

CABINET

**Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday 13 February 2025
at 10.00 am in Council Chamber, Third Floor, Southwater One, Telford,
TF3 4JG**

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY 20 FEBRUARY 2025

(DEADLINE FOR CALL-IN: TUESDAY 25 FEBRUARY 2025)

Present: Councillors R A Overton (Vice-Chair), Z Hannington, C Healy, A D McClements, R Mehta, K Middleton, S A W Reynolds, P Watling and O Vickers.

Also Present: Cllr T J Nelson (Conservative Group Leader) and Cllr W L Tomlinson (Liberal Democrats Group Leader)

Apologies: Councillor L D Carter

CAB-43 Declarations of Interest

None.

CAB-44 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 6 January 2025 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

CAB-45 Leader's Announcements

None.

CAB-46 2024/25 Financial Monitoring Report

The Cabinet Member: Finance, Governance & Customer Services presented the report of the Director: Finance, People & IDT.

Since the last update presented to Cabinet in January 2025, the national picture had remained the same with many Councils continuing to face extreme challenges around Adult Social Care, however these pressures had begun to stabilise.

The report set out the latest financial monitoring position for the year relating to the revenue budget, capital programme and income collection. It provided the latest projections in relation to the projected outturn which was expected to be over budget by £4.713m at year end, however noted a further reduction of £0.119m since the last financial monitoring and that the use of budget contingencies would bring the Council's position within budget. The current projected position would require use of all of the one-off contingency

earmarked for Social Care and would leave a balance of £1.196m in the general contingency.

Detailed in section 5.2.1 of the report, there was projected variances over £0.250m, which remained the same as the previous report with the key variance in Adult Social Care of £6.7m additional investment needed for the cost of providing care packages across all client groups.

Telford & Wrekin's Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit remained the same as previous reports and had been a result of budget pressures relating to High Needs provision with these pressures continuing in 2024/25. The current position was that the deficit was currently projected to significantly increase in 2024/25, from £1.82m at the start of the year to approximately £6m by year end. At the time of the meeting, the Council were still awaiting further details of the Government's intention to set out plans for reforming the SEND system in 2025.

There had been an improvement of £0.092m on council-wide underspend as a result of business rates levy income. The Capital Programme had remained the same since the last report presented with a projected spend of £91.6m against a budget of £93.1m, indicating some re-phrasing into 2025/26 required at year end.

The Council had continued its excellent track record of strong financial management and budget holders would continue their work to manage budgets as effectively as possible to address in-year financial pressures.

There were no further comments from Cabinet Members on the report.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group welcomed the report and was pleased to see further improvements on the Council's current financial position since the last report presented to Cabinet. He thanked Officers and the local authority for their combined efforts in managing the budgets.

The Leader of the Conservative Group recognised the work of the Council's Finance Team and expressed his thanks for the briefings that had been conducted.

RESOLVED – that:-

- a) the 2024/25 revenue budget position, which shows that, after applying budget contingencies, the Council is projecting to be within budget at year end, and this is without having to use the Budget Strategy or General Fund reserves be noted;**
- b) the position in relation to capital spend be noted; and**
- c) the collection rates for NNDR, council tax and sales ledger be noted.**

CAB-47 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 to 2028/29

The Cabinet Member: Finance, Governance & Customer Services presented the report of the Director: Finance, People & IDT.

The report sought approval of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the next four years from 2025/26 to 2028/29 and contained details on the Capital Strategy, Medium-Term Capital Programme, Investment Strategy, Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators.

The report built on the previous MTFS report considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 6 January 2025 which had been subject to public consultation and scrutiny by Members of the Council's cross-party Business & Finance Scrutiny Committee.

Since the approval of the current Medium Term Financial Strategy on 29 February 2024, which covered a four year period to 2027/28, many Councils had seen an increase in demand for key services and higher costs, particularly for the provision of social care.

On the whole, the first one-year funding settlement announced by Government had been positive with significant increase in funding which was welcomed following a period of significant budget challenges, however the Council had a long track record of financial management and had managed to maintain financial stability and set a balanced budget for 14 consecutive years.

