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Title of meeting:	Central Services Decision Meeting
Date of meeting:	31 January 2025
Subject:	Twinning Activity update
Report by:	Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services
Wards affected:	All

1. Requested by Central Services Cabinet Member
Councillor Chris Attwell

2. Purpose

2.1 To provide the Cabinet Member and the members of Central Services with an overview of the activities which took place with all our twin and sister cities through the previous quarter as well as an outline of the activities planned for 2025.

3. Information Requested

3.1. This report contains a summary of all the activities which occurred between the City of Portsmouth and our twin and sister cities during the last quarter. The reactivated Twinning Advisory Group (TAG) has received updates and an outline of the forward programme and has supported the proposed programme of works.

3.2. **Activity with the City of Caen:** Caen City Council sent a group of runners from their German twin town of Würzburg to take part in the Great South Run. Unfortunately, the race was cancelled due to bad weather after they had boarded the ferry. However, arrangements were made for them to visit the Historic Dockyard allowing them to enjoy more of what the city has to offer. The ECTC arranged host families for some of the runners and others stayed in a hotel.

3.3. Efforts continue to link some of the secondary schools in Portsmouth with those in Caen following the meeting with the Solent Languages Hub in May. In addition, the PGCE Modern Foreign Languages Course Leader at Portsmouth University is also keen to link primary schools in the city with those in Caen. In October, she visited Caen and met with an Education Delegation made up of members of the international teams and educational projects teams as well as a representative from primary and one from secondary schools.

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- 3.4. A meeting was held with all interested stakeholders and Portsmouth school and college leaders at the City of Partners Languages on 29th November. Discussions to date have looked at online virtual exchanges between schools in Portsmouth and Caen with a focus on ages 9-10 in primary (approx. 1,000 pupils in Caen with 30 schools) and secondary students aged 11-14 (10 secondaries in Caen). The aim is, initially, to consider day trips with historical, literary or music links and then to look towards an exchange.
- 3.5. A meeting took place between the Caen Development Agency, the Hampshire Chamber of Commerce and Head of Economic Development at Portsmouth City C in December to discuss economic development opportunities between the cities and wider regions. A further meeting is planned in January to explore opportunities to provide business to business engagement across the Hampshire and the Isle of Wight area of the UK and the region including Caen. To also explore opportunities for Universities and Higher Education establishments in terms of partnership and knowledge exchanges to benefit the two economic regions and to explore opportunities in widening skills and work experience development in common across the regions.
- 3.6. City of Caen Deputy Mayor Cécile Cottenceau attended the UK-French Local Government Forum held in Leeds in December. She has requested a meeting to discuss projects to strengthen the link between the two cities. The online meeting is scheduled to take place in February.
- 3.7. **Activity with the City of Duisburg:** The Portsmouth Friends group from Duisburg visited Portsmouth and met with the Lord Mayor in August on their annual visit to the city. They were given refreshments in the Guildhall Banqueting Room, had a Q&A with the Lord Mayor before being given a tour of the silver in the corridor.
- 3.8. Efforts continue with the Solent Languages Hub to link secondary schools with Duisburg. Whilst Admiral Lord Nelson was unable to secure a teacher from Duisburg, they have been allocated one from near Berlin. However, Springfield has made contact with the Head of English at the Krupp Gymnasium in Duisburg with the aim to get students to contact each other via letters this academic year.
- 3.9. City of Portsmouth College (CoPC) had to postpone their visit to the Sophie Scholl Berufskolleg due to an Ofsted inspection and needing to get more funding. However, Miriam Jansen-Gellert and Egbert Meiritz from Friedrich-Albert-Lange Berufskolleg in Duisburg visited CoPC and the Lord Mayor in December to celebrate 50 years of partnership.
- 3.10. The Economic Development team has been holding regular meetings with the Duisburg Innovation and Business team who offer support to businesses looking for connections and exploring ideas.

