



Draft Proposed Procedure for Twinning / Informal Agreements with International Cities

Introduction

Dublin City Council's International Relations Unit gives a focus to our international relationships by facilitating and promoting international links and relations that benefit our city.

The key principles that guide our international relations work should ensure we manage our relationships with a focus and aim to bring a rationale to our international linkages, one that focuses on mutual benefits between Dublin City and the partner city or region.

Dublin City Council has embedded international relations in its Corporate Plan 2020–2024 by promoting Dublin internationally as a place to invest, visit and live and to strengthen ties with our existing partner cities through mutually beneficial initiatives and exchanges.

Building international relations is a core policy aim at national government, national agency and city level. Enhancing the profile of Dublin City internationally is at the core of our efforts. The City Council is one of many key stakeholders and agencies who have a role to play in international linkages and work collectively to play a full and productive role.

Developing links or partnerships can support with achieving policy objectives such as culture, sports, heritage, age friendly and links with diaspora, economic development as well as tourism. There may be opportunities to work on problems or develop innovative solutions with partners around key challenges such as design, smart cities, climate change and energy and many more.

Our international relations efforts will further ensure our elected members play a key civic leadership role and that the assets at Council's disposal are utilised to promote the city.

Legislative basis for Twinning

Currently Dublin City Council international relationships consist of both formal Twinning and informal Friendship / Co-operation Agreements / Memorandums of Understanding (MOU's).

Twinning can be defined as a coming together of two cities or regions seeking to strengthen or develop common interests including economic development, arts and culture, tourism sports and community. There may be opportunities to work on problem solving or develop innovative solutions with partners around key challenges such as design, smart cities, climate change, energy and many more.

While not legally binding, the signing of a formal Twinning agreement facilitates the setting up of a long term, trusting relationship. Its form and content are not fixed and may be amended depending on the specific nature of the partnership that is being set up according to partners' wishes.

Twining is a Reserved Function of the Council and legislative provision is set out in the Local Government Act 2001

Twining of local authority areas. **75.**—(1) A local authority may enter into arrangements for the twinning of its administrative area or a part of it or establish other similar links with any other area, whether within or outside the State.

(2) The decision to enter into an arrangement under *subsection (1)* is a reserved function.

(3) A local authority shall not enter into an arrangement under *subsection (1)* unless, having had regard to the following matters, it is satisfied that the arrangement is justified:

(a) the benefits likely to accrue to its administrative area and the local community,

(b) the social, cultural and general interests of its administrative area and the local community, and

(c) the total cost involved.

(4) The Minister may issue directions to local authorities or specified classes of local authorities for the purposes of this section.

(5) There shall be recorded in the annual report of a local authority for every year expenditure and other particulars in relation to the performance of its functions under this section.

Current Twinning Agreements:

- San Jose, USA and Dublin City Council - 1986
- City of Liverpool and City of Dublin - 1997
- City of Barcelona and City of Dublin - 1998
- Addendum to Twinning Agreement between City of Barcelona and Dublin City - 2009
- Beijing The Peoples Republic of China and Dublin City Council - 2010
(MOU Beijing Municipality of the People's Republic of China and Dublin City - 2011)

Summary below of the most recent activities between our Twin cities:

Liverpool City Council

(Collaboration between Dublin / Belfast / Liverpool /Manchester

2022: Lord Mayor met with the Lord Mayor of Belfast and the Mayors of Greater Manchester and Liverpool City Region to discuss areas for further collaborations, specifically relating to the decarbonising transport, heat and industry and how the cities could learn from each other going forward. A Statement of Intent was signed by the Lord Mayors and the Mayors

of Liverpool City Region and Greater Manchester to demonstrate the four cities commitment to working north, south, east and west to collaborate on practical approaches to accelerate the delivery of net zero and share best practices, knowledge and experience.

A number of bi-lateral meetings relating to possible opportunities of collaboration between all the cities on Tourism, Culture, Night Time Economy, Sports were attended by Senior Management from CRES Department.

Barcelona City Council

2021: A meeting was held between the Lord Mayor and Deputy Mayor Barcelona City Council and an exchange of mutual interests and priorities at European level was discussed. Both parties agreed to strengthen collaboration between our two cities.