Key points from the report included the proposed general council tax increase for 2025/26 across all council tax bands of 2.99% equivalent to £0.69p per week for an average band B property as well as a 2% increase for the adult social care precept, equivalent to £0.46p per week, which would raise an additional £4.5m. All funding raised through the council tax increase would be invested in the provision of social care services. The Council would continue to offer the lowest level of council tax in the Midlands and of any unitary authority in the country despite the requirement for a general increase.

The net revenue budget set for the current year and which forms the basis for the budget for future years was anticipated to be £157m with £88m generated from council tax, £57m generated from business rates and £12m funded from Government. In 2024/25, 75% or £118m of the net budget was spent on social care for Adults and Children.

The proposed Capital Programme which totals over £376m would see £30m invested into transport and highways schemes, £45.2m for education capital projects including investment into school expansions, £9.7m for affordable or specialist housing programmes, £8.7m for leisure and cultural schemes and over £26m for towns fund projects which would avoid the closure of libraries and community centres. Further investments also included an additional £7.7m for social care services, £94m for schemes such as Nuplace, Telford & Wrekin Properties and the Long Term Empty Property Strategy and £1.7m

into enhancing the Borough's green spaces including a total of 20 local nature reserves and over 300 green guarantee sites.

The Council's Growth Fund which had been in operation for 9 years had delivered projects such as the development of the Station Quarter and the new Digital Skills and Enterprise Hub and had a cumulative investment of £79.4m which was estimated to deliver an ongoing gross return, additional business rates income of 6.53% and would help deliver a further 1,445 new jobs for the Borough to help reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training.

The four-week budget engagement process ran from 7 January 2025 to 5 February 2025 with online sessions with key stakeholders, voluntary and community sectors, Town and Parish Councils, businesses and local residents. The MTFS had been published on the Council's website and feedback had been gathered via a wide range of channels including email, social media, in writing and via telephone.

The Vice-Chair of the Business & Finance Scrutiny Committee presented the Committee's response to the proposals following its meeting on 7 January 2025. The Committee recognised that whilst the provisional settlement from government was better than in previous years, the financial landscape for local government had remained challenging and whilst Committee members, on the whole, were unanimously supportive of the budget approach being taken, it had been recognised that each group may have chosen to focus their priorities in different ways.

Cabinet Members acknowledged how the Council had faced numerous challenges in recent years, particularly following the increase in demand for services which had resulted in higher costs. Members recognised that despite the welcomed news of the funding settlement from Government that there were still huge challenges ahead for the organisation. Members commented on the investment opportunities and how the Council had continued to deliver high quality homes, create new jobs, provide transport networks, protect and enhance green spaces and invest in improving local schools despite the significant number of savings made since 2010 and demonstrating its commitment to continue to protect, care and invest. Members were also pleased that the Council had continued to offer services such as free parking for residents and free green waste collections.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group supported the report and was pleased to learn of the improved settlement from Government this year when compared to previous settlements. It was recognised that there were challenges with Adult Social Care and that the Council had a statutory duty to provide these services despite the need to source additional funding in response to the increase in demand. He stressed the need for longer-term planning and certainty from local Government in relation to funding streams, particularly around Adult Social Care which was not set to be resolved until 2028. He welcomed the investments that had been made by the Council over time, highlighting that borrowing can lead to assets and that the investments

made had generated significant gains for the Borough such as Nuplace which had provided good quality homes at commercial rents. He commented on the importance of supporting residents amid the cost of living crisis and asked Cabinet to consider keeping council tax increases in line with inflation rates and suggested extending the discount scheme to protect vulnerable residents from the impact of rising costs.

The Leader of the Conservative Group thanked officers for the detailed report and highlighted that in a recent briefing conducted by officers, the Council's gross debt was expected to reach £657m by the end of the medium-term period. He acknowledged whilst some investments would yield a return, that the Council should not continue to borrow money for the purpose of return on investment due to the return of investment on capital borrowing being much lower. He commented on the assumptions made around inflation in the previous report and that the Council's budget included an allowance for pay awards of around 4% and 2% for other costs to the Council such as contractors and asked for confirmation on if those values remained correct. He raised concerns about the amount of debt the Council had incurred and the risk this posed to the Council if the debt was not paid off.

