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Date: 06 October 2026

To: All Members of the Cabinet

cc: All other recipients of Cabinet agenda

Cabinet – Wednesday, 7 October 2026

I enclose for consideration at the above meeting the following report tabled as Any Other Business on the agenda:

7.1 International Links and Towards a Business and Cultural Cooperation Agreement with the Municipality of Iași, Romania **CAB/26/144**

NOTE: Due to technical issues, if the report is not attached you will be able to view it at:

<https://www.hertsmere.gov.uk/your-council/councillors-and-councils/council-papers>

Yours faithfully

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Hertsmere Borough Council

Meeting name & Date	Cabinet 7 October 2026
Agenda item	7.1
Report title	International Links and Towards a Business and Cultural Cooperation Agreement with the Municipality of Iași, Romania
Report reference no.	CAB/26/144
Wards affected	All wards.
Cabinet Member or Lead Councillor	Cllr Chris Myers, Cabinet Member for Street Scene, Parks, Leisure & Culture
Report author, job title & email	Cllr Chris Myers, Cabinet Member for Street Scene, Parks, Leisure & Culture. cllr.chris.myers@hertsmere.gov.uk
List of Appendices	Appendix 1 – Draft Business and Cultural Cooperation Agreement between Hertsmere Borough Council and the Municipality of Iași
Reason for urgency	Not applicable.

Is it a Key Decision?	No.
Call-in expires on	Not applicable – recommendation to Council.
Exempt from Call-in	Not applicable.

Public Report - this report is available to the public.

1 Recommendation

1.1 Cabinet is asked to recommend that Council:

- a. Endorses the importance of growing our Borough's international links and profile in a post-Brexit increasingly globalised world.
- b. Seeks to grow such international links where the potential exists to deliver clear and quantifiable business, economic and cultural benefits to the borough.
- c. Approves the Business and Cultural Cooperation Agreement between Hertsmere Borough Council and the Municipality of Iași, Romania, attached at Appendix 1;
- d. authorises the Leader of the Council to sign the Agreement on behalf of Hertsmere Borough Council; and
- e. agrees that minor amendments which do not alter the substance of the Agreement may be made by the Assistant Director Policy & Partnerships, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Monitoring Officer, before signature.

- 1.2 Cabinet approves expenditure of up to £10,000 to enable Hertsmere Borough Council to host a delegation from the Municipality of Iași in November 2026, funded from contingency budget.
- 1.3 Cabinet is asked to delegate authority to the Assistant Director Policy & Partnerships, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder(s), to agree the programme for the delegation visit and to oversee the initial delivery arrangements under the Agreement within approved budgets.

2 Purpose of this report

- 2.1 This report seeks approval for Hertsmere Borough Council to enter into a formal Business and Cultural Cooperation Agreement with the Municipality of Iași, Romania. The draft Agreement has been agreed in principle by the Municipality of Iași and is attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.2 The Agreement is intended to provide a practical framework for cooperation in areas of shared economic and cultural interest. It is not a civic twinning arrangement and does not create the ceremonial or open-ended commitments commonly associated with town twinning.
- 2.3 The proposal would establish Hertsmere's first agreement of this kind: a focused international relationship intended to support business connections, inward investment, cultural exchange, creative industries, education and wider institutional collaboration where these produce identifiable benefit for both places.
- 2.4 The report also seeks approval for expenditure of up to £10,000 to host an incoming delegation from Iași in November 2026. The visit would move the relationship from an agreed document to an initial Hertsmere based programme of meetings, site visits and introductions with relevant Hertsmere businesses, cultural organisations, educational institutions and other partners.

