

REPORT TITLE: TWINNING AGREEMENT - NIZHYN, UKRAINE

9 JULY 2025

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Martin Tod, Leader of the Council

Contact Officer: Gareth John Tel No: 01962 848135
gjohn@winchester.gov.uk

WARD(S): WINCHESTER TOWN WARDS

PURPOSE

The Council has been approached by representatives of Nizhyn City Council (Ukraine) to establish a 'twinning agreement' between their city and the city of Winchester. This is in recognition of the strong ties that have developed in recent years between our respective communities.

Nizhyn (pronounced 'Nee-jin') is an historic city located in the Chernihiv region of northern Ukraine along the Oster River some 72 miles northeast of Kyiv. It has a population of around 72,000 and is home to over 300 historic buildings, 70 of which are of significant cultural and historic value. Nizhyn is also home to Nizhyn Gogol State University, which is one of the oldest institutions of higher education in Ukraine, established in 1805 and has approximately 8,000 students. Nizhyn is a major industrial centre which is currently twinned with Ioannina (Greece), Preiļi (Latvia), Świdnica (Poland) and State College (Pennsylvania, United States).

The proposal has the support of Councillor Kathleen Becker (Cabinet Member for Healthy Communities) and Councillor John Tippet-Cooper (the Council's 'Sanctuary Champion'). Members will be familiar that the Council continues to offer support, along with residents of the district, to those who have left Ukraine and have found sanctuary in the district.

The proposed agreement is included at the Appendix, and it should be emphasised that the agreement is regarding the area encompassing the city of Winchester (town wards), and not the Winchester district.

The Winchester City Council district is currently twinned only with Giessen in Germany. There have also been links with other "Winchesters", principally Winchester, Virginia, with which an informal 'Sister City' relationship had existed.

There are other 'twinning' throughout the district (e.g. Alresford, Bishops Waltham), including the Winchester (town)/Laon link. These are all community-to-community arrangements, and the Council will only be involved informally by arrangement.

On this basis, the agreement at the Appendix is intended to be signed by the respective mayors as representatives of the two communities, emphasising that the links are made and to be fostered by the people of Winchester (town wards) and of Nizhyn, rather than the authorities.

In conclusion, the nature of the agreement is recognised as being to foster and develop mutual understanding and respect between the residents of both town areas. Whilst these purposes are clearly stated, there is no commitment to undertake any specific programme of activities by the Council itself, nor dedicate any resource.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Council endorse the proposed town twinning agreement at the Appendix to the report as the basis for the twinning agreement between the city of Winchester (town wards) and Nizhyn City Council (Ukraine) and that the Mayor of Winchester sign accordingly.

IMPLICATIONS:

1 COUNCIL PLAN OUTCOME

- 1.1 The Council Plan looks to achieve, through the 'Healthy Communities' priority the continued support for the City of Sanctuary movement and for refugees to our district. Welcoming and providing ongoing support to those leaving Ukraine has been at the forefront of this in recent years. Ukrainian guests are a welcome and integrated part of our district community.
- 1.2 The fostering of twinning links with Ukraine is in recognition of the positive ties that have developed between our two communities, and it will further enhance these links through residents of Winchester and their twinned town, rather than by the respective authorities.

2 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 The Council has no formal Twinning Budget (and nor has there been for many years). As the agreement proposed will be an informal community-to-community arrangement, there are no additional resource implications.

3 LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no legal responsibilities which relate to town twinning agreements as the arrangements are not underpinned by any statute, although The Local Government Act 1972 gives power to councils to enter into twinning arrangements and to expend money on them.
- 3.2 The Director (Legal) has assessed and concluded the proposed twinning agreement at the Appendix as having no legal basis, nor containing any implications that the council could be bound by.
- 3.3 The Council would be able to terminate the twinning agreement in the future should it be considered appropriate to do so by the passing of a resolution at Council.

4 WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None directly, other than, potentially, assistance with facilitating dialogue and information sharing between the two communities.

5 PROPERTY AND ASSET IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None from this report.

6 CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

- 6.1 This proposal brought forward for consideration has been undertaken via consultation between representatives of Nizhyn City Council (Ukraine), Councillor Kathleen Becker (Cabinet Member for Community and

Engagement), Councillor John Tippet-Cooper (the Council's 'Sanctuary Champion').

7 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 None from this report.

