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Telford & Wrekin
Co-operative Council

Protect, care and invest
to create a better borough

Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Cabinet

Monday 6 January 2025

6.00 pm

Council Chamber, Third Floor, Southwater One, Telford, TF3 4JG

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Cabinet Members:

Councillor L D Carter Leader of the Council

Councillor R A Overton Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member: Highways, Housing & Enforcement

Councillor Z Hannington Cabinet Member: Finance, Governance & Customer Services

Councillor C Healy Cabinet Member: Neighbourhoods, Planning & Sustainability

Councillor A D McClements Cabinet Member: Leisure, Tourism, Culture & the Arts

Councillor R Mehta Cabinet Member: Inclusion, Engagement, Equalities & Civic Pride

Councillor K Middleton Cabinet Member: Healthier, Safer & Stronger Communities & Partnerships

Councillor O Vickers Cabinet Member: The Economy

Councillor S A W Reynolds Cabinet Member: Children, Young People, Education, Employment & Skills

Councillor P Watling Cabinet Member: Adult Social Care & Health Systems

Invitees

Councillor T J Nelson Conservative

Councillor W L Tomlinson Liberal Democrat

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CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday 5 December 2024 at 10.00 am in Council Chamber, Third Floor, Southwater One, Telford, TF3 4JG

PUBLISHED ON WEDNESDAY 11 DECEMBER 2024

(DEADLINE FOR CALL-IN: MONDAY 16 DECEMBER 2024)

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

Also Present: Councillor T J Nelson (Conservative Group Leader)

Apologies: Councillors Z Hannington and B Tomlinson.

CAB-26 Declarations of Interest

None.

CAB-27 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2024 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

CAB-28 Leader's Announcements

The Leader paid tribute to former Councillor Eric Carter following his passing after a short period of illness. The Council had been deeply saddened to learn of Councillor Carter's passing and acknowledged his commitment to local government and democracy for over three decades including whilst serving as a Cabinet Member between 2007 – 2011. The Leader passed on his sincere condolences to Councillor Carter's family, friends and colleagues.

CAB-29 Pride in Our High Street

The Cabinet Member: Economy presented the report of the Director: Prosperity & Investment.

The Pride in Our High Streets programme was entering its tenth year, having launched in 2015 and formed part of a key long term funding commitment to protect, care and invest in local high streets. Since its launch, the Council had invested £7.6m to support high streets to remain resilient in the face of neglect and to support businesses to adapt following the rise in online shopping since the COVID-19 pandemic. The programme had developed into a nationally recognised model for investment in high streets and had had visible and direct impact on the Borough's high streets with 65 empty retail premises brought

back into use through start up grants, 388 new jobs created and 367 business grants awarded. Over the last five years, the programme had reduced the number of empty premises from an average of 9% to 3.8% exceeding the national average of 14%.

The report set out that the third phase of the programme commenced in 2019 and had seen a further £6.1m investment to support high street regeneration initiatives to inform 5 new 'Place Plans'. Tailoring investment through Place Plans continues to support new business start-ups and help develop business resilience, raise aspirations and encourage young entrepreneurs to become business focused. Several improvement schemes had been delivered as part of the Place Plan activity with many projects concentrated on Madeley and Dawley high streets. Some investments included:-

- Nightclub exterior refurbishment in Newport supported by match funding from owners;
- Improvements in and around the bandstand on Dawley High Street;
- War memorial improvements in Madeley & Ironbridge;
- Planting schemes in Ironbridge & Madeley to improve the look and feel of the high street;
- Creation of a catering facility in Dawley Town Park to help attract new visitors and to encourage existing visitors to stay longer;
- Car Park Improvements in Ironbridge;
- Support for the creation of a permanent Post Office in Dawley; and
- Supporting specialist housing provision across out towns.

The report also highlighted the positive impact of the Pride in Our High Streets programme during delivery of its current phase in supporting the regeneration and revitalisation of the Borough's high streets. The programme had seen investment targeted at transforming the look and feel of high streets with improved shop frontages, new signage, eco grants to enable high street businesses to be more sustainable and greener, diversification grants to support businesses to adapt business models to changing markets and new street furnishings. Investment into façade improvements had seen the transformation of 100 properties across Borough high streets, making high streets more attractive and inviting for visitors and residents, with heritage colours and period features had been reintroduced into Ironbridge and Wellington.

In the run up to the annual Small Business Saturday event in December, the Council would be announcing its latest High Street Heroes with over 100 awards presented to date. Recent award winners included the Little Christmas Shop in Ironbridge, Park Street Kitchen in Wellington and Amanda's Ow Bist'Ro in Dawley.

The report set out the future plans for the programme which included further funding of £1m to develop the ongoing package and also further expansion to cover district centres such as Hadley & Leegomery, Sutton Hill and Donnington to ensure areas continue to get the investment they need.

Cabinet Members welcomed the report and thanked the Leader and Officers for their continued commitment and dedication towards championing the Borough's high street offer. The scheme had been transformative and had continued to bring new life to market towns, helping businesses to adapt with the use of diversification grants and supporting residents' wellbeing.

The Leader of the Conservative Group noted the report and highlighted the Pride in Our High Streets programme as one intervention which should be kept under continuous review. He asked if the Cabinet could consider supporting the programme through non-cash means such as minimising road closures and licence fees and also urged the Cabinet to reconsider the risks of volunteering intervention as part of high street regeneration to enable residents to continue to be involved with keeping high streets attractive and minimise costs imposed on the Council.

The Leader of the Council provided reassurance that it was not the Council's intention to impede on volunteering opportunities and emphasised the Council's support for volunteer growth. The Leader noted the successes of the programme to date and expressed his gratitude to Town and Parish Councils for their financial contribution. The Leader addressed current frustrations with private landlords holding empty properties and advised that the recently announced new government legislation on high street auctions would give local authorities the power to influence landlords to lease out their premises. Despite public dissatisfaction with high streets, the Leader stressed the importance of continued efforts and recognised the hard work and dedication of business owners and their significant contributions to the Borough's high streets and the wider community.

RESOLVED – that:

- a) the work of the Pride in Our High Streets (PIOHS) programme in supporting resilient local high streets, local businesses and communities of the borough be noted; and**
- b) continuation of the PIOHS programme be approved.**

CAB-30 Telford Land Deal Update

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member: Highways, Housing & Enforcement presented the report of the Director: Prosperity & Investment. The report set out the continued achievements of the Telford Land Deal during the last financial year and since its commencement in 2015 which with support from the Council's Growth Fund and the Invest Telford Business Pledge which had delivered new higher skilled local jobs, created growth and security in the local supply chain and new homes across the Borough.

Since the Council entered into a unique 10-year Land Deal with Homes England, the Deal had cumulatively delivered the sale of a total of 34 commercial sites and 25 sites for residential development, achieving a gross sales income of £60.3m to date. These sites have enabled the delivery of 1,583 new homes and supported commercial premises in delivering 2,473

new jobs, with many in engineering and manufacturing adding skilled job opportunities for the Borough.

The financial successes of the Land Deal have meant that a cumulative profit of £19.1m has been achieved by the Land Deal partners up to 31 March 2024. In the last year alone, the Deal had delivered £11.7m in growth sales income, delivered 381,117sqft of commercial floor space and provided 48 new homes. The Council had in 2023/24, completed the reinvestment of £3.3m of its profit share alongside its Growth Fund to support the delivery of 24 industrial units at Hortonwood following the creation of Orchard Business Park.

The report highlighted that the Telford Land Deal Board had recently endorsed the decision of the Council to spend profit share monies to support the viability of projects being delivered through the Towns Investment Fund. This included approval to invest £3m of its profit share into projects in Oakengates and the Telford Town Centre. The funding had seen the delivery of new homes, refurbished retail units and quality public realm spaces. Investment had also supported the delivery of enhanced access routes and the new 43,055sqft Digital Skills and Enterprise Hub, located in the Quad in Station Quarter, accommodating a coordinated offer for both education and a flexible new space for businesses.

