

## EQUALITY ANALYSIS (EA)

<b>POLICY/PROPOSAL:</b>	Twinning Agreement
<b>DEPARTMENT:</b>	Democratic Services, Law and Governance
<b>TEAM:</b>	Mayor's Office
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	Fatema Limbada
<b>LEAD MEMBER(S):</b>	Cllr Ihtesham Afzal
<b>DATE:</b>	16 April, 2025

*NB: Please ensure you have read the accompanying EA guidance and instructions in full.*

### SECTION A – INITIAL SCREENING

#### **1. Please provide a description of the International Partnering Protocol, and a summary of its objectives and the intended results.**

This International Partnering Protocol (IPP) aims to establish a 'Twinning' arrangement with Nablus, Palestine. Twinning is organisation-led, and focused on exchanging information, knowledge & expertise, and developing joint projects in defined areas by contributing to policy objectives such as culture, sports, heritage, links with diaspora, economic development and tourism.

Potential mutual benefits include:

- Exchange of knowledge, skills and experience;
- Increasing cultural awareness, including knowledge and understanding of the town, city or region;
- Increased tolerance and understanding;
- Enhanced opportunities for youth activities, and
- The development of close friendships and ties built up over many years.

Criteria around Twinning includes:

- All funds relating to twinning must be raised and managed externally, and all planning and organisation must also be managed externally.
- If the Mayor is invited to the twinned town/city/region, or to events outside of London, then all costs must be met externally.
- Agreement will last for five years, with the option for future renewal.
- Ongoing community support and organisation is at the crux of the arrangement

In November 2024, the Council passed a Motion to consider twinning with the city of Nablus in Palestine. Nablus is twinned with many cities across the world, including towns and cities in Ireland, France, Russia and Morocco. In addition to a petition evidencing community

support, there is also support from faith organisations, businesses and local groups in Brent as well as a cross-sector interest in Brent, from schools, youth groups, charities, faith organisations, and community centres that already have links or interest in the region.

Having liaised with the Brent & Harrow branch of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) and other groups, there are a series of synergies with, and opportunities for Brent through this arrangement, including:

- Demography: Nablus has a predominantly Muslim population; Brent has the 15<sup>th</sup> largest Muslim population and the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest Arab diaspora in England and Wales.
- Shared challenges: Nablus is addressing issues parallel to those faced by Brent such as the climate emergency, poverty, housing, infrastructure pressures, urban planning and unemployment.

Opportunities: aligned with the challenges, there are opportunities for collaborative projects around urban planning, sustainable development and beyond. Additionally, we can foster mutual learning and innovation while enhancing cultural exchange and diversity.

## **2. Who may be affected by this policy or proposal?**

It's important to recognise that the conflict between Israel and Palestine is highly contentious and polarising. People across the globe have been both directly and indirectly impacted by the conflict. The conflict has been attributed to rises in hate crime within the UK, Islamophobic and Antisemitic, therefore the decision to twin with a Palestinian city has not been taken lightly and appreciates that it may cause anxiety to some of Brent's communities.

### Members

Members are representatives of their locality and the borough. Given the contention surrounding the Israel/Palestine conflict and the strong feelings felt around this within our communities, Members will have an important role in demonstrating support, consideration and care to any and all concerns around the conflict and Twinning arrangement. Members may receive an increase in casework or complaints from residents on this issue.

Some Members will be more actively involved in the Twinning arrangement and the practical activities. They will need to ensure they demonstrate consideration and care around the implications and impacts of any practical actions and outcomes (e.g. visits and events)

### Officers

Officers may have to respond to queries and complaints related to the Twinning both through formal structures or through our engagement forums and mechanisms.

Practical involvement from officers for Twinning arrangements is limited. The main practical support will be through business-as-usual support provided from the Mayor's Office i.e. should the Mayor be involved or lead an activity related to the Twinning the team will

support, and the funding will be from the Mayoral budget. Beyond this, activity will be driven by the relevant Member and the community/organisation.

### Residents

The direct and practical impact for residents may be limited, however given how contentious and polarised the Israel/Palestine conflict is, different groups will be emotionally impacted by the Twinning, at the very least. Nationally, reports have found that the conflict has contributed to a rise in hate crime, particularly around antisemitism; therefore, there may be anxiety for some groups that the Twinning may demonstrate greater support for one group over another and may exacerbate existing tensions i.e. Twinning with Nablus may risk compounding antisemitism, equally rejecting the Twinning may be viewed as Islamophobic.

There are routes for residents to share any concerns, for examples through usual Councillor engagement and democratic and council engagement processes. Additionally, petitions can be submitted for and against this twinning and considered at Full Council before members are asked to vote for or against this plan. Petitioners may also decide to put in a request for an alternative IPP.

### **3. Is there relevance to equality and the council's public sector equality duty? Please explain why. If your answer is no, you must still provide an explanation.**

Yes, as this is a change of policy. The Israel/Palestine conflict has resulted in challenges around community cohesion around the globe and the Twinning may exacerbate these challenges. Equally, Twinning provides opportunities to share and enrich culture and history with other areas across the world.

