

BUSINESS AND FINANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Business and Finance Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday 7 May 2025 at 6.00 pm in Council Chamber, Third Floor, Southwater One, Telford, TF3 4JG

Present: Councillors N A M England (Chair), L Lewis, S Syrda and R Tyrrell

Also Present: Councillor R A Overton (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member: Highways, Housing & Enforcement)

In Attendance: J Clarke (Senior Democracy Officer (Democracy)), J Dunn (Director: Prosperity & Investment), A Lowe (Director: Policy & Governance) and D Toy (Regeneration & Investment Service Delivery Manager)

Apologies: Councillors E M Callear, G Luter and N Page

BFSC34 Declarations of Interest

None.

BFSC35 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 7 January be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

BFSC36 Telford Land Deal

The Director: Prosperity & Investment and Service Delivery Manager: Regeneration & Investment gave a verbal update on the Telford Land Deal.

The Land Deal was signed ten years ago in order to support inward investment. The former Telford Development Corporation (TDC) held the legacy new town sites for employment and housing for inward investment enquiries and at this point the Council could only signpost interested parties to the relevant government department or English Partnerships. Many sites had constraints requiring upfront investment to enable them to come forward for development. This included ecology surveys, highway assessments and planning applications and this, together with lack of utility provision, meant sites were not able to come forward quickly.

The Council took an agency role which enabled it to enter into negotiations and bring forward investment, addressing to some extent the previous constraints.

The 10 year Land Deal then followed; a partnership between the Council, Homes England and the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). The Council took on responsibility for bringing forward Homes England land interests to the market with the support of £19m Local Growth Fund investment. The profit secured over the agreed baseline value was shared between the parties and the profit share used to support strategic investment projects to drive growth in the Borough.

During the past 10 years, a total of 35 commercial sites and 25 residential sites had been delivered which had secured 1583 new homes (of which 684 were affordable), a total of 2,493 new jobs and gross sales income of £60.38m. Some examples of what had been delivered through the Land Deal included the use of employment sites to support business expansion, supporting a business into a single premise from 3 separate ageing premises and the provision of a high-tech distribution centre facilitating parcel distribution to the wider borough via a fleet of smaller delivery vehicles.

In relation to residential delivery, Living Space developed 39 affordable homes which were completed in April 2022, a 55 unit development of affordable homes was completed in October 2022 by Keon Homes. A former Homes England site delivered a 329 unit development in conjunction with Lovells, Nuplace and Wrekin Housing Group which was a mix of open market homes, private rental and affordable properties together with a 76 bed Extra Care Facility which included specialist dementia care apartments and supported living provision.

The locally retained profit share from the Telford Land Deal, together with the Growth Fund and central government grants had supported accelerated delivery of public sector development schemes, identified gaps in the local market, enhanced the delivery of infrastructure and addressed the shortfall in new 'greener' premises. Some of the completed profit share supported developments included the Orchard Business Park, Theatre Quarter at Limes Walk and NiPark Phase 2.

During the last 10 years the land deal had also delivered:

- Employment floor space of 209,038sqm
- Private sector investment of £504,253,514

Eight accelerated sites had been brought to market ahead of anticipated delivery dates.

In response to questions, the Service Delivery Manager: Regeneration & Investment explained that the gross figure of £60m income was the figure from all land sales. After reimbursement of baseline site values to Homes England and the reimbursement of costs incurred by Homes England and the Council, the net profit share available for investment was just over £16m.

The Director: Prosperity & Investment explained that the aim for the Land Deal when it was entered into was to strengthen confidence and accelerate

sites for inward investment. Some identified sites had been unable to progress, prompting the Council to invest in infrastructure improvements, enhancing electricity supply, ecological conditions and highways and enabling the Council to react swiftly to any enquiries.

From a residential perspective, this initiative supported the development of legacy sites from the Commission for New Towns which had benefitted a range of affordable housing options across the borough.

The Cabinet Member: Highways, Housing & Enforcement stated that the Land Deal had empowered the Council to both attract and support businesses while ensuring efficient site delivery. It had successfully prepared sites for commercial and residential developments, delivering homes and revitalizing brownfield areas. The generated income had enabled various schemes to enhance the borough.

The Director: Prosperity & Investment also informed Members, in response to questions, that the business rates and council tax delivered as a result of the Land Deal was a combined total worth just under £4m which went into front line services.

The Director: Prosperity & Investment confirmed to Members that there was a two year run-off period following the Land Deal in which some remaining sites could still come forward. These sites were included in the old, and developing, Local Plans. Other sites may also come forward via Homes England. As part of the 10 year Land Deal, the Council accepted a number of legacy elements from TDC which included items such as grass verges and woodland and as part of the profit share received an additional £2m to look after the sites and create nature reserves and wildlife corridors as part of the programme.

The Cabinet Member: Highways, Housing & Enforcement commented that some of the land had been used for environmental purposes such as Local Nature Reserves and to increase biodiversity such as woodlands as the land could not be developed. This had brought forward a benefit for the borough through the accessible green spaces.

BFSC37 Work Programme Review

The Director: Policy & Governance presented the updated work programme for the Committee for 2024/2025. Areas shaded in grey indicated completed work. Some items remained unfinished, which was anticipated as the Committee was about to enter the final municipal year of the two-year programme. Requests for additional items to be included in the work programme were made.

At the first meeting of the new municipal year, the Committee would review the work programme and identify items for consideration for the next rolling two-year period.

BFSC38 Chair's Update

The Chair indicated that this was the last meeting of the Committee for the 2024/25 municipal year and he thanked the Members for their participation and particularly their input during the consultation on the budget. He also thanked officers for their support.

The meeting ended at 6.31 pm

Chairman:

Date: Wednesday 25 June 2025