8 PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

8.1 None from this report.

9 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

9.1 None from this report.

RISK MANAGEMENT

| Risk | Mitigation | Opportunities |
|---|--|--|
| <u>Financial Exposure</u> There is no direct financial resourcing requirements associated with the proposal. | N/A | The Council would retain a 'watching brief' on the working of the agreement over time. |
| <u>Exposure to challenge</u> That signing of the agreement be challenged due to perceived legal basis of the pledges within. | There are no legal responsibilities which relate to town twinning agreements as the arrangements are not underpinned by any statute. The agreement, as worded, is an informal arrangement with no legal basis. | The Council would be able to terminate the twinning agreement in the future should it be considered appropriate to do so by the passing of a resolution at Council. |
| <u>Innovation</u> (1) The agreement may inadvertently attract unforeseen negative comment from communities. | (1) Each of the pledges within the agreement promote positive outcomes that foster understanding, cooperation, and sustainable development. | (1) Continued support of the Council's commitment to the City of Sanctuary movement: for example, the agreement highlights importance of 'reflecting the spirit |

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| <p>(2) There are risks stemming from the possibility that the Russia/Ukraine conflict shall result in increased Russian-borne cyberthreats to the Council as an ally of Ukraine</p> | <p>(2) The Council's IMT service is vigilant and has robust measures already in place regarding the ongoing threat of cyberthreats.</p> | <p>of our community and core values of openness, kindness, and respect for everyone.</p> <p>(2) Investigation of technical advances etc regarding protecting public services from cyberthreats</p> |
| <p><u>Reputation</u></p> <p>Changes to international political circumstances.</p> | <p>Should any future risk to the Council's reputation be identified as having stemmed from the agreement, then the Council would be able to terminate the twinning agreement in the future (should it be considered appropriate to do so) by the passing of a resolution at Council.</p> | <p>The Council would retain a 'watching brief' on the working of the agreement over time.</p> |
| <p><u>Achievement of outcome</u></p> <p>There are no direct staffing or financial resources associated with the proposal.</p> | <p>N/A</p> | <p>The Council would retain a 'watching brief' on the working of the agreement over time.</p> |
| <p><u>Community Support</u></p> <p>The agreement, and pledges therein would have support from communities.</p> | <p>The Council Plan looks to achieve, through the 'Healthy Communities' priority, the continued support for the City of Sanctuary movement and for refugees to our district.</p> | <p>The fostering of twinning links with Ukraine is in recognition of the positive ties that have developed between our two communities</p> |
| <p><u>Timescales</u></p> <p>N/A</p> | <p>N/A</p> | <p>N/A</p> |

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| <u>Project capacity</u> There are no direct staffing or financial resources associated with the proposal. | N/A | The Council would retain a 'watching brief' on the working of the agreement over time |
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10 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

- 10.1 Winchester City Council has previously endorsed twinning links. The city of Winchester (town wards) has been linked with the city of Laon in France since 1994 and the Winchester district has an older link with Giessen in Germany, which was formalised in 1963. There has also been links with other "Winchesters", principally Winchester, Virginia, with which an informal 'Sister City' relationship exists.
- 10.2 These are community-to-community arrangements, and the Council is only involved informally by arrangement, e.g. agreements are signed by respective mayors as representatives of the two communities and the links fostered by residents and their twinned towns, rather than the authorities.
- 10.3 The fostering of twinning links with Ukraine is in recognition of the positive ties that have developed between our two communities. In Winchester this has been further strengthened by the establishment of the Winchester Ukrainian Cultural Association (WUCA), which has a membership of approximately 200 and whose purpose is *"to support and promote the cultural, educational, and community interests of the Ukrainian community residing in Winchester and surrounding areas"*. As representatives of our Ukrainian community, WUCA will also have a distinct role in future "delivery" of the twinning agreement.
- 10.4 In the absence of budget or officer support, the proposed twinning agreement with Nizhyn City Council (Ukraine) has been drafted accordingly to ensure that it contains no legal obligations or binds the Council to any resource commitment.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None

Other Background Documents:

None

Appendix

Twinning Agreement



TWINNING AGREEMENT

between

the Nizhyn City Council of Chernihiv Region (Ukraine)
and the City of Winchester, Hampshire (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)

The Nizhyn City Council of Chernihiv Region (Ukraine)
and the City of Winchester, Hampshire (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland),

hereinafter referred to as the Parties

Recognizing the close ties between our communities,

Affirming the resilience, determination, and courage of the people of Nizhyn and Ukraine in defending their freedom and democratic values,

Confirming our shared commitment to democracy, local self-government, human rights, and the rule of law,

Dedicated to strengthening international partnerships that foster mutual understanding, cooperation, and sustainable development,

WE HEREBY COMMIT TO:

- Maintain close ties between our cities by encouraging cooperation between our local authorities, institutions, and communities.
- Promote environmental responsibility by sharing information on projects and approaches that enhance sustainable development and protect natural resources.