3 Reasons for recommendation

- 3.1 Hertsmere has significant strengths in film and television production, creative industries, cultural activity, education and enterprise. Iași is a major Romanian centre for culture, higher education, research, technology and business. A structured relationship offers a credible basis on which organisations in both places can identify opportunities and develop direct working links.
- 3.2 A formal agreement gives the relationship clarity, visibility and continuity. It identifies shared areas of interest without committing either authority to particular projects or future expenditure unless separately approved through the appropriate governance and budget processes.
- 3.3 The approach reflects the Council's interest in place-to-place collaboration, domestically and beyond
- 3.4 Since 2024 the film and television sector in Romania has grown significantly. This is primarily due to a tax incentive scheme which has resulted in the emergence of Romania as a global production hub. Engagement with representatives of the Romanian sector at the 2026 Cannes Film Festival demonstrated strong interest in collaboration with

Hertsmere to develop a complementary offer for major productions. It is important that Hertsmere's own screen sector remains a globally significant player with global profile, in the face of strong challenges from the USA, the Nordic region, Latin America and Asia.

- 3.5 Hosting the Iași delegation is a necessary delivery step. A purposeful programme would allow potential partners to meet, test areas of mutual interest and identify a small number of achievable actions. The proposed £10,000 ceiling is intended to cover reasonable costs such as accommodation, local transport, venue hire, hospitality, interpretation where required and programme materials, subject to the Council's financial procedure rules.
- 3.6 Approval by Council is appropriate given the strategic and first-of-its-kind nature of the Agreement and will provide a clear democratic mandate for the relationship.
- 3.7 Hertsmere has a growing Romanian diaspora community of over 3500 residents. They have developed a number of cultural and representative groups who are extremely active in delivering cultural events at local parks and other venues. The initial request to explore this relationship came from those community groups.
- 3.8 The history of Iași, as the location of a series of horrific pogroms resulting in the murder of over 13,266 Jewish people over two days in June 1941, is particularly significant to Holocaust Remembrance. This link would provide a significant pedagogical focus for Hertsmere's ongoing commitment to Holocaust commemoration and education. The current leadership of the Iasi Municipality has been particularly supportive of expanding the annual and ongoing commemoration of this atrocity

4 Alternative options

- 4.1 Do not enter into the Agreement. This would avoid the limited officer time and hosting expenditure involved, but would lose the opportunity to convert discussions with Iași into a structured programme capable of generating economic, cultural and institutional benefits.
- 4.2 Continue on an informal basis. This would offer flexibility but provide less clarity, visibility and continuity for external partners, and would make it harder to establish shared priorities and accountability for delivery.
- 4.3 Pursue a traditional twinning arrangement. This is not recommended. The purpose of the proposal is a targeted, outcomes-led business and cultural relationship, not a general civic or ceremonial twinning commitment.
- 4.4 Approve the Agreement but do not host a delegation. This would reduce immediate expenditure but risks leaving the Agreement without the early practical engagement required to establish credible projects and partner relationships.

5 Background

- 5.1 Discussions between representatives of Hertsmere Borough Council and the Municipality of Iași have identified complementary interests and an appetite for a clearly defined framework for cooperation. The parties have

developed the draft Agreement at Appendix 1, which has been agreed by the Municipality of Iași, subject to Hertsmere's decision-making process.

- 5.2 The Agreement is expected to support introductions and collaboration between public bodies, businesses, cultural and creative organisations, universities and education providers, and other relevant institutions. Any resulting project would be led by relevant institutions and/or businesses bilaterally, subject to its own business case, resources, legal requirements and approvals as appropriate. No Council expenditure would be budgeted for such projects which would need to operate on a self-funded basis.
- 5.3 The relationship is deliberately designed as a business and cultural cooperation agreement. References in communications, events and future delivery documents should maintain that description and should not present the arrangement as town twinning.
- 5.4 An incoming delegation is proposed for November 2026. An outline programme will be developed with Iași and local partners, centred on areas where meetings and site visits can lead to practical follow-up rather than purely ceremonial activity.