Ni Park had recently reached completion of its second phase with a further 3 units totalling 30,000sqft and is now a recognised hub for small businesses. The first phase of delivery had seen 24 small business units completed in October 2021, supported through funding from the Growth Fund and Land Deal profit share. All units proved popular with small agri-tech businesses, with further opportunities to partner with Harper Adams University. Another of the Council's prime business parks, Hortonwood West had been highly successful in providing much needed employment land delivering 339 new jobs and 375,143sqft of employment floor space.

As the Land Deal draws nearer to the end of its 10 year agreement, negotiations had taken place to secure an extension, enabling the Council to continue to bring forward the small number of sites that remain and to continue to deliver new homes, create skilled jobs and foster sustainable growth.

Cabinet Members welcomed the report and thanked Officers and Partners involved. Members noted the positive impact the Land Deal continued to have in driving investment and regeneration for the Borough and the importance of delivering new homes and jobs for its residents. Members also highlighted the significant impact of the £4m income from business rates and council tax on delivering key frontline services and securing capital investment through land sales and private sector contributions. Members welcomed plans to negotiate an extension of the current agreement.

The Leader of the Conservative Group thanked Officers for the detailed and extensive report in acknowledging the achievements of the Land Deal in land remediation and growth. He expressed a desire for jobs to remain within the

Borough to reduce the need for long commutes for residents and welcomed next steps for the extension of the current agreement.

The Leader of the Council acknowledged the success of the Land Deal to date and highlighted the importance of continuing to provide good quality jobs and homes for residents. The Leader emphasised that the Borough remained open for business and the Council continued to be committed to securing new investment opportunities.

RESOLVED – that:

- a) **the outcomes achieved during the 2023/2024 financial year and overall, since the Land Deal commenced in 2015 be noted;**
- b) **delegated authority be granted to the Director: Prosperity & Investment to negotiate the terms of any extension to the Land Deal as set out in section 4.21 in consultation with the Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member: Highways, Housing & Enforcement; and**
- c) **delegated authority be granted to the Director: Policy & Governance to take all the necessary steps to give effect to the proposals set out in this report.**

CAB-31 2024/25 Financial Monitoring Report

In the absence of the Cabinet Member: Finance, Governance and Customer Services, the Leader of the Council presented the report of the Interim Director: Finance, People and IDT.

The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2024/25 to 2027/28 was approved at Full Council on 29 February 2024 and included the 2024/25 revenue budget and medium term capital programme. Since its approval, the economic climate had continued to be challenging with cost pressures being experienced, particularly in relation to the provision of Adult Social Care.

Nationally, Councils had continued to face extreme challenges in 2024/25 with unprecedented pressures driven by high costs and high demand for services particularly Adult Social Care, Children's Safeguarding and School Travel Assistance. The Autumn Budget presented by the Chancellor on 30 October 2024, set out a medium term plan for public finances which included a one-year Spending Review covering Departmental budgets for 2025/26 with a further Spending Review stage in late Spring 2025 which it is anticipated will cover 2026/27 and 2027/28.

The headline figures indicated a real terms increase in core local government spending power of around 3.2% in 2025/26, including at least £1.3bn of new grant funding, of which £600m will be new grant funding to support social care. However, there are many unknowns and lack of clarity about what funding streams are included and the detail and impact on individual local authorities will not be known until the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement which would be announced in early December.

The report set out the latest financial monitoring position for the year relating to the revenue budget, capital programme and income collection. It provided the latest projections in relation to the projected outturn position, progress against the approved 2024/25 capital programme and gave a summary of collection information in relation to Council Tax Business Rates and Sales Ledger income.

The funding outlook for the medium term remains very uncertain and will clearly continue to be challenging, particularly given the Council has already had to deliver £156.9m ongoing budget savings since 2009/10.

The report also highlighted that the budget was within limits after applying contingencies set aside at the start of the financial year. An additional £6.7m had been invested in Adult Social Care due to ongoing pressures. Despite these challenges, the Council had maintained a surplus, avoided drastic interventions, and kept the £21.7m budget strategy reserve intact.

Although income monitoring was slightly below target, it was anticipated that targets would be met by year-end. Projections would continue to be refined, and a further monitoring report had been scheduled for the next Cabinet meeting taking place on 6 January 2025.

The Leader highlighted that the Council had an excellent track record of strong financial management and while extremely challenging the Council would continue to deliver quality services to the residents of the borough and protect critical front-line services.

Cabinet Members welcomed the report which showed due diligence, and that the Council was in a good position to deliver a balanced budget despite the increase demand in services such as Adult Social Care and Children's Safeguarding. Members acknowledged the hard work of Officers and their role on maintaining the budget and praised the Council's robust financial management and strategic decision-making on projects such as the Growth Fund, NuPlace and Solar Farm to ensure revenue regeneration for the Council.

The Leader of the Conservative Group recognised the work of the Council's Finance Team and acknowledged the complexity of the accounts and the pressures on the Council, particularly in social care, emphasising the need to predict demand more accurately. He raised concern over the overspend from dedicated school grants due to the introduction of new rules for children and young people with special educational needs and the associated costs. He noted the anticipated 3.2% increase in spending power and asked whether it would be real terms.

RECOMMENDED TO FULL COUNCIL that:-

- a) the 2024/25 revenue budget position be noted;**

- b) the position in relation to capital spend; and recommends that Full Council approves the changes to the capital programme detailed in Appendix C and all associated changes to the Medium Term Financial Strategy, including Treasury and Prudential Indicators;**
- c) the collection rates for NNDR, council tax and sales ledger be noted; and**
- d) the current position in relation to Treasury & Prudential Indicators be noted.**

CAB-32 Thrive Telford

The Cabinet Member: Economy presented the report of the Director: Prosperity & Investment.

The report set out the work that had been undertaken as part of the Council's Thrive Telford programme which had seen £5.8m invested into skills, social activities and vital business support across the Borough. The programme had targeted support to those most in need including community groups that help reduce anti-social behaviour and crime and children and young people who were currently not in education, employment or training (NEET).

Delivery of the Thrive Telford programme began in February 2023 with implementation phases continuing into Summer 2024 and a current programme end date of 31 March 2025. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) provided £2.6 billion of new funding for local investment by March 2025 which would enable local authorities funding for communities, places, businesses, people and skills to support the delivering of the following objectives:-

- Boost productivity, pay, jobs and living standards by growing the private sector;
- Increase opportunities and improve public services;
- Restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging; and
- Empower local leaders and communities.

The report highlighted a number of key achievements since the programme commenced including the issuing of 174 business grants, 382 residents enrolled onto NEET programmes, 30 businesses accessing support services to improve efficiency and 170 individuals receiving start up support.

Working with the St Giles Trust, the programme had supported the roll out of the Trust's Desist and Transform programme which looks to provide education and build awareness for young people in areas such as knife crime, criminal justice and gang related crime. The programme had also supported other initiatives such as Telford Kicks, a free football programme which takes place at 8 locations across the Borough and provides young people with constructive activity to reduce engagement in anti-social behaviour. School Kabaddi workshops had taken place in partnership with Sport England and

the Telford and Wrekin Interfaith Council which had seen a total of 19 schools and 1,525 pupils participating.

The programme had been vital in launching the new Digital Skills Hub located at the Quad in Station Quarter to offer maths and digital-focused courses by Telford College to students in the Borough as well as robotics, automation and engineering-based courses.

The Government had recently announced that the programme will be extended for a further year and the Council were awaiting details of the extension including any changes to priorities.

Cabinet Members welcomed the report and highlighted the positive impact the programme had had on reducing anti-social behaviour in the Borough.

The Leader of the Conservative Group acknowledged that outward investment was beneficial and noted that the report highlighted the number of enterprises and individuals who had benefitted from the programme. He asked for detail to be provided on what proportion of capital investment had been invested into the Quad and the facilities that the Council was occupying.

The Cabinet Member: Economy confirmed that details would be provided outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED – that the progress of the Thrive Telford programme be noted.