- Strengthen community connections by fostering people-to-people engagement that embraces inclusion, diversity, and mutual respect.
- Support educational and cultural exchange enabling students, teachers, artists, and civic organizations to learn from and inspire one another.
- Promote economic and social development by encouraging the exchange of knowledge and best practices in governance, sustainable development, and urban planning.
- Jointly uphold freedom, democracy, and resilience, advocating for the right of every person to live in peace and security.

This partnership reflects our belief in international friendship and the role of local communities in building a more just and peaceful world together.

This Agreement is concluded for an indefinite period.

This Agreement shall enter into force on the date of its signing by the authorized representatives of both Parties, following prior approval by the competent authorities of both Parties, if required by the legislation of Ukraine and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The Agreement shall be published in accordance with the applicable laws of both countries.

Each Party reserves the right to terminate this Agreement. The Agreement shall be terminated three months after one Party receives written notification from the other Party of its intention to terminate the Agreement.

Amendments and additions to this Agreement shall be made by mutual written consent of the Parties. Disagreements regarding the interpretation or application of the provisions of this agreement shall be resolved through negotiations and consultations between the Parties.

Signed on the _____, 2025, in the city of _____, in two copies, each in Ukrainian and English, both texts being equally authentic.

**On behalf of the Nizhyn City Council
Chernihiv Region (Ukraine)**

Mayor of Nizhyn
Oleksandr KODOLA

**On behalf of the City of Winchester,
Hampshire (United Kingdom of Great
Britain and Northern Ireland)**

Mayor of Winchester
Sudhakar ACHWAL

УГОДА ПРО ПОБРАТИМСТВО

між

**Ніжинською міською радою Чернігівської області (Україна)
та Містом Вінчестер, Гемпшир (Сполучене Королівство Великої Британії та
Північної Ірландії)**

Ніжинська міська рада Чернігівської області (Україна)
та Місто Вінчестер, Гемпшир (Сполучене Королівство Великої Британії та Північної
Ірландії),

що далі іменуються Сторонами

Визнаючи тісні зв'язки між нашими громадами,

Підтверджуючи стійкість, рішучість і мужність народу Ніжина та України в
захисті своєї свободи й демократичних цінностей,

Стверджуючи нашу спільну віру в демократію, місцеве самоврядування, права
людини та верховенство права,

Віддані зміцненню міжнародних партнерств, які сприяють взаєморозумінню,
співпраці та сталому розвитку,

ЦИМ ЗОБОВ'ЯЗУЄМОСЯ:

- Підтримувати тісні зв'язки між нашими містами, заохочуючи співпрацю між нашими органами місцевого самоврядування, установами та громадами.
- Сприяти екологічній відповідальності, обмінюючись інформацією про проекти та підходи, що підвищують сталий розвиток та захищають природні ресурси.
- Зміцнювати зв'язки між громадами, сприяти розвитку взаємодії людей, що передбачає інклюзію, різноманіття та взаємну повагу.

- Підтримувати освітній та культурний обмін, дозволяючи студентам, вчителям, митцям і громадським організаціям вчитися одне в одного та надихати одне одного.
- Сприяти економічному та соціальному розвитку, заохочуючи обмін знаннями й найкращими практиками у сфері врядування, сталого розвитку та міського планування.
- Разом підтримувати свободу, демократію та стійкість, виступаючи за право кожної людини жити в мирі та безпеці.

Це партнерство відображає нашу віру в міжнародну дружбу та роль місцевих громад у спільній побудові більш справедливого та мирного світу.

Ця Угода укладається на невизначений термін.

Ця Угода набирає чинності з дати підписання уповноваженими представниками обох Сторін після попереднього схвалення компетентними органами обох Сторін цієї Угоди, якщо законодавство України та Сполученого Королівства Великої Британії та Північної Ірландії вимагає такого схвалення для набуття чинності цієї Угоди. Угода буде опублікована відповідно до чинного законодавства обох країн.

Кожна зі Сторін має право припинити дію цієї Угоди. Дія цієї Угоди припиняється через три місяці після отримання однією з Сторін письмового повідомлення від іншої Сторони про її намір припинити дію цієї Угоди.

Зміни і доповнення до цієї Угоди вносяться за взаємною письмовою згодою Сторін. Розбіжності щодо тлумачення або застосування положень цієї угоди вирішуються шляхом проведення переговорів та консультацій між Сторонами.

Підписано _____ 2025 року в м. _____ в двох примірниках, кожний українською та англійською мовами, при чому обидва тексти мають однакову силу.

**Від Ніжинської міської ради
Чернігівської області (Україна)**

Міський голова міста Ніжина
Олександр КОДОЛА

**Від Міста Вінчестер,
Гемпшир (Сполучене Королівство
Великої Британії та Північної Ірландії)**

Міський голова Вінчестера
Судгакар АЧВАЛ