6 Proposed approach and governance

- 6.1 Following approval, the Agreement would be signed by the authorised representatives of both authorities. Officers would establish named points of contact and prepare a short initial action plan identifying proposed activity, lead organisations, anticipated benefits, resource requirements and timescales.
- 6.2 The initial action plan should prioritise a limited number of deliverable opportunities. Possible themes include business-to-business connections and inward investment; film, television and the wider creative industries; cultural programming and exchange; higher education, skills and research; and tourism and destination promotion, where these align with the final terms of the Agreement.
- 6.3 Progress will be reviewed after the first 12 months by a panel established by the Policy and Operations Review Committees. Their report will be tabled at Cabinet and Full Council setting out activity undertaken, partners engaged, expenditure, outcomes achieved, lessons learned and recommendations for continuation or adjustment.
- 6.4 The Agreement itself does not authorise expenditure beyond that approved in this report. Any further financial commitment will require an identified budget and approval in accordance with the Constitution and financial procedure rules.

7 Financial and budget framework implications including efficiency gains and value for money

- 7.1 This report seeks approval for expenditure of up to £10,000 to host the Iași delegation in November 2026. The proposed funding source is Hertsmere's contingency budget.
- 7.2 Expenditure will be limited to necessary and reasonable costs directly connected with the visit and managed in accordance with the Council's financial procedure rules and procurement requirements. Wherever

practicable, officers will seek partner contributions, hosted venues and other opportunities to reduce the net cost to the Council.

- 7.3 Entering into the Agreement creates no automatic obligation to fund future projects, exchanges or visits. Any future expenditure will be subject to separate approval and the availability of resources.
- 7.4 Value for money will be assessed by reference to the quality and relevance of organisations engaged, practical follow-up actions secured and evidence of economic, cultural or institutional benefit, rather than the number of ceremonial engagements delivered.
- 7.5 There shall be no expenditure by the Council whatsoever on any travel, accommodation or costs associated with any visits to Iasi by any elected members.

8 Legal powers relied on and any legal implications

- 8.1 Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 provides local authorities with a general power of competence to do anything that individuals generally may do, subject to statutory limitations. This provides a basis for entering into a non-binding cooperation framework and undertaking related activity for the benefit of the borough.
- 8.2 The final Agreement should be reviewed by Legal Services before signature to confirm its legal status, termination arrangements, data protection provisions, use of names and branding, dispute provisions and that it does not create unintended financial or contractual liabilities.
- 8.3 Any specific project developed under the Agreement will require its own consideration of legal powers, procurement, subsidy control, intellectual property, information governance and contractual arrangements as applicable.

9 Environmental and sustainability implications

- 9.1 The delegation visit will involve international and local travel and therefore has an environmental impact. The programme should be designed efficiently, with meetings grouped geographically, public or shared transport used where practical, and remote engagement used for subsequent activity where it can achieve the same outcome.
- 9.2 Future cooperation may provide opportunities to exchange good practice on sustainability and climate action, subject to this being reflected in the agreed programme.

10 Risk management, Health and Safety implications

- 10.1 The principal risks are that the Agreement produces limited practical activity, creates expectations that cannot be resourced, or results in expenditure without demonstrable benefit. These risks will be managed through a focused initial action plan, named leads, clear budget controls and a 12-month review.
- 10.2 Reputational and protocol risks will be managed through coordinated communications, due diligence on proposed external partners and clarity that this is a business and cultural cooperation agreement rather than a

twinning arrangement. This will include consideration of any feedback from the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office.

- 10.3 Normal corporate health and safety, travel and event-management arrangements will apply to the delegation programme.

11 Personnel implications

- 11.1 Initial coordination will be undertaken within existing officer resources. The programme should be proportionate to available capacity. Any proposal requiring additional staffing or specialist support will be subject to separate approval.

12 Equalities implications

- 12.1 The Agreement has the potential to widen participation in cultural, educational and economic opportunities and to strengthen understanding between communities. No negative impact on any protected characteristic has been identified at this stage.
- 12.2 Specific activities developed under the Agreement will be expected to consider accessibility and inclusion at the design stage. Interpretation and accessible formats will be provided where reasonably required for the delegation programme.

13 Corporate Plan and policy framework implications

- 13.1 The proposal supports the Council's place-shaping role and the Corporate Plan objective of "Community Equals Place". It can contribute to a strong Hertsmere identity, enterprise and sustainable growth by promoting the borough's assets and connecting local organisations with new partners and markets.
- 13.2 The Agreement also supports an open and collaborative approach by enabling the Council to convene businesses, cultural bodies, education providers and public institutions around shared opportunities.

14 Asset management implications

- 14.1 There are no direct asset management implications arising from approval of the Agreement. Any use of Council venues for the delegation will be arranged through normal booking and operational procedures.

15 Communications and engagement implications

- 15.1 A coordinated communications plan will explain the purpose and limits of the Agreement, promote relevant opportunities to Hertsmere organisations and maintain the distinction between this cooperation framework and a traditional twinning arrangement.
- 15.2 Engagement for the November programme should include relevant businesses, cultural and creative organisations, education providers and community partners. Participation should be based on relevance to the agreed themes and the likelihood of practical follow-up.

COOPERATION AGREEMENT

Between

The Municipality of Iași, Romania

and

The Borough of Hertsmere, Hertfordshire, England

Preamble

The Municipality of Iași, Iași County, Romania, represented by the Local Council of Iași ("Iași"), and the Borough of Hertsmere, Hertfordshire, England, represented by Hertsmere Borough Council ("Hertsmere"), together referred to as "the Parties", have reached the following understanding:

- Recognising the longstanding friendship between the peoples of Romania and the United Kingdom;
- Acknowledging the importance of international cooperation in promoting prosperity, cultural relations and community development;
- Desiring to strengthen relationships between their communities through cooperation in areas of mutual interest;
- Committed to encouraging links between businesses, cultural organisations, educational institutions, community groups and public bodies, in accordance with the legal powers and responsibilities of each Party.

Article 1 – Purpose

This Agreement establishes a framework for friendship and cooperation between the Parties for the mutual social, cultural and economic benefit of their communities.

The Parties will cooperate in accordance with the laws and governance arrangements applicable in Romania and England.

The Parties will exchange experience and best practices and encourage dialogue between organisations within their respective areas.

Article 2 – Areas of Cooperation

The Parties will work together, in accordance with the responsibilities vested in them, to encourage cooperation in business, culture, tourism, sport, environmental sustainability, economic development, local government innovation, protection of local heritage in cooperation with civic associations, and other mutually agreed areas.

Where cooperation relates to functions exercised by other public authorities, both Parties will facilitate introductions and encourage collaboration with the appropriate organisations.

Nothing in this Agreement will require either Party to act beyond its legal powers or responsibilities.

Article 3 – Practical Cooperation

The Parties will encourage exchanges between elected representatives, officers and partner organisations.

They will promote business, culture, heritage, tourism, sport, sustainability, education and community partnerships through appropriate projects and exchanges.

The Parties will encourage and facilitate relationships between educational institutions where opportunities arise, recognising that education responsibilities rest with different competent authorities within each country.

Article 4 – Financial Arrangements

Each Party will normally bear its own international travel costs. The host Party will normally meet agreed local hospitality costs, subject to budget availability and applicable law.

Any additional expenditure will be agreed in advance in writing.

Article 5 – Coordination and Implementation

The Parties will maintain regular dialogue regarding implementation and may establish working groups where appropriate.

Article 6 – Settlement of Disputes

Any disagreement concerning this Agreement will be resolved amicably through consultation and mutual agreement.

Article 7 – Cooperation between Successor Local Public Administration Authorities

The Parties acknowledge that local government reorganisation may occur during the lifetime of this Agreement.

This Agreement is entered into in respect of the communities of the Borough of Hertsmere.

Although this Agreement cannot bind any successor authority, the Parties express their intention that successor authorities should be invited to continue and, where appropriate, expand this cooperation.

Article 8 – Duration

This Agreement will take effect on the date of signature and remain in force until terminated by either Party on three months' written notice.

It may be amended at any time by written agreement of both Parties.

Signed at _____ on _____ in two original copies, each in the Romanian and English languages, all texts being equally valid.

For the Municipality of Iași

For the Borough of Hertsmere

Mayor

Authorised Signatory

Mihai Chirica

Name: _____