

CABINET

**Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday 12 February 2026
at 10.00 am in the Council Chamber, Third Floor, Southwater One,
Telford, TF3 4JG**

PUBLISHED ON WEDNESDAY 18 FEBRUARY 2026

(DEADLINE FOR CALL-IN: MONDAY 23 FEBRUARY 2026)

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, P Watling and O Vickers (Cabinet Member for The Economy & Transport).

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

CAB-44 Declarations of Interest

None.

CAB-45 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 6 January 2026 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

CAB-46 Leader's Announcements

Given the lengthy agenda for this meeting, the Leader hoped there would be some healthy debate since the agenda showed that Telford and Wrekin was an ambitious Council that was focused on delivering for its residents.

Whether it be the Telford Land Deal or the Housing Investment Programme to show that the Council was investing in good jobs, new homes, thriving local centres, that it continued to strengthen as a Council after 14 years of cuts from the previous Conservative government.

The Council had a government that was backing it now but the corporate peer challenge showed that the Council was willing to listen, that it invite scrutiny, that it wanted to learn, that it wanted to improve but, above all else, continued to be a first-class Council that was delivering first-class services for its residents.

The agenda included the Shropshire Hills National Landscape Plan and local nature reserves that reiterated a simple truth that was often forgotten that protection of the natural environment in Telford and Wrekin was also a priority for the Council.

CAB-47 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2026/27 - 2029/30

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Governance and Customer Services presented the report of the Director for Finance, People and IDT, which sought the Council's approval of its Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the four years 2026/27 to 2029/30.

This overview report, together with the following linked reports on the agenda for this meeting, formed the Council's overall Medium-Term Financial Strategy for the next four years and the budget framework for 2026/27:

- The Capital Strategy
- The Medium-Term Capital Programme
- The Investment Strategy
- The Treasury Management Strategy
- The Prudential Indicators

The report also built upon the MTFS report considered at Cabinet on 6 January 2026, which had been subject to public consultation and scrutiny by members of the Council's cross-party Business and Finance Scrutiny Committee since that date. The January report was itself an update of the Council's four-year MTFS approved at full Council on 27 February 2025, and this report remained consistent both with that strategy and the approach to prudent and successful financial management exercised by the Council for many years throughout an unprecedented and protracted period of severe financial constraint.

Councillor Hannington said she was presenting a MTFS with a clear, honest, fully compromised and practical approach, which chose stability and responsibility and by making difficult decisions early rather than waiting for crisis to dictate its actions.

The Council had delivered £195m of ongoing savings since 2009, and yet, demand for the Council's most essential services in adult social care and children's safeguarding, continued to rise sharply. Seventy pence of every pound the Council spent now went into social care as it refused to abandon vulnerable residents simply because demand was hard to meet.

This budget put people first and did so with clarity and conviction with £15.8m additional investments being put into adult social care and £2.7m more for children's safeguarding. These two services were not optional nor negotiable or something the Council could scale back and would fund these properly.

The Council continued to keep Council Tax as low as possible and, despite the proposed increase of £1.20 per week for a Band B property, Telford and Wrekin remained the lowest Council Tax authority in the Midlands for the services it provided, which was an achievement no other authority in this region could match. Crucially, every penny of that increase went towards social care.

The Council's £437m Capital Programme was proof of that ambition and it was building more homes for local families through Nuplace and Telford and Wrekin homes, better roads and safer highways, new school places, which included vital CEN provision, regeneration in Station Quarter, Oakengates and Wellington, improved leisure facilities, new green infrastructure and climate-focused investment.

Investment was not a luxury but was the foundation of a strong local economy and thriving communities, and the Council would not step back from it. The Cabinet Member made it clear that savings were not easy, but through consultation it had collaborated with Town and Parish Councils and worked with the voluntary sector in order to redesign services rather than abandon them, and the Council always prioritised protecting those who relied upon it most. The new savings proposals, which totalled £19.1m, were challenging, but they were deliverable, measured and necessary to keep the Council's medium-term position sustainable.

Seventeen consecutive years of balanced out-turn, an unqualified audit opinion, a budget strategy reserve of £21.7m held for prudence and flexibility, strong treasury, strong governance and strong risk management, which showed responsible financial stewardship, that the Council was stable and the future was being planned for.

The Council's Business and Finance Scrutiny Committee, which was made up of six non-executive members, had reviewed the MTFS for 2026 to 2030.