CAB-33 Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report

The Cabinet Member for Inclusion, Engagement, Equalities & Civic Pride presented the report of the Director: Policy & Governance. The report provided an update on the work that had taken place to meet the Council's commitments to the Armed Forces Covenant and in support of the Borough's Armed Forces community during 2023/24.

As a signatory of the Armed Forces Covenant, Telford and Wrekin Council was required to uphold a commitment to support those who serve or had served in the Armed Forces. In the last year, the Council had delivered its annual Armed Forces Day event and had broadened outreach activities through partnership working to include the Armed Forces Staff Network, Veterans' Cafes in Dawley, Madeley and Donnington, the Models for Heroes Group, Bake & Banter Sessions, Veterans' & Spouses' Craft & Sewing Group, Armed Forces Community Art Lessons and a Veterans Football Club which meets weekly at AFC Telford United. The Council had also been recognised by the Ministry of Defence as a Gold Employer for veterans, an award granted for 5 years and due for renewal in 2025.

Since 2011, a total of 151 organisations across the Borough had signed up to the Armed Forces Community with 35 signatories collected in the last 12 months. A total of 26 Town & Parish Councils had also signed the Covenant

and the Council had continued to receive positive feedback about how these organisations had benefited greatly from being able to build a reputation as being 'Forces Friendly'.

The report highlighted the Council's commitment to enhancing its support offer through the development of a new Armed Forces Community Hub, creating a single point of contact for veterans and their families.

Cabinet Members recognised the importance of supporting veterans and armed forces personnel and the Council's continued commitment to supporting them. Members also highlighted the success of some of the outreach activities such as the Veteran's Café which had seen over 1,000 attendances in recent months and how these initiatives had provided a space for Veterans to seek support.

The Leader of the Conservative Group welcomed the report and commended the work of the Council in supporting the Armed Forces community and looked forward to receiving further updates in relation to the progress of the new Armed Forces Community Hub.

The Leader of the Council praised the Council's continued commitment to supporting the Borough's veterans and their families highlighting the Council's accreditation and acknowledging the work of Parish and Town Council's in making High Streets armed forces friendly. The Leader acknowledged the challenging landscape for providing veteran's support and the reliance on 1,700 charities in the UK but provided reassurance that the Council would continue to support veterans and their families through outreach activities and access to skills and employment opportunities.

RESOLVED – that:

- a) the progress made developing the Council's "offer" to the borough's Armed Forces community be noted;
- b) the proposed restructure of the Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Board be endorsed; and
- c) the £10,000 funding for the Armed Forces community cafes for the next two years be approved.

CAB-34 Councillors Pride Fund 2023-24: Helping to Protect, Care and Invest to Create a Better Borough

The Cabinet Member: Inclusion, Engagement, Equalities & Civic Pride presented the report on Councillors Pride Fund 2022-23: Helping to Protect, Care and Invest to Create a Better Borough which provided details in relation to allocation of the Councillors' Pride Fund during the financial year 2023/24.

In 2023, Members were allocated a total of £270,000 to invest in projects and activities which would seek improvement at a local level. The fund enabled Members to deliver the Council's five priorities in their ward with a small amount of money making a big difference on a local level, particularly to small

community groups that found it difficult to access alternative grant funding. The final deadline for submitting applications in the current financial year was 1 February 2025.

During the reporting period, a total of 335 proposals had been received and awarded with the largest proportion of applications supporting activities for children and young people ranging from uniformed groups, youth clubs, sporting activities, playgroups and school trips. Funding had also supported a number of community and voluntary groups for older residents, services to support residents who continue to be affected by the cost of living crisis as well as the Armed Forces community. Members had been encouraged to seek match funding for their grants which had secured an additional 60p of funding for every £1 allocated.

The report highlighted how Members had used the funding available to support the Council's priorities and provided various examples of projects and initiatives which had reaped the benefits.

Cabinet Members welcomed the report and highlighted the positive impact it had made in local communities and gave examples of some of the initiatives they had supported in their own ward areas.

The Leader of the Conservative Group advocated for the scheme which was administered efficiently by Officers. He acknowledged the growth of the ward fund over the past nine years, highlighting the flexible criteria which had allowed Members to focus on delivering priorities for their residents and make a significant impact to their communities.

RESOLVED – that:

- a) the continued impact of the Councillors' Pride Fund in supporting Councillors to deliver the Council's five priorities in their ward to protect, care and invest in order to create a better borough be noted;**
- b) the importance of this funding in offering a bespoke response to need in individual communities and in supporting community organisations to thrive and offer valued services to residents be noted;**
- c) the additional funding that applications to this scheme have secured through match funding of projects to the value of £163,064 be noted; and**
- d) the final deadline for applications in the year 2024-25 is 1 February 2025 be noted.**

The meeting ended at 11.18 am

Signed for the purposes of the Decision Notices

Anthea Lowe
Director: Policy & Governance
Date: **Wednesday 11 DECEMBER 2024**

Signed

Date: Monday 6 January 2025

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Telford & Wrekin
Co-operative Council

Protect, care and invest
to create a better borough

Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Cabinet

6 January 2025

2024/25 Financial Monitoring Report

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Zona Hannington - Cabinet Member: Finance and Governance
Lead Director:	Michelle Brockway - Interim Director: Finance, People and IDT
Service Area:	Finance, People and IDT
Report Author:	Pauline Harris – Finance Manager
Officer Contact Details:	Tel: 01952 383701 Email: pauline.harris@telford.gov.uk
Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key Decision:	Key Decision
Forward Plan:	Yes – 20 November 2024
Report considered by:	SMT – 3 December 2024 Business Briefing – 12 December 2024 Cabinet – 6 January 2025

1.0 Recommendations for Decision/Noting

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 1.1 Notes the 2024/25 revenue budget position, which shows that, after applying budget contingencies, the Council is projecting to be within budget at year end, and this is without having to use the Budget Strategy or General Fund reserves;
- 1.2 Notes the position in relation to capital spend; and recommends that Full Council approve the changes to the capital programme detailed in Appendix C and all associated changes to the Medium Term Financial Strategy, including Treasury and Prudential Indicators;

1.3 Notes the collection rates for NNDR, council tax and sales ledger;

2.0 Purpose of Report

2.1 To provide Cabinet with the latest financial monitoring position for the year relating to: the revenue budget, capital programme and income collection.

3.0 Background

3.1 The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2024/25 to 2027/28 was approved at Full Council on 29 February 2024, which included the 2024/25 revenue budget and medium term capital programme. Since the MTFS was approved, the economic climate has continued to be challenging with costs pressures being experienced, particularly in relation to the provision of Adult Social Care.

3.2 Good financial management is an essential element of good governance and long-term service planning which are critical to ensuring that local service provision is sustainable and the use of resources is maximised in order to meet the needs of our residents.

3.3 Financial management is the responsibility of budget holders and is supported by Finance staff using a risk based approach: more focus is given to higher risk areas (high value/more volatile); less frequent financial monitoring is undertaken on budgets deemed to be medium to lower risk. Financial monitoring provides Cabinet and Senior Management Team with a focussed view on the Council's financial performance, to inform and support decision making and to ensure financial sustainability.

3.4 This Financial Monitoring Report for 2024/25 provides the latest projections in relation to the projected outturn position i.e. how projected net revenue spend compares to the budget set for the year; progress against the approved 2024/25 capital programme; the key issues to be highlighted; together with a summary of collection information in relation to Council Tax, Business Rates and Sales Ledger income.

3.5 The funding outlook for the medium term remains very uncertain and will clearly continue to be challenging, particularly given the Council has already had to deliver £156.9m ongoing budget savings since 2009/10.

3.6 There is a statutory duty for local authorities to set a balanced and robust budget each financial year and to take timely action to address financial pressures. It is our aim to continue to deliver quality services whilst ensuring a balanced budget.

3.7 The Medium Term Financial Strategy is a separate report on the Cabinet agenda and provides more detail on the medium term position.

4.0 Summary of main proposals

4.1.1 Nationally, Councils continue to face extreme challenges in 2024/25 with unprecedented pressures driven by high costs and high demand for services – particularly Adult Social Care, Children's Safeguarding and School Travel Assistance.

