

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday 19 June 2025 at 10.00 am in Council Chamber, Third Floor, Southwater One, Telford, TF3 4JG

PUBLISHED ON WEDNESDAY 25 JUNE 2025

(DEADLINE FOR CALL-IN: MONDAY 30 JUNE 2025)

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

Also Present: Councillor T J Nelson

Apologies: Councillors W L Tomlinson and P Watling

CAB-1 Declarations of Interest

None.

CAB-2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 May 2025 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

CAB-3 Leader's Announcements

The Leader congratulated the whole of the Local Authority, the administration and partners who had helped deliver a successful budget. This achievement, he said, was second to none.

The Leader reported on the recent success in securing the Local Government Chronicle award for Council of the Year 2025, which recognised the hard work that had been undertaken by Members, partners and stakeholders to deliver the best for local residents. He said that the Council had officers who were amongst the best in the country and thanked them all for their hard work.

The Leader thanked everyone that had played a part in bringing major investment by Rheinmetall to the former GKN site in Hadley. This multi-million-pound investment would play its part in the defence of the realm and the security of the country alongside the depot in Donnington. The development would bring a better quality of work life for those employed at the factory through access to green spaces, leisure services, good housing supply and the lowest Council Tax in the midlands. The Council had pitched against four other areas and this was wonderful news for the borough.

CAB-4 2024/25 Financial Outturn Report

The Cabinet Member: Finance, Governance and Customer Services presented the 2024/25 Finance Outturn Report, which set out the final outturn position for the year in relation to the revenue budget, capital programme and income collection.

Since the Medium-Term Financial Strategy was approved in 2024, the economic climate had continued to be challenging with costs pressures being experienced, particularly in relation to the provision of Adult Social Care.

The funding outlook for the medium-term remained very uncertain and regular updates in relation to the projected financial position for 2025/26 would come before Cabinet during the 2025/26 municipal year.

Despite the significant pressures faced during 2024/25, the Council ended the year within budget, a considerable achievement. This demonstrated strong financial management and resilience and had been achieved through a range of measures such as maximisation of external income, in year grants, trading income, capitalisation of revenue spends and one-off savings from vacancy management.

The gross revenue budget for 2024/25 was £529m with the net budget at £157m with the revenue outturn position being within budget by £0.091m (0.06% of net budget). The position at year end allowed a small number of one-off investments in key areas in order to support the Council's priorities and future financial sustainability and the budget strategy reserve remained at £21.7m. The council will continue to feel the impact of inflationary pressures, a continued demand for services and uncertainty in relation to the changes to the local government funding system due to be implemented in April 2026.

It was very pleasing to report that Children's Safeguarding & Family Support ended the year within budget, an unprecedented position compared to previous years and a clear demonstration of the positive work being undertaken by the service.

The key pressure area during the year had been Adult Social Care (ASC), with £8.8m of essential additional investment being required. This included the impact of market price increases, more complex needs, higher demand and longer periods of care being required. Work continued to deliver care which maximised prevention and independence where possible.

Capital spend at year end was £87.17m against an approved budget of £93.15m. Some re-phasing of expenditure would be required into 2025/26 as a result of re-profiling spend which would generate some treasury management benefits in 2025/26.

Non-Domestic Rate (NDR) collection was ahead of target at year end whilst Council Tax and Sales Ledger Debt were slightly behind the targets set.

NuPlace Ltd unaudited accounts had received rental income of £5,046m in 2024/25 which had generated £0.448m of profit after investment and taxation. A dividend of £0.302m had been paid to the Council as its sole investor. During 2024/25, the Council had received a total of £2.0m which included the dividend, additional interest and other marginal costs. Housing stock now sat at 608 homes which added £5.6m to the asset value.

Cabinet Members welcomed the report but noted that adult social care remained the biggest pressure nationally. The quality of service had been rated good by CQC and highlighted the support to residents via the hybrid assessments which could be used as a best practice. NuPlace was a good news story generating income to support front line services whilst providing good quality homes, security of tenure and developing brownfield sites. The Council continued to have a strong budget position by investing in front line services and prudent projects such as the solar farm and NuPlace and it was important to note that this was not the same nationally. Investments and expansion to the school estate, good local jobs and leisure facilities enabled the Council to protect, care and invest in order to be a better borough.

