



## **FULL COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of a meeting of the Full Council held on Thursday 23 January 2025 at 6.00 pm in Council Chamber, Third Floor, Southwater One, Telford, TF3 4JG**

**Present:** Councillors E Aston, S Bentley, K T Blundell, M Boylan, A J Burford, S P Burrell, E M Callear, L D Carter, C Chikandamina, E Davies, P Davis, F Doran, N A Dugmore, A J Eade, A R H England, N A M England, S Handley, Z Hannington, C Healy, T L B Janke, A S Jhavar, J Jones, J Kaur, L Lewis, G Luter, A D McClements, R Mehta, H Morgan, T J Nelson, R A Overton, N Page, L Parker, I Preece, S J Reynolds, S A W Reynolds, H Rhodes, R Sahota, P J Scott, S Syrda, G Thomas, P Thomas, J Thompson, K Tonks, R Tyrrell, J Urey, O Vickers and D R W White

**In Attendance:** A Lowe (Director: Policy & Governance) and D Sidaway (Chief Executive), L Gordon (Mayor & Member Support Officer)

**Apologies:** Councillors G H Cook, S Davies, G C W Latham-Reynolds, K Middleton, W L Tomlinson, K T Tomlinson and P Watling

#### **37        Prayers and Reflections**

Reverend Keith Osmund-Smith of the Telford Christian Council said prayers.

#### **38        Declarations of Interest**

None.

#### **39        Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2024 be confirmed and signed by the Mayor.

#### **40        Leader's Report & Announcements**

The Leader welcomed Members to the first Full Council meeting of 2025 and extended his thanks to council staff who had continued to work over the festive period in the face of weather emergencies and flooding.

The Leader noted that the announcement of the Local Government Funding Settlement set out a positive indication that the Government were engaged to help tackle issues such as the national increase in demand for services for vulnerable adults and children which had created funding challenges for the Council.



The Leader reported on the commitments and ambitions for the coming year and stated that the immediate focus would be providing strong financial management for 2025. The Leader gave details of the expansion to NuPlace and Telford & Wrekin Homes which would provide high quality housing for rent and the income generated would support investment into new jobs in the Borough, regeneration of new town estates, the improvement of Telford's bus network and would allow the Council to invest into highways whilst always protecting green spaces. Members heard that there were further plans to expand the Council's Leisure and culture offer. The Council would continue to provide services such as fortnightly free garden waste collection, free recycling centres and free parking across the Borough.

The Leader outlined the three principles that underpinned the Council's plans for the future; to ensure the Council is efficient as possible, that the Council will explore all avenues of raising new income with a commercial approach, and to ensure that they retain the lowest Council Tax in the West Midlands.

#### **41        Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor noted the engagements that had been attended since the last meeting of Council. In particular, he highlighted some of the festive events he had attended, such as the Civic Carol Service, school fayres and the staff raffle to win a family ticket to the pantomime. The Mayor expressed his thanks to all of the staff who had participated and donated to his chosen charity.

The Mayor looked forward to continuing in his term of office and attending his Charity Ball which would take place in April. Members were advised that more details about the Ball would follow soon.

#### **42        Public Questions**

The following question from the public had been received.

(i) The following question to Cllr L D Carter, Leader of the Council was submitted by Mr Mark Allen:

*"In Telford, 100% of Child Maintenance is counted as Income, for Council Tax Reduction. This seems to be unusual, in the UK. Your policy also discounts the first £15 of other forms of Maintenance (Sched 4, Para 48) - what was the rationale for making that distinction?"*

Cllr L D Carter, Leader of the Council responded that Child maintenance was not universal to all children and varied in amount and impact. For equality and parity, it was taken as part of the household income. The inclusion of child



maintenance as income was included as part of a consultation carried out in 2019 regarding Council Tax reduction.

Although detailed in the policy, Cllr L D Carter advised that it was an erroneous inclusion and no one within Telford and Wrekin was eligible for the £15.00 disregard. The Leader advised that the Council would look to remove this inclusion from the policy.

