

Policy and Sustainability Committee

10:00am, Thursday 22nd August 2024

Relationship with the City of Kaohsiung

Executive/routine
Wards

Executive
All

1. Recommendations

1.1 It is recommended that Committee:

1.1.1 Agrees that the Lord Provost writes to the city of Kaohsiung setting out our desire to sustain collaboration between Edinburgh and Kaoshiung.

1.1.2 Agreed that the Council should work collaboratively with city partners to build a productive relationship with the City of Kaohsiung.

1.1.3 Notes the letters of appreciation received by the Council in response to this arrangement, the concerns raised by partners, and the potential risks identified in this report.

Paul Lawrence

Chief Executive

E-mail: paul.lawrence@edinburgh.gov.uk

Friendship Arrangement with the City of Kaohsiung

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This paper provides a response to a motion agreed by the Policy and Sustainability Committee in August 2023.

3. Background

- 3.1 A report to the Policy and Sustainability Committee in August 2023 agreed that:
- 3.1.1 Development of cultural, festival, sustainability, digital innovation, trade, and investment links should provide the focus for the next steps in strengthening Edinburgh and Taiwan relationships
 - 3.1.2 Officers would work in partnership with stakeholders to develop a future programme of activity to take forward these relationships, and
 - 3.1.3 The Council would work towards a Memorandum of Understanding with appropriate city partners.
- 3.2 This report provides an update on that programme of activity.

4. Main report

- 4.1 Engagement with partners in Taiwan in the past year has included:
- 4.1.1 Scottish Storytelling Centre hosted a Taiwan Literature event in 2023
 - 4.1.2 Development of links between cultural partners in Edinburgh and the National Kaohsiung Centre for the Arts
 - 4.1.3 Discussions on potential musical exchanges between Edinburgh Jazz and Blues Festival and partners in Taiwan during 2025
 - 4.1.4 Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop to host an artist in residence from Kaohsiung in 2025.
 - 4.1.5 2024 has seen the 11th edition of the Taiwan Season showcase of productions at Edinburgh Festival Fringe, which has earned a reputation for its world-class dance, theatre, circus and music performances for both adults and children.
- 4.2 In addition to these cultural links, partners including members of the Edinburgh International Group, the Connected Places Catapult, and UK Research and

Innovation are exploring the potential development of an Innovation City project with the Taiwan Institute for Information Industry (III) in Kaohsiung. This project has the potential to unlock £1.5m of matched funding from III to support partner projects.

- 4.3 If the recommendations in this report are agreed, the Council will seek to unlock the Connected Places Catapult funding and work with Festivals in Edinburgh to support mutually agreeable relationships and programme plans.
- 4.4 During these discussions, the Council has received letters of support for the proposed arrangement from the Kaoshsiung City Government, the Taipei Office in the UK, and the Scotland Taiwanese Association. The Council has also received correspondence from partners expressing concern over the proposed arrangement and its potential impacts, these include correspondence from the Chinese Consul General, alongside other local stakeholders such as the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, Edinburgh International Airport and the Edinburgh Hotels Association. These local concerns relate to the potential impact of this Agreement on existing and future economic links with China.
- 4.5 In considering these risks, officers have sought views from UK and Scottish Government officials which note that the proposed arrangement:
 - 4.5.1 Is not inconsistent with current UK and Scottish Government policies and is therefore within the remit for a local authority decision
 - 4.5.2 Does pose potential risks for the city's relationship with China, but that these risks are difficult to quantify with confidence and would be for the Council to consider.
- 4.6 After further discussion with members of the Edinburgh International Group, and having sought advice from Scottish Government and UK Government officials, it is suggested that a formal agreement such as a Memorandum of Understanding is not required to continue the good working arrangements described above. And instead, it is proposed that the Lord Provost writes to the Mayor of Kaoshsiung setting out the City of Edinburgh's desire for links to be sustained through appropriate cultural and educational activity.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 As set out above.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 Delivery of actions and next steps outlined in this report will be taken forward within agreed Council budgets. Any additional budget requirements identified will be discussed and agreed through annual budget decision making processes.

7. Equality and Poverty Impact

- 7.1 There are no direct implications for equalities and poverty in Edinburgh associated with this report.

8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications

- 8.1 There are no direct climate or nature emergency implications associated with this report.

9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance, and community impact

- 9.1 Representations have also been received from the Chinese Consul General in Edinburgh setting out concerns that this arrangement is not aligned to their One China Policy. As such, there is a risk that entering into a formal arrangement may put at jeopardy existing and potential new civic and trade relationships between Edinburgh and cities in China (including Edinburgh's twin city agreement with Xi'an and existing memorandum of understanding with Shenzhen) and may result in an official complaint to the UK Government from the Chinese ambassador to the UK.
- 9.2 The extent of these risks and any potential follow-on implications for cultural, economic, or academic relationships between Edinburgh and China are difficult to quantify at this stage. Local partners, however, have raised concerns over specific material potential impacts that could arise as a result of this arrangement - such as loss of potential direct air routes to China, students, and visitors - as well as the potential for the arrangement to result in a general denigration of relationships with partner bodies in China.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 [Taiwan Visit Report August 2023](#)
- 10.2 [Edinburgh International Framework, June 2021, Policy and Sustainability Committee](#)

11. Appendices