On 15 January, Scrutiny Committee members had attended a workshop for further insight, and no opposition or independent alternative budget was proposed. This MTFS was assertive because the times demanded assertiveness. It protected the Council's most vulnerable and continued to invest in the borough's future, kept Council Tax the lowest in the Midlands, set out a plan and it showed that the Council remained strong, capable and committed to the people it served.

On the invitation of the Leader, the Chair of the Council's Business and Finance Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Nathan England, spoke in support of the Cabinet's 2026-27 budget proposals. The Committee had examined these proposals thoroughly and he was proud to report that all but one member supported the budget with just a single vote against the proposal, which had demonstrated the strength and clarity of these proposals.

This budget reflected a careful and balanced approach in a challenging financial landscape, which protected vital services, supported vulnerable residents and made strategic investments in housing, infrastructure, education and economic growth across Telford and Wrekin.

Every recommendation had been scrutinised and was grounded in both sound financial management and a clear vision for the borough's future. Importantly, the proposals ensured that additional Council Tax resources were targeted to

essential services, which showed responsible stewardship of public funds and a commitment to both short-term needs and long-term growth.

On behalf of the Scrutiny Committee, the Chair commended the Cabinet for preparing a budget that was well structured, fair and achievable and he was confident it delivered the right balance of service protection, community investment and fiscal prudence. The Scrutiny Committee therefore supported the Cabinet's budget proposals and endorsed them to this meeting.

The Leader of the Council thanked the Cabinet Member and the Council's Director of Finance for working through the process over many months to ensure these proposals were sound, robust and reasonable.

With regards to specifics within the Budget proposals, the Leader highlighted:

- Ensuring that 100% of local veterans' military compensation was discounted when calculating benefits and the Council had become a fully signed up member of the Royal British Legion's Credit their Service Campaign.
- The Council was purchasing its first 10 homes in the first ever Telford and Wrekin Homes for Veterans' Housing Scheme.
- The Council was to roll out two-pound bus fares across the Council Owned Bus Network and promised that they would be in place for many years to come.
- The Council was to provide at least 100 additional SEND places in local hubs with more to follow.
- The Council was to support its Safer and Stronger Programme across Telford and Wrekin.
- The Council was to put £250,000 into replacing that funding, which had been cut by the Police and Crime Commissioner to make sure young people had access to youth services in neighbourhoods across Telford and Wrekin and that the Council was tough and robust on antisocial behaviour that blighted some of the borough's communities.
- The Council was to extend its Grit Bin network to 1,000 bins.
- The Council was to increase the number of snow wardens in addition to continuing to grit nearly 7,000 miles of roads in a typical bad weather situation.
- The Council was to bring back into use, the Telford Town Park amphitheatre.

- The Council was to restate its commitment to securing a Priorslee campus for education, business and sports.
- The Council was to maintain free garden waste collections.
- The Council was to maintain free parking on Council-owned car parks where free parking had always existed.
- The Council was to continue to support the borough's high streets and would continue that pride in its high street scheme, which had seen vacancy rates on these streets at a generational low.
- The Council had pledged £250,000 to support the Lingen Davies Campaign to bring a cancer treatment centre to Telford.

These were some of the specifics and all at the same time as keeping the Council Tax the lowest in the Midlands.

There was a lot here for people to get behind and with it, came a three-pronged assurance that would keep Council Tax the lowest that the Council possibly could; it would be an efficient organisation, where it needed to be and it would invest to generate income to protect frontline services that mattered most to its residents.

The Leader of the Conservative Group noted that, currently, 70% of the Council's expenditure was taken up by adult social care and if the Council was not careful, it could become in danger of just being a commissioning service for social care, which would put pressure on all the other services that the Council provided.

He recognised this was not down to just the current government, but also previous governments, that it was not good and had to be sorted out since it was crippling local government finances.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group supported the proposed rise in Council Tax, and welcomed additional funding received from the Government of around £6m, but said the Council had to look after those who were the most vulnerable within the borough, to the detriment of others. The Council had to look after people who were in adult social care and children's services, and he acknowledged the good work being done to make cost savings responsibly and by doing things smarter.