San Jose

2018: A delegation from San Jose travelled to Dublin for a 4-day programme that included city-to-city officials meetings, presentations on Dublin City Cultural Strategy, Economic Development and LEO and the entrepreneur Eco-System, Smart Dublin / Smart Docklands. It involved visits to the US Embassy and the Advanced Manufacturing Centre, UCD.

2019: A delegation from Dublin led by the Deputy Lord Mayor visited San Jose to discuss areas of mutual interest around the digital space and mobility.

Beijing

2018: A visit to Dublin by a Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Secretary of CPC Beijing Municipal Committee met with the Lord Mayor, Chief Executive, members of the senior management team and officials to discuss city management, urban planning and development as well as historic and cultural preservation. Following on from this, three members of staff from the Beijing Municipal Government worked in Dublin City Council for a number of months in 2018. Their backgrounds were in City Planning and Land Resources Management, Commission for Reform and Development and Commission of Commerce and wished to learn and experience Dublin's city planning; business environment, incubation of Start Up companies and policies.

2019: A delegation from Beijing Municipal Commission of Urban Management visited Dublin to meet with teams in the Environment & Transportation Department to learn about the management functions and management systems of waste sorting and disposal and to study relevant policies, laws and regulations about waste management; to share experiences about waste disposal facility operations and relevant technologies.

The Deputy Lord Mayor led a small delegation from Dublin City Council on an official visit to the Beijing Municipality.

Informal Agreements:

There are opportunities to explore / facilitate less formal future partnership arrangements in circumstances where there is a mutual interest and benefit that fits with the city's objectives, however there needs to be a clear interest or commitment from the partners involved to develop and sustain the links. This type of arrangement is a less formal commitment.

Friendship / Co-operation Agreements / MOU's have become more popular in recent years where partners identify areas of interest in which the partner cities or regions are committing themselves to explore and a timeframe for any proposed collaboration.

List of City Council Informal Agreements

- Protocol for Co-operation and Partnership negotiations between Dublin and St. Petersburg, Russia – Signed 2010 (no time limit specified)
- Co-operation Agreement between the City of Guadalajara, Mexico and City of Dublin (in the digital area) – Signed 2013 (no time limit specified)
- Memorandum of Understanding between Belfast City and Dublin City- Signed 2014 (no time limit specified)
- Memorandum of Understanding between Mexico City Government, Mexico and Dublin City – Signed 2015 (expired September 2019)
- Establishment of Friendly Exchange Relationship between City of Wuhan, China and Dublin City – Signed 2016 (expired September 2019)
- Friendship and Co-Operation Agreement City of Montreal and Dublin City Council – Signed 2016 (no time limit specified)
- Co-Operation Agreement between City of Dublin Ohio & Dublin City Council – Signed 2017 (4 years duration - expired)

Other types of arrangements:

It is important to note that many of the City Council's activities occur through being a Capital city of an EU member state, for example, EU Programme funded projects and shared learning forums will continue as a matter of course and will not fall within the remit of an international linkages framework.

There may be opportunities through specific European Programmes to develop international relations and links with other European Cities rather than entering into a formal arrangement.

In September 2021, the Corporate Policy Group (CPG) formally agreed that all future requests for engagement with international projects would require the Chief Executive, Head of the relevant Department, Chair of the relevant Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) and the Lord Mayor approval to sign off agreements. When this joint decision is agreed, the project / agreement would then be assigned to the appropriate SPC for information.

Future Agreements:

There is a need for clear objectives and decision-making criteria for entering into any Twinning Agreements or developing new informal international links; identifying outputs and outcomes and the potential to link with key partners to help achieve wider benefits for the city.

Dublin City Council has received a range of proposals for city relationships and requests and opportunities to forge new relationships. With limited time and resources, deciding on what opportunities to pursue, requires decision-making criteria and robust assessment and will require a rationale that is rooted in evidence. While we will maintain the relationships in place, new opportunities for city partnership working will undoubtedly arise.