As part of the International Partnering Protocol, the Twinning must be evidenced through community support and have a positive, beneficial impact for Brent. It must also help foster good relations across different groups.

4. Please indicate with an "X" the potential impact of the policy or proposal on groups with each protected characteristic. Carefully consider if the proposal will impact on people in different ways as a result of their characteristics.

Characteristic	Impact Positive	Impact Neutral/None	Impact Negative
Age		X	
Sex		X	
Race		X	
Disability *		X	
Sexual orientation		X	
Gender reassignment		X	
Religion or belief		X	

Pregnancy or maternity		X	
Marriage		X	

5. Please complete **each row** of the checklist with an “X”.

### **Screening Checklist**

	YES	NO
Have you established that the policy or proposal <i>is</i> relevant to the council’s public sector equality duty?	X	
Does the proposal relate to an area with known inequalities?	X	
Would the policy or proposal change or remove services used by vulnerable groups of people?		X
Has the potential for negative or positive equality impacts been identified with this policy or proposal?	X	

**If you have answered YES to ANY of the above, then proceed to section B.**

**If you have answered NO to ALL of the above, then proceed straight to section D.**

## SECTION B – IMPACTS ANALYSIS

- 1. Outline what information and evidence have you gathered and considered for this analysis. If there is little, then explain your judgements in detail and your plans to validate them with evidence. If you have monitoring information available, include it here.**

In relation to similarities with the demography of Nablus, the Census 2021 captures that Brent currently has the second highest Arab diaspora in England and Wales, making up 5.3% of the population. Additionally, Brent has the 15<sup>th</sup> largest Muslim population in England and Wales, accounting for 21.4% of the population. There is no data available around the number of Palestinians in Brent; equally, in relation to potential challenges arising around community cohesion, there is no data available around Brent’s Israeli population.

The latest hate crime statistics in Brent suggest:

- 40 recorded offences around antisemitism (April 24 – February 25), 11% reduction in the same period last year.
- 73 recorded offences around Islamophobia (April 24 – February 25), 82% increase in the same period last year.

The council have engaged with a range of groups to help inform this decision, including:

- The Brent & Harrow branch of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) and other groups to consider what arrangements would be feasible and productive.

- Brent Trades Union Council, Brent NEU, Brent Friends of Palestine, CADFA and the Palestinian Forum in Britain to understand existing relationships, activities and opportunities.
- Other local authorities working on similar International Partnership Arrangements in Sheffield, Barnet, Hounslow and Oxford councils to consider what arrangements would be feasible and productive.

In relation to community support for the Twinning, a petition has been submitted on behalf of the Brent-Nablus Twinning Association in support of the partnering arrangement and has received 1849 signatures. No counter petitions or protest emails have been raised and received. The number of signatories in the petition has exceeded 1500 people, this allows the council to formalise into a Twinning arrangement without being a Friendship Agreement first.

Nablus is already twinned with many cities, including Dublin which Brent is also twinned with.

2. For each “protected characteristic” provide details of all the potential or known impacts identified, both positive and negative, and explain how you have reached these conclusions based on the information and evidence listed above. Where appropriate state “not applicable”.

### AGE

<b>Details of impacts identified</b>	Not applicable
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### DISABILITY

<b>Details of impacts identified</b>	Not applicable
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### RACE

<b>Details of impacts identified</b>	<p>The Twinning may be interpreted as having positive implications due to the cultural and knowledge sharing opportunities with Nablus, particularly given similarities in demography and local challenges and opportunities.</p> <p>However, the Israel/Palestine conflict is highly contentious and polarising and may have negative implications. People across the globe have been both directly and indirectly impacted by the conflict. The conflict has been attributed to rises in hate crime within the UK, both Islamophobic and Antisemitic. While it is unlikely, there is a possibility that Twinning with Nablus may compound existing tensions as it may be viewed as supporting one group over another. The Twinning may, at the very least, cause emotional harm to some groups in Brent. Therefore, the council and Members will need to</p>
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	<p>demonstrate care and consideration with engaging with residents and activity associated with the Twinning.</p> <p>It's difficult to understand the scale of any impact associated with the Twinning based on quantitative insights. The 2021 Census results shows that Brent currently has the second highest Arab diaspora in England and Wales, second only to Birmingham. Arabs make up 5.3% of the Brent population (17,924 people), although it is hard to know what percentage of this are Palestinian. Equally, it is not possible to know the Israeli population in Brent.</p>
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## **SEX**

<b>Details of impacts identified</b>	Not applicable
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## **SEXUAL ORIENTATION**

<b>Details of impacts identified</b>	Not applicable
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## **PREGANCY AND MATERNITY**

<b>Details of impacts identified</b>	Not applicable
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## **RELIGION OR BELIEF**

