

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Council	
MEETING DATE:	16 March 2023	
TITLE:	'Friendship Agreement' with the city of Oleksandriya, Ukraine	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM/		
List of attachments to this report: None		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 B&NES Council has consistently stood in solidarity with Ukraine following the Russian invasion on 24 February 2022. Part of this response involved dialogue between the council, the Mayor of Oleksandriya City Council – a city in central Ukraine, similar in population to Bath – and the Ambassador of Ukraine to the United Kingdom. This relationship has led to the formation of a new local group, the **Friends of Oleksandriya**.
- 1.2 To further develop the relationship with the city of Oleksandriya, Council is requested to pursue and formalise a friendship agreement between B&NES Council and the city of Oleksandriya.

2 RECOMMENDATION

Council is asked to;

- 2.1 **Pursue and agree a friendship agreement between B&NES Council and the city of Oleksandriya**
- 2.2 **Agree to establish a working group to work with the Friends of Oleksandriya and Oleksandriya City Council to draft a friendship agreement**

2.3 **Delegate authority to the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council to negotiate, agree and sign the finalised friendship agreement on behalf of B&NES Council.**

3 THE REPORT

3.1 Since the start of the Russian invasion on 24 February 2022, B&NES Council has stood in solidarity with Ukraine. Bath and North East Somerset's communities have welcomed more than three hundred and fifty refugees under the government's Homes for Ukraine scheme.

3.2 The council has played a key role in helping Ukrainian guests integrate into local communities. For example, establishing the B&NES Ukrainian Support Fund. This made available two rounds of £10,000 for local charities and voluntary groups to provide a range of services that promote integration, organise local events and signpost to advice and support.

3.3 A public statement was made to the May 2022 Council meeting by the local group '**Bath Stands with Ukraine**'. It proposed a link between B&NES Council and a Ukrainian city similar in population to Bath.

3.4 This subsequently led to dialogue opening between the Council, the Mayor of the Oleksandriya City Council, and the Ambassador of Ukraine to the United Kingdom. Oleksandriya is a central Ukraine city with a population of approximately eighty thousand, located in Kirovohradska Oblast, within the Kirovohrad region, 350km from Kyiv (see location maps in appendix 1).

3.5 The creation of a local group the **Friends of Oleksandriya** emerged from these developing relationships.

3.6 There is now a desire to further deepen these connections through the development of a friendship agreement. Although not legally binding it would form a commitment from both parties to:

- deepen relationships by strengthening and formalising bilateral relationships and promoting cooperation and support.
- provide a framework to establish and strengthen cultural and other community ties, fostering co-operation based on respect, equality, and mutual benefit.
- promote awareness between the two communities and identify environmental, social, cultural, educational, health and wellbeing and other opportunities for joint working.

3.6 To develop a friendship agreement it is proposed to establish a council working group to work with the B&NES based **Friends of Oleksandriya** and the city council of Oleksandriya.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 The friendship agreement is not a legally binding document. The intention is to enter into this agreement for the purposes of establishing friendship, recognising bilateral relations, and promoting co-operation between the two Parties.

- 4.2 The council has experience of developing/formalising a friendship agreement. In 2009 signing an agreement with China's Jianxi Province (and city of Jingdezhen). Council agreed to terminate this agreement at its meeting on 17 November 2022.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 5.1 The council will provide the officer support to develop and finalise the friendship agreement. It is anticipated that this can be managed through existing resources. Any further additional costs, such as translation requirements, would require the identification of appropriate funding.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the council's decision-making risk management guidance.

7 EQUALITIES

- 7.1 A full EIA will be undertaken as part of the development of the agreement.

8 CLIMATE CHANGE

- 8.1 The friendship agreement will promote awareness between the two communities and offer opportunities for joint working in relation to the climate and ecological emergency.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 9.1 The Council at its May 2022 meeting was asked by local group **Bath Stands with Ukraine** to consider pursuing a link with a comparable Ukrainian city. The statement suggested pursuing a less formal arrangement than a twinning agreement, as would be led by the Charter Trustees of the City of Bath. Due to the urgency of the request, the desire to demonstrate a council wide commitment, and the council's previous experience it is felt a friendship agreement best meets this request.

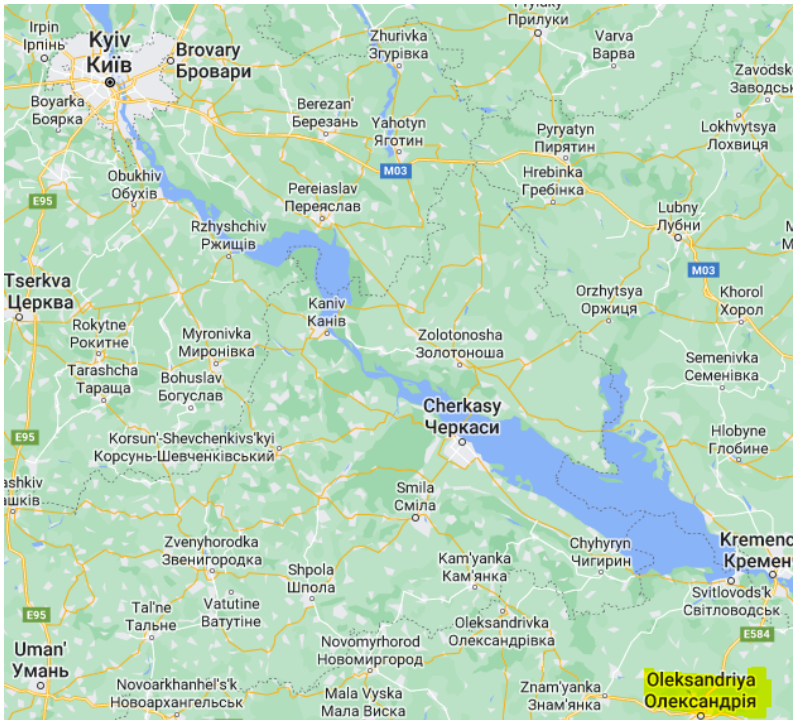
10 CONSULTATION

- 10.1 The Council's Monitoring Officer has had the opportunity to input into the report.
- 10.2 The Leader of the Council has written to the Mayor of Oleksandriya to confirm the intention to pursue a friendship agreement as a continued commitment to forge relationships between the council and Oleksandriya.

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Background papers	
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	

APPENDIX 1

Map 1 - Oleksandriya's location relative to Kyiv



Map 2 - Oleksandriya's location in the centre of Ukraine