#### **43            Councillor Questions On Notice**

The following questions were asked under Council Procedure Rule 6.2.2:-

(a) Councillor R Tyrrell asked the following question to Councillor R A Overton, Cabinet Member: Highways, Homes and Enforcement:

*"Members will recall the issue of the ongoing environmental issues at the Potters Landfill site at Granville raised at 2 meetings last year. Despite assurances from the Environment Agency that capping is complete, noxious odours and fumes continue to be emitted from the site. Has Cllr Overton received a response to the letter he was intending to send to the Environment Agency?"*

Councillor R A Overton responded that the Council has continued to raise concerns to the environment agency who have advised that they were monitoring the situation. Key actions had been completed but as of the time of the meeting there had been no response to the letter sent to the Environment Agency. Ward Councillors would be provided with an update when any response had been received.

Councillor R Tyrrell asked a supplementary question:

*"There are two more cells to fill before the site is set to close in 2030. What actions will be taken to minimise these gases, and if capping works were completed in September, why are there still issues? We were also promised result and date from council testing equipment, when can these be expected?"*

Councillor R A Overton responded that the Environment Agency were responsible for the site and the action plan. However, the results of the tests carried out using Council equipment would be published on the Council's website shortly.

(b) Councillor H Morgan asked the following question on behalf of Councillor K Middleton, to Councillor R A Overton, Cabinet Member: Highways, Homes and Enforcement:



*"During the last Full Council meeting, there was a lot of discussion about the impact on pensioners over the winter. For the benefit of the chamber and as Ward Councillors, could you talk us through the support that Telford and Wrekin have put in place to support the most impacted pensioners who following the means testing of the winter fuel payments?"*

Councillor R A Overton responded that Household Support funding had been used to issue vouchers to pensioners. Almost a further 6000 pensioners who received housing benefit or Council Tax reduction would also receive £100.00 of supermarket vouchers. This constituted an increase of support being issued to a further 2000 customers than in 2024. A campaign had been rolled out over Autumn to advise 900 pensioners of the support they may be entitled to and an information booklet detailing the financial help available to pensioners had been distributed to community centres, libraries and Department of Work and Pension buildings. Councillor R A Overton advised that the Council had also committed to fund the Benefit Advisor post with Age UK for a further 12 months and had provided Age UK with additional funding for an extra four days a week for the next three months, in order to deal with the influx of queries following the change to the winter fuel allowance. In addition to the Government funded Household Support Fund, the council also funds the Emergency Welfare Assistance Scheme, which amounted to £182,000 per year, which provides support to vulnerable residents. The Council would also be investing in a Telford Energy Advice Line to help support with household energy bills.

(C) Cllr N Dugmore asked the following question to Cllr L D Carter, Leader of the Council:

*"Will the Council Leader reaffirm that this administration is opposed to Telford & Wrekin Council merging with any neighbouring authority as proposed by this Government?"*

Cllr L D Carter responded that whilst the Devolution White Paper does not propose that the Council merge with any of its neighbouring authorities, the Council did have a long-standing tradition of opposing mergers, and this position would not change. Cllr L D Carter noted that the Council was in a good financial position and any proposed merger would not benefit residents, so on that basis the Council would not enter into any discussions regarding a merger with neighbouring authorities.

#### **44            Cabinet Decisions Made Since the Last Meeting of the Council**

Members received the report on the Cabinet decisions made since the last meeting of the Council. No questions of clarification were raised.



**45      Appointment of Permanent S151 Officer**

It was moved by Councillor L D Carter and seconded by Councillor T Nelson that following a unanimous decision of the Personnel Committee, that Michelle Brockway be appointed as the permanent S151 Officer of the Council.

**RESOLVED - that the recommendation from Personnel Committee to designate the Director: Finance, People & IDT, Michelle Brockway, as the Council's s.151 Officer is accepted and approved.**

**46      Setting of Council Tax Base 2025/26**

The Cabinet Member: Finance and Governance presented the report in relation to setting the Council Tax Base and Special Fund purposes for the financial year 2025/26 as prescribed by the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012:2914). This was the first stage in the process of setting the Council Tax for 2025/26 with final recommendations on council tax levels being presented to Full Council on 27 February 2025.