The Deputy Leader of the Council highlighted that many local authorities across the country had been affected by the funding cuts made by the previous Government and that the proposed budget had been designed to continue the Council's ethos to protect, care and invest. He commented that despite the oppositions disapproval to borrowing, that the borrowing made by the Council to date had continued to deliver quality homes, new businesses and jobs which had returned income to the Council to help deliver vital services. He reiterated that the Cabinet would continue to invest for the benefit of Borough residents and provided assurance that the Council would continue to strive to secure funding to deliver much needed services.

RECOMMENDED TO FULL COUNCIL THAT:-

- a) the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2025/26 to 2028/29 and the budget framework for 2025/26 set out in this suite of reports be approved;**
- b) a council tax increase of 4.99% for 2025/26 including the Government's 2% Adult Social Care precept, equivalent to £0.69 per week general council tax increase for the average Band B property and £0.46 per week for the ASC precept, which will be fully invested in the provision of social care services for the most vulnerable members of our community be approved;**
- c) the net investment of £7.7m into Adult Social Care in 2025/26 be approved;**
- d) the budget savings listed at Appendix 10 totalling £13m in 2025/26 and £11.8m ongoing be approved;**
- e) the continuation of work with partner organisations, including Town & Parish Councils and Voluntary Sector and Community Groups to seek to identify ways to mitigate the impact of some of the cuts to services that we can no longer afford to deliver and to**

- note the availability of the Invest to Save/Capacity Fund which is available to support partnership working be approved;
- f) the base budget in Appendix 8 be approved;
 - g) the policy framework for Reserves and Balances and their planned use outlined in Appendix 6 be approved;
 - h) the Risk Register at Appendix 14 be approved;
 - i) the endorsement of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme a link to which is included within Appendix 16, ready for implementation from 1 April 2025 be approved;
 - j) the continuation of the Council Tax Reduction Hardship Assistance Policy, also within Appendix 16 be approved;
 - k) the revenue implications of the medium-term capital programme for the period 2025/26 – 2028/29 set out in the Capital Strategy and Programme reports also on this agenda be approved;
 - l) delegated authority be granted to the Director Finance, People & IDT after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Governance and Customer Services to action any virements required following the final allocation of the Dedicated Schools Grant and other Grants and following the completion of the NNDR1 and final estimates of Business Rates income;
 - m) delegated authority be granted to the Director Adult Social Care after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health Integration and Transformation, to enter into appropriate Section 256 and Section 75 Agreements under the NHS Act 2006 (as amended);
 - n) authorisation of Director Policy & Governance to execute all necessary contract documentation including affixing of the common seal of the council as appropriate to enable the council to enter into appropriate Section 256 and Section 75 Agreements under the NHS Act 2006 (as amended) be approved;
 - o) this suite of MTFS reports as the Council's Efficiency Strategy for 2024/25, including the documentation at Appendix 13, to enable new capital receipts to be used to fund the revenue costs of transformation and efficiency projects as assumed throughout these reports be approved;
 - p) delegated authority be granted to the Director Finance, People & IDT after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Governance & Customer Services to amend the use of the contingency in 2025/26 and to make any other associated adjustments to accommodate any difference in funding between that currently assumed and final grant allocations when received;
 - q) delegated authority be granted to the Director Finance, People & IDT after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Governance & Customer Services to make changes to the Medium-Term Financial Strategy with immediate effect to reflect all grants received from Government with authority to incur associated spend;
 - r) the Pay Policy for 2025/26 included as Appendix 17 be approved;

- s) the additional recommendations contained in other reports included in this suite of Medium-Term Financial Strategy reports included on this agenda be approved;
- t) the savings delivered of £181.7m since 2009/10 as a result of reduced government funding from 2011 whilst the cost and demand for many Council services have been increasing and in particular for Adult Social Care be noted;
- u) that 75pence in every £1 the Council spends is now allocated to Social Services be noted;
- v) that a number of the investments made in this report also generate a financial benefit, as well as fulfilling their primary purpose, which is invested in front line services be noted;
- w) national and international economic pressures which have resulted in an extremely challenging financial outlook for U.K public services with interest rates remaining high be noted; and
- x) the CFO's robustness statement in Appendix 15 be noted.

CAB-48 Adult Social Care's Care Quality Commission (CQC) Assessment Outcome

The Cabinet Member: Adult Social Care & Health Systems presented the report of the Director: Adult Social Care.