RESOLVED – that Cabinet noted:

- a) **the Councils priorities to deliver our vision to protect, care and invest to create a better Borough:**
 - **Every child, young person and adult lives well in their community**
 - **Everyone feels the benefit from a thriving economy**

- All neighbourhoods are a great place to live
 - Our natural environment is protected, and the Council is taking a leading role in addressing the climate emergency
 - A community focussed innovative Council providing efficient, effective and quality services.
- b) Council Tax be increased for 2026/27 by £1.20 per week for the average Band B home, supporting investment in social care services, which would continue to see Telford & Wrekin Council have the lowest Council Tax in the Midlands for the services it provides, and one of the lowest in the country.
 - c) the continued strong track record of sound financial management of the Council including delivery of a balanced budget for over 17 years.
 - d) that 70 pence in every £1 the Council spends be allocated to Social Services.
 - e) that a number of the investments made in the report, such as Nuplace and the Growth fund, generate a financial benefit, as well as fulfilling their primary purpose, which was invested in front line services. This was equivalent to provision of over 585,000 home care hours or over 6million £2 bus fare rides.
 - f) the savings of £195.3m delivered 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.
 - g) the changes to the Local Government Finance Settlement, which were welcomed by the Council, with the implementation of the Fair Funding Review 2.0 for 2026/27 including a multi-year settlement and an updated formula incorporating updated data for deprivation and population which would better reflect needs.
 - h) the changes to the Business Rates System effective from 1st April 2026 which would introduce 3 new multipliers as well as a reset of the system and a revaluation.
 - i) National and international economic pressures which had resulted in a challenging financial outlook with interest rates and inflation remaining higher than Bank of England forecasts.

RESOLVED – that Cabinet approved:

- a) the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2026/27 to 2029/30 and the budget framework for 2026/27 set out in the suite of reports.

- b) a Council Tax increase of 4.99% for 2026/27 including the Government's 2% Adult Social Care precept, equivalent to £0.72 per week general Council Tax increase for the average Band B property and £0.48 per week for the ASC precept, which would be fully invested in the provision of social care services for the most vulnerable members of our community.**
- c) the net investment of £15.8m into Adult Social Care and £2.7m in Children's Safeguarding in 2026/27.**
- d) the budget savings listed on Appendix 9 with a total of £19.1m ongoing savings including new savings of £9.3m in 2025/26 and £11.4m in 2026/27.**
- 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.**
- f) the base budget in Appendix 7.**
- g) the policy framework for Reserves and Balances and their planned use outlined in Appendix 5.**
- h) the Strategic Risk Register at Appendix 13.**
- i) the endorsement of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme a link to which is included within Appendix 15, ready for implementation from 1 April 2026.**
- j) the continuation of the Council Tax Reduction Hardship Assistance Policy.**
- k) the revenue implications of the medium-term capital programme for the period 2026/27 – 2029/30 set out in the Capital Strategy and Programme.**
- 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) the 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).
- o) the suite of MTFS reports as the Council's Efficiency Strategy for 2026/27, including the documentation at Appendix 12, to enable new capital receipts to be used to fund the revenue costs of transformation and efficiency projects as assumed throughout these reports.
- 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 2026/27 and to make any other associated adjustments to accommodate any difference in funding between that currently assumed and final grant allocations when received.
- q) delegation 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 2026/27.
- s) the additional recommendations contained in the other reports included in the suite of Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

CAB-48 2025/26 Financial Monitoring Report

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Governance and Customer Services presented the report of the Director for Finance, People and IDT, which provided Cabinet with the latest financial monitoring position for the year in relation to the Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and income collection.

Councillor Hannington said that despite one of the most challenging national financial environments Councils had faced in over a decade, the Council's position this year was remarkably strong. Through disciplined in-year financial management and decisive early action, the Council was projecting to deliver a balanced out-turn for 2025/26, which was a significant achievement when many authorities across the country were reporting severe financial distress.

The Council's planned budgeted contingencies, both for general pressures and those specifically ringfenced for social care, had been used exactly as

intended and had absorbed the pressures experienced without drawing on reserves. As a result, the Council's budget strategy reserve of £21.7m and general balances of £4.1m remained completely untouched, which demonstrated genuine financial resilience and gave the Council stability heading into next year.

Adult social care continued to face high national demand and cost pressures, but the Council's approach was working. It had delivered almost £5m in-year savings and cost avoidance and, importantly, the rate of growth in long-term care demand had begun to slow. The Council's home first and prevention focused strategies were not only improving outcomes for residents but also helping to stabilise expenditure.