Following the debate, as required by the Council's Constitution, a Recorded Vote was taken:

*For: (47) Councillors E Aston, S Bentley, K T Blundell, M Boylan, A J Burford, S P Burrell, E M Callear, L D Carter, C Chikandamina, E Davies, P Davis, F Doran, N A Dugmore, A J Eade, A R H England, N A M England, S Handley, Z Hannington, C Healy, T L B Janke, A S Jhavar, J Jones, J Kaur, L Lewis, G Luter, A D McClements, R Mehta, H Morgan, T J Nelson, R A Overton, N Page, L Parker, I Preece, S J Reynolds, S A W Reynolds, H Rhodes, R Sahota, P J Scott, S Syrda, G Thomas, P Thomas, J Thompson, K Tonks, R Tyrrell, J Urey, O Vickers and D R W White*

*Against: (0)*

*Abstain: (0)*

**RESOLVED – that:**

- a) The calculation of the tax base for 2025/26 as at paragraph 4.4 and Appendix A be approved; and**
- b) the amount calculated for Telford and Wrekin Council Tax base for 2025/26 for its Special Fund Area shall be as per the appropriate parish amounts detailed in Appendix A for the parishes listed in paragraph 4.5, in Accordance with the Local Authorities**



**(Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012:2914)  
be approved.**

**47            Recommendations from Cabinet**

**(a)            2024/25 Financial Monitoring Report**

The Cabinet Member: Finance and Governance presented the Financial Monitoring Report which was presented to Cabinet on 6 January 2025.

The report provided an update on the revenue budget and progress relating to the capital programme. The report included some changes to the capital programme which now required formal approval by Full Council.

**RESOLVED – that the changes to the capital programme and all associated changes to the Medium Term Financial Strategy, including Treasury and Prudential Indicators as detailed in Appendix A to the report be approved.**

**48            Recommendations from Committees and Boards**

**(a)            Biennial Scrutiny Report 2022 - 2024**

Councillor D R W White presented the biennial Scrutiny Report 2022 – 2024 for noting.

Councillor M Boylan seconded the report.

Responding to a question from Cllr N Dugmore, Councillor M Boylan set out that a report regarding landfill management would be coming to an upcoming Environment Scrutiny meeting.

**RESOLVED - that the Biennial Scrutiny Report 2022 - 2024 be noted.**

**49            Motions on Notice**

**(a)            Councillor Stephen Burrell will propose the following Motion:-**

“With Telford & Wrekin comprised of two thirds of rural land and communities, this Council recognises the vital role that farmers provide for this Borough and beyond and, as such, resolves to throw its full weight behind local Telford & Wrekin farmers and the farming industry by directly lobbying the Government to reverse the Chancellor’s terrible Inheritance tax proposals.”

Councillor S Bentley seconded the Motion.

Following a robust debate, the Motion was lost by a majority vote.



(b) Councillor Andrew Eade will propose the following Motion:-

"This Council resolves to oppose top down imposed housing targets and lobby Government to allow housing figures to be determined locally in Telford & Wrekin. This Council also vehemently opposes the attack on local democracy which will take planning decisions on Housing applications away from elected members of this Council."

The Motion was seconded by Councillor T Nelson.

Councillor C Healy then moved an amendment, with additional words shown in bold and underlined and removed words shown with a strikethrough.

"This Council welcomes the Government's commitment to consult on changes to the national planning system designed to resolve the chronic housing crisis and provide good quality secure homes for those not currently able to access the Housing Market including those on Social Housing waiting lists and those living in temporary accommodation.

This council recognises the removal of ~~resolves to oppose top down imposed housing targets~~ towards the end of the Conservative government and the negative effect this had on the housing crisis. ~~and lobby Government to allow housing figures to be~~ Whilst housing figures determined locally in Telford & Wrekin to meet housing need, do align to the new housing target formula, we recognise that for some councils this is not the case and that proposed targets are challenging so we resolve to work with other councils through the LGA to ensure housing targets are practical and appropriate and engage with government accordingly.

This council notes the Government proposals to retain the ability for local elected members to dedicate their energy to scrutinising the most complex and contentious applications whilst also providing greater training for planning committee members and extra resource to recruit skilled planning professionals. This council will ~~also vehemently oppose the attack on~~ always oppose any attack on local democracy which will take planning decisions on Housing applications completely away from elected members of this council."

The amendment was seconded by Councillor R A Overton.

At the end of a lengthy debate regarding the amendment, a vote was taken and it was:



**RESOLVED** – that the amendment be carried and become the substantive motion.

Following a robust debate, the amended motion was put to the vote and it was:

**RESOLVED** – that the amended Motion be approved.

(c) Councillor Andrew Eade will propose the following Motion:-

“While noting the Labour party’s own figures of potentially 4000 pensioners dying due to this governments removal of the Winter Fuel Allowance, this Council notes the extra £100 paid to some local pensioners from the Emergency Relief fund provided by the previous government, but accepts that more needs to be done and consequently resolves to:

- a) Revisit financial reserves in order to consider providing further financial aid;
- b) Deplore the original decision to strip pensioners of their heating allowance and write to the Chancellor to demand this cruel decision is reversed; and
- c) Join the Unite Union’s campaign to force the current Labour Government to change its mind.”

The Motion was seconded by Councillor R Tyrrell.

Councillor R A Overton then moved an amendment, with additional words shown in bold and underlined and removed words shown with a strikethrough.

“While noting the Labour party’s own figures of potentially 4000 pensioners dying due to this governments removal of the Winter Fuel Allowance, this council notes **that, despite public finances being wrecked by the last Conservative Government, the new government has protected the poorest and most vulnerable pensioners by maintaining the winter fuel allowance payment to them. This council also notes and commends** the extra £100 paid to some local pensioners from the Emergency Relief fund provided by the previous government **and extended by the new Government and notes and commends the priority that this Council is giving to helping local pensioners**, but accepts that more needs to be done and consequently resolves to:

- a) Revisit financial reserves in order to consider providing further financial **aid including support on Council Tax;**
- b) Deplores **the necessity of** the original decision to strip pensioners of their heating allowance and write to the Chancellor to demand this ~~cruel~~ decision is



reversed as soon as reasonably possible, but also ensures that any future changes do not result in reinstatement of the benefit to millionaire pensioners or those who live abroad as was the case prior to the current changes;

c) Join the Unite Union's campaign to force the current Labour Government to change its mind when reasonably possible;

d) Condemn the Leader of the Conservative Party for her announcement that they intend to abolish the state pension triple lock; and

e) Support and welcome the Labour Government's plan to keep the pension triple lock for the lifetime of the Parliament, which saw an increase in the state pension of £900 last year and will see it rise £460 in April this year."

The amendment was seconded by Councillor C Healy.

At the end of a lengthy debate regarding the amendment, a vote was taken and it was:

**RESOLVED** – that the amendment be carried and become the substantive motion.

Following a robust debate, the amended motion was put to the vote and it was:-

**RESOLVED** – that the amended Motion be approved.

(d) Councillor Stephen Bentley will propose the following Motion:-

The Speaker advised that the proposer and seconder of the motion indicated that they wished to withdraw the motion without further discussion.

**50** **Councillor Tim Nelson will propose the following Motion:-**

"This Council deplores the Labour governments cruel and arbitrary decision to renege on the compensation for WASPI ladies in Telford and Wrekin. The Council calls on the government to reverse their decision, and so restore to many local residents the compensation they are legally entitled to. Surely every Councillor will have WASPI ladies they are aware of in their ward, an injustice has been done."

The motion was seconded by Councillor A J Eade.

Councillor C Healy then moved an amendment, with additional words shown in bold and underlined and removed words shown with a strikethrough.



~~“As we have done previously,~~ this Council ~~deplores the Labour governments cruel and arbitrary decision to renege on the~~ **continues to support the call for** compensation for WASPI **women** ladies in Telford and Wrekin. **This council recognises that the very difficult financial challenges faced by the new government given the £20 billion financial black hole left by the previous government means that claims cannot be settled immediately. However,** The Council calls on the government to **reconsider their position and agree a timetable for implementation of the compensation scheme or mediate for an alternative.”** ~~reverse their decision, and so restore to many local residents the compensation they are legally entitled to. Surely every Councillor will have WASPI ladies they are aware of in their ward, an injustice has been done.~~

The amendment was seconded by Councillor E Callear.