The Leader of the Conservative Group congratulated the Council on winning the Council of the Year award. He raised concerns in relation to good and bad borrowing and the interest on the debt, capitalisation and revenue expenditure. He asked that both now and in the future that the Council be conscious of future costs and that they be more explicit where capitalisation was being used.

The Leader responded that capitalisation measures allowed funds to be raised and be used for revenue spending. Investment focussed on both children's and adults' services, tripling the investment in these key areas. Financial challenges had been significant with important decisions required to avoid cutting services. Where opportunities presented, these were taken for the benefit of the residents. Support from the local MP had further aided efforts and there had been a 2.6% real terms growth in the budget year on year. He highlighted the improvements to free school meals, breakfast clubs, local transport schemes, active travel initiatives and infrastructure projects. If money was removed from the budget it would mean charges for green waste collection, car parking and require increased bus fares above £2.

RECOMMENDED TO FULL COUNCIL that:

- a) the performance against the 2024/25 Net Revenue budget which resulted in outturn being within budget by £91k be noted;**
- b) the revenue outturn position for 2024/25, which remained subject to audit by the Council's external auditors, and related virements be agreed;**
- c) delegated authority be granted to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer, to approve the transfers to reserves, and associated approval to the relevant members of**

the Senior Management Team, after consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member, to spend the reserves in relation to the Income/Budget equalisation reserve;

- d) the capital outturn position and related supplementary estimates, re-phasing and virements as summarised in the report be agreed;**
- e) delegated authority be granted to the Director: Finance, People & IDT to make any changes required, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Governance and Customer Services**
- f) the performance against income targets be noted; and**
- g) the suite of Medium-Term Financial Strategy reports approved by Full Council on 27 February 2025 be the Council's Efficiency Strategy for 2025/26, to enable new capital receipts to be used to fund the revenue costs of transformation and efficiency projects which will support the future financial position.**

CAB-5 Biodiversity Duty Consideration and Action Plan

Councillor C Healy, Cabinet Member Neighbourhoods, Planning & Sustainability presented the report which sought the adoption of the Biodiversity Duty Consideration Report and Action Plan following the Government's implementation of an Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) in 2023. This EIP set out how the UK would meet its international obligations by 2030 and its commitments up to 2042.

The Council, as a significant landowner, had set out an action plan with a wide ranging impact both inside and outside of the borough and included the protection of the borough's natural environment, taking a leading role in tackling climate emergency, holding a Tree City of the World designation, signatories to the West Midlands' Biodiversity Pledge, reducing its carbon emissions by over 60% and protecting green spaces through statutory and non-statutory designations.

In advance of these commitments, the Environment Act 2021 set out the requirements to deliver a step-change in nature conservation across England. These include Section 102 of the Environment Act 2021, which had amended the pre-existing Biodiversity Duty on public bodies in England (Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006), which included conserving and enhancing biodiversity. Section 40a of the Act prescribes the requirement for monitoring and reporting and included the timetable for monitoring, reporting and subsequent reviews. The Act also included significant changes in relation to Biodiversity Net Gain, Local Nature Recovery Strategies and had set up a new national body which would oversee environmental compliance.

The Action Plan followed the Government's published guidance which had set out the SMART based actions and the actions were identified in the Plan at part 2 of the document.

The Environment Act required the Council to publish its first monitoring report by the 26 March 2026 to include the specific elements on the delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain. Following this report the corporate Biodiversity Duty Plan must be reviewed and reported at least once every five years.

Cabinet Members welcomed the report and the work that had gone into it to ensure the legislation had been complied.

The Leader of the Conservative Group noted the national target dates of 2030 and 2042 which would allow time for changes to be made. He noted that Telford had been awarded Tree City Status which he considered an interesting concept. The Local Plan referenced that 8,000 houses would be built on food production land which he considered inappropriate. In relation to the Transport Plan, it was important to have a range of investments and contractors to maintain alternative forms of travel such as cycle paths and walkways. He noted that the report did not list allotments within Newport. In relation to leaving areas uncut, it was important that the public had confidence that these areas had been allocated and not neglected. He noted the ambition was to have more rain gardens but asked how many the borough currently had and asked if the council had a baseline for the number of species of trees and whether this would improve biodiversity. It was important to ensure that developers were not buying their way out of biodiversity net gain or greenwashing and in relation to the overall context he considered that the borough was a nature depleted disaster.