<b>Details of impacts identified</b>	<p>The Twinning may be interpreted as having positive implications due to the cultural and knowledge sharing opportunities with Nablus, particularly given similarities in demography and local challenges and opportunities. The Twinning plan includes ambitions to involve the main faiths in Brent and Nablus (Islam, Christianity, Hinduism and Judaism). Additionally, Brent's Muslim population is 21.4% (15<sup>th</sup> largest in England and UK) and Nablus is predominantly Muslim.</p> <p>However, the Israel/Palestine conflict is highly contentious and polarising and may have negative implications. People across the globe have been both directly and indirectly impacted by the conflict. The conflict has been attributed to rises in hate crime within the UK, both Islamophobic and Antisemitic. While it is unlikely, there is a possibility that Twinning with Nablus may compound existing tensions as it may be viewed as supporting one group over another. The Twinning may, at the very least, cause emotional harm to some groups in Brent. Therefore, the council and Members will need to demonstrate care and consideration with engaging with residents and activity associated with the Twinning.</p>
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## **GENDER REASSIGNMENT**

<b>Details of impacts identified</b>	Not applicable
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### **MARRIAGE & CIVIL PARTNERSHIP**

<b>Details of impacts identified</b>	Not applicable
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#### **3. Could any of the impacts you have identified be unlawful under the Equality Act 2010?**

No

#### **4. Were the participants in any engagement initiatives representative of the people who will be affected by your proposal and is further engagement required?**

This is uncertain as robust data does not exist around Palestinian and Israeli populations in Brent. Additionally, the supporting petition does not capture people's characteristics and backgrounds.

Formal engagement is not required, but there is still the opportunity for members or the public to discuss their opinions for or against this twinning at Full Council.

No further engagement is deemed as necessary but any counter-petitions, concerns or complaints will be taken into consideration.

#### **5. Please detail any areas identified as requiring further data or detailed analysis.**

N/A

#### **6. If, following your action plan, negative impacts will or may remain, please explain how these can be justified?**

If the Twinning results in any negative impacts around hate crime or community tension they will be addressed through existing work and support available through our Community Safety Team, working with the Police and other stakeholders.

#### **7. Outline how you will monitor the actual, ongoing impact of the policy or proposal?**

Each Twinning arrangement will be reviewed every five years. The organisation will be asked to re-submit the assessment template to show evidence of impact etc. which will be used to determine whether the arrangement continues or not.

As part of the initial assessment, the proposer is asked to outline how they will show and monitor progress and impact of the activities undertaken. This will also be reviewed periodically.

In relation to any resident concerns or complaints, this will be monitored through our existing mechanisms e.g. corporate complaints monitoring, Member enquiries monitoring etc.

## SECTION C - CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis above, please detail your overall conclusions. State if any mitigating actions are required to alleviate negative impacts, what these are and what the desired outcomes will be. If positive equality impacts have been identified, consider what actions you can take to enhance them. If you have decided to justify and continue with the policy despite negative equality impacts, provide your justification. If you are to stop the policy, explain why.

Twinning with Nablus poses both positive and negative implications around race and religion/faith.

The IPP assessment outlines that range of synergies, benefits and opportunities related to Twinning with Nablus. The potential challenges mainly relate to community cohesion and tension will be monitoring through our existing mechanisms (e.g. complaints and community safety channels).

It's difficult to fully determine any implications or the scale of them as they become clearer as initiatives and opportunities are realised as part of the Twinning. Additionally, existing data does not tell us the size of some of the relevant groups that may be more directly impacted in Brent.

## SECTION D – RESULT

*Please select one of the following options. Mark with an "X".*

<b>A</b>	<b>CONTINUE WITH THE POLICY/PROPOSAL UNCHANGED</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>JUSTIFY AND CONTINUE THE POLICY/PROPOSAL</b>	
<b>C</b>	<b>CHANGE / ADJUST THE POLICY/PROPOSAL</b>	
<b>D</b>	<b>STOP OR ABANDON THE POLICY/PROPOSAL</b>	



## SECTION E - ACTION PLAN

This will help you monitor the steps you have identified to reduce the negative impacts (or increase the positive); monitor actual or ongoing impacts; plan reviews and any further engagement or analysis required.

Action	Expected outcome	Officer	Completion Date
Consider any counter-petitions, should one be submitted.	Determine the scale of any challenge against the twinning and assess next steps.	Amira Nassr	As and when
Monitor volume of concerns or complaints raised around the twinning.	Determine any trends and then assess any need for any specific tailored support for impacted groups	Amira Nassr	31 October 25
Monitor hate crime trends in Brent.	Determine if the twinning has contributed to any increases in hate crime and then assess the twinning and community safety response accordingly.	Amira Nassr, liaising with the council's Community Safety Team	31 October 25

## SECTION F – SIGN OFF

Please ensure this section is signed and dated.

<b>OFFICER:</b>	Fatema Limbada	Fatema Limbada 16/04/25
<b>REVIEWING OFFICER:</b> <i>* the manager with oversight of the project</i>	Amira Nassr	Amira Nassr 17/04/25
<b>HEAD OF SERVICE / Operational Director:</b>	Minesh Patel	Minesh Patel 17/04/25