As of April 2023, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) had taken on new responsibilities under the Health Care Act 2022 for assessing how local authorities meet their duties for people accessing care and support.

On 19 February 2024, the Council received notification from the CQC of its upcoming assessment and requested an initial information return as part of the first stage of the assessment by 8 March 2024. The Council received notification on 24 May 2024 that the onsite element of the assessment would take place in July 2024 which included 3 days of interviews with the final report of the CQC's assessment of the Council published on 5 November 2024.

The CQC's findings concluded that the Council's ability to meet its duties for people accessing care and support was 'Good'. The report highlighted strengths in professional assessments, innovative co-production, and strong partnership working, which ensured individuals could live independently and receive necessary support when needed. It was noted that the Council's reflective practices were acknowledged, and the initial self-assessment undertaken by the Council was deemed fair.

The CQC had recognised the strength-based approaches and use of assistive technology by the Council which had delayed the need for statutory services and maintained individuals' independence. The report also underscored the importance of strong leadership and a culture of transparency, with locality teams and frontline staff being recognised for their innovative practices that had continued to improve waiting times and discharge outcomes in collaboration with health partners.

In addition to the strengths identified, the report also identified some areas of focus and continued work which included:-

- reducing waiting lists and waiting times for assessments;
- improving take up of Direct Payments;
- improving accessibility of services;
- improving the diversity and representation within experts by experience groups and Board;
- focusing on Safeguarding, Mental Capacity Act (MCA) and Deprivation of Liberties (DoLS);
- improving communication with people in receipt of care and support services, their family and carers;
- developing the care market further; and
- focusing on employment opportunities available for people with care and support needs including with learning disabilities.

The report provided a summary of actions to be taken to address the areas of focus highlighted by the CQC as part of a continuous Improvement Action Plan.

Cabinet Members responded positively to the report and acknowledged the contributions made by Council teams, partners and service users in achieving the assessment score which reflected the Council's commitment to providing the highest quality care and support to the most vulnerable residents in the Borough. Members praised collaborative efforts made by the Council's Public Health and Adult Social Care teams in areas of work such as fall prevention, weight management, frailty and the quit smoking offer which has helped to reduce system pressures, alleviated financial burdens and improved quality of life for residents.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group welcomed the report and the CQC's assessment rating of 'Good'. He acknowledged the challenging work involved in caring for vulnerable adults and noted that whilst the rating was not higher, it was still a strong achievement made by the Council and reflected its commitment to looking after the Borough's most vulnerable residents. He emphasised the importance of enabling people to live as independently as possible in the safety of their own homes and the need for the Council to continue to be seen as a supportive organisation that residents can approach for help and advice including access to funding.

The Leader of the Conservative Group acknowledged that the CQC's assessment rating of 'Good' was one which was positive. He raised several points of clarification relating to the content of the report including discrepancies in the maximum waiting time for assessments and when targeted interventions in relation to prevention would take place. He emphasised the need for the Council to focus on home care rather than bed-based care to reduce the risk of readmissions. He also asked that the Council review the availability of independent living accommodation for young people who were looking to move out of home and whether the percentage of care

providers requiring improvement was typical as the number appeared quite high.

The Cabinet Member: Adult Social Care & Health Systems emphasised that the Council's long-standing strategy had been to ensure that enablement and the use of assistive technology were embedded into services which was an approach proven effective as evidenced by the positive feedback obtained from health partners. He also acknowledged that the Council's current situation in terms of adult social care was significantly better than in other areas across the country and advised that written responses to the questions raised would be provided outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED that:-

- a) **the Care Quality Commission (CQC) assessment of Telford & Wrekin Council's Adult Social Care Services as 'Good', recognising that the services are performing well and meeting their expectations be noted with the assessment highlighting that:**
 - **"Assessments were conducted professionally, using strength-based approaches and focused on whole-family support to ensure people could live at home for longer."**
 - **"Innovative approaches to coproduction, engagement, and inclusion, were embedded in local authority processes. These were supported by the strategic board structures and staff culture."**
 - **"Strong partnership working."**
 - **"Improved outcomes in supported accommodation, and enabled bespoke solutions for people maintaining independent living, delaying entry to statutory services through the use of assistive technologies."**
 - **"Strong leadership and a culture of transparency and learning."**
 - **"The realignment of locality team functions and responsibilities, as well as innovative use of frontline teams were improving waiting lists, and strong partnership working with health partners was improving discharge and readmission outcomes for people."**
- b) **the Adult Social Care (ASC) Care Quality Commission (CQC) Assessment Summary Continuous Improvement Plan as presented in Appendix B and the implementation of it be approved;**
- c) **delegated authority for the Director of Adult Social Services in consultation with the lead Cabinet Member to implement changes to the plan as require be approved; and**
- d) **that the monitoring of the ASC CQC Assessment Summary Continuous Improvement Plan by the Telford and Wrekin Health and Care Scrutiny Committee be noted.**