The Council's £124m Capital Programme for 2025/26 was progressing well with major regeneration, education and infrastructure schemes advancing and projected to complete on budget. Capital receipts were on target and the Council's investment programme continued to deliver visible improvements across the borough. The Council had again demonstrated the strength of its overall financial governance, a consistent record of balanced outturns and unqualified audit opinions.

The Council's 2024/25 accounts had been signed off on 10 February 2026 with an unqualified audit opinion ahead of the backstop deadline of 27 February.

A positive, multi-year funding settlement had been secured that increased the Council's spending power by 8.8 % next year.

The Cabinet Member thanked the whole team for its outstanding work. The positive feedback from KPMG and the Audit Committee was a real testament to the team's dedication, professionalism and excellence. In summary, this report showed a Council that was financially stable, well managed and proactively addressed pressures whilst protecting frontline services. It reflected the hard work of teams across the organisation, and it positioned the Council strongly for the year ahead.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group said it was not every local authority that got their accounts out as quickly as Telford and Wrekin did, and he congratulated the team for doing so. Also, to get an unqualified audit report, which meant the figures that had been presented were accurate for the accounts for the previous financial year and were sound meant that the Council was considered to deliver value for money services. He was pleased that this Council took governance, the accounts and audits etc. seriously.

The Leader of the Conservative Group said he was well aware of the challenges to try and square the social care budget and that there was a lot of work to be done there. It did not alter the fact that the Council had used over £7m worth of reserves to deal with the gap caused partly by adult social care.

RESOLVED – that Cabinet noted:

- a) the 2025/26 revenue budget position, which showed that due to the proactive in-year financial management, the Council was projecting to be within budget at year end;
- b) the estimated total reserves at the end of 2025/26 were £57.3m including the £21.7m Budget Strategy Reserve and £4.1m in General Balances which both remain unused during 2025/26;
- c) the position in relation to capital spend
- d) the collection rates for NNDR, Council Tax and Sales Ledger

CAB-49 Corporate Peer Challenge 2025

The Leader of the Council presented the report of the Executive Director for Place, which set out the findings of the Peer Review Team (the Team) and highlighted areas of best practice and recommendations for consideration by the Council.

As part of a commitment to continuous improvement, which ensured that services were, and the organisation as a whole was as efficient and effective as it could be to take forward delivery of the Council's strategic priorities, in October 2025, the Local Government Association (LGA) undertook a Corporate Peer Challenge of the Council, at the request of the Leader and the Chief Executive, to explore how effectively resources were prioritised and used to deliver the Council's vision "to protect, care and invest to create a better borough".

Councillor Carter said it was the first time that he had been part of this process and despite having been a little unsure as to what to expect, it was pleasing to present the outcome of that corporate peer challenge.

It was an important external check that helped ensure the Council remained a high performing, well-run Council and that it did not stop driving delivery of good services for its residents, which was its focus. As part of the Council's commitment to that continuous improvement, he and the Chief Executive invited the LGA to undertake the peer challenge, since its last review in 2021.

It was considered good practice to have a peer challenge every five years and the Council wanted to do that early, particularly since a change in leadership of the Administration 12 months ago, it was important to have that external view and to understand quickly where the Council could strengthen further.

In October 2025, the Team, made up of cross-party Councillors and Council officers from across the country, met 120 people through interviews and focus groups, which included external partners. The aim was to understand how the Council used its resources to deliver its priorities, and the Team had produced a report of its findings, which identified the Council as having strong leadership and a culture that was working effectively to deliver its vision to protect, care and invest to create a better borough. It commented that Telford

and Wrekin was a confident and high-performing Council with a strong track record of delivery, civic pride and innovation. The Team praised the quality of the leadership, the workforce, financial management, economic development, social care and its focus on brilliant basics. Fundamentally, it endorsed the way the Council managed its budget, made evidence-led decisions and delivered for its communities.

To support the Council in its desire for continuous improvement and to maintain its strong track record in delivery, the Team had identified eight recommendations to be considered in taking the Council forward. It was positive that these recommendations built on commitments that the Council had already made and provided assurance that the Council was delivering in the right areas.

The recommendations provided an opportunity to review and refine existing activity, to ensure the Council's work to improve remained focused and in proportion. The Action Plan at Appendix A to the report highlighted and set out how ongoing actions already met many of these recommendations. The Leader hoped that having produced the plan to demonstrate clearly what the Council needed to do to continue to improve, and that it would do so quickly, showed how seriously the Council took that and it would deliver those as quickly as it could.

The Council would update the Team on the work when it returned later this year.

The Leader thanked the Team for its work and constructive and positive feedback, and everyone involved with Telford and Wrekin Council and its partners for the way that they engaged with that process and continuing to be a fantastic Council that delivered and was focused on delivering the very best for its residents in Telford and Wrekin.

The Leader of the Conservative Group said that there was one certainly around economic growth in the borough, which was 1.8% between 2013 and 2023. It was above the West Midlands average, which was good, but it was way below the national average of 8%. There were some good points, around NEETs (not in education, employment or training), the default, the infrastructure and skills together were the pathway to prosperity. However, a lower proportion of level three plus qualifications in the borough, plus health inequalities still remained as challenges that the Council needed to deal with.

In respect of Highways, and certain issues around potholes – there was a cost to doing this and it was a substantial cost. There was a balance to be reached at some point as to whether the road surface was repaired rather than filling a pothole, cost wise.

Opposition briefings were extremely good, candid and senior officers did attend as requested and gave substantial briefings, which was to be commended.

RESOLVED – that Cabinet:

- a) noted and endorsed the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge which highlighted that:
 - the Council was a high performing organisation;
 - had strong and effective leadership together with a committed workforce;
 - was valued by partners as an organisation that gets things done; and
 - had a strong performance culture underpinned by a commitment to continuous improvement.
- b) noted and endorsed the action plan to implement the recommendations at Appendix A to the Corporate Peer Challenge 2025
- c) approved the timescales for reporting progress to Cabinet and the follow up review to be undertaken by the Local Government Association;
- d) records its thanks to the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge team who visited Telford & Wrekin Council and undertook the review.

CAB-50 Telford Land Deal Update

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Highways, Housing and Enforcement, presented a report by the Director for Prosperity and Investment, which set out the achievements of the Telford Land Deal, which, with support from the Council's Growth Fund and the Invest Telford business pledge, had delivered new and higher skilled local jobs, created growth and security in the local supply chain alongside new homes and had been central to the Council's Strategy to Protect, Care and Invest into Creating a Better Borough.

Councillor Overton said that he was presenting an update of the Telford Land Deal, an important and successful decision that the Council made, which was a clear strategic choice by the Council to work with Homes England to use public land more intelligently, to unlock homes, jobs and regeneration, while ensuring the benefits were reinvested here for the borough's residents.

When the deal was agreed, many sites were difficult, stalled or long-term brownfield land and left alone, they would have continued to deliver nothing for local communities. By working in partnership, the Council de-risked sites, accelerated delivery, retained strong local influence over outcomes and reinvested receipts directly back into the borough. Through the land deal, the Council had created 2,493 jobs and 1,583 new homes had been delivered or were in delivery, which included 684 affordable homes. Over 209,000 square metres of new employment floor space had been brought forward. Also, more

than 125 acres of brownfield land had been regenerated and over £500m of private sector investment had been leveraged into Telford and Wrekin.

The deal had also delivered strong financial returns with £15.7m retained by the Council. New homes delivered to the deal generated around £2.6m each year in additional Council Tax. This income strengthened the Council's financial position and helped protect the front-line services residents relied upon, which included care and community services.

He remained clear this was exactly what the deal was set up to achieve by tackling difficult sites head on and creating high quality homes and communities for local people. The land deal demonstrated the Council's values in action, protected public finances by making best use of public land, protected communities by prioritising brownfield regeneration, and protected essential services by generating sustainable income. It showed care through affordable homes and community facilities, and it invested in jobs, skills, and long-term growth.

The deal had delivered real social value, supported local businesses and supply chains, apprenticeships and skills, community organisations, green spaces and increased biodiversity, alongside renewed confidence and pride in the borough's neighbourhoods. The current land deal was always time limited and was now approaching the end of that term. This was not an end point, but a transition.

Building on a decade of delivery, the Council was engaging with Homes England on future arrangements to ensure the model continued to maximise value for residents. The Council would approach the next stage in a position of strength, with a proven track record, clear values and a stronger understanding of what delivered for the borough. It had delivered homes, jobs, regeneration, income and social value and put the Council in a stronger position to protect services and invest in its future.

