

Full Council – 7 July 2025

Conservative Group Motion

Protecting Equality and Community Cohesion in Brent's International Partnerships.

This Council notes:

- Brent is one of the most diverse boroughs in the country, home to communities of several faiths, ethnicities and backgrounds.
- The importance of ensuring all Council decisions, particularly international partnerships, uphold values of equity, inclusion, and political neutrality.
- The Council's decision to twin with Nablus has caused division across the borough.
- The Equalities Impact Assessment provided as part of the decision to enter a twinning arrangement with Nablus stated the twinning 'may cause emotional harm to some groups in Brent' and 'may risk compounding antisemitism', while also suggesting rejecting the partnership 'may be viewed as Islamophobic'.
- As part of the process relating to the twinning arrangements with Nablus, there was no meaningful engagement with key groups including Hindus, Christians, and the Jewish community on the community assessment or proposal prior to the decision.
- The UK Foreign Office advises against all travel to all parts of the West Bank, raising concerns about the safety and viability of a mutual exchange arrangement with Nablus.

This Council believes:

- All twinning decisions must be guided by equalities compliance, transparency, and wide community support.
- Partnering with towns where access is unsafe for some Brent residents due to nationality, religion or sexual orientation contradicts our borough's values.

- Solidarity and global engagement are important but must not override our duties under the Equality Act or risk harming community cohesion.

This Council resolves:

- (1) To introduce a new Equalities Compliance Protocol for future international partnerships requiring:
 - A published Equalities Impact Assessment before any vote.
 - Formal consultation with Brent's major faith and community groups.
 - Assessment of safety and access for all protected groups, including LGBTQ+ residents.
- (2) To confirm that international partnerships should remain apolitical and avoid affiliation with any side in an ongoing foreign conflict.
- (3) To request that Council reviews the International Partnering Protocol and framework, including all current twinning arrangements, to ensure alignment with Brent's equality duties and community priorities.
- (4) To reaffirm support for partnerships reflecting shared values of democracy, inclusion and access for all residents.

Councillor Suresh Kansagra
Kenton Ward