CAB-49 Children and Young People's Strategy

The Cabinet Member: Children, Young People, Education, Employment & Skills presented the report of the Director: Health & Wellbeing.

The report summarised the proposals for the Council's draft Children and Young People Strategy for 2025 – 2028 which was an overarching plan that will act as an umbrella for a range of supporting partnership strategies and transformation programmes. The vision of the strategy was that the Borough would be a home to healthy, safe children who achieve their potential and encompasses four main aims including start well, stay well, keep safe and enjoy and achieve.

In recent years, a variety of local strategies aimed at improving the lives of children and young people have been in place across a range of partnerships including the Safeguarding Children's Partnership and the Health & Wellbeing Board. At the time of the meeting, the Government was in the process of developing and launching a new set of national policies and reforms, such as the Children's Social Care reform, the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill and the NHS 10 year plan.

A new Children & Young People's Strategy for Telford and Wrekin was proposed to streamline and deliver the Council's strategic commitments across a range of children and young people's agendas and partnerships, alongside the rapidly changing national policy landscape.

The strategy will adopt a whole-child approach to maximise outcomes for all children and young people, with a focus on narrowing the gap for children who are disadvantaged, emphasising the importance of early years support. The strategy will address issues such as poverty, mental health, domestic abuse, substance abuse and special educational needs.

The proposals as part of the development of the new strategy would draw on engagement, consultation and co-production work undertaken as part of the development of the supporting strategies, including insight gathered from children and families with special educational needs and disabilities through the development of Family Hubs, the Young Person's Year of Wellbeing campaign and the healthy weight consultation.

Cabinet Members expressed strong support for the strategy and thanked officers for their hard work. They recognised the aims of the strategy to create a nurturing community where every child and young person can thrive. Members highlighted the importance of emotional health and wellbeing which was a key priority of the Stay Well initiative and the work the Council had undertaken with young people as part of the Year of Wellbeing to develop a new toolkit. Members also noted the success of the Family Hubs initiative to date which had expanded from three operational hubs to a total of six hubs in the past year and had supported over 8,500 people.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group welcomed the report and highlighted the council's outstanding children's services and their continuous improvement journey. He noted the importance of the Council's responsibility to care for the Borough's most vulnerable residents. He asked the Cabinet to consider future support from the Council for youth clubs.

The Leader of the Conservative Group thanked officers for the report and noted the demographic statistics contained within the report highlighting that the Council had either met or were above the national average in some areas. He asked that the strategy and future associated documents contain clear objectives and measurable outcomes to enable residents to understand if the desired outcomes are being met and asked when the data would be made publicly available.

RESOLVED – that the commitments and proposals in the Telford & Wrekin Children & Young People's Strategy 2025-2028 be supported and approved.

CAB-50 Publication version of Local Plan

The Cabinet Member: Neighbourhoods, Planning & Sustainability presented the report of the Director: Prosperity & Investment which set out the Council's legal obligation to comply with regulations to ensure the Local Plan was up to date.

Government policy over a number of years has required Local Planning Authorities to deliver Local Plans and keep them up to date to ensure that they are reviewed every 5 years. The Council was also required to show a 5-year land supply for development to avoid speculative development in locations which could impact valuable greenspaces and would not support provision of planned key infrastructure, such as schools and highway improvements.

The existing Telford & Wrekin Local Plan was adopted in February 2018 and given these circumstances and opportunities it was proposed that a review of the Local Plan be launched. The proposed review would see population growth of c28,500 over the plan period, with a total Borough population below the original vision of the Telford Development Corporation of a new town consisting of 260,000 people. Telford had remained the key population centre, most accessible location and destination for jobs and inward investment. As part of the review, the Council were also planning for development needs of communities in Newport and the rural area.

In line with national guidance the Council previously consulted on Issues & Options (I&O) during 2020/21. This set out and sought public views on four strategic objectives underpinning the review of the Telford & Wrekin Local Plan:-

- Employment led growth through inward investment and job creation;

- A 'Forest Community' approach which affords the protection, enhancement and accessibility of the natural environment and green spaces that characterise the Borough;
- Support for regeneration of our Borough Towns, new town estates and infrastructure Publication Version of Local Plan; and
- Meeting local housing needs including providing more affordable and specialist accommodation to support people to live longer and healthier at home.

The process for the formal review and consultation for the draft local plan was detailed in the report and the Council had reviewed comments received and amended the plan where deemed appropriate. The key themes from the consultation included:-

- The number of homes the Council were planning for and the distribution of new allocations weighted towards the north of the Borough
- The need to plan for new infrastructure to accommodate new development
- The release of agricultural land for new development
- Concerns around flooding and drainage on and around proposed development sites
- The need to protect important green spaces

As part of the key proposals of the local plan, over a third of housing would be affordable or social housing, new buildings would be more energy efficient, green spaces would be protected, a further 17,000 jobs would be secured through new land for existing businesses to grow, an additional six new schools would be built and GP surgeries expanded.

The review process had also enabled the Council to update policies within the Local Plan and where needed introduce new policies to better reflect the development priorities of the Council and the needs of the community. Changes included amendments to the Council's affordable housing policy to incorporate funding for specialist housing and the introduction of a policy to cover stalled development sites which will allow the Council to bring forward previously developed land such as former pubs, derelict sites and vacant land.

The proposed plan would be published for final comment before examination by a Government appointed Planning Inspector.

Cabinet Members welcomed the report and the new proposals put forward for the Local Plan which would provide much needed affordable and quality homes, continue to protect and enhance green spaces and maintain the Borough's identity as one of the greenest places in the country. Members commented on the importance of a plan-led approach for infrastructure and thanked Council officers for their hard work. They highlighted that climate change would continue to be central to the plan, with policies in place to reduce carbon emissions and improve sustainability, reaffirming the Council's commitment to tackling climate change.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group thanked officers for the detailed report and briefings provided. He asked for clarity over the process for obtaining final comments from the public as the consultation window would not open until 17 March and any comments made before then may not be considered. It was noted that the Council were dictated by Government frameworks in relation to housing numbers and that local authorities must accommodate shortfalls from neighbouring authorities such as the Black Country when they are unable to meet their housing targets. He raised concerns around infrastructure and that the local plan could not condition developments on the provision of infrastructure which would result in planning applications proceeding regardless of the funding available. It was noted that planning conditions could be applied to individual applications ensuring that developments are phased in line with infrastructure improvements. He expressed significant concerns regarding the three main developments in north Bratton, Wappenshall and Muxton which would make up the majority of the additional 8,000 houses planned, highlighting that residents and businesses in the area would need to access highways such as the M54 and thus exacerbating existing road infrastructure issues at junctions 5, 6 and 7. He was supportive of the Council's efforts towards creating local nature reserves and was supportive of the additional green areas allocated around new developments.

The Leader of the Conservative Group expressed concerns around building on food production land and highlighted the importance of food security. He raised concerns around the additional 8,000 homes proposed and whether the existing infrastructure would be able to accommodate the new dwellings. He welcomed the Council's efforts to promote and expand the Borough's green spaces and the use of energy efficiency but asked that the Cabinet consider installation of solar panels on building roofs rather than on farmland. He also welcomed the use of compulsory purchase orders with regard to stalled sites.

The Cabinet Member: Neighbourhoods, Planning & Sustainability clarified that the consultation process had been outlined on the Council's website with a specific period for submitting public comments and any comments that had been made would be included. It was noted that whilst the Government sets a formula for housing numbers, the numbers proposed as part of the local plan were based on the Borough's actual need and anticipated growth. It was also highlighted that the current infrastructure plan was in the process of being updated and that funding for infrastructure comes from various sources including Section 106 monies and Government grants. It was confirmed that only 2.8% of agricultural land would be affected by the local plan and that the Council had continued its efforts to improve agricultural productivity in the Borough.