- 4.1.2 While inflation is expected to reduce in the medium term, current indicators show that the economy will be slower to recover than was expected when the Council's budget was set. In October 2024 CPI increased to 2.3% which is above the Bank of England's 2% target. The Bank of England reduced base rate from 5.25% to 5.00% in August with a further cut to 4.75% in November but is still higher than was anticipated when the Council's budget was set.
- 4.1.3 Given these factors, monitoring for 2024/25 indicates a number of variations from the approved budget, notably relating to Adult Social Care where in order to meet the needs of the most vulnerable residents, additional investment is required.
- 4.1.4 Before application of remaining contingencies included in the revenue budget, the projected outturn position is currently expected to be over budget by £4.832m at year end, which is a reduction of £0.429m since the last report. Making use of the specific earmarked Social Care contingency and the General budget contingency brings the position back to be within budget. Further work is ongoing to refine projections, identify additional in-year efficiencies, additional income and one-off balances which could be used to improve the position further.
- 4.1.5 The Council has an excellent track record of strong financial management and Cabinet Members and budget holders will continue their work to manage budgets as effectively as possible during 2024/25 to address in-year financial pressures.
- 4.1.6 Projections will continue to be refined in the final quarter of the year. While extremely challenging our aim is to continue to deliver quality services to the residents of the borough and protect critical front-line services. If the final outturn position is over budget, after applying the budgeted contingencies, this would be covered from a number of reserves which may include the Council's Budget Strategy Reserve. Many of the pressures currently being faced by the Council are of an ongoing nature which, unless the government recognise the unprecedented nature of the financial challenges being faced by councils across the country in the local government funding settlement (which was not announced at the time of writing this report), will have a significant impact on the future Medium Term Financial Strategy (also on this agenda).

4.1.7 A summary of the current projection for the year end position is:-

	£m
Net Revenue Budget	157.296
Projected Net Revenue Outturn	162.128
Projected Variance	+4.832
Use of One off Contingency (earmarked for Social Care Pressures)	-1.959
Use of General Budget Contingency	-2.873
Projected Year End Variance	0.000

4.1.8 There are a number of variations from the approved budget, detailed in Section 5. The key variance is Adult Social Care (ASC), with £6.7m additional investment currently being required relating to the cost of providing care packages across all client groups. This includes the impact of market price increases, more complex needs, higher demand and longer periods of care being required; all of which are being analysed by the Service with the aim of refining projections and managing spend. This is after additional net investment of £5.9m (which is after savings of £7.7m have been reflected) into ASC in 2024/25 as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

4.2 **Capital**

The capital programme totals £93.1m for 2024/25 which includes all approvals since the budget was set. Schemes are in progress and at the time of compiling this report spend is projected to be slightly under budget which indicates that there is likely to be re-phasing into 25/26 at year end.

4.3 **Corporate Income Collection**

Income collected in relation to Business Rates is within the target set while Sales Ledger and Council Tax are slightly outside the target set. Ultimately, all debt will be pursued and will continue to be collected after the end of the financial year with all appropriate recovery avenues being pursued.

5.0 Additional Information

5.1 The overall 2024/25 monitoring position against the budget is summarised in the table below:

Service Area	Budget £m	Variation Cabinet 5.12.24 £m	Movement £m	Total Current Variation £m
Finance, People & IDT	16.589	(1.750)	0.000	(1.750)
Policy & Governance	1.369	(0.043)	0.000	(0.043)
Adult Social Care	68.180	6.761	0.000	6.761
Housing, Commercial & Customer Services	5.223	(0.229)	0.000	(0.229)
Children's Safeguarding & Family Support	49.422	0.651	(0.083)	0.568
Education & Skills	12.794	0.590	0.091	0.681
Health & Wellbeing	0.806	0.033	(0.002)	0.031
Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services	33.145	0.039	0.025	0.064
Prosperity & Investment	(6.812)	1.062	0.140	1.202
Council Wide	(23.420)	(1.853)	(0.600)	(2.453)
Total	157.296	5.261	(0.429)	4.832

5.2.1 Projected variances over £0.250m are highlighted below, all other variances over £50k are detailed in Appendix B.

Service Area	Variance £m
<p><u>Finance, People & IDT</u></p> <p>Treasury – impact of capital spend re-profiling and positive cash flow positions during the year. This benefit is offsetting the income pressure in the Property Investment Portfolio and Housing shown below.</p>	-1.700
<p><u>Adult Social Care</u></p> <p>Longer Term Care Purchasing – projected expenditure relating to block and spot contracts. Additional investment is required due to the continued increase in the costs of care. The service</p>	+6.401

Service Area	Variance £m
<p>continues to work on delivering care which maximises prevention and independence where possible. External consultants have also been commissioned to review the service and work undertaken to date indicates areas where savings may be possible in future.</p> <p>My Options – Adults & Children’s Services – pressure from delay in delivery of savings from change in provision at Lakewood Court and staffing savings to be delivered.</p> <p>Prevention & Independence – Older People & Disability – mainly due to staffing vacancies due to recruitment challenges</p> <p>Prevention & Enablement, Intermediate Care – demand for reablement services and services to facilitate discharge from hospital continue to be high and a pressure is evident in 2024/25. Regular discussions with Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin ICB are being held to determine the funding strategy for 2024/25 which may result in a share of the pressure falling on Telford & Wrekin Council.</p> <p>Income – client contributions</p>	<p></p> <p>+0.569</p> <p>-0.269</p> <p>+0.469</p> <p>-0.370</p>
<p><u>Housing, Commercial & Customer Services</u></p> <p>Customer Relationships & Welfare Services – Use of One off Reserve Funding</p> <p>Strategic Housing, Income – income shortfall which will be delivered when Housing Schemes become operational (Red Lion development due 2025/26). Note, borrowing costs are also reduced which is reflected in the Treasury benefit reported under Finance.</p>	<p></p> <p>-0.466</p> <p>+0.270</p>
<p><u>Children’s Safeguarding & Family Support</u></p> <p>Children in Care, Leaving Care Team & Speciality Services, Family Solutions:</p> <p>Children In Care Placements – additional investment was allocated in the 2024/25 budget process and costs are currently projected to be within budget. The Council’s new provision for supported accommodation, Octavia Court, which opened in the Summer, is also having a positive impact on placement costs.</p>	<p></p> <p>-0.354</p>

Service Area	Variance £m
Health Funding – anticipated health contributions in relation to health needs are lower than budgeted, impacted by reduced overall placement costs.	+0.643
Operational Expenditure – pressure mainly arising from aids and adaptations and funding of the Autism Hub.	+0.253
Income – additional grant income received	-0.404
Child Protection & Family Support, Parenting Assessment & Contact Teams	
Staffing expenditure – underspend due to vacant posts	-0.372
Safeguarding, Management & Partnerships:	
Staffing expenditure – shortfall arising from one off investment ending and anticipated savings target applied	+0.659
<u>Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services</u>	
Use of Reserves – one off funding to meet street lighting costs	-0.313
<u>Prosperity & Investment</u>	
Regeneration & Investment, Property Portfolio Income – capital investment re-phased into future years with corresponding impact on budgeted income. Note, this is offset by a reduction in borrowing costs which is reflected in the Treasury benefit totalling £1.7m reported under Finance.	+0.911
<u>Council Wide</u> – including WME dividend which is projected to be higher than budgeted; additional retained rates inflation and other corporate underspends.	-2.453

5.2.2 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

Dedicated Schools Grant sits within Education & Skills and is monitored separately to the Council's General Fund position shown in Section 5.1. Excluding funds passed to academies and colleges, Dedicated Schools Grant totals £133.4m in 2024/25. DSG deficits are currently required to be held in a separate reserve in local authorities' accounts.

During 2023/24 Telford & Wrekin's DSG was overspent and a deficit of £1.82m was carried forward to 2024/25. The deficit was due to budget pressures relating to High Needs provision and these pressures have continued in 2024/25. The current

position is that the deficit is currently projected to significantly increase in 2024/25, from £1.82m at the start of the year to approximately £6m at the end of the financial year.

A cost improvement plan is in place and meetings are regularly held to monitor and address budget pressures. The Council has a positive relationship with schools and other providers which assists the Council to manage the budget as effectively as possible and ensure we meet our responsibilities to young people.

High needs pressure is a national issue with most upper tier Council's having a DSG deficit. At the end of 2022/23, the national total DSG deficit was £1.168bn (which included 100 authorities with deficits). A recent survey from the Association of Local Authority Treasurers has revealed that the deficit currently exceeds £3bn across English Councils and is projected to rise to £8bn in 2026/27.

In 2020, the Government introduced a statutory override that meant that all local authorities' DSG deficits were separated from a Council's wider accounts. This means there is no current expectation that a council's general fund should be used to offset any DSG deficit. This override is currently in place until 2025/26. The new government has yet to announce its policy position beyond 2025/26.

A letter has been sent to the Secretary of State for Education, and the Minister of State for School Standards advising them of the significant financial challenges we are currently facing, calling on the government for a financial resolution and for the current system to be reformed.

The position is being closely monitored and updates will be included in future financial monitoring reports.

5.3 **CONTINGENCIES, RESERVES & BALANCES**

5.3.1 The 2024/25 budget includes a general revenue contingency of £3.950m which is set aside to meet any unforeseen expenditure or income shortfalls during the year and a one-off contingency of £1.959m set aside specifically for Social Care pressures.

The current projected position would require use of all of the one-off contingency earmarked for Social Care and would leave a balance of £1.077m in the general contingency (see table in 4.1.7).

5.3.2 There is also a contingency amount held centrally for contractual and pay inflation. Any remaining balance will be applied to support the overall position at year end. The pay award for 2024/25 has now been finalised and detailed work on the associated cost is being undertaken.

5.3.3 The Budget Strategy Reserve remains at £21.7m.

5.4 CAPITAL

5.4.1 2024/25 Capital Programme

The 2024/25 capital programme totals £93.1m. The financial position is shown in the table below and shows projected spend at £91.3m which indicates that there is likely to be some re-phasing into 2025/26 required at year end.

Service Area	Approved Budget	Spend	% Spend	Year End
	£m	£m		£m
Prosperity & Investment	51.35	29.55	57.55%	51.22
Policy & Governance	0.07	0.01	14.29%	0.05
Education & Skills	15.53	8.23	52.99%	15.19
Adult Social Care	0.03	0.00	0.00%	0.03
Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services	12.86	4.91	38.18%	12.53
Housing, Commercial and Customer Services	6.37	2.99	46.94%	5.37
Finance People and IDT	5.93	3.64	61.38%	5.93
Corporate Items	1.01	0.34	33.66%	1.01
Total	93.15	49.67	53.3%	91.33

5.4.2 The 2024/25 capital programme relies on £4.6m of net capital receipts as part of its funding. Capital receipts included in the medium term budget strategy are kept under continual review and any changes will be reflected in future budget projections but are currently projected to be on target.

5.4.3 Changes to the capital programme are shown in Appendix C for approval.

6.0 CORPORATE INCOME MONITORING

6.1 The Council's budget includes significant income streams which are regularly monitored to ensure they are on track to achieve targets that have been set and so that remedial action can be taken at a very early stage. The three main areas are Council Tax, NNDR (business rates) and Sales Ledger. Current monitoring information relating to these is provided below. The Council pursues outstanding debt vigorously, until all possible recovery avenues have been exhausted, but also prudently provides for bad debts in its accounts.

6.2 In summary, NNDR collection is within the target set while sales ledger collection and council tax are slightly outside target.

INCOME COLLECTION – OCTOBER 2024			
	Actual	Target	Performance
Council Tax Collection	62.46%	62.93%	0.47% behind target
NNDR Collection	67.56%	67.22%	0.34% ahead of target
Sales Ledger Outstanding Debt	5.69%	5.25%	0.44% behind target

Council Tax (£119.1m)

The percentage of the current year liability for council tax which the authority should have received during the year, as a percentage of annual collectable debit. The measure does not take account of debt that continues to be pursued and collected after the end of the financial year in which it became due. The final collection figure for all financial years exceeds 99%.

Year End performance 2023/24 97.31%
 Year End Target for 2024/25 97.31%

Performance is cumulative during the year and expressed against the complete year's debit.

Month End Target	Month End Actual	Last year Actual
62.93%	62.46%	62.93%

Collection rates are slightly behind target.

6.3 NNDR-Business Rates (£82.3m)

The % of business rates for 2024/25 that should have been collected during the year. This target, as for council tax, ignores our continuing collection of earlier years' liabilities.

The measure does not take into account the debt that continues to be pursued and collected after the end of the financial year in which it became due. As a general rule the final collection figure for any financial year exceeds 99%.

Year End performance 2023/24 97.37%
 Year End Target for 2024/25 98.00%

Month End Target	Month End Actual	Last year Actual
67.22%	67.56%	66.59%

Collection rates are slightly ahead of target, and ahead of performance last year.

6.4 Sales Ledger (£103m)

This includes general debt and Social Care debt. Debt below 2 months is classified as a normal credit period.

The target percent is set relating cumulative debt outstanding from all years to the current annual debit. The targets and performance of income collection for 2024/25 are as follows:

Age of debt	Annual Target %	October 2024	
		£m	%
Total	5.25	5.858	5.69

Sales ledger performance is outside of target; individual balances are being pursued via legal action.

7.0 Alternative Options

7.1 Budget holders will investigate a number of options to seek to deliver required service outcomes from within budgeted resources. Options to deliver savings and additional income have been explored.

8.0 Key Risks

8.1 Budget holders actively manage their budgets and the many financial risks and challenges that council services face, examples include the risk of a particularly harsh winter which would impact adversely on the winter gritting and adult social care budgets, the increasing dependency on income from a wide range of activities and the risk of interest rate movements and further inflationary pressures, the risk of changes in legislative or accounting requirements impacting on budgets etc. The Council has comprehensive risk management arrangements in place, which are reviewed and updated by the Senior Management Team.

9.0 Council Priorities

9.1 Delivery of all Council priorities depends on the effective use of available resources. Regular financial monitoring in the financial management reports helps to highlight variations from plan so that action can be taken to effectively manage the Council's budget.

10.0 Financial Implications

10.1 The financial impacts are detailed throughout the report.

11.0 Legal and HR Implications

11.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. The S151 Officer has a statutory duty to monitor income and expenditure and ensure that the Council takes action if overall net overspends /shortfalls emerge.

11.2 Legal services will provide ongoing advice in relation to specific proposals relating to the making of savings, including on any requirement to undertake consultation as such proposals are brought forward for consideration.

12.0 Ward Implications

12.1 There are no impacts on specific wards

13.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

13.1 There are no Health, Social and Economic Implications directly arising from this report.

14.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

2024/25 Financial Monitoring Report

14.1 There are no Equality & Diversity implications directly arising from this report. Proportionate impact assessments are carried out and a range of consultation mechanisms are used where appropriate.

15.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

15.1 There are no Climate Change and Environmental Implications directly arising from this report.

16.0 Background Papers

1	Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25 to 2027/28	Council 29/02/2024
2	2024/25 Financial Monitoring Report	Cabinet 10/07/2024
		Council 18/07/2024
3	2024/25 Financial Monitoring Report	Cabinet 07/11/2024
		Council 12/11/2024
4	2024/25 Financial Monitoring Report	Cabinet 05/12/2024

17.0 Appendices

Appendix A	Summary of 2024/25 Projected Variations
Appendix B	2024/25 Revenue Variations over £50,000
Appendix C	Capital Approvals

18.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Director	27/11/2024	27/11/2024	MLB
Finance	27/11/2024	27/11/2024	PH
Legal	27/11/2024	28/11/2024	RP

2024/25 Revenue Budget Variations

Service Area	Budget	Variation 5 December 2024 Cabinet	Movement	Total Current Variation
	£	£	£	£
Finance, People & IDT	16,589,038	(1,749,590)	0	(1,749,590)
Policy & Governance	1,369,241	(42,638)	0	(42,638)
Adult Social Care	68,180,364	6,761,253	0	6,761,253
Housing, Commercial & Customer Services	5,222,983	(229,561)	0	(229,561)
Children's Safeguarding & Family Support	49,422,229	651,416	(82,882)	568,534
Education & Skills	12,793,726	590,162	90,795	680,957
Health & Wellbeing	805,856	33,497	(1,693)	31,804
Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services	33,144,752	38,320	25,000	63,320
Prosperity & Investment	(6,812,251)	1,061,534	139,909	1,201,443
Council Wide	(23,420,098)	(1,853,315)	(600,000)	(2,453,315)
Total	157,295,840	5,261,077	(428,871)	4,832,206
	0			0

2024/25 Revenue Budget Variations over £50,000

Description		Budget	Total Variation	Comments
		£	£	
Finance, People & IDT				
Treasury		14,444,469	(1,700,000)	Impact of re-profiling capital spend and positive cash flow position during the year.
Learning & Development	Staffing	564,456	(60,447)	Vacancies
Revenues	Supplies & Services	217,710	66,013	Legal/operational expenditure
	Variations under £50k	1,362,403	(55,156)	
Total Finance, People & IDT		16,589,038	(1,749,590)	
Policy & Governance				
	Variations under £50k	1,369,241	(42,638)	
Total Policy & Governance		1,369,241	(42,638)	
Adult Social Care				
All long term care purchasing-Spot & block for all ages	Spot & block purchasing	83,724,125	6,401,685	The long term care projection remains as previously reported. There was a recent upward revision to forecast expenditure arising from an acceleration in the costs of care over recent months. Continued and careful monitoring of the position currently suggests there is no requirement to change the projection at this stage however care expenditure is continuing to grow and this will be tracked closely. It should, however, be noted that the trajectory of growth in the first half of 2024/25 has been half that in the equivalent period in 2023/24, reflecting the delivery of validated savings by the service. Part of the increase in care costs is offset by an increase in income (£370,000) shown lower down in this report, reducing the net increase to just over £2.25m. The management team continue to work on delivering care which maximises prevention and independence wherever possible, which is helping to mitigate this budget pressure, which would otherwise be much higher. Newton Europe, external consultants, have also been commissioned to review the service and their work to date has indicated areas where further savings could be delivered in the future. The forecast position will be kept under review as the year progresses, as demand for the service has historically been volatile.
Health funding contributions-all ages and care types	Joint Funding	(7,986,218)	0	Latest forecast income from the NHS from latest identified projections of care for clients with some health needs
Prevention & independence - Older People & Disability	Staffing & Operational expenditure	3,079,487	(269,393)	Mainly from vacancies due to recruitment challenges.
Autism, Learning Disability & mental health	Staffing & Operational expenditure	2,059,417	114,388	Overspend due to additional agency workers.

2024/25 Revenue Budget Variations over £50,000

Description		Budget	Total Variation	Comments
		£	£	
Prevention & Enablement	My Options-Adults & Children's services	272,374	569,136	Pressure from previous savings associated with changes to Lakewood Court from residential provision to Supported accommodation, and costs of agency staff to cover services.
	In House purchasing (from My Options)	7,168,213	223,771	Increase in costs to reflect additional clients mainly in day services
	Intermediate Care	7,632,827	469,000	The demand for reablement services and services to facilitate discharge from hospital continues at an unprecedented level. Work to mitigate the impacts of increased activity and expenditure has had a positive impact resulting in some reduced activity. This has allowed a reduction to forecast bed usage and expenditure. The pressure on the base budget held within the BCF is, based on current activity levels, projected to be a little under £1m in 2024/25, which is half the 2023/24 overspend. Total expenditure in 2024/25 is likely to be around £9.6m. Any overspend is split between Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin ICB and the Council and the current monitoring position assumes the same split (49:51) as in 2023/24. Partner organisations continue to pursue work programmes to look at alternative service delivery strategies to deal with the demand in the medium to longer term. Alongside this discussions with Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin ICB are being held on a regular basis to determine how any funding pressure will be split, and the position will be updated when this is confirmed.
	Staffing & Operational expenditure	1,402,323	57,751	Overspend due to agency workers over and above the number of vacancies
	Client Contributions	(13,599,430)	(370,000)	Based on current expectations of in year income.
	Agency - contribution from reserves	0	(143,992)	Contribution from ASC reserves to cover additional agency resource taken on to support the service in the first quarter of 24/25, costs of which are included in staffing lines above.
	Use of One Offs		(199,000)	
Income	Variations under £50k	(15,572,754)	(92,093)	Expenditure for Newton support is included here with an equivalent income source to cover the expenditure.
Total Adult Social Care		68,180,364	6,761,253	
Housing, Commercial & Customer Services				
Strategic Housing	Income	(324,000)	270,000	Income target shortfall; will be delivered when Housing Schemes become operational; Red Lion development due in 2025/26. There is a benefit in relation to lower borrowing costs which is included in the Treasury benefit reported under Finance.
	Variations under £50k	1,225,395	(176,428)	
Telford Theatre	Various	331,640	137,165	Projected costs in relation to the closure. This over spend is being mitigated by a £151k underspend within the BIT team as a result of premises cost savings.
Telford Ice Rink	Income	(870,113)	(122,987)	Projected over achievement of income.
Wellington Leisure Centre	Various	0	0	
Customer Relationships & Welfare Services	Use of one of reserve funding	0	(466,241)	Use of Reserve.
Community Services	Solar Farm - Income	(989,810)	114,213	Projected shortfall in PPA and FIT income; 10.45% reduction for April to Sept to the previous year.

2024/25 Revenue Budget Variations over £50,000

Description		Budget £	Total Variation £	Comments
Libraries	Variations under £50k	4,739,491	14,717	
	Variations under £50k - Libraries	1,110,380	0	
Total Housing, Commercial & Customer Services		5,222,983	(229,561)	
Children's Safeguarding & Family Support				
Children in Care, Leaving Care Team & Speciality Services, Family Solutions	CIC Placements, Post 18 Staying Put & Leaving Care Support	31,222,780	(354,472)	Additional budget, allocated in the context of 2023/24 outturn and the budget model, currently exceeds projected costs of placements. The work with Impower and ongoing work on prevention, early intervention and review of placement costs is having a positive impact on the cost of placements. The Council's new provision for supported accommodation, Octavia Court, which opened over the summer, is also having a positive impact on placement costs.
	Health funding	(6,997,900)	643,002	The budget was realigned in accordance with the placements model, but health funding is currently projected in the context of identified income in the first part of the year and the reduction in overall placement costs.
	Children with Disabilities	2,058,540	145,853	Expenditure in this area has increased significantly in recent years, as the level of need in the CYP population has increased. The realigned budget is now more realistic for this area, but there continues to be a high demand for support for children with disabilities.
	Operational expenditure	2,584,980	253,062	Section 17 costs (for children in need), CWD - aids and adaptations and funding of the Autism Hub are the main elements contributing to pressure in this area.
	Income	(2,587,834)	(403,590)	Additional income received from government grants including Remand Grant, staying put grant and care leavers supported accommodation reform grant.
Child Protection & Family Support, Parenting Assessment & Contact Teams	Operational expenditure	455,235	150,088	Increase in No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) expenditure and Hotel/B&B costs
Family Safeguarding	Operational expenditure	2,817,301	149,912	The main drivers of the forecast overspend are legal expenses and assessments, both of which are linked to placement cost pressures in recent years.
Service Wide	Staffing expenditure	18,661,350	250,812	A budget saving of £300,000 arising from the ending of a short-term investment in staffing plus overall vacancy factor saving of £299,000. Partly offset by savings from vacancies across service and additional funding included in line below
Variations under £50k		387,950	(299,573)	Includes additional income to mitigate staffing pressures - see above
Total		48,602,403	535,095	
Independent Review	Variations under £50,000	819,826	33,439	