As the current deal concluded, the Council did so, proud of what had been delivered, clear about its priorities and confident about the next chapter for Telford and Wrekin. This was a good news story, and it showed exactly how the Council protected, cared and invested to create a better borough for everyone.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group said that it was remarkable and an excellent job that the Council and partners had done to transform these areas of land into either housing or industry, which they were always intended for, and to retain pockets of this land as green in the midst of all that development to get breathing space for people.

The Leader of the Conservative Group said that it was expensive to bring brownfield sites into use, whether it be employment or housing, and that was being done, which was good given these costs could be very high if land contamination existed.

He noted the potential for continuing with a deal around the MOD land as well, which also had potential, and he was more than happy to acknowledge the benefits and success of the Telford Land deal however, he warned of development outstripping resources in the borough, certainly within the local plan.

RESOLVED – that Cabinet noted the outcomes achieved during the last 10 years since the Land Deal commenced in 2015 including over £500m of private sector investment, nearly 2500 new jobs and over 125 acres of brownfield land developed.

CAB-51 Housing Investment Programme - Update & Business Plan

The Cabinet Members for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Sustainability; and Highways, Housing and Enforcement (Deputy Leader) presented a report by the Director for Prosperity and Investment, which presented for consideration and approval a new Business Plan for the Housing Investment Programme, which included a series of pipeline schemes for investment.

Councillor Overton said that he wanted to present, in particular, the work of Nuplace and Telford and Wrekin Homes because this programme showed how housing policy could deliver high quality housing alongside social value, regeneration and long-term financial responsibility at the same time.

This was an overarching joined-up approach, and a decision to build refurbished homes for the Council's own housing company was deliberate since it allowed it to build on brownfield land rather than greenfield, to raise standards in the private rented sector, to provide good quality homes with security of tenure, and to generate long-term income that helped protect vital Council services. By entering the private rented market, the Council was not competing to the bottom but was setting the standard.

This programme played a direct role in tackling rogue and irresponsible landlords by offering tenants a genuine alternative, well-built new and refurbished home. Professional management and stability in doing so helped drive up expectations across the whole market and supported the Council's wider enforcement work. The Housing Investment Programme had delivered hundreds of new homes and by emptying redundant properties back into the use through Telford Wrekin Homes, the Council generated burn-through sites and delivered accessible and adaptable homes that supported independence and care needs. It had also created jobs, apprenticeships and a strong Council asset base that generated not just income year after year, but also capital growth.

This programme was a clear example of values in action. It protected residents by raising standards and tackling poor quality housing. It protected neighbourhoods by regenerating eclectic sites, and it protected Council finances by building a growing asset base that supported frontline services. It also showed the Council cared, provided secure homes where people could put their roots, support older residents, families and vulnerable people, and

link housing with health, well-being and independence. It was also about investing in the Brownfield land, in high quality homes that lasted, and in a model that paid back into the Council, in order that it could continue to deliver its services that residents relied upon, such as adult social care packages and children's care placements, but also supporting the Council to make sure it continued to collect green waste for free or free parking in the borough's towns.

Feedback from residents moving into these homes demonstrated that they felt secure for the first time in years, families were benefiting from better quality homes, and residents no longer worried about short-term lets or poor conditions. These lived experiences showed why this programme mattered and looking ahead, the future of the Housing Investment Programme was clear. The Council would continue to look to expand new build and refurbishment, strengthen links between housing, care and health and make time for financial discipline while continuing to raise standards and challenge its landlords.

The Council was also delivering sustainable homes as it continued its focus on low-carbon homes on sustainable sites, PV's, EVs and future homes pilots. When the programme was first proposed, it had been opposed by the Conservative Group. However, as the homes had been delivered, standards raised, income generated and the community improved, there had been a clear recognition across the chamber of the positives this idea had delivered, and it reflected on the Council's belief in protecting care and investing to create that better borough through new and refurbished homes.

Councillor Healy said that the Housing Investment Programme had been established to meet housing needs, but it was much broader than that since the Council made sure that it connected everything that it did across the whole of the local authority in order to create that better borough.

It was important to remind people that the Council did not set up this programme to be a social landlord, but worked in partnership with its social and local partners around that, and it was very much about raising standards in the private rented sector, giving security of tenure with a quality and responsive repair service to the borough's residents.