RECOMMENDED TO FULL COUNCIL THAT:-

- a) the Publication Local Plan, the Publication Policies Map and the Site Allocations be approved;**

- b) that any representations on the publication version of the plan received be agreed;
- c) the submission of the Publication Local Plan and associated documents, to the Secretary of State for examination be approved;
- d) delegated authority be granted to the Director: Prosperity & Investment, following consultation with the Cabinet Member, to exercise all relevant powers under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and associated law to:
 - Receive, action and collate representations made for submission to the Secretary of State;
 - Prepare the plan for submission to, and examination by, the Secretary of State; and
 - Publish the outcome of the examination and recommendations.
- e) delegated authority be granted to the Director: Prosperity & Investment, following consultation with the Cabinet Member to exercise the Council's powers relating to its duty to cooperate in relation to the planning of sustainable development as set out in Section 33A Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and any other associated legislation and guidance;
- f) delegated authority be granted to the Director: Prosperity & Investment, following consultation with the Cabinet Member to enter into formal arrangements with any person or body referred to or prescribed in accordance with Section 33A Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and associated law and authorise the Lead Cabinet Member to sign and confirm the Council's agreement to those formal arrangements if required; and
- g) the new Local Development Scheme and updated Statement of Community Involvement documents for publication be approved.

CAB-51 Telford & Wrekin Skills Strategy

The Cabinet Member: Early Years, Children, Young People and Education presented the report of the Director: Education & Skills.

The report sought approval of the Telford and Wrekin Skills Strategy which sets out the Council's approach to further developing the Borough's skills levels to support localised economic growth and the Council's Vision 2032.

The strategy had been developed in collaboration with key partners including skills providers, education settings and employers and sets out the Council's vision to become a learning Borough for all. The strategy will focus on 5 main objectives:-

- Improving the overall skills levels of residents to raise working age skills at qualification levels 1, 2 and 3 to higher than the national average;
- Nurturing and supporting aspirations whatever an individual's background or existing skill level to fulfil their talent;

- Developing progression pathways to provide a clear route for people to progress through the skills system to employment;
- Providing a skills system which is fully inclusive and representative of the Borough to ensure all residents and communities are well-served by the skills system and that engagement practices reflect communities' needs; and
- Providing a skills system which provides the skills required by businesses, both current and future, and contributes to economic growth and the prosperity of the town.

The proposed strategy would enhance the offer provided across the Council and would build on existing programmes that support schools to further engage with employers and higher education partners, including Harper Adams, so that higher level qualifications and work based learning and apprenticeships could be further developed.

The report also highlighted the importance of having the right skills and talents to attract investors and deliver residents' aspirations. The strategy would align with the "Get Britain Working" white paper, which introduces key changes like a national jobs and careers service, a youth guarantee, and a connect-to-work programme.

Cabinet Members welcomed the report and that the strategy reaffirms the Council's commitment to ensuring that every child, young person and adult can live within their community and benefit from a thriving economy. Members noted the importance of developing a clear pathway for young people from education to employment and providing routes whilst working with businesses to promote upskilling, apprenticeships, work experience and internships.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group welcomed the report and noted the importance of upskilling young people, particularly those individuals who did not wish to pursue a degree. He highlighted the need for apprenticeships and vocational training, noting that academic routes may not be suitable for everyone.

The Leader of the Conservative Group acknowledged the Council's ambition to focus on skills and lifelong learning for residents. He stressed the importance of ensuring young people were prepared for employment and the need for better outcomes from primary and secondary schools.

RESOLVED that:-

- a) **the Telford and Wrekin Skills Strategy, A Learning Borough for All, (Appendix A) that sets out our strategic approach to further develop the borough's skills levels to support localised economic growth be approved; and**
- b) **delegate authority be granted to the Director for Education & Skills, in consultation with the Cabinet member: Children, Young People, Education, Employment & skills, to amend future versions of the Skills Strategy in light of changes to national policy.**

The meeting ended at 12.05 pm

Signed for the purposes of the Decision Notices

Anthea Lowe
Director: Policy & Governance
Date: **Wednesday 19 FEBRUARY 2025**

Signed

Date: Thursday 3 April 2025