2024/25 Revenue Budget Variations over £50,000

Description		Budget	Total Variation	Comments
		£	£	
Total Children's Safeguarding & Family Support		49,422,229	568,534	
Education & Skills				
Traded Advisory Services		65,448	121,219	Grant income which was available to support services in this area in 2023/24 (e.g. Ukraine grant) is no longer available in 2024/25 creating budgetary pressure. Services are being reviewed in this context.
Specialist Services		562,064	238,822	Significant additional expenditure has been incurred in Educational Psychology due to the use of agency staff to process statutory assessments.
Premature retirement costs		1,171,024	149,751	Savings targets have been applied to this area, which covers the costs of teachers who prematurely retired, with the local authority picking up premature retirement costs. This policy ceased some years ago, but annual costs continue to be incurred through the duration of teachers retirement. Savings targets were applied on the basis of demography, but at present this impact is not being seen on costs.
Under £50K		10,995,190	171,165	This variance includes the £142K vacancy factor for Education & Skills
Total Education & Skills		12,793,726	680,957	
Health & Wellbeing				
Coroners Court	Contracted services	266,450	67,800	Pressure on budget from services being delivered by the Coroner and associated services. Demand for Post Mortems and body conveyancing is increasing costs
	Variations under £50k - GF Services	230,376	(35,996)	
Sexual Health	Contracted services	(5,600)	56,141	Pressure within contract identified within consumables supply contracts and initiatives
	Variations under £50k-Public Health	314,630	(68,199)	
Public Health Grant	Underspend/(Overspend) to/(from) Reserve		12,058	underspends against public health funded budgets transferred from Public Health reserve
Total Health & Wellbeing		805,856	31,804	
Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services				

2024/25 Revenue Budget Variations over £50,000

Description		Budget	Total Variation	Comments
		£	£	
Enforcement	Income - Car Parking	(55,570)	143,204	Shortfall against budgeted income from car parking
	Income - FPN	(46,980)	58,327	Shortfall against budgeted income
	Variations under £50k	810,353	(4,655)	
Neighbourhood & Environmental Services	Variations under £50k	5,421,736	11,717	
Highways, Engineering & Project Delivery	Supplies & Services - Street Lighting	1,979,350	175,620	Increased Maintenance Costs
	Supplies & Services - Street Lighting		13,471	Increased Energy Usage
	Supplies & Services - Street Lighting		36,361	Increased Energy Costs - Difference between 6% average rate and actual rates
	Supplies & Services - Street Lighting		53,959	Energy Green levy introduced in 24/25
	Reserves - Street Lighting		(312,804)	Use of Reserves
	Reserves - Street Lighting		(63,652)	Use of one-off reserves
	Supplies & Services - Flood Barriers		58,392	Unbudgeted costs incurred for responding to flooding including supporting deployment of Ironbridge flood barriers
	Variations under £50k	8,786,636	21,691	
Strategic Transport & Highway Network Management	Supplies & Services - Concessionary Travel	1,675,700	(54,797)	Reduction in operating costs
	Variations under £50k	9,927	(13,484)	
Safer & Stronger Communities	Variations under £50k	(2,149,550)	0	
Waste & Neighbourhood Services	Waste Treatment	6,456,430	(73,656)	Reduction in Waste Tonnages and associated Treatment processing costs
	Variations under £50k	10,256,720	13,625	
Total Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services		33,144,752	63,320	
Prosperity & Investment				
Building Innovation Telford	Premises - Addenbrooke House	-	120,442	Running costs and NNDR of Addenbrooke House up to transfer of property.
	Premises - Lakewood Court	-	191,000	Property improvement costs.
	Premises - The Place	422,630	(151,558)	One off underspends.
	Premises - Oakengates Leisure		(203,121)	One off NNDR rebates and reduced in year NNDR.
	Variations under £50k	(3,678,080)	(171,537)	One off use of Grant, S106 and reserve to support in year pressures.

2024/25 Revenue Budget Variations over £50,000

Description		Budget £	Total Variation £	Comments
Development Management	Income - Planning applications & Building Control	(2,625,900)	200,000	Estimated based upon a downturn in year to date trends compared to 23/24. This will be monitored monthly and can fluctuate up or down, net of one off salary underspends from vacancy management.
Regeneration & Investment	PIP Income	(10,467,570)	911,182	Delay in Growth Fund capital schemes impacting on phasing of income. There is a benefit in relation to the associated lower borrowing costs which is included in the Treasury benefit reported under Finance.
	Income - Earthworks savings target	(200,000)	200,000	Alternative for site identified that will deliver improved outputs.
	Net - Southwater MSCP & Hall Court	(221,090)	52,461	Shortfall on income, although a much improved position than 23/24.
Strategic Planning	Premises costs	-	100,000	Orchard Business Park additional revenue costs associated with utility works.
	Variations under £50k	1,107,320	(131,053)	
	Variations under £50k	8,850,439	83,627	
Total Prosperity & Investment		(6,812,251)	1,201,443	
Corporate				
S31 Grant	Business Rates Retention Scheme Top Up		(69,000)	Additional top up inflation 24.25
WME Dividend		(590,000)	(226,315)	Dividend received from WME higher than budgeted
Council Wide		(22,830,098)	(2,158,000)	Various corporate underspends including pensions and provision for savings shortfalls net of potential costs. To be updated as the year progresses.
Total Corporate		(23,420,098)	(2,453,315)	
Total		157,295,840	4,832,206	

0 0

157,295,840

0

APPENDIX C

Capital Approvals - by Service Area

Virements

Scheme	Service Area	Funding Source	24/25 £	25/26 £	26/27 £	27/28 £
Capital Investment Fund	Corporate Items	Prudential		(3,334,633.00)	(3,000,000.00)	
Towns Fund - Wellington	Prosperity & Investment	Prudential		2,084,633.00		
Condition Works - Leisure	Prosperity & Investment	Prudential		1,000,000.00		
Condition Works - Leisure	Prosperity & Investment	Prudential		250,000.00		
Pride in Your High Street	Prosperity & Investment	Prudential			1,000,000.00	
Levelling Up Fund	Prosperity & Investment	Prudential			2,000,000.00	
			0.00	0.00	0.00	

Slippage

Scheme	Service Area	Funding Source	24/25 £	25/26 £	26/27 £	27/28 £
Capital Investment Fund	Corporate Items	Prudential		(1,600,000.00)	1,600,000.00	
Property Investment Portfolio	Prosperity & Investment	Prudential		(11,000,000.00)	11,000,000.00	
Housing Company - Housing	Prosperity & Investment	Prudential		(2,500,000.00)	2,500,000.00	
Housing	Housing, Commercial & Customer Services	Prudential		(2,500,000.00)	2,500,000.00	
			0.00	(17,600,000.00)	17,600,000.00	0.00

New Allocations

Scheme	Service Area	Funding Source	24/25 £	25/26 £	26/27 £	27/28 £
Stalled Sites	Prosperity & Investment	Prudential		250,000.00	250,000.00	
Towns Fund - Wellington	Prosperity & Investment	External		174,000.00		
Property Investment Portfolio	Prosperity & Investment	External		875,424.00		
Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)	Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services	Grant		1,788,577.00		
All Other School Schemes	Education & Skills	Grant	342,549.15			
			342,549.15	3,088,001.00	250,000.00	0.00



Telford & Wrekin
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Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Cabinet

Monday 6 January 2025

2025/26 Telford & Wrekin Schools Funding Formula

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Shirley Reynolds - Cabinet Member: Children, Young People, Education, Employment & Skills
Lead Director:	Simon Wellman - Director: Education & Skills
Service Area:	Education and Skills
Report Author:	Tim Davis – Finance Manager
Officer Contact Details:	Tel: 01952 383756 Email: tim.davis@telford.gov.uk
Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key Decision:	Key Decision
Forward Plan:	20 November 2024
Report considered by:	SMT - Tuesday 3 December 2024 Business Briefing - Thursday 12 December Cabinet - Monday 6 January 2025

1.0 Recommendations for decision:

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1.1 Approve the 2025/26 funding formula for Telford & Wrekin mainstream schools, consulted on with the Schools Forum. The formula:

- distributes an estimated £178m;
- mirrors the governments national funding formula for schools as far as is possible;
- guarantees no reduction in funding per pupil for all mainstream schools in Telford & Wrekin. This is the maximum protection allowed by the DfE for 2025/26, as the 'minimum funding guarantee' – MFG – must be set between -0.5% and 0%;

- where appropriate, supports growing schools by using estimated pupil numbers to determine funding, to avoid a lag in money reaching growing schools;
- for 2026/27 onwards, grant delegated authority to the Director for Education & Skills, in consultation with the Cabinet Member: Children, Young People, Education, Employment & Skills and the Schools Forum, to approve the Telford & Wrekin funding formula for mainstream schools.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 Each year we review the local funding formula for mainstream schools in the context of revisions to Department for Education (DfE) regulations or any other relevant developments.
- 2.2 Although we consult with schools and the Schools Forum regarding any changes, the Council makes the final decision on the funding formula. The local funding formula applies both to academies and maintained schools.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is allocated to local authorities by the DfE in four blocks; Schools, High Needs, Early Years and Central School Services, using the following bases:
- Schools Block: Calculated by multiplying the number of pupils at the preceding October census (i.e. October 2024 for 2025/26) by a unit of funding, which is different for each local authority. The 2025/26 allocation for T&W is approximately £178m, around £5m more than 2024/25.
 - High Needs Block: Calculated by a combination of historic allocations and a national funding formula. The 2025/26 allocation for T&W is approximately £39.6m, an increase of £3m, (8%), compared to 2024/25.
 - Early Years Block: Calculated by taking the average pupils in the relevant two January censuses (i.e. January 2025 and January 2026 for 2025/26) and then multiplying by a unit of funding. The 2025/26 allocation for T&W is difficult to accurately estimate due to the extensions of children entitled to funded provision in 2025, but could be around £26m.
 - Central School Services block: Calculated by a mixture of historic expenditure levels and number of pupils. The grant was introduced in 2018/19 replacing (albeit at a much reduced level) the abolished Education Services Grant. The 2025/26 allocation for T&W is approximately £1.2m, similar to 2024/25
- 3.2 This report concerns the local funding formula used to distribute the school block to mainstream schools.

- 3.3 The DfE usually provides the national bases of the funding formulas in the summer, with the final funding allocations in December being determined by applying these bases to the October census data. Due to the change of government in 2024, the national bases were provided later this year, on 28 November.
- 3.4 There is some flexibility to move money between blocks, but any movement out of the Schools and Early Years blocks is limited in scale and subject to a Schools Forum vote. DSG as a whole is ring-fenced for schools.
- 3.5 The increase in per pupil funding for mainstream schools in 2025/26 is 2.23% per pupil nationally, reflected in a similar figure for T&W.

Possible transfer of 0.5% from the Schools Block fund

- 3.6 In order to help with addressing high needs pressures, local authorities can transfer up to 0.5% of the schools block budget to high needs. For T&W 0.5% would amount to £0.9m in 2025/26. As the DfE classifies this as a transfer between DSG blocks, rather than a funding formula issue, this is a decision for the Schools Forum, rather than T&W's cabinet, which will take place in January 2025.

4.0 Summary of main proposals

- 4.1 For a number of years, T&W has adopted the principle of mirroring the national funding formula, as far as possible, in our local funding formula. We propose to continue with this policy in 2025/26. This approach is in the context of the DfE's stated intention to move to a national funding formula at school level. This is now supported by a requirement for local authorities to converge to the national formula year on year.
- 4.2 The local funding formula was discussed with the Schools Forum on 12 December 2024. The Forum agreed that we should continue to mirror the NFF funding factors in the local funding formula 2025/26 as far as is possible.
- 4.3 Since 2020/21 the DfE has also required local authorities to apply a national minimum funding per pupil amount to all schools. For 2025/26 this is set at £4,955 for primary schools and £6,465 for secondary schools. This has the impact of boosting the funding of schools with less deprived intakes, as these schools receive relatively little from funding factors linked to deprivation and low prior attainment.
- 4.4 There is a further national minimum funding guarantee, assuring a minimum increase per pupil compared to the previous year. For 2025/26 national regulations mean this must be set at between 0% and -0.5%. T&W propose to adopt the highest possible level of 0%.
- 4.5 There continues to be significant pupil growth in the secondary sector in T&W. In order to support this growth, when schools agree upon request from the Council to increase their pupil admission number (PAN), or to admit pupils above their PAN, these schools are proposed to be funded based on the resulting estimated pupil numbers in the admission year (reception for primary, year 7 for secondary schools).

- 4.6 This avoids the lag in the school funding system, as usually funding for the financial year April to March (maintained schools) or academic year September to August (academies) is based on the preceding year's October census.
- 4.7 This proposal matches the arrangements followed since 2022/23. These arrangements have supported expansion of school provision in areas of demographic growth within the borough and in the secondary sector generally, ensuring that there is sufficient local provision of school places across the borough.
- 4.8 Additional funding for pupil growth is provided by government based on local demographic data.
- 4.9 Actual allocations to schools can only be finalised once final funding information is released by the DfE in December and Schools Forum decisions are made in January (e.g. regarding any transfer of funds from the schools block to high needs). Cabinet approval is therefore being sought for the principles behind the local funding formula for schools, rather than the precise amounts to be allocated to each school.
- 4.10 As these principles have remained unchanged for some years and are unlikely to materially change in future years, Cabinet is requested to grant delegated authority to the Director for Education & Skills, in consultation with the Cabinet Member: Children, Young People, Education, Employment & Skills and the Schools Forum, to approve the Telford & Wrekin funding formula for mainstream schools for 2026/27 onwards.

5.0 Alternative Options

- 5.1 Local authorities ability to significantly alter their local funding formula is now constrained by the requirement to begin converging to the national model from 2023/24. However, as noted above, for several years before this we already aimed to replicate the national model as far as possible locally.

6.0 Key Risks

- 6.1 The funding formula for schools aims to provide a fair allocation of resources to all schools, within the constraints of total available DSG funding, by taking account of each schools demographics and other circumstances.
- 6.2 However, with regards to school income, the amount of funding available is determined by government. With regard to expenditure, key determinants of schools costs such as pay awards, energy bills etc are outside the local authority's control. Therefore, whilst aiming to be as fair as possible, the funding formula cannot protect schools from all financial risks. As noted above (paragraph 3.5), the government's increase in funding per pupil in 2025/26 for mainstream schools is modest compared to potential inflationary pressures.

7.0 Council Priorities

- 7.1 The school funding formula aims in particular to support the Council's priority to ensure that *'Every child, young person and adult lives well in their community'*. By supporting the ability of schools to enable children and young people to achieve their academic potential, it also contributes to ensuring that *'Everyone feels the benefit from a thriving economy.'*

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 As described above, schools are funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), ring-fenced funding allocated to councils by government. Most mainstream schools in Telford & Wrekin (T&W) are forecast to receive an increase in funding in 2024/25 both in funding per pupil and in total funding. There is a national Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) per pupil set at between 0% and -0.5% for 2024/25. We propose to set the local MFG at the maximum 0%. However this protection and the average increases in per pupil funding will not necessarily be enough to match inflationary pressures. Depending upon their financial circumstances – for example the level of revenue balances that are held – some schools in T&W, may need to find financial efficiencies in 2025/26.

9.0 Legal and HR Implications

- 9.1 The dedicated schools grant (DSG) is payable to the local authority under Section 14 Education Act 2002 and administered under the DSG: Conditions of Grant Guidance, as updated by the Education & Skills Funding Agency from time to time.
- 9.2 The Chief Financial Officer of the local authority is required to confirm the deployment of the DSG in support of the schools budget
- 9.3 The School and Early Years Finance (England) (No. 2) Regulations 2018 were revoked for financial year commencing 1st April 2023, replaced by the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2023 which govern how the local authority determines its schools budget and consultation requirements.
- 9.4 The application of the national funding formula (NFF) for schools for 2025-2026 is informed by Department for Education guidance and Education & Skills Funding Agency operational guidance, as updