

Title of meeting: Cabinet Meeting

Date of meeting: 22nd June 2021

Subject: Sister City Links with Halifax, Canada and the Falkland Islands

Report by: Director Culture, Leisure & Regulatory Services

Wards affected: All

Key decision: No

Full Council decision: No

1. Purpose of report

1.1 To formalise Sister City links between Portsmouth and Halifax in Canada and the Falkland Islands.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That officers be authorised to enable the City of Portsmouth to enter into Sister City relationships with the Halifax Regional Municipality, Canada and the Falkland Islands Government.

3. Background

3.1 Historically Portsmouth City Council has supported and maintained a number of relationships with other cities throughout the world as part of a twinning, sister and friendship city process.

3.2 The oldest links that we have were established out of a desire to foster improved relationships between British and German cities following the Second World War. The rationale for Portsmouth to have such links has changed recently with an emphasis on supporting economic development and business development.

3.3 The main purpose for any new international relationship should be to support economic development. We are very aware that our strongest links are currently with European cities. In this period of economic uncertainty we are keen to ensure that we have links and opportunities for working with other parts of the world. We therefore wish to establish links with Canada and the Falkland Islands to support new relationships and encourage business growth through other partnership routes.



- 3.4 An earlier report to Cabinet on 4 February 2020 proposed that the Leader of the Council write to the Mayor of Halifax and the Legislative Assembly of the Falkland Islands to requests the establishment of Sister City links.
- 3.5 Halifax is a city on the eastern seaboard of Canada. It is home to Canada's main naval base, which was also formerly a Royal Naval Dockyard. The majority of Canadian servicemen who served in Europe during the Second World War departed from Halifax, including those who landed on D-Day. Halifax is the provincial capital of Nova Scotia in Canada and the municipal authority has a population of 400,000. The recent sale of the Type 26 Frigate to the Royal Canadian Navy and the decision by the Canadian Government to build the ships in Halifax is a significant trade and inward investment opportunity. The contract to build 15 ships is worth £20bn with many companies in Portsmouth either already involved or seeking to obtain supply chain contracts. In addition there is great potential for a future trade, investment and educational mission to include not just Halifax but also Toronto. Portsmouth and Halifax therefore share significant historical, geographical and economic synergy.
- 3.6 The Department of International Trade and the British High Commission in Canada have a strategy to increase trade with the Atlantic coast of Canada, and this sister city link will build on this and bring economic benefits to Portsmouth. The British High Commission in Canada and the Canadian High Commission in London are both very supportive of the proposed sister link with Portsmouth.
- 3.7 A very successful virtual Trade, Investment and Education Mission was held on the 25th of February 2021 hosted by the Mayor of Halifax and the Leader of Portsmouth City Council. Sessions included a joint one by the two Naval Base commanders one by the Universities and break sessions for businesses in key shared high growth business sectors. Following this discussion, partners in Halifax have already identified a number of work strands that support both cities corporate priorities. These include the Vice Chancellors of the relevant Universities meeting and an application by the University of Portsmouth for funding to facilitate student exchanges; further virtual business to business trade sessions, cultural, visitor economy and creative partner sessions; and investigating recruiting Canadian teachers to fill shortages in Portsmouth Schools.
- 3.8 Portsmouth shares a significant history with the Falkland Islands. As a distant territory of the United Kingdom the Falkland Islands and other South Atlantic territories have long required support from the Royal Navy. As a far-flung outpost the South Atlantic dependencies have long been a strategic location for the navy with Port Stanley in particular being used as an anchorage for centuries. As the last islands before the Antarctic the Falkland Islands and South Georgia have often been the last port of call for explorers, such as Captain Scott and Ernest Shackleton. Many of these explorers were naval officers and voyages often started from Portsmouth. Two Portsmouth sailors who died after the Battle of the Falklands in 1914 are buried in Port Stanley. The 1982 Falklands War saw thousands of Portsmouth sailors and other servicemen taking part. The Portsmouth based ships HMS Sheffield and HMS Coventry



were sunk and others were damaged. Since 1982 the Royal Navy has maintained a presence in the Falklands with Portsmouth-based ships regularly on station. Thousands of Portsmouth sailors will have visited the islands and we are aware that 2022 marks the 40th Anniversary of the Falklands Conflict.

- 3.9 Portsmouth and the Falkland Islands are intrinsically linked and this proposal to establish a Sister City Link will bring formal recognition to that relationship. There are also business opportunities and the link will also support Portsmouth's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant. A visit by Falkland Islands Legislative members Leona Roberts, Roger Spink and Mark Pollard in 2019 to the Lord Mayor of Portsmouth expressed their strong interest in developing and having a formal link between the islands and the city. Whilst the geographical distance between the Falkland Islands and Portsmouth is considerable it is hoped that this proposal to establish a new Sister City link will bring closer working ties which can be facilitated through both the military and business links already established.
- 3.10 As both relationships have synergy between each city, offer a number of opportunities and have been the basis for productive discussions with partners we are recommending that the City Council formalise the emerging relationships with Halifax and the Falkland Islands into Sister City links.
- 3.11 We will look to agree a work plan to support each Sister City Link. The focus for the agreed work plan for each relationship should consider supporting economic development between the two cities, along with development of appropriate specialist relationships such as that between Universities and based on naval links.
- 3.12 It should however be noted that currently there are not specific funds available for twinning support. Any financial commitment therefore has to be considered from Resources Portfolio Reserve and time resources found from within existing staff time, as we do not have dedicated officers solely working to support the international links in the way most of our twin and sister cities do.

4. Reasons for recommendations

- 4.1 Portsmouth needs to ensure that the twin, sister and friendship links it has are working to support new avenues for economic trade. Historically we have had a focus on working with European countries and establishing a new link with Commonwealth countries in a post Brexit period would help to balance out any challenges with European trade in the short term.

5. Integrated impact assessment

- 5.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment is attached.

6. Legal implications

6.1 There is no fixed or formal definition of a sister city link but generally this comprises a long term and reciprocal commitment by the relevant civic authorities to foster cultural, social and economic, trade, investment and educational relationships between the two areas and their communities

7. Director of Finance's comments

7.1 There is no specific budget provision to support twinning arrangements. Any costs arising from the recommendation will have to be met from existing budgets or from Portfolio reserves (subject to agreement by S151 Officer and the Portfolio holder)

.....
Signed by:

Appendices: None

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

.....
Signed by: