

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday 4 January 2024 at 10.00 am in Walker Room, Meeting Point House, Southwater Square, Telford TF3 4HS

PUBLISHED ON WEDNESDAY 10 JANUARY 2024

(DEADLINE FOR CALL-IN: MONDAY 15 JANUARY 2024)

Present: Councillors S Davies (Chair), R A Overton (Vice-Chair), L D Carter, C Healy, R Mehta, K Middleton, N A M England and P Watling.

Also Present: Councillors T Nelson and W L Tomlinson

Apologies: Councillor E M Callear, A J Eade and S A W Reynolds

CAB-36 Declarations of Interest

None.

CAB-37 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

CAB-38 Leader's Announcements

The Leader referred to the planned changes to services being delivered at Princess Royal Hospital and the decision of the Government to close down A&E services and the moving of the Women and Childrens Unit.

Following representations made by the Council, the Independent Reconfiguration Panel had been asked to provide advice to the Secretary of State for Health on the proposals. The decision was that Future Fit would continue with some 13 recommendations which demonstrated how problematic the proposal was. Crucially the Independent Panel requested that the term "A&E Local" should not be used as this undermined patient safety.

The Leader would be writing to the Government immediately to ask for the withdrawal of the wording "A&E Local" to be removed from all of the plans.

Telford and Wrekin would be the largest Town without a fully functioning A&E and it was the Council's job to stand up for Telford and no apology would be made for this.

CAB-39 Housing Investment Programme Update

The Cabinet Member: Place (The Economy & Neighbourhood Services) presented an update on the Housing Investment Programme together with an update on the performance of the property and tenancy management service and the financial outturn for Nuplace during 2022/23.

To date, Nuplace housing portfolio comprised 485 homes with a further 359 planned or due to be delivered bringing the total portfolio to 844 homes. Of these, 123 were affordable and available at discounted rents. A further 399 affordable dwellings were being delivered by housing association partners. Work at Southwater Way in relation to the low carbon town centre scheme had been completed. A further 99 homes were under development across three sites including 18 accessible and adaptable dwellings and 18 low carbon homes. The scheme at The Gower was bringing a Grade 2 listed building back into use. Planning Permission had been secured for a further 155 new homes across the Borough with the Nuplace portfolio offering a broad range of property types and sizes.

There were approximately 1,350 people living in Nuplace properties across ten sites. Following a recent survey 95% of tenants would recommend Nuplace to family and friends.

The Social Value Plan contributed towards employment, training, apprenticeships, supply chain development and the delivery of a range of community projects on a site-by-site basis.

In addition to creating good quality housing for rent, and driving an improvement in housing standards within the private rental market, a cumulative net incremental income of £9.7m to the Council had been achieved up to 2022/23. Benefits from Council Tax and the New Homes Bonus had generated an additional income of £4m up to 31 March 2023. The capital value of the Nuplace asset portfolio was £86.7m; an increase of 28%.

Cabinet Members welcomed the report which brought brownfield sites and old housing stock back into use. Through partnership working with other housing providers and using the TWC Homes Model this set a benchmark for affordable social rents and helped to combat rogue and absent landlords. It also improved local health, inequalities and climate action and gave local residents a sustainable home for life.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group welcomed the dwellings being of a higher standard than the national guidelines, environmentally friendly and keeping the standards high for others to match as well as the commercial success of Nuplace.

The Deputy Leader of the Conservative Group welcomed the principal of Nuplace and that it was leading the way and asked that a partnership approach take place with the private sector.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the progress made in relation to the delivery of the Housing Investment Programme be noted; and
- b) the financial performance for the year 2022/23 and the impact of Nuplace's operations on the Council's budget position be noted.

CAB-40 Invest Telford Economic Development Strategy

The Cabinet Member for Place (The Economy & Neighbourhood Services) presented Invest Telford which reported on the Council's vision for fair and inclusive economic growth.

Exceptional rates of business growth and investment continued to be founded on a commitment to being a business supporting and business winning Council with an increase of 14.9% in the number of businesses in the town. Grant funding of £110m had been used to support businesses creating more than 4,000 new jobs. Investment into Telford's connectivity via transport and digital technology played a role in connecting communities and facilitating growth.

The report set out the myriad of challenges that the Council had faced and the continued focus on economic growth and resilience. Due to significant changes in the UK economy, it was necessary to re-visit the economic strategy the reflect new challenges and embed Telford's vision up to 2032 which included raising skill levels, connecting local residents to opportunities, affordable energy and infrastructure and ensuring Telford continued to be a draw for new investors. This would be achieved through tailored business support which included business grants and incentives, skills for growth - job promotion, the Telford Land Deal and Growth Fund, creating new sector investment opportunities, investment into transformational infrastructure and marketing our offer.

Cabinet Members welcomed the report highlighting that key to being a business winning and business supporting Council was tackling inequalities, leading the green economy and creating jobs for the future by having a forward thinking approach.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group welcomed the report and the relationship with Wolverhampton University who had a base in Telford.

The Deputy Leader of the Conservative Group commented on the ambition of the strategy and the success of Telford's strong economy and looked forward to seeing details of the measurement of success against the strategy.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the contribution that the Council's approach to business and investment support is having on the local economy, businesses and residents be noted;

- b) the Invest Telford Strategy for Growth 2024 – 2034 as the basis to further the promotion of the Borough for business investment, recognising that the Strategy will be fair and inclusive and aligned with the Council’s broader goals of creating a thriving community with inspiring opportunities for all, be approved;**
- c) the establishment of a Telford business leadership forum comprising senior leaders from the private, public and third sectors committed to delivering sustainable growth. Delegates the constitution of the forum to the Director: Housing, Employment and Infrastructure and the Director: Policy and Governance in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Place be approved; and**
- d) the creation of an Ambassador programme, open to businesses across all sectors and to key public organisations in order to leverage wider support for the promotion of Telford as a destination for investment, growth and quality of life be approved.**

CAB-41 2023/24 Financial Monitoring Report

The Cabinet Member: Finance, Customer Services and Governance presented the 2023/24 Financial Monitoring Report which gave the latest financial monitoring position relating to the revenue budget, capital programme and income collection.

Following approval of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2023/24 – 2026/27 at Full Council on 2 March 2023 the economic climate had continued to encounter high inflation, high energy costs, interest rate increases and the cost of living emergency. The latest projections on the outturn position were set out in the report. The funding outlook for the medium term remained uncertain and would continue to be a challenge in light of the current inflationary pressures, increasing costs of Children’s Safeguarding and the demand for Adult Social Care.

Cabinet Members thanked the teams across the Council for their hard work but highlighted the pressure on local government.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group welcomed the report but highlighted the difficulties faced by the Council in relation to increased costs and demands in supporting vulnerable adults and children.

The Deputy Leader of the Conservative Group commented on the circumstances that local government around the country faced but felt that the Council were doing the best they could to balance their budget.

RESOLVED – to RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL that:

- a) the 2023/24 revenue budget position; approves the use of contingencies detailed in section 5.3; and, the use of and re-purposing of reserves detailed in Section 5.3;
- b) the position in relation to capital spend; to approve the changes to the capital programme and all associated changes to the Medium Term Financial Strategy, including Treasury and Prudential Indicators; and
- c) the collection rates for NNDR, council tax and sales ledger be noted.

CAB-42 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25 – 2027/28

The Cabinet Member: Finance, Customer Services & Governance presented the Medium Term Financial Strategy which gave an update on the key uncertainties, financial pressures and increase in demand for the provision of social care services.

A consultation would take place between 5 January 2024 and 4 February 2024 with key stakeholders, voluntary and community sectors, Town and Parish Councils, businesses and cross-party Business & Finance Scrutiny committee. Views would also be sought from local residents through the Council's website.

Following the consultation, a report containing the budget and finalised levels of Council Tax would be brought back to the Cabinet meeting being held on 15 February 2024 which would contain recommendations to be considered at Full Council on 29 February 2024 and would ensure that the Council's medium-term financial position remained sustainable and robust.

Cabinet Members highlighted the increase in demand in both adult and children's services and asked residents to take part in the consultation. The housing investment portfolio supported services and helped to create new jobs and investment opportunities which showed ambition for the Borough and the local community.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group supported the report and noted the difficult financial circumstances the Council faced.

The Deputy Leader of the Conservative Group noted the report and welcomed the opportunity for debate at Full Council.

RESOLVED – that:

- a) the revised Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) including a council tax increase for 2024/25 of 4.99% which will be fully invested in the provision of social care services for the most vulnerable members of our community be noted;

- b) **delegated authority be granted to the Director: Finance & Human Resources, in consultation with the Leader or relevant Cabinet Member to allocate funding from the £20m Capital projects fund referred to in paragraph 4.6 of the report;**
- c) **the unprecedented financial pressures being faced by local authorities across the country and the high level of uncertainty relating to the medium term financial outlook for Telford & Wrekin Council due to:**
- **The escalating costs of, and demand for, many Council services but particularly Adult Social Care and safeguarding vulnerable children;**
 - **National and international economic pressures resulting in an extremely challenging financial outlook for U.K. public services;**
 - **The Government's one-year provisional local government finance settlement not extending beyond the end of March 2025;**
 - **The impact of the significant potential changes to the local government finance system which have now been discussed by the Government for many years remain a major uncertainty. As does the potential impact of Adult Social Care funding reforms which have been delayed until October 2025; and**
- **the high level of uncertainty required the Council to retain flexibility by limiting new ongoing investments to our highest priorities whilst identifying significant ongoing additional budget saving; be noted.**

CAB-43 2024/25 Telford & Wrekin Schools Funding Formula

The Cabinet Member: Adult Social Care & Health Systems presented the 2024/25 Telford and Wrekin Schools Funding Formula on behalf of the Cabinet Member: Education, Employment & Visitor Economy who was unable to attend the meeting.

A review of the local funding formula for mainstream schools in line with revisions from the Department for Education (DfE) took place annually in consultation with schools and the Schools Forum and applied to both academies and maintained schools as set out in the report.

The DfE had miscalculated the number of pupils in the Borough (and nationally) which meant that the net impact on per pupil amounts were around 0.62% less than they would otherwise have been. Despite this, there had been a modest increase in the per pupil funding for 2024/25 for Telford and Wrekin of 2.12% which is slightly above the national average of 1.90%.

In order to help with special and high educational needs pressures, local authorities could transfer 0.5% of the schools block budget between Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) blocks which equated to £0.8m in 2024/25 for

Telford and Wrekin but this decision would be taken by the Schools Forum rather than Telford & Wrekin's Cabinet. A consultation would take place with local schools and the Forum would vote at their meeting on 18 January 2024.

In relation to the reduction/removal of joint use funding a decision was awaited from the DfE. Contingency plans were being developed in the event that the funding was reduced or withdrawn.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group commented that this was a further cut to schools due to heating and salary costs.

The Deputy Leader of the Conservative Group expressed concerns in relation to the turnover of teaching staff, prosperity being founded on education and skills. He also noted that the funding for schools was insufficient but recognised that the council would work within the national framework despite the lack of funding provided to it.

RESOLVED – that the 2024/25 funding formula for Telford & Wrekin mainstream schools, consulted on with the Schools Forum, be approved.

CAB-44 Telford Town Park Strategic Framework

The Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Green Spaces, Heritage & Leisure presented the key findings and recommendations on the Telford Town Park Strategic Framework 2023.

Telford Town Park covered some 150 hectares and was the largest green space within the Borough. It contained formal play areas located to the north and incorporated approximately 90 hectares of designated Local Nature Reserve, 13 pools and ponds, historic industrial landmarks, formal gardens, sports and leisure facilities, a visitor centre and Queen Elizabeth II Arena and attracted approximately 700,000 visitors per year and was an important part of the Green Network.

Providing formal and informal recreation opportunities the Town Park made a significant contribution towards improving the health and wellbeing of local residents as well as being central to the visitor, economic and cultural offer. It hosted a programme of events ranging from large music events, the annual Balloon Fiesta, local community events and the weekly park runs.

The Strategic Framework set out the overarching plan and vision for the Town Park over the next ten years and remained the jewel in the Borough's crown.

Set out in the report were identified projects which took place alongside a range of partners and Town and Parish Councils. The Town Park Team continued to work with the Exotic Zoo, Wonderland and the Council's High Ropes attraction.

A benchmarking exercise had been undertaken on the cost of the park which was considerably lower than sites across the country through income generation and a commercial approach and the Council would continue to keep striving to ensure the Town Park remained a valued part of the community.

Cabinet Members welcomed the report and the fantastic outdoor space which was vital to the local community and the positive response that was received from visitors.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group welcomed the report and the importance of having a free green space and activities during the cost of living crisis.

The Deputy Leader of the Conservative Group praised the Town Park its biodiversity and access to free activities and welcomed the vision for its future.

RESOLVED – that:

- a) **the Telford Town Park Strategic Framework be endorsed; and**
- b) **delegated authority be granted to the Director of Communities, Customer and Commercial Services in consultation with the Lead Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Green Spaces, Heritage and Leisure to progress the further development of the recommendations set out within the Strategic Framework.**

CAB-45 Telford and Wrekin Alcohol and Drugs Strategy 2024-2029

Cllr Kelly Middleton - Cabinet Member: Healthy, Safer & Stronger Communities & Partnerships presented the Telford and Wrekin Alcohol and Drugs Strategy 2024-2029 which had been developed by the Telford and Wrekin Alcohol and Drugs Partnership Board during 2023.

Addiction to alcohol and other substances had a huge impact in society and in England an estimated 600,000 people dependent on alcohol and 300,000 on substances which was more prevalent in the most deprived communities and led to inequalities in health.

The previous strategy had been approved by Cabinet in 2019 and had achieved its three key aims which included increasing the number of people receiving alcohol treatment, improving outcomes for alcohol and drugs treatment and providing better support for children and young people affected by their parents' addiction. The Covid 19 pandemic had brought major challenges to the implementation of the strategy and had a significant impact on partnership planning and access to services.

In 2023, a new Alcohol and Drugs Strategy was approved by the Telford and Wrekin Community Safety Partnership with priorities identified as prevention, a reduction in alcohol and drug related harm, treatment and recovery support.

It also set out to reduce deaths caused by alcohol, hospital admissions and, offending together with other harm to local communities.

Cabinet Members welcomed the Strategy and highlighted that prevention was key for a good standard of living along with treatment and recovery. It also recognised the impact on children and the generational impact.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group welcomed the Strategy and commented on the national statistics and felt that more funding would be of benefit to this area of work.

The Deputy Leader of the Conservative Group was supportive of the Strategy which worked towards national guidelines and best practice. He considered that alcohol abuse should be recognised on the same scale as drug abuse due to the similarity of destructive tendencies and welcomed the prevention, moderation and management of these behaviours.

RESOLVED – that the Telford & Wrekin Alcohol and Drugs Strategy 2024-2029 be approved.

CAB-46 Councillors Pride Fund 2022-23: Helping to Protect, Care and Invest to Create a Better Borough

The Cabinet Member: Inclusion, Engagement, Equalities & Civic Pride presented the report on Councillors Pride Fund 2022-23: Helping to Protect, Care and Invest to Create a Better Borough which provided details in relation to allocation of the Councillors' Pride Fund during the financial year 2022/23.

The fund enabled Members to deliver the Council's five priorities in their ward with a small amount of money making a big difference on a local level, particularly to small community groups that found it difficult to access alternative grant funding. The final deadline for submitting applications in the current financial year was 1 February 2024. During the reporting period a total of 604 proposals had been received with 402 applications being awarded – some Councillors had joined forces to provide more funding for particular projects. By 5 September 2022, 36% of projects had been approved and were underway. Applicants were encouraged to seek match funding which had secured 46p of additional funding for every £1 allocated.

The report highlighted how Councillors had used the funding to support the Council's priorities in 2022.

Cabinet Members welcomed the report and highlighted the positive impact it had made in local communities and to support the voluntary sector and were proud of the Pride Fund.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group welcomed the funding of £5,000 per Ward Member.

The Deputy Leader of the Conservative Group advocated the scheme which was administered efficiently and allocated to local communities in response to their requests and thanked the staff for their work.

RESOLVED – that:

- a) the continued impact of the Councillors Pride Fund in supporting Members to deliver the Council’s five priorities in their ward to protect, care and invest in order to create a better borough. Councillors Pride Fund 2022-23: Helping to Protect, Care and Invest to Create a Better Borough be noted;
- b) the importance of this funding in offering a bespoke response to need in individual communities and in supporting community organisations to thrive and offer valued services to residents be noted;
- c) the additional funding that applications to this scheme have secured through match funding of projects to the value of £248,212 be noted;
- d) the final deadline for applications in the year 2023-24 of 1 February 2024 be noted.

The meeting ended at 11.41 am

Signed for the purposes of the Decision Notices

Anthea Lowe
Director: Policy & Governance
Date: **Wednesday 10 JANUARY 2024**

Signed

Date: Thursday 15 February 2024