Through the programme, young families had been able to move into good quality, secure homes. Families with members of their family with disabilities had been able to move into adapted homes that met their needs. As the portfolio had developed, the Council was building more sustainable homes with solar PV, higher levels of insulation, EV charge points, and more recently air source heat pumps, which demonstrated to the private sector that this could be done, it could be delivered, it could be viable, and also that helped reduce the running costs of these homes for the Council's residents, which subsequently helped with the cost of living.

The Council had also redeveloped listed buildings and challenging sites that had been stalled for many years, which again demonstrated to the housing

sector that the Council could conserve and protect its heritage as well as create good quality homes of buildings like the Gower, Walm Walker Street and the former nursery at Kettley Bank, all of which had been repurposed into providing unique and quite beautiful homes.

With Telford and Wrekin homes, the Council was acquiring empty properties that might otherwise blight some of the borough's communities and was refurbishing these in order that they continued to be lived in and supported that redevelopment in the borough's communities.

This was more than just a housing plan; it was about a whole range of benefits as well as the income that came in to support those front-line services. It was about providing homes for life, supporting the Council's residents, providing jobs through the actual work on these homes and the apprenticeship and skills development that were part of this programme. It was about protecting the environment and it was about revitalising the borough's neighbourhoods.

The Leader of the Conservative Group said what he had seen on a tour around some of the developments had been extremely good, particularly with existing buildings and buildings of heritage. He was impressed by the whole situation and getting brownfield sites into use and to use them for housing like this was important.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group said that the Council was raising the standards for rented accommodation and was glad that it was involved in this because it also kept the building skills alive; by employing people locally and he welcomed the initiative.

RESOLVED – that Cabinet:

a) noted progress made in relation to the delivery of the Housing Investment Programme including;

- **Delivery of 669 dwellings across sixteen sites, with a further 121 under construction, bringing the portfolio to 790 and providing homes for over 1,750 local people.**
- **Diversification of the portfolio to include smaller, larger, accessible and adaptable properties to ensure resident's needs are met as they change over time. Housing Investment Programme Update & Business Plan**
- **Delivery of low carbon homes on sustainable sites, incorporating solar panels, EV chargers, biodiversity improvements and blue and green infrastructure.**
- **Regeneration of circa 48 acres of brownfield land, equivalent to 27 professional football pitches.**
- **Providing a high-quality tenancy and property management service, with 86% of tenants confirming they would recommend Nuplace to friends and family.**
- **Generating net cumulative income to the Council of £13.8m to**

help protect frontline services and securing capital growth of 31% against the £93m invested (2024/25).

- b) considered and approved the draft Housing Investment Programme Business Plan 2026, including investment in a further circa 300 new and refurbished additional homes**
- c) delegated authority be granted to the Chief Executive as Chair of the Housing Investment Board to implement the proposals contained within the report and the associated Business Plan 2026.**

CAB-52 Shropshire Hills National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030

The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Sustainability, presented the report of the Director for Prosperity and Investment, which sought Cabinet's approval of the statutory Shropshire Hills National Landscape Management Plan 2025 to 2030 and the Terms of Reference for a reformed Joint Advisory Committee for the National Landscape.

Councillor Healy said that the Shropshire Hills National Landscape was probably still known to most people as the area of outstanding natural beauty.

It was a key part of the borough's visitor economy yet whilst only a small percentage of the national landscape sat within the borough, it attracted tourism and the borough benefitted economically from that. Other attractions in the area, which included the Ironbridge Gorge, added to the visitor offer as well as visitor welcome facilities and hotels where people could stay in order to then explore all that the wider county had to offer.

It was a local landmark important to the borough and important too that the Council was part of the management of that special landscape. The management plan set out the management for the next five years, which had been subject to public consultation and also consultation with stakeholders, which included landowners and communities within the national landscape. It was a living landscape and a working landscape and the management for the next five years, set out priorities around nature recovery, addressing climate change and climate resilience, and connecting people to nature.

A revision to the terms of reference and the Joint Advisory Committee was necessary to ensure that that management remained focused on delivering against the plan and protecting this nationally important landscape for generations to come. The Cabinet Member thanked Councillor Mark Boylan, who was the Council's representative on the Joint Advisory Committee and who had worked with her and officers on inputting into the plan.

RESOLVED – that Cabinet:

a) approved the Shropshire Hills National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030;

b) approved the Terms of Reference for the new Shropshire Hills National Landscape Advisory Committee.

CAB-53 Local Nature Reserves Update

The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Sustainability, presented the report of the Director for Prosperity and Investment, which sought Cabinet's approval of the declaration of new areas of Local Nature Reserve (LNR) under Sections 19 and 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

Councillor Healy said that the two new local nature reserves were in central Newport and Hurley Brook. Over the last few years, she had several tours of Newport with ward members, the Town Council, the Civic Society and others and on most visits, she had been made clear of the desire to look at the management of a number of sites throughout central Newport and how they could be brought together.

Those representations had been heard and Newport Canal, which was already a site of special scientific interest - a designation that had a higher level of protection than a local nature reserve - but also connected to the canal, the recognition that Strine Brook Park and Victoria Park, which was one of the Council's green flag parks, were connected to the canal and that by designating the whole area as a local nature reserve, allowed the management of all of those green spaces to be brought together and much more cohesive. The site benefitted from lots of volunteer input and there was a new friends' group that had been started up and Newport in Bloom also did quite a lot of work around the canal area and other parts of what would be the local nature reserve.

Shrewsbury Newport Canal Trust had also done a lot of work over many years in that area and would be a fantastic new local nature reserve for the borough. If approved, officers would work with local members, the Town Council and these volunteer groups to determine that future management and the naming of the reserve as that needed to be led locally.

Hurley Brook was the other new site, that was in the centre of the Hadleigh and Leegomery ward. The site followed the Hurley Brook with woodlands and meadows attached and supported a wide range of flora and fauna. It was situated in the middle of a quite densely populated part of town and this designation meant that those local people had got easy access to very high-quality green space. Like at Newport, the ward members and especially the chair of Hadley and Leegomery Parish Council had championed this site, which also had a very active friends' group.

The Council had done some wonderful projects in partnership with those to enhance the nature conservation value of the site and also to monitor the

water quality of the brook to ensure that the Environment Agency and Severn Trent Water met their statutory obligations and worked to reduce pollution there.

On the amended boundaries, sites that were previously approved back in September 2022, the Council was looking to separate out some of those areas and had brought a number of sites together to designate them as local nature reserves and as one large local nature reserve. Having reflected on that and worked with Natural England, the Council was now looking to separate some of those boundaries in order that, for example, Priorslee Flash was a separate local nature reserve, Red Hill Ecology Park would become a separate local nature reserve, and then the Snedshill and Albion Hill would be a separate local nature reserve, which recognised the distinct habitats that they had and also the distinct communities that they served.

Similarly, the previously approved Holmer Lake and Kemberton Meadows local nature reserve had been separated out so that Holmer Lake actually now connected to the Madebrook pools local nature reserve, which recognised that the friends' group of Holmer Lake actively worked in the Madebrook and Stirchley pools area. Bringing this together as one site made much more sense on the ground, which meant that Kemberton Meadows and Pitmounds would be a stand-alone local nature reserve.

The proposals would bring the total number of local nature reserves to 27, covering 748 hectares of land equivalent to four hectares of local nature reserve per 1,000 population and was four times the standard that was set by Natural England.

This underscored the Council's reputation as one of the greenest Councils, whereas in the country it underscored its reputation with Natural England and was held up as an example of national best practice in terms of protecting and enhancing green space. It also underscored the Council's approach to careful plan-led development that ensured green spaces were retained, that those green spaces were connected in order that wildlife could move between areas that helped populations, species to expand and be more resilient to factors such as climate change. Finally, it underscored the Council's commitment to deliver on protecting and enhancing biodiversity.

RESOLVED – that Cabinet:

- a) approved the declaration of new areas of Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and amendments to existing and previously approved LNRs as outlined in the plans and the separation of two proposed LNRs into four LNRs in their own right. This would take the total number of LNRs to 27, covering around 748ha and would result in approximately 4.03ha of LNR per 1000 of the population, over four times the minimum recommended standard;**
- b) delegated authority be granted process to the Director of Prosperity and Investment and Director of Policy and Governance**

**in consultation with the Cabinet member for Neighbourhoods,
Planning and Sustainability to complete the declaration.**

The meeting ended at 12.14 pm

Signed for the purposes of the Decision Notices

Anthea Lowe
Director: Policy & Governance
Date: **Wednesday 18 FEBRUARY 2026**

Signed

Date: Thursday 26 March 2026