

UPDATE FROM THE TOWN TWINNING WORKING GROUP

Head of Service:	Piero Ionta, Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer
Report Author	Piero Ionta, Tim Richardson
Wards affected:	(All Wards);
Urgent Decision? (yes/no)	No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	N/A
Appendices (attached):	None

Summary

To receive an update from the Town Twinning Working Group.

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- (1) Note the update from the Town Twinning Working Group.**
- (2) Recommend to the next Full Council meeting that it decide whether it wishes:**
 - i. to take no further action**
 - ii. for the Working Group to continue to explore the proposed new twinning arrangement with Bucha and transfer of the existing twinning arrangement with Chantilly, or**
 - iii. to invite East Surrey Council to consider the existing Chantilly twinning and Bucha's proposal directly post vesting day.**
- (3) Should either recommendation (2)(ii) or (2)(iii) be passed, to invite the Working Group to provide a further report to the next meeting of this Committee.**

1 Reason for Recommendation

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- 1.1 The Strategy and Resources Committee agreed to create a Town Twinning Working Group at its meeting on 17 March 2026. The Working Group was requested to consider and explore the issues surrounding a proposal to establish a twinning agreement with the City of Bucha, Ukraine.
- 1.2 The Committee invited the Working group to provide an update on its efforts at this meeting.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Town Twinning Working Group held its first meeting on 11 June 2026, following the conclusion of the pre-election period following the elections to the East Surrey Shadow Authority.
- 2.2 The Working Group considered the following matters:

Continuation of Twinning arrangements post 1 April 2027.

- 2.3 The Working Group noted that whilst most functions, contracts and assets of EEBC would transfer to East Surrey Council at vesting day (1 April 2027) as a result of Local Government Reorganisation, civic and ceremonial matters would not.
- 2.4 As town twinning is a civic and ceremonial matter, existing town twinning arrangements with Chantilly and any proposed new arrangement that could be entered into with Bucha would therefore be at risk of ending on 1 April 2027. The Working Group identified the following potential routes to avoid this:
 - 2.4.1 Seeking the agreement of East Surrey Council to adopt and continue the twinning agreements.
 - 2.4.2 Seeking the agreement of a suitable community group/charity to adopt the twinning agreements.
- 2.5 The Working Group noted that this issue would be common across all predecessor councils in Surrey and suggested that it would be beneficial to ask that the matter be considered at a forthcoming meeting of Surrey Leaders' Group, to seek feedback on the potential routes forward.

Community group involvement.

- 2.6 The Working Group identified that Surrey Stands with Ukraine and the Epsom Town Twinning Association were community organisations which may be interested in adopting the twinning agreements for Bucha and Chantilly respectively. It was felt that it might be appropriate to invite representatives of those groups to a future meeting of the working group if the feedback from Surrey Leaders' Group indicated that East Surrey Council would not be minded to adopt the existing twinning agreements.

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- 2.7 The possibility of a single community group adopting both agreements was also raised.

Funding.

- 2.8 The Working Group noted that clarity would be required on funding of twinning arrangements, whether the agreement(s) were to be held by East Surrey Council or a community group. Currently the Chantilly arrangement receives no funding from EEBC.

3 Further updates and next steps

- 3.1 Subsequent to the Working Group's meeting, this matter has been raised with the Surrey Leaders Group and has been identified for further officer investigation prior to the autumn 2026 cycle of predecessor and shadow Council meetings.
- 3.2 The Working Group has agreed that its next meeting will be held on 23 July, which will dovetail with this work. Before that takes place, members are invited to consider seeking a steer from the next Full Council meeting to determine whether it wishes this Committee and the Working Group:
- i. to take no further action,
 - ii. for the Working Group to continue to explore the proposed new twinning arrangement with Bucha and transfer of the existing twinning arrangement with Chantilly, or
 - iii. to invite East Surrey Council to consider the existing Chantilly twinning and Bucha's proposal directly post vesting day.
- 3.3 Subject to which recommendation is passed, it is recommended that the Working Group be invited to provide a further report to the next meeting of this Committee to provide an update on the progress made.

4 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

4.1 Equality Impact Assessment

4.1.1 None.

4.2 Crime & Disorder

4.2.1 None.

4.3 Safeguarding

4.3.1 None.

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4.4 Dependencies

4.4.1 None.

4.5 Other

4.5.1 None.

5 Financial Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications as a result of this report.

5.2 **Section 24 considerations:** There are no Section 24 implications in relation to the current town twinning arrangements and it is not anticipated that there would be any implications if it is agreed to proceed with a twinning agreement with the City of Bucha.

5.3 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** The report is for noting and there are no immediate financial implications arising at this stage. However, there are a number of points that Members should be aware of as listed below.

5.4 Whilst the current Chantilly twinning arrangement does not receive financial support from the Council, any future proposal could give rise to financial pressures depending on the model adopted.

5.5 Clarity will be required on the funding approach should East Surrey Council or an external community organisation assume responsibility for twinning arrangements. Any commitment of Council resources, whether direct or indirect, would need to be identified, costed and approved through the appropriate budget setting process.

6 Legal Implications

6.1 **Legal Officer's comments:** None arising from the content of this report.

7 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

7.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged:

- Effective Council

7.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is not included within the current Service Delivery Plan.

7.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:** None.

7.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:** None.

7.5 **Partnerships:** The Working Group recognised the vital role that community groups provide in ensuring the success of town twinning arrangements and their potential to secure their future continuation.

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- 7.6 **Local Government Reorganisation Implications:** Town twinning agreements held, managed or administered by the Council will end on 1 April 2027 unless they are adopted by a community group or East Surrey Council, as the borough area to which they relate along with the predecessor Council will cease to exist on that date. Twinning agreement that do not involve the Council should not be effected by vesting day.
- 7.7 To facilitate the continuation of any twinning arrangements beyond 1 April 2027, it will be necessary to secure the agreement of a community group or East Surrey Council prior to that date.

8 Background papers

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

Previous reports:

- Report to Strategy and Resources Committee, 17 March 2026.

Other papers:

- Article received from Lionel Blackman, published in the May issue of "Liberator" – 'A Pact that goes beyond Ukraine'