

International Relations Policy

Introduction

New Zealand's economy is reliant on international trade and partnerships – and this includes our own city¹. Palmerston North is a growing hub of international activity and networks, which is part of what makes it a great place to live.

Many of Palmerston North's sectors have a strong international correlation², and Council's goal is to refocus and strengthen our international relations to support these sectors and to encourage business, investment, students, and visitors to the city.

In March 2013, the Palmerston North City Council (PNCC) decided to embark on a proactive international relations programme, building on existing city-to-city relations. The international relations office was established in 2016 with a stronger focus on gearing global city partnerships and international relations in support of economic outcomes.

These efforts are part of a broader upward trend in local government international relations globally. City authorities are emerging as active agents in international relations, driving international connectivity in a way that is focussed on supporting local needs and sectors.³

To be effective, international relations activities should be guided by clear objectives, agreed principles, and best-practice guidelines⁴. The purpose of this policy is to provide this direction for the Council's international relations function, partnerships and civic leadership role.

Strategic context

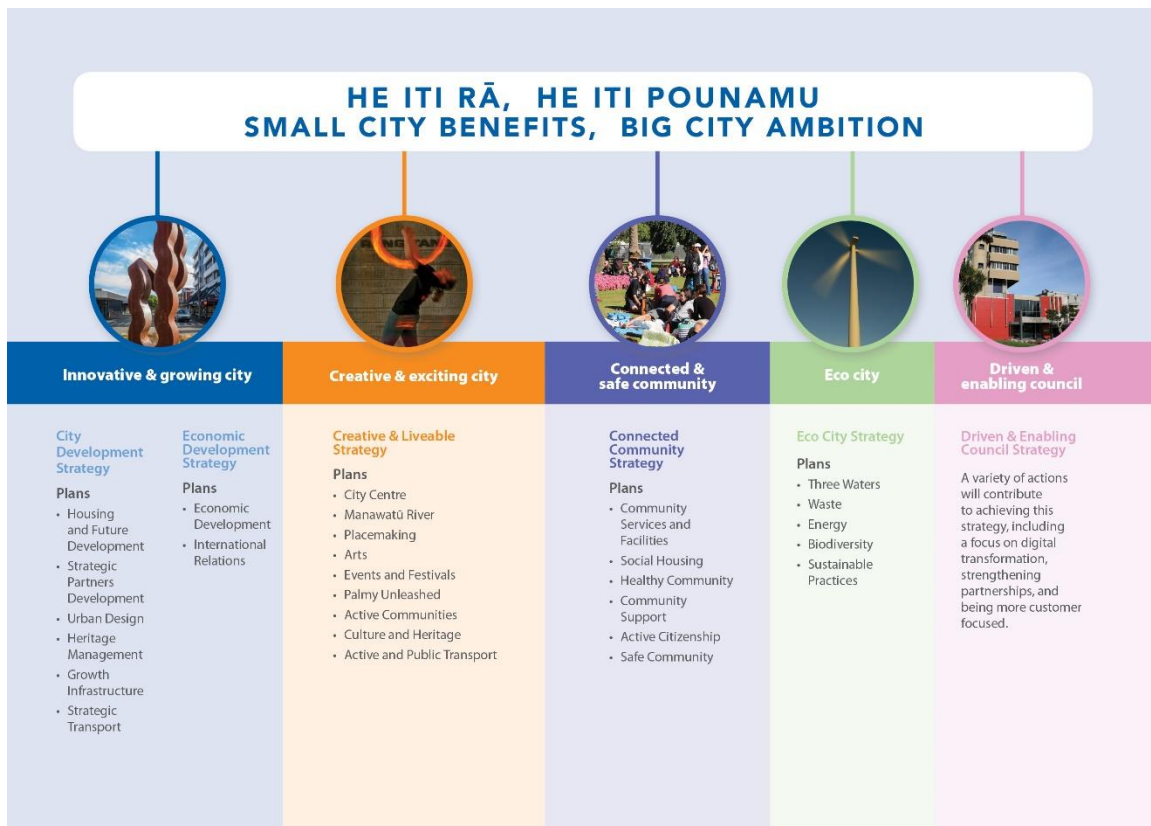
In 2018 the PNCC confirmed a new strategic direction – *Small City Benefits, Big City Ambition*.

¹ New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2018), *Trade and Regional Economic Development*
<https://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/trade/nz-trade-policy/trade-for-all-agenda/>

² New Zealand Trade and Enterprise (2016), Manawatu-Whanganui Regional Investment Profile

³ Curtis, S., (2014) *The Power of Cities in International Relations*, Routledge, New York

⁴ Hogan, James (2019) *From Sister to Global Cities: the economics for New Zealand's Sister City relationships*, New Zealand Institute of Economic Research (NZIER), Wellington



The Economic Development Strategy aims to achieve Goal 1: An innovative and growing city. The International Relations Plan was developed to help achieve this goal, including a specific programme to establish an International Relations Policy to guide international relations and protocol.

The purpose of the International Relations Plan is to

“diversify the economy to reduce reliance on our traditional industries (priority 3, Economic Development Strategy) and support an ‘innovation economy’ to underpin growth into the future (priorities 2 and 4, Economic Development Strategy)”

Palmerston North City Council has an important civic leadership role in supporting the city’s international relations. We can create an environment that enables our city to be more internationally connected, respected, competitive, innovative and vibrant.

The Mayor, Elected Members and Council administration can play an important role in opening official doors for local businesses and organisations ready to take on global markets, especially in partner countries or cities where municipal government holds strong influence.

Through effective international relations, the Council will build Palmerston North’s reputation as a globally-oriented city, promote our region’s comparative advantages, and support valuable opportunities.

Policy objectives and goals

The purpose of this policy is to articulate the scope, principles and guidelines for Palmerston North's global city partnerships, and a clearer approach to international visiting delegations.

The policy also guides PNCC's engagement with the diplomatic corps, trade offices, and other agencies that facilitate international relations. It also articulates Council's value-added role across these activities.

International relations activities will focus on areas where Council has a distinct role and can make a difference towards the following policy objectives:

- providing civic leadership for the city's strategic international relationships
- developing meaningful and beneficial international partnerships, and leveraging them for economic, educational, social and cultural benefits
- enhancing Palmerston North's reputation among international partners and representatives, especially our regional comparative advantage
- Identifying opportunities for learning and innovation, such as international knowledge exchange, best practice and benchmarking on issues of shared interest to our community.
- Joining up effort with other cities, regions and central government agencies towards our common international efforts and goals.

Scope

"International relations" is commonly associated with central government diplomacy. The scope of this policy refers to sub-national diplomacy efforts by local government, which runs parallel to the efforts of New Zealand's state-level diplomatic relations, but with a distinct focus on external partnerships that are relevant to the local community.

Local government international relations occupy a middle ground between official country-to-country relationships and business-led relations. It focusses on building civic relationships that build trust and goodwill, thereby reducing the transaction costs for businesses and organisations seeking international cooperation or trade in these places.

This policy therefore has an external relationship focus and does not apply to all of the city's local activities with an international element, such as cultural festivals or multicultural community services.

While the International Relations plan and policy contributes to the delivery of the Economic development strategy, this does not mean that all levers for international business and trade sit within the role of Council.

Council will work in partnership with other relevant agencies and organisations to support successful economic outcomes.

Likewise, the policy does not assume that all of Council's international relations activities are directly economic in nature. Some important roles, such as being a cultural ambassador for the city, help foster an environment of trust for cooperation to happen.⁵

⁵ Hogan, J (2019) NZIER, p.11

Definitions

Global City Partnerships

This policy categorises all of Palmerston North's offshore city-to-city relationships under a single term of "Global City Partnerships". Global City Partnerships have commonly been referred to as "Sister Cities" or "Friendship Cities", though other terms such as "strategic city partnerships" and "economic alliances" are also emerging as common terms.

They fundamentally refer to the same thing: international city relationships that result in mutually beneficial cooperation and trust outputs over time. This includes the exchange of ideas, people, and materials, enabling a range of economic, cultural, educational, youth, sport, professional, and technical projects.

The history of each of Palmerston North's relationship (as a Sister City, Friendship City) can continue to be acknowledged in public information, but the umbrella classification of "Global City Partnership" will apply in this policy, and to the formation of all new relationships, to simplify Council deliberations and resource management.

Guidelines

Global City Partnerships

Global City Partnerships are managed through the international relations office, with the international relations budget set through Council's Long-Term Plan.

To flexibly respond to opportunities, Global City Partnerships will be prioritised on a case-by-case basis, to take advantage of strategic opportunities, rather than attributing a fixed status or resource allocation base (e.g. as was historically done with Sister versus Friendship cities).

The level of focus on each city relationship will be regularly monitored and determined by the International Relations Office.

Considering new city partnerships

Building new international relationships requires time and consideration and comes with resourcing implications. Genuine requests for new partnerships will be carefully considered. There must also be funding and resource available to effectively manage the relationship.

Council will consider new relationships according to the following process:

- Formal requests for new partnerships will be submitted to the PNCC International Relations Office for assessment against the criteria below.
- If the relationship clearly meets these criteria, a report will be presented to Council with options, recommendations and any resourcing implications for decision-making.
- If the prospective relationship does not meet these criteria, it will either be declined by the international relations office or, if showing future promise, may be subject to further feasibility testing, as resources and priorities allow.

New international city partnership requests will only be presented to Council for decision if the prospective city has met the following criteria:

- evidence of community connections including political or economic ties, established education, industry and/or business connections - especially with priority sectors
- economic, social, cultural, historic or geographic similarities to Palmerston North
- exhibition of best practice, particularly in areas of interest and relevance to Palmerston North's strategic direction
- evidence of support from the respective City government, including a capacity to engage and a willingness to both plan and measure activities and outcomes
- evidence of proactive community support for the proposed relationship
- alignment with New Zealand's broader diplomatic priorities and markets.

Inbound international delegation visits

To manage limited resources, the level of Council involvement in inbound international visitors will vary depending on the nature of the visit.

The guidelines below provide a policy direction, supported by internal operational guidelines and protocol.

- International visit requests will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the international relations office.
- Where the visit is from one of our Global City Partners, the Diplomatic Corps, or other strategic partner, the City Council will extend an official invitation and proactively host the visit, supporting connection to the relevant sector(s) or community group
- Where the prospective visiting group is unknown or unprompted, the Council will gather information and assess value to the city prior to deciding on the issue of an invitation. For these visits, Council will offer a local, user-pays avenue, where feasible, and official involvement where there is likely benefit to the community.

Outbound international delegation visits

Face-to-face meetings are an important part of building effective partnerships⁶. To ensure the sustainable development of our Global City Partnerships, Council will engage in a reasonable number of focussed, outbound delegations overseas. These can include visits to our global partner cities, and to strategic sites in the surrounding region.

- When the Mayor or elected member is required to travel for this purpose, a recommendation is submitted to Council for approval.
- Council recommendations and decisions will consider the stated mission objectives, available resources, timing, civic occasions, level of engagement and connection to the international relations plan.

⁶ Hogan, J (2019) NZIER, p.16

General

The implementation of this policy will be guided by the following principles:

Sustainable

International relations activities will be built around a wider community of interest to ensure longevity and organic growth and will be consistent with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.⁷

Cost-effective

Decisions on allocating the Council's international relations resources must be made with confidence that the community derives sufficient value to justify engagement. All international relations activities will be planned and undertaken in a cost-effective way.

Mutually beneficial

International activities will focus on areas where partners agree that there is benefit for both sides and can articulate and monitor common objectives.

Manaakitanga

Palmerston North will be a welcoming and hospitable place for our international manuhiri (guests). Manaakitanga is strongest when practiced alongside mana whenua, especially in welcoming international guests and leading civic engagement on behalf of the community.

Cultural awareness

The management of our international relations activities will be sensitive to the cultural customs and expectations of our partners.

Monitoring and Review

Regular monitoring of international relations activity will account for ongoing developments, priorities, objectives and evaluation. The International Relations Office presents 6-monthly reports to the relevant Council Committee.

This International Relations policy document will be reviewed every three years, or earlier if required.

⁷ United Nations, *Sustainable Development Goals*, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/>