Cabinet Members, in response to these comments, confirmed that the term 'Tree City' referred to cities or towns. The borough had a very good active travel network with investment into Newport, Oakengates and other town centre areas, together with the Silkin Way. Work would continue around grass cutting and mowing but there would be a mix of wildflower meadow and seed mix planting and it was important to note that some of these areas would not flower but were equally important to wildlife habitats. The council would continue to look for opportunities for tree planting and replace tree cover where ash die back had occurred. In relation to the baseline, work was being undertaken on the local nature recovery strategy across both Telford and Wrekin and Shropshire in order to enhance and connect up areas following the hierarchy set out in the Local Plan but if it was not possible within the borough then this would link back to the Local Nature Recovery Plan and areas such as wetlands which were an international important habitat.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the importance of protecting and restoring biodiversity for the borough and its residents be noted;**

b) the commitment to safeguard, enhance and improve biodiversity in accordance with the Biodiversity Duty be approved; and

c) the Biodiversity Duty Consideration Report & Action Plan be adopted.

CAB-6 The Green Pledge

Councillor Carolyn Healy - Cabinet Member: Neighbourhoods, Planning & Sustainability presented The Green Pledge which set out the introduction of a Green Pledge scheme to encourage the protection and management of non-council owned green spaces within the borough.

The Green Pledge would provide long-term management and safeguarding of green spaces which were of local importance and were not in the ownership of the Council. This would assist the Council in its commitment to the provision of locally accessible green spaces for local communities and to protect wildlife, the provision of leisure and recreation and offering positive health and wellbeing for families.

Cabinet Members welcomed the report which was a voluntary initiative to support the ongoing commitment to climate action, improve biodiversity and create a strong community partnership to protect and enhance greens paces. It would contribute to the health and wellbeing commitment to tackle health inequality and reduce obesity, stress and depression and the wider health impacts.

The Conservative Group Leader thanked officers for the report and he welcomed the concept of the green pledge and the commitment to manage land in a more positive way. He asked the Council to be wary of greenwashing and cautious in relation to land ownership. This was an opportunity to undertaken engagement with residents on the estates and with management of the industrial estates to improve the green spaces what were not particularly managed well and to ensure these were safe and welcoming environments. In relation to engagement and decision making, was there an opportunity to widen the decision-making process to include more people.

In response, Cabinet Members confirmed that they would work with residents paying a management fee to bring forward schemes on the open spaces and develop other schemes as they came forward. Criteria of schemes would need to be really clear and monitored, particularly around the issues of ownership/management and greenwashing. The priority would be to work closely with those closest to the site where issues could be teased out. A paper would come forward setting out the criteria but in the meantime, it could be considered how to bring others into the decision-making or whether an annual review or a group be set up to oversee how schemes were progressing.

RESOLVED: that

- a) the creation of the Green Pledge scheme be approved; and
- b) Delegated authority be granted to the Director of Prosperity and Investment and the Director Policy and Governance, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning & Sustainability to complete the declaration process of Green Pledge sites.

CAB-7 Outside Bodies Report 2025/26

The Cabinet Member: Finance, Governance & Customer Services presented the report on the Representation on Outside Bodies 2025/26 which sought delegated authority for the Monitoring Officer to approve nominations to Outside Bodies which required annual appointments.

RESOLVED – that:

- a) the outside bodies to which the Council has historically nominated be noted: and
- b) delegated authority be granted to the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Cabinet Member: Finance, Governance and Customer Services, to consider which bodies to nominate to and which Councillor is nominated.

The meeting ended at 10.53 am

Signed for the purposes of the Decision Notices

Anthea Lowe
Director: Policy & Governance
Date: **Wednesday 25 JUNE 2025**

Signed

Date: Thursday 17 July 2025