

## COUNCIL REFERRED MOTION

<b>Head of Service:</b>	Piero Ionta, Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer
<b>Report Author</b>	Piero Ionta, Tim Richardson
<b>Wards affected:</b>	(All Wards);
<b>Urgent Decision? (yes/no)</b>	No
<b>If yes, reason urgent decision required:</b>	N/A
<b>Appendices (attached):</b>	<b>Appendix 1</b> – Motion as received by Full Council on 10 February 2026.

### Summary

To consider the motion as received from Council regarding the proposed twinning of this Council with the town of Bucha, in Kyiv Oblast, Ukraine.

### Recommendation (s)

#### The Committee is asked to:

- (1) **Approve the creation of a Working Group – that comprises of 3 members of this Committee (2 Resident Association Group members of this committee + 1 member of this committee to be selected from either the Labour, Liberal Democrat or Conservative Political Groups).**
- (2) **Nominate and authorise the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of this Committee to settle the Terms of Reference of the Working Group in advance of its first meeting.**
- (3) **To invite the Working Group to provide an update of its efforts at the next scheduled meeting of this Committee.**

### 1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 To consider creating a working group of members of this committee to consider the impact of the motion received from Full Council.

# Strategy and Resources Committee

## 17 March 2026

### 2 Background

- 2.1 At its meeting held on 10 February 2026, a motion was received proposing the following recommendations:
- 2.2 That the council:
  - 2.2.1 Endorse in principle the establishment of a twinning arrangement between the Borough of Epsom & Ewell and the City of Bucha, Ukraine.
  - 2.2.2 Recognise the Bucha-Epsom Association (BEA) as the lead organisation in the Borough responsible for twinning activities with Bucha.
  - 2.2.3 Authorise the Chief Executive, at an appropriate time, to approve and sign on behalf of the Council a standard twinning charter provided under Ukrainian law, as is consistent with UK civic practice.
  - 2.2.4 Encourage civic, cultural, educational, and community groups within the Borough to engage with the Bucha-Epsom Association and consider participation in twinning initiatives.
- 2.3 Council resolved by a majority vote to refer the Motion to this Committee for consideration.
- 2.4 The aim of this report is to set out the issues that this committee should consider before making a decision on the motion noted above.

#### **Recent History of Twinning within Epsom & Ewell:**

- 2.5 Council last considered the issue of twinning back in 1995. Following a public consultation, the Council, in April 1993 invited local organisations to set up a Town Twinning Steering Committee, charged with the task of selecting a suitable twin and setting up a properly constituted Town Twinning Association.
- 2.6 A report was brought to the then Policy and Resources Committee on 28 March 1995. Following the recommendation of that Committee, a report was then brought to Full Council on 11 April 1995, who adopted the recommendation as received.
- 2.7 Whilst the starting point would be to look at the existing agreement in place for the Chantilly twinning arrangement, It is fair to say that as some 30 years have passed since anyone at the council last consider this, there is no knowledge or internal process to rely upon, which is relevant to the issue of resourcing delivery of this proposal.

# Strategy and Resources Committee

## 17 March 2026

### Formal process:

- 2.8 As noted within the motion, there is no statutory process that the Council is obliged to follow to make a decision whether to twin Epsom & Ewell with another municipal area; a recent House of Commons Library Briefing Papers on the topic states:
- 2.8.1 “Twinning has traditionally consisted of agreements (charters, contracts or memorandums of understanding) or school exchanges and meetings between business leaders, and council officials from each town meeting one another.”
- 2.9 Under the Council’s Constitution and Operating Framework, there is no specific delegation to officers nor does this fall with the Terms of Reference of any committee which leads to the conclusion that a resolution of full Council is required and that an MoU between the relevant parties should be put in place.

### Resource implications and risk:

- 2.10 If this Council were minded to support this motion, there are a number of considerations to be explored before a decision can reasonably be made.
- 2.11 It is therefore recommended that a working group made up for 3 members of this Committee explore this motion and the issues that it raises, reporting back to this Committee at its next scheduled meeting.
- 2.12 The issues that require further exploration and discussion with officer includes:
- 2.12.1 **Resourcing** - Mindful that this Council is entering its final year of existence, will this twinning process and support of it add demands upon the Council’s Mayoral Office, Democratic Service & Legal Team whilst they continue to deliver services alongside preparing for a new East Surrey Council and supporting the work across Surrey to deliver Local Government Reorganisation
- 2.12.2 **Risk** – Entering into a new twinning relationship (which requires officer time, civic engagement, committee reporting and potential travel arrangements) may pull focus away from mandatory LGR preparations. This can cause delays, quality issues, or operational failures in core reorganisation tasks.

# Strategy and Resources Committee

## 17 March 2026

2.12.3 **Uncertainty** - East Surrey Council may review or terminate pre-vesting arrangements, potentially harming relationships with the proposed parties. Any twinning commitments signed now may not align with the future council's strategic priorities, governance, or budget framework. This would also place a burden upon the new Council to update any agreement/s soon after vesting day to reflect the new Council in place of this Council.

2.12.4 **Cost** – It is unclear if any grant funding is sought in addition to the obligation that would be placed for officer support; it is noted that the current Chantilly twinning arrangement has no funding or resourcing from the council. Whilst it is said that twinning is low-cost, it is still a discretionary activity. In a period of budgetary pressure, creating new recurring commitments (hospitality, travel, officer support) is likely to be challenged and scrutinised by auditors or public opinion.

2.13 A Working Group – much as this Council created a Steering committee back in 1994 to carry out a similar function – would be best placed to explore these issues and make a number of recommendations for this Committee to consider; these may include conducting a public consultation to mirror the approach adopted back in 1993 before a decision is taken whether to invite Full Council to consider endorsing the proposal.

### 3 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

3.1 Equality Impact Assessment

3.1.1 None arise from this motion.

3.2 Crime & Disorder

3.2.1 None arise from this motion.

3.3 Safeguarding

3.3.1 None arise from this motion.

3.4 Dependencies

3.4.1 Noted above.

3.5 Other

3.5.1 None

# Strategy and Resources Committee

## 17 March 2026

### 4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 It is hoped that the Working Group will be able to ascertain what cost this would place upon the Council – in terms of grant funding, officer time, providing access to council facilities for public events and meetings, hosting and attendance by the Mayor or other members of civic events, etc.
- 4.2 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** None arising from the content of this report.

### 5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 **Legal Officer's comments:** Any relevant comments are included within the body of this report.

### 6 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

- 6.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** None of the Key Priorities are engaged.
- 6.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is not included within the current Service Delivery Plan.
- 6.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:** None arise from this motion.
- 6.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:** None arise from this motion.
- 6.5 **Partnerships:** None arise from this motion.
- 6.6 **Local Government Reorganisation Implications:** Any impact is noted within the body of this report.

### 7 Background papers

- 7.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

**Previous reports:**

- None

**Other papers:**

- None