

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday 26 March 2026 at 10.00 am in the Council Chamber, Third Floor, Southwater One, Telford, TF3 4JG

PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY 2 APRIL 2026

(DEADLINE FOR CALL-IN: WEDNESDAY 8 APRIL 2026)

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

Also Present: Cllr A J Eade (Conservative Group Leader)

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Z Hannington

CAB-54 Declarations of Interest

None.

CAB-55 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2026 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

CAB-56 Leader's Announcements

The Leader announced that an expression of interest had been put forward that Telford become the first UK Town of Culture in 2028 which would coincide with the 60th birthday of Telford as a new town. A cultural strategy was already underway and would form part of the bid. The Council would be working with Town and Parish Councils, together with community and cultural organisations across the borough to help form the bid. A further six other towns within Shropshire would be submitting a bid and it was felt that given the borough's rich history, heritage and culture there was a fantastic chance of being shortlisted.

The Leader announced that the council had secured one of the West Midlands first Valour Hubs, which would provide one-stop support for local veterans. Locally there were 16,000 armed forces personnel and families, with at least 8,000 veterans. A grant of £670,000 pounds, received from the government, would build on the fantastic work that had already been started by the Council and its partners such as the Christopher Turley Armed Forces Community Hub in Dawley. He thanked Councillor Davies, MP for Telford, as well as the Officers for all of their work to secure the funding. This built on the budget in relation to discounting 100% of the veterans' compensation enabling

them to attract benefits. During the coming year the first 10 homes would be purchased to provide housing for local veterans.

The Leader confirmed that the Council had been announced in the next phase of the youth hubs which was a partnership between the government, DWP and local authorities. The location of the hub was yet to be confirmed but it was great to see a government, the MP, and the Council working together for the betterment of residents and delivering projects which would make a real difference across our borough.

CAB-57 Economic Development Strategy Update

The Cabinet Member: The Economy & Transport presented the Economic Development Strategy Update which highlighted the activity and progress of inward investment and business support in the delivery of the council's economic development strategy following its launch in 2024. Significant progress had been made during the last two years attracting inward investment and promoting the borough as a great place to live, work and study. Work had continued to support businesses through the delivery of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Thrive Telford programme and the launch of the Invest Telford Partnership. Greater emphasis had been placed on strategic collaboration and deepening activity with local skills providers to increase the talent pipeline and give opportunities for local people to go far but stay near and to support residents into good quality employment as well as investing in our high streets.

The report highlighted the council's strong track record of investment and it being a regional leader in productivity growth and this had been reflected by the real-life examples of businesses who recognised the value of the Invest Telford teams. Engagement had taken place with over 300 local businesses during the last year including start-ups, SMEs, scale ups and strategic employers across key sectors such as manufacturing, professional services, digital and low carbon providers. A further key sector of the council's economy was defence with its historic specialisms as well as its national priority. The borough had a longstanding defence manufacturing and engineering heritage which was underpinned by major operation and industrial assets such as MOD Donnington. In May 2025, Rheinmetall had announced that Telford was the new location for its calibre barrel production facility and was a landmark in inward investment for the borough creating more than 400 jobs for local people and injecting £400m into the UK economy over the next decade.

The West Midlands Combined Authority was working to develop a West Midlands Defence and Security Cluster with the Invest Telford team being actively involved. Through this work almost 2,500 jobs had been created together with within £4.5 million pounds in business rates which had been reinvested into frontline services with a commitment to keep council tax the lowest in the Midlands.

In conclusion, Councillor Vickers expressed that the UKSPF programme had played a big part in driving economic growth across the borough and rather than operating as a standalone funding pot, UKSPF has been fully integrated into the wider economic development approach supporting business growth, innovation, skills development and productivity with 77 projects having been contracted through the SME grant and innovation programme representing a total value of £575,000. Of this, £375,000 have been provided through UKSPF grant funding with the remaining £200,000 secured through private sector investment. This level of match funding demonstrated business confidence together with programs ability to stimulate additional economic activity. He thanked the local business community for their continued innovation, drive and commitment, as well as the officers at the council who were essential to delivering sustainable economic growth across Telford and Wrekin.

