

Report to:	COUNCIL
Relevant Officer:	Alan Cavill, Director of Place
Relevant Cabinet Member	Councillor Simon Blackburn, Leader of the Council
Date of Meeting	13 th September/ 21 st September 2016

RELATIONSHIP WITH SANYA

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To consider the request from the City of Sanya in China to enter into a ‘sister city’ agreement and in doing so seek to formalise and strengthen the current arrangements. Sister City (twinning arrangements as usually referred to in the UK) can include both formal and informal agreements between cities/ towns to work more closely in cultural, educational and economic areas.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

- 2.1 To agree that the proposed arrangement with the Chinese City of Sanya is likely to promote or improve the economic well-being of Blackpool and its inhabitants.
- 2.2 To confirm the arrangement to enter into the proposed ‘sister city’ agreement and twinning arrangement with Sanya.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

- 3.1 To strengthen and formalise the existing relationship which has developed with Sanya over recent years.

3.2a Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.2b Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council’s approved budget? Yes

3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

To not enter into a formal relationship.

4.0 Council Priority:

4.1 The relevant Council Priority is: "The economy: Maximising growth and opportunity across Blackpool".

5.0 Background Information

5.1 Sanya is a young city that was established in 1984 in the south of Hainan in China. Sanya is a coastal town with a strong tourism economy. Its major exports include aquatic products, pharmaceuticals and fashion accessories. The major export markets are Hong Kong, Taiwan, the US, Japan and the EU.

5.2 A delegation from Sanya has already been to visit Blackpool three times in recent years, with the most recent being this month. A reciprocal visit was also held earlier this year in March when the Leader of the Council, the then Deputy Chief Executive and the Director of Place visited Sanya.

5.3 During the visit in March, the Mayor of Sanya confirmed the city's interest in developing a long term relationship for the benefit of both resorts. A number of common issues of interest were discussed with senior government officials in charge of tourism, economic development and education including:

- developing tertiary education in terms of catering and hospitality qualifications together and students moving between the two resorts.
- investment discussions relevant to what is happening in Blackpool and Sanya.
- challenges faced by both resorts and how to share learning and opportunities.

5.4 There was also a meeting with business people from Sanya and there was significant interest in developing links between Blackpool and Sanya in terms of ballroom dancing. A meeting also took place with three of the larger leisure investors and this relationship is continuing.

5.5 The link with Sanya has developed over recent years and is a great opportunity both in terms of economic impact and cultural benefits. Blackpool's current links with a Chinese company has already seen a £4 million investment in the Winter Gardens with the Illuminasia attraction and now the Blackpool Dance Festival in Shanghai will bring in significant income over the next five years. The visit in March also tied in with the launch of the Blackpool Dance Festival in Shanghai.

5.6 There are now over 50 formalised links between UK towns/ cities and Chinese towns/ cities. A number of these being added to in recent years. In most cases, the association, especially when formalised by local government, is known as "town twinning" though other terms, such as "partner towns" or "sister cities" are used, (as in this case) by other countries. Linked with the Northern Powerhouse key cities to

benefit from devolution deals have established links with the Chinese towns. E.g. Liverpool with Shanghai (1999), Manchester with Wuhan (1986) and Sheffield with Chengdu (2010). In September 2015, the then chancellor George Osborne delivered a speech encouraging more business partnerships between China and Northern England and highlighting the existing twin city relations between Sheffield and Chengdu as proof of the close Sino-British relationship.

5.7 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

5.8 **List of Appendices:**

None.

6.0 **Legal considerations:**

6.1 The 'sister city' agreement would not represent a legally binding contract between Blackpool Council and Sanya. It does, however, signify an intention to co-operate over a five year period (and beyond that unless the agreement is brought to an end) and clearly therefore should only be entered into if this does represent the Council's intentions.

6.2 If the Council agrees that the proposed arrangement with Sanya is likely to promote or improve the economic well-being of Blackpool or some or all of its inhabitants, the legal power to enter into this would be provided by the Power of General Competence under the Localism Act 2011.

7.0 **Human Resources considerations:**

7.1 There are no additional human resource implications to the agreement with Sanya.

8.0 **Equalities considerations:**

8.1 The Council's relationship with the Chinese community in Blackpool is key to the development of the relationship with Sanya and they are an integral part of the the process.

9.0 **Financial considerations:**

9.1 There are no costs with signing the agreement itself. The costs of the trip in March this year was approximately £5,000 with the hosts providing the accommodation. This was split between the Council and Blackpool Entertainment Company Limited. Any future visits would look to be supported in this way and can be met, as required, from existing Council budgets.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 Not signing the agreement could possibly hinder the development of the relationship and limit opportunities for economic growth.

11.0 Ethical considerations:

11.1 None.

12.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

12.1 Dialogue over the formalisation of the relationship has taken place between the Leader of the Council, senior officers at the Council and the Mayor of Sanya and senior officials there. Visitors from Sanya were in Blackpool in early September and a document was signed by the Leader of the Council signifying an intention to enter into this arrangement and Council is asked to confirm this agreement.

13.0 Background papers:

13.1 None.