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- 3.11. Duisburg 'Pop Up Shop' is being trialled and Spice Island Chilli will be the first Portsmouth produce to be sold at Duisburg's new 'Pop-Up Shop', as a first-try purchase to see how the idea is received, with the potential of being extended to include other produce.
- 3.12. Plans are in place for commemorating the 75th anniversary of the twin city link and regular comms are in place with Duisburg's International Relations team.
- 3.13. **Activity with the City of Haifa:** The Portsmouth Haifa Friendship Twinning Committee met again in November.
- 3.14. **Activity with the City of Halifax:** Maritime UK Solent hosted an online conference in partnership with Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada and Portsmouth City Council on 19 November 2024 titled 'Greening your Marine Operations'. The aim was to bring together organisations from both cities to promote and strengthen investment, supply chain and business-to-business development, and encourage collaboration.
- 3.15. The Economic Regeneration team continue to have regular Teams meetings with the Halifax Partnership team. Some positive connections have been made for businesses in both cities which continues to be supported by officers.
- 3.16. **Activity with the City of Maizuru:** Plans are in place to organise a group of 10 Japanese students aged 15-17 with a visit to Portsmouth in March 2025. Further details at 4.10.
- 3.17. An annual online greeting was held on 7th January by the Lord Mayor and brought together representatives from Halifax, two of the three Portsmouths in the US, New Hampshire and Rhode Island, Caen, Duisburg and the Falkland Islands. In addition, members of the ECTC and a representative from the University of Portsmouth's International office joined the call.
- 3.18. **Approach to Valletta, Malta:** Following the decision of the Cabinet to approach Valletta in Malta for a potential new relationship a formal letter has been sent to the Mayor of the City of Valletta to which we are currently awaiting a response.

4. Outline Future Activity

- 4.1. The next section of this report contains a summary of the scheduled activities which are due to occur between the City of Portsmouth and our twin and sister cities throughout 2025. It should be noted that some planned activities are still being worked up or are dependent on securing external funding.

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- 4.2. **Planned Activity with the City of Caen:** The Lord Mayor has been invited to the launch of Caen's programme celebrating its 1000th anniversary in March.
- 4.3. Logistics are being worked up to support representatives from Portsmouth schools to attend the International Young Persons D-Day ceremony in June 2025 at Utah Beach.
- 4.4. **Planned Activity with the City of Duisburg:** 2025 commemorates the 75th anniversary of the twinning of Duisburg and Portsmouth. A variety of activities are being planned to include: an exhibition at the City Museum 'From Enemy to Friendship', use of the circular flowerbed near The D-Day Story to highlight the anniversary, a book exchange, an online series of lectures and a team is being sought to take part in Duisburg's Dragonboat festival.
- 4.5. Mayor Link and a delegation will be visiting Portsmouth from 6-9 July. During the visit, it will provide the opportunity to reaffirm our mutual commitment to the twinning link and a formal dinner will be held.
- 4.6. PCC will continue to work with the Solent Languages Hub to form links with secondary schools and support the City of Portsmouth College link with the Sophie-School Berufskolleg and the long-standing link with Friedrich-Albert-Lange Berufskolleg.
- 4.7. Economic Development will continue their regular dialogue with partners in Duisburg, exploring commercial opportunities. The Economic Development team are continuing their regular dialogue with partners in Duisburg, exploring commercial opportunities for small and medium size businesses.
- 4.8. **Planned Activity with the City of Halifax:** Monthly virtual meetings held with partners in Halifax exploring commercial opportunities and business events planning, with support from Maritime UK Solent.
- 4.9. Initial plans are in place to organise an in-person networking event for Portsmouth with Halifax Nova Scotia companies on Monday 7 April 2025 in Portsmouth, another opportunity for us to build and strengthen relationships.
- 4.10. **Planned Activity with the City of Maizuru:** Japanese students from Maizuru will be visiting Portsmouth from 22-29 March 2025. They will attend English language classes in the morning and activities in the afternoon. The group will meet the Lord Mayor in the Parlour and spend a couple of afternoons with students at Mayfield School, where they have historically had a link. Draft plans are for the students to have lunch with their English counterparts each day, have a tour of the school and visit a range of different lessons as well as do a sports lesson together. On the

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second afternoon, they will have the opportunity to present to each other about their respective cities.

- 4.11. **Planned activity with the City of Sylhet:** Economic Development are working with partners in Sylhet to focus on highlighting the opportunities we have here for growing trade, investment and tourism.
- 4.12. **Potential link with Palestine:** Following on from the discussion at the Full Council meeting in December 2023 members of the Twinning Advisory Group discussed an officer suggestion of a potential link with the City of Jericho during the TAG meeting on 26th September 2024. At that time, it was agreed it would be sensible to keep a watching brief on the current unstable situation and for this option to be considered again at a future meeting.
- 4.13. The Twinning Advisory Group meeting of 28th November included a deputation from Mrs Christine Elmer a supporter of the proposal for Portsmouth to have a link with Palestine. As a result of this meeting officers have undertaken further research with the Palestine Twinning Network and have a meeting arranged in the very near future. As we are writing this report there is a high possibility of a ceasefire being enacted which could provide a new opportunity for exploring this suggestion further.

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Signed by:
Stephen Baily
Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services

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
International Relationship strategy	International Relationship Strategy Report.pdf (portsmouth.gov.uk)
Minutes of the Twinning Advisory Group Meeting of 26 th September 2024	Twinning Advisory Group minutes 26th September 2024