Opportunities may be generated either by our work or via partners through their own activities and will require measured assessment to determine value for the City Council and our stakeholders. Using objective criteria, we will evaluate each new opportunity and each current relationship against a range of economic, tourism, cultural, historical connections, educational, and operational factors before providing recommendations on the merit of any new opportunity. With a mind to shared values such as their ability to demonstrate the promotion of human rights, gender equality and advocate for social justice, respect and diversity of cultures.

Twinning / Friendship Agreements can offer benefits especially when there is a clear objective, with a strong, shared interest, community involvement and commitment of the partners involved. Such partnerships can offer an important opportunity to learn, share ideas and support community engagement.

Objective Criteria:

- Does Dublin have mutual shared interests, similarities / characteristics with the proposed city / region
- Is there a clear aim / focus that achieves wider benefits for partnership between Dublin and the proposed city / region
- Is there mutual shared support, commitment and resources to support and achieve the aims and maintain the relationship into the future
- Can the proposed partner city demonstrate that they promote human rights and advocate social justice, gender equality, respect and diversity of cultures
- What key aims and outcomes will be achieved by a twinning (clear objectives identified for cultural, educational and or economic exchanges and interaction)
- How do the twinning objectives fit in with Dublin City Council's strategic priorities as set out in the Corporate Development Plan 2020-2024
- Is there potential for a long-term commitment (potential for a sustainable relationship and not just a focus on singular events or areas)
- Does the proposed twinning demonstrate viability (resources identified and adequate financial support for exchanges and maintenance of the relationship)
- Will the proposed twinning have a negative impact on other commitments (will it significantly impact on other twinning arrangements and the existing resources allocated for twinning)

- Does the twinning offer opportunities to participate in other programmes/beneficial activities (could it lead to partnership arrangements in other areas, such as EU funded projects/programmes, joint marketing campaigns to support tourism or attract future FDI help address common challenges such as climate change, etc.)

Assessment Tool:

When a request is received from another international city or region to enter into a Twinning or informal Agreement and in order to meet the criteria set out above, the attached **Matrix** should be applied as an assessment tool by Dublin City Council to ensure the partnership is a good fit for Dublin city and its communities.

All future Twinning and Informal Agreements entered into should align with Dublin City Council's Mission Statement: *To drive the sustainable development of the City through strong civic leadership and delivery of effective services that promote the well-being and quality of life of citizens and communities.*

Governance Structure:

Twinning Agreements

Step 1:

The Lord Mayor / Elected Members / Chief Executive may initiate the process

Step 2:

The proposal must be referred initially to the Protocol Committee for their consideration

Step 3:

In order to fulfil the requirement of Section 75 (3) research will be carried out by the International Relations Unit and informal contact made with the city or region. A report will be prepared and referred back to the Protocol Committee and a recommendation made to the City Council

Step 4:

If a recommendation to proceed is agreed, communications that are more formal are commenced with the relevant city and an agreement between the two cities is developed and agreed.

All Twinning Agreements should be time bound with a review process undertaken every two years.

All Twinning Agreements should be referred to the Department of Foreign Affairs if appropriate.

Undoing a Twinning Agreement:

It must be noted that the undoing of a Twinning Agreement requires careful consideration and should involve the office of the Minister for Housing, Local Government & Heritage and our Protocol Committee before any such Motion is put before the full City Council.

Twinning is a Reserved Function of the City Council and there are a number of considerations that the elected members are required to take into account when approving a Twinning Agreement. These considerations would also need to be carefully reviewed again if there is any proposal to undo the Twinning. Consultation with relevant Minister(s) would also be a requirement.

Informal Agreements

Step 1:

The Lord Mayor or Chief Executive may initiate the process

Step 2:

Request reviewed and assessed by International Relations. If yes, International Relations will consult with the appropriate Assistant Chief Executive and Executive Manager to ensure there are adequate resources in place to support the agreement

Step 3:

If recommended, the request is referred to the Protocol Committee for consideration and decision recorded in the Breviate to the full City Council

Step 4:

If the recommendation to proceed is agreed, follow up research and contact with the city or region is undertaken by International Relations

All Informal Agreements should be time bound.

Richard Shakespeare

Assistant Chief Executive