Cabinet Members spoke about the work of the Invest Telford Team which stood out not just in attracting new investment but in supporting and retaining existing business, engaging local firms and being a front door for growth which, together with the Land Deal, had been a key delivery tool for unlocking sites, attracting investment, creating jobs and regenerating brownfield land. The strategy also supported the growth sectors, skills pipeline and the clean, green approach that strengthened community and the economy together with quality of life, regeneration and innovation, such as Station Quarter. There were significant challenges affecting business environments following Brexit, emerging technologies, increased usage of AI and climate change. The borough had the fourth lowest rate of business closures within the UK and a lower unemployment rate than the national average and the key to this was the partnership between the public and private sectors and strengthening the links between schools, college and employees. The New Town legacy had been continued by having strong policies, a plan-led approach towards development ensuring good neighbourhoods and fantastic green spaces which made locating a business to Telford very attractive. Financial pressures for businesses were highlighted and the Business Energy Advice Programme and the Telford Sustainability and Energy Cluster were able to help in relation to reliance on fossil fuel and energy consumption. Some big successes had been Rheinmetall's decision to expand into Telford showing confidence in the skilled workforce and strong local economy. Work with schools, colleges and local employers as part of the Go Far, Stay Near project and the Skills Show helped young people learn about career opportunities locally. The Skills Show had been a huge success and it was amazing to see the opportunities available for the residents. Alongside this the Job Box were available for residents in Southwater One giving advice and support through Learn Telford. This alongside programmes such as Together Telford, and the work to promote the Quad at Station Quarter brought schools, higher education and employers into one environment to build exciting opportunities for the future.

The Leader of the Conservative Group commented that the one stop hub and providing 10 homes for veterans was commendable and that he and his Group would be happy to support in any way they could. In relation to the Economic Development Strategy, he was unsure as to exactly what fair and

inclusive growth was. He considered that businesses were being squeezed with employment taxes, welfare spending, and public pay sector awards, without any productivity deals and the business rates revolution none of which actually helped the local economy. He raised concerns regarding the growth rates in the borough which were only marginally better than the West Midlands growth rate and felt there was a shortage in growth. Following the LGA Peer Review, he was of the opinion that the council should undertake a consultant's review of the economic development within the borough and he considered there was a shortcoming in that area. He raised concerns regarding NEETs and the 18 or so impoverished neighbourhoods which lay at the bottom 20% nationally. He was encouraged by what was said in relation to the defence industry and welcomed the work done to attract business, investment, money and jobs and whilst he welcomed the creation of jobs he felt there was a myriad of smaller suppliers and sub-contractors in the supply chain who also needed support. Concerns were raised regarding the delay in the defence investment plan and he felt it was paralysing the defence industry and investment was needed from the government for jobs and security and he asked what conversations had been undertaken with government ministers and MPs on this issue.

The Leader welcomed the support of Councillor Eade for the 10 Homes for Veterans. He considered that the comments in relation to the Peer Review and the commission around economic growth were untrue and that economic growth was benefitting everyone in the borough, including those in the most deprived area. He considered that the council had gone above and beyond to retain the skills of officers, planners, architects, legal officers and the investment team to ensure that there were business opportunities and these did not happen by accident and that the council would continue to deliver what was set out in the strategy.

RESOLVED that:

- a) progress in the delivery of the Councils Economic Development Strategy 'Our Fair & Inclusive Strategy for Economic Growth 2024-2032' (the EDS) be noted:**
- b) the successes and opportunities in the borough and activity in the supporting skills for business through the Telford Together programme be noted; and**
- c) support for the delivery of the EDS and the Councils approach to securing investment and support for existing local business through the activities of Invest Telford be continued.**

CAB-58 Contaminated Land Strategy

The Cabinet Member: Highways, Housing & Enforcement presented the Contaminated Land Strategy which provided an update on the process for considering and regulating contaminated land across the borough. The report set out how the council would continue to protect local communities and the

environment so that it was safe for current and future use. Although the borough had a long and proud industrial history, it was vital that the council remained vigilant with regards to land contamination. The Strategy provided a clear, modern framework which was aligned with the Environmental Protection Act and would replace the previous 2013 Strategy. Inspection duties and assessing and prioritising sites played an important role in managing and remediating land where development took place. The Strategy reinforced the commitment to transparency through the publicly accessible contaminated land register. Emphasis was given that through the work of the Environment Agency and the Landowner that the only site ever classed as contaminated had now been fully reclassified and removed from the public register. As a result of this there was currently no land within Telford and Wrekin that was classed as contaminated. This demonstrated that the processes were working with strong partnerships and the effective management of the industrial past. The Policy ensured the proactive monitoring and assessment of sites and intervention to protect public health would be undertaken if required.

In summary, Councillor Overton reported that this updated strategy strengthened the protection of the local environment, and supported safe development giving continued confidence to residents, businesses and developers.

Cabinet Members reiterated that it was important for the council to understand the potential risks of contaminated land and that there were controls in place to limit pollution of land and water and that by having the strategy in place it would allow the identification of any potential risks. If land was to come forward through the planning process, it would enable the risk to be understood and any remedial action on historic contamination to be taken.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the Contaminated Land Strategy be approved;**
- b) delegated authority be granted to the Director Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Enforcement, to make ongoing changes to the strategy as required; and**
- c) the development of an Action Plan to provide the framework for ongoing monitoring and management of contaminated land within the borough be endorsed.**

CAB-59 Adoption of Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Councillor C Healy, Cabinet Member: Neighbourhoods, Planning & Sustainability presented the Adoption of Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) which sought approval for the adoption of Local Nature Reserves and the grant of delegated power to the

Director of Prosperity and Investment in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member. She welcomed the Lead Officer from Shropshire to the meeting and thanked her for the hard work, along with officers at Telford, to ensure that the strategy had been developed in collaboration with landowners, stakeholders and residents.

The main function of the LNRS was to address the decline in biodiversity in the UK as part of the Environment Act 2021. The council had a moral duty to preserve species and habitats as well as addressing the declining biodiversity which could pose a risk to food, water quality and the wider public health.

The Strategy identified valuable habitats and those areas that potentially required improvement to help nature recovery and support more wild flora and fauna. The goal was to create habitats that were larger, more numerous and better connected. If habitats could be connected via green spaces, then species could expand their populations and move. A key part of the Strategy highlighted areas that were already protected such as Local Nature Reserves and sites of special scientific interest (SSSIs) and the buffer zones which added to the protection of the sites. It was about making sensitive changes to the management of the sites working alongside landowners and land managers.

Engagement events had taken place throughout the course of the development of the Strategy as well as direct engagement with Town and Parish Council and SALK events. Friends of Parks groups and the Telford Green Space Partnership had also engaged.

The Strategy would give a strong evidence base for directing agricultural grants and subsidies as well as other funding initiatives and it was felt that evidence base was key. In Telford and Wrekin, the LNRS had been developed alongside the Local Plan so the two plans could be aligned in terms of spatial planning and policies that would inform future decision making and the approach to biodiversity net gain of up to 20%.

The Strategy was linked to other strategic policies including the Health and Wellbeing Strategy in that access to nature has a significant positive effect on our physical and mental health. It was also important to work alongside the Climate Change Action Plan and the Climate Adaption Strategy in relation to carbon reduction and resilience to climate change.

Natural England was the government body who would oversee the process and they considered that the Strategy was sound, comprehensive and well-written.

Cabinet Members supported the adoption of the LNRS which reflected the responsibility to protect the environment and the commitment to the long-term wellbeing of the residents. It set out practical locally led action which would restore habitats and strengthen biodiversity, as well as improving connectivity across the borough. Working constructively with landowners, communities and partners was key and that could be achieved with the strategic non-

regulatory approach supporting nature recovery alongside farming, development and economic growth. The Strategy also supported climate resilience, flood management, public health and the quality of life. It was an example of how the council protected, cared and invested in the borough by protecting the natural assets and investing in a healthier more resilient borough. By recognising that there were limited time and resources it ensured that the efforts were focussed on where they would have the biggest impact whilst promoting, protecting and increasing access to green spaces for local residents.

The Leader of the Conservative Group felt that there was a contradiction within the strategy by creating or returning nature and biodiversity whilst at the same time concreting over green fields. He raised concerns that there was no dedicated budget which could be used to implement initiatives and schemes. The report was comprehensive and he was happy to help in any small way and would be delighted to use his ward fund to help out with projects.

RESOLVED – that:

- a) the work of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) Steering Group and stakeholders in supporting co-ordinated biodiversity action in the borough and wider Shropshire area be noted; and
- b) delegated authority be granted to the Director: Prosperity & Investment in consultation with the Cabinet Member: Neighbourhoods, Planning and Sustainability the authority to agree to appropriate amendments as required to meet parallel approvals from other stakeholders and the adoption of the LNRS as set out in Appendix C & D of the report be approved.

The meeting ended at 10.51 am

Signed for the purposes of the Decision Notices

Anthea Lowe
Director: Policy & Governance
Date: **Thursday 2 APRIL 2026**

Signed _____

Date: Thursday 14 May 2026