



REPORT TO: CORPORATE COMMITTEE ON 30 NOVEMBER 2021

SUBJECT: TOWN TWINNING

BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To make recommendations on a suggested response to an approach about establishing twinning relations and suggested sectors for co-operation.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III(B)(6) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to any new policy matter which does not fall within the terms of reference of any other Committee.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:-

- i) **note officers have looked into the suggested fields of partnership and co-operation and the responses are outlined in section 3 of this report;**
- ii) **agree that it be left to the discretion of Visit Moray Speyside to respond to the approach as outlined in para 3.7 of this report;**
- iii) **agree that this be placed on the agenda for the next appropriate meeting of the Moray Economic Partnership to assess the level of interest; and**
- iv) **agree that the appropriate authorities in Jiaxing Province be advised of the above.**

3. BACKGROUND

Introduction

- 3.1 An approach has been received from Jiaxing, a prefecture-level city under the jurisdiction of Zhejiang Province. It covers an area of 4,223 square kilometres and an ocean area of 1,559 square kilometres with a population of 5.4 million.
- 3.2 Jiaxing is the birthplace of Communist Party of China, the cradle of Jiangnan culture, and the permanent venue for hosting the world Internet Conference.
- 3.3 It is located in the northeast of Zhejiang Province and 30 minutes from Shanghai by train. Jiaxing ranks 37th among the top 100 cities in China in

terms of comprehensive strengths and 40th in terms of economic standing and is home to 78 Fortune 500 companies. Jiaxing is the cradle of Jiangnan culture. With 7000 years history of human civilisation, it has profound historic heritage and culture. The Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal runs through the city. Jiaxing is home to the ancient water towns of Wuzhen and Xitang as well as the world wonder Qiantang Tidal Bore. The city spends over 3% of GDP on the investment of R&D. As a pioneer for the development of digital economy, Jiaxing has attracted the 4th largest number of mid-to-high-end talents in China.

Existing Exchanges and Co-operation

- 3.4 Jiaxing attaches great importance to international exchanges and cooperation. The city has 8 international sister cities, 26 cities with international friendly exchange relations, and 75 cities with international friendly engagement relations. These cities come from 34 countries on 5 continents. In terms of education, more than 10 universities, and 120-plus middle and elementary schools have paired with foreign universities and schools. Among them, the International Campus Zhejiang University has established joint laboratories and colleges in cooperation with Imperial College London, the University of Edinburgh and the University of Illinois.
- 3.5 Jiaxing suggests that there be cooperation in the following areas within the framework of a letter of intent to establish relations.

Education

- 3.6 Jiaxing has 153 primary schools and 165 middle schools, some of which are well-known such as Jiaxing No.1 Middle School. Both parties could conduct cooperation on education and establish friendly relations between schools through exchanges of teachers and students, language training, and curriculum development. Primary and secondary schools and vocational technical colleges can also carry out various forms of exchanges.
- 3.7 Currently there are no active links between Moray and schools in China. Due to Covid19 restrictions the Council does not have the two Mandarin teachers from China who offer Mandarin in nine Moray schools – Forbes Academy, Elgin Academy, Lossiemouth High School, Buckie High School, Aberlour PS and Nursery, St Thomas' PS and Mortlach PS. There is a willingness for links from the repositioned Confucius Hub at Forbes Academy.
- 3.8 There is insufficient time or capacity to develop links this academic session and Education Services' operational plans have been completed. However Education Services would be willing to review the position in the next academic year particularly if the Council has the Chinese teachers available again and it can be included in future operational plans.

Tourism

- 3.9 It is suggested Jiaxing and Moray could carry out online tourism promotion exchanges, and cultural and tourism departments establish contact mechanisms to facilitate the establishment of contacts between travel agencies in the two cities, utilise the knowledge of both sides to promote tourism routes and attractions to both peoples.

- 3.10 Visit Moray Speyside are firmly supportive of the proposal from Zhejiang province. Previously as Moray Speyside Tourism, a similar opportunity was supported in 2018 which had potential to become a formal arrangement at regional level.
- 3.11 Pre COVID, the number of visitors to Moray Speyside from China had been growing consistently - the region's premium distilleries and luxury, worldwide brands making Moray a 'must see' destination on the itineraries of an increasing number of Chinese visitors.
- 3.12 With the 'post COVID' reality now in sharp focus, there is a new opportunity in front of our region, which could allow Moray to establish its position as a premium destination with a huge number of potential visitors. This would be taken forward by Visit Moray Speyside at their discretion as per Recommendation 2.1(ii) above.

Economy, Trade and Industry

- 3.13 This envisages information exchanges in the economic and trade fields, jointly facilitate going out and bringing in of enterprises, promote the import and export of specialty produces, jointly organise business forums, and participate in the development of each other's international industrial parks and high-tech parks, and help institutes related to business and facilitation of international trade build strategic partnerships.
- 3.14 One way forward might be to convene a meeting of the private sector representatives in Moray such as the Chamber of Commerce. Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) would want to play a supporting role but the lead for any such arrangements needs to be the respective business organisations. HIE can also use its links to Scottish Development International in Shanghai to further explore the merits of developing such a twinning arrangement with Jiaying.

Cultural Events

- 3.15 The introduction and joint cultivation of brands for international festivals and cultural exchanges, and organise seminars on scientific and technological innovation, conferences of business and investment, cultural tourism resources promotion, among others. This aims to push for cultural exchange activities between non-governmental organisations and institutions, promote exchanges between associations, experts and scholars in the fields of sports, music, drama, art, literature and architecture, and jointly organise international conventions, exhibitions, performances and events etc. It is presumed this would be picked up primarily by Visit Moray Speyside and the business community and not the Council directly.

Current Twinning Arrangements

- 3.16 Moray has twinning arrangements with the following:-
- Landshut is twinned with Elgin
 - Kronach is twinned with Keith
 - Hersbruck is twinned with Lossiemouth
 - Vienenberg, Germany and Mount Dora, Florida are twinned with Forres

- 3.17 There has from time to time been other interests, the most recent in 2019 from another Chinese province when the Council's role was to issue, in support of the British Embassy in Beijing, an invitation to a delegation from that province to visit Speyside as part of a series of visits to parts of the UK. This approach is more advanced consisting as it does of a letter of intent to establish relations.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

It will be important for any initiatives like this to be evaluated against the priorities and outcomes of the strategic plans.

(b) Policy and Legal

There is no legal requirement to participate in town twinning.

(c) Financial implications

The current twinning arrangements are largely local, cultural and education exchanges limited to the particular town in question and promoted and supported by local interested groups and associated fundraising.

(d) Risk Implications

There are no direct risk implications.

(e) Staffing Implications

There are no staffing implications, the current twinning arrangements are effectively voluntary. The extent of the involvement recommended at 2.1 above can be met within existing resources.

(f) Property

None.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

None.

(h) Consultations

Corporate Management Team, Head of Economic Growth and Development, HIE, Visit Moray Speyside and Education Services.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Working with partnership bodies, council officers have assessed the implications of establishing twinning arrangements in the suggested sectors for co-operation and the outcome is as set out in the recommendations above.**

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Background Papers:
Ref: SPMAN-1108985784-684