BUSINESS AND FINANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Business and Finance Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday 11 March 2026 at 6.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Third Floor, Southwater One, Telford, TF3 4JG

Present:	Councillors N A M England (Chair), N Page (Vice-Chair), L Lewis, G Luter, S Syrda and R Tyrrell.
In Attendance:	J Dunn (Director: Prosperity & Investment), A Lowe (Director: Policy & Governance) and P Starkey (Senior Democracy Officer (Scrutiny)).
Apologies:	Councillor J Kaur.

BFSC22 Declarations of Interest

None.

BFSC23 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 15 January 2026 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

BFSC24 Innovative Approaches to Alternative Accommodation

The Director: Policy & Governance presented the report setting out proposals to establish a time-limited, politically balanced working group jointly with Members of the Communities Scrutiny Committee to explore innovative approaches to alternative accommodation, with a particular focus on smaller, lower-cost homes and the repurposing of existing assets in the Borough.

The Director: Policy & Governance outlined the proposed scope, membership and timetable for the joint working group which would look to comprise of a total of seven Members, four from the Business & Finance Scrutiny Committee and three from the Communities Scrutiny Committee. The proposals set out that the joint working group would run over a 6-month period which meetings taking place between 1 April and 30 September 2026. A draft Terms of Reference was attached at Appendix A and illustrative examples of the work of other authorities at Appendix B.

The Committee noted that the activity would be delivered within existing resources and delegated authority was sought for the Director: Policy & Governance to work in consultation with the Chair of the Business & Finance Scrutiny Committee to enable the programme of work to proceed.

The Committee welcomed the establishment of the joint working group, noting the benefits of drawing on external expert witnesses and learning from other authorities. Members expressed support for progressing with the working group to address housing need, particularly single-person accommodation and opportunities to utilise existing buildings.

In response to Members' questions, the Director: Policy & Governance confirmed that invitations would be issued to both Committees to seek expressions of interest and that the Terms of Reference would be finalised at the first meeting. Findings and recommendations would be reported back to the Committee following the evidence gathering phase.

RESOLVED – that the proposals for the working group as set out in the report be approved and delegated authority be granted to the Director: Policy & Governance, in consultation with the Chair, to make any necessary amendments to enable the programme of work to proceed.

BFSC25 Telford Land Deal

The Director: Prosperity & Investment presented an update on the Telford Land Deal, summarising the outputs as the authority was nearing the end of the 10-year deal. Members were reminded that the Land Deal was established in 2015 as a 10-year partnership between the Council, Homes England and the Marches LEP, enabling the Council to take responsibility for bringing Homes England's former new-town landholdings to the market, supported by an initial £19m Local Growth Fund investment. This model was designed to address long-standing barriers to development including ecology surveys, utilities constraints and planning challenges that had historically delayed the release of sites for employment and housing.

The presentation outlined how the Land Deal had continued to perform strongly. Across the full ten-year period, the programme had supported the delivery of significant new employment floorspace, the remediation and development of over 50 hectares of brownfield land and the creation of around 2,400 jobs, while generating approximately £2m in business rates and £2.5m in council tax.

Examples of key completed schemes included Hortonwood West which had delivered serviced industrial land, new infrastructure and substantial job creation, the T54 site, which continued to attract major inward investment including the multi million pound expansion of Magna Cosma, and the wider Hortonwood estate which had benefited from upgraded power capacity and had been brought to market as shovel ready employment land.

Members were informed that the Land Deal had also enabled a pipeline of major residential schemes, including 100% affordable housing sites at Newcomen Way, Majestic Way and Old Park, alongside mixed-tenure developments supported through Homes England funding. The Director: Prosperity & Investment also highlighted the completion of the 299 housing scheme at The Hem, one of the largest allocations brought forward under the Land Deal to date. In addition, the use of retained profit share had supported wider regeneration projects such as the Theatre Quarter in Limes Walk and the delivery of 24 small business units at Orchard Business Park, as well as enabling the Council to address viability gaps in emerging developments.

The Committee heard that the Council had recently taken ownership of residual liability land from Homes England, which was being utilised to support environmental enhancements including Great Crested Newt licensing, carbon offsetting and biodiversity net gain. A small number of unsold development plots remained and the remainder expected to be disposed of during the run-off period to March 2027. Homes England would lead on bringing forward the strategic SUE sites at Shawbirch and Wappenshall.

The Committee welcomed the update and commended officers for the sustained success of the programme over the past decade. Members reflected on the long-term economic benefits secured through the Deal, the increased investor confidence within the Borough, the substantial employment and housing delivery, and the Council's effective use of retained profit share to reinvest in regeneration and infrastructure.

In response to Members' questions, the Director: Prosperity & Investment explained that a significant proportion of the employment opportunities had been taken up by existing Telford & Wrekin businesses or residents, citing examples of local firms expanding such as Rosewood Pet Products and construction phase jobs being filled by local tradesmen. The Director: Prosperity & Investment also confirmed that financial returns remained broadly in line with expectations, despite increases in infrastructure costs. The small number of sites which remained unsold were progressing through the market or being considered for alternative use including the expansion of a local nature reserve.

Members noted the update.

BFSC26 <u>Work Programme Review</u>

The Director: Policy & Governance presented the updated work programme. Areas shaded in grey indicated completed work and any remaining items would be rolled over to the 2026/27 municipal year as part of the two year rolling work programme.

As this was the last meeting of the current municipal year, Members noted that suggestions were being collated for the 2026/27 municipal year and an updated work programme would be brought forward to the first Committee meeting in the new municipal year.

Members noted the updated work programme.

BFSC27 <u>Chair's Update</u>

The Chair thanked Officers and Members for their participation in the meeting and throughout the year.

The meeting ended at 6.28 pm

Chairman: ....

Date: Wednesday 24 June 2026