At the end of the debate regarding the amendment, a vote was taken and it was:

**RESOLVED – that the amendment be carried and become the substantive motion.**

Following further debate, the amended motion was put to the vote and it was:-

**RESOLVED – that the amended Motion be approved.**

(a) Councillor Thomas Janke will propose the following Motion:-

“This Council notes with concern the recent announcement by the UK Government to reduce the Army Cadet Force training budget by 50%. This Council believes that these cuts are short-sighted and jeopardise the future of an organisation that has provided young people with an introduction to military discipline, leadership, and opportunities for personal development for nearly 170 years. The Army Cadet Force (ACF) plays a vital role in inspiring the next generation of Armed Forces personnel, offering a unique pathway for young people to explore careers in the military. This is especially critical at a time when the UK Armed Forces are facing a significant recruitment crisis. This Council further believes that the ACF is not only a recruitment pipeline but also an organisation that fosters discipline, resilience, and teamwork in young people, contributing positively to their communities and society at large.

**This Council resolves to:**

1. Instruct the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for Defence and the Prime Minister to express our deep concerns about the impact of



these budget cuts on the Army Cadet Force and the future of the Armed Forces.

2. Urge the UK Government to reverse these budget reductions immediately to safeguard the future of the ACF and its essential contribution to national defence and youth development.
3. Call on local Members of Parliament across Shropshire to advocate in Westminster for the protection of ACF funding.
4. Explore local support measures to mitigate the immediate impact of these cuts on cadet units in our area, where possible.”

The Motion was seconded by Councillor K Tonks.

Councillor R Mehta then moved an amendment, with additional words shown in bold and underlined and removed words shown with a strikethrough.

This Council notes ~~with concern~~ the recent announcement by the UK Government to ~~reduce the Army Cadet Force training budget by 50%~~ **honour the previous Government's commitment, in light of the inherited economic crisis, to end the £1.1m DFE grant to Cadets. The Council also notes the Government's ongoing commitment to providing £3.6 million in funding for the Cadet Expansion programme and their commitment to review the Army Cadet and Reserve Force and commitment to the Cadet Expansion Programme until 2033.**

~~This Council believes that these cuts are short-sighted and jeopardise the future of~~ **This Council believes that the Government should do all it can to support** an organisation that has provided young people with an introduction to military discipline, leadership, and opportunities for personal development for nearly 170 years. The Army Cadet Force (ACF) plays a vital role in inspiring the next generation of Armed Forces personnel, offering a unique pathway for young people to explore careers in the military. This is especially critical at a time when the UK Armed Forces are facing a significant recruitment crisis. This Council further believes that the ACF is not only a recruitment pipeline but also an organisation that fosters discipline, resilience, and teamwork in young people, contributing positively to their communities and society at large.

This Council resolves to:

1. Instruct the ~~Chief Executive~~ **Leader** to write to the Secretary of State for Defence and the Prime Minister to express our deep concerns about the impact of these budget cuts on the Army Cadet Force and the future of the



Armed Forces and seek reassurances on the Government's commitment to the ACF.

2. Urge the UK Government to reverse these budget reductions immediately as soon as is practicably possible, to safeguard the future of the ACF and its essential contribution to national defence and youth development.

3. Call on local Members of Parliament across Shropshire Telford & Wrekin to advocate in Westminster for the protection of ACF funding.

4. Explore local support measures to mitigate the immediate impact of these cuts on cadet units in our area, where possible.

5. Continue with it's work to support local Armed Services and Veterans which is widely recognised as amongst the best in the Country."

The amendment was seconded by Councillor L D Carter.

At the end of the debate regarding the amendment, a vote was taken and it was:

**RESOLVED** – that the amendment be carried and become the substantive motion.

Following a robust debate, the amended motion was put to the vote and it was:-

**RESOLVED** - that the amended Motion be approved.

**51** Councillor Paul Watling will propose the following Motion:-

The Speaker advised that the proposer and seconder of the motion indicated that they wished to withdraw the motion without further discussion.

The meeting ended at 8.37 pm

Chairman: .....

Date: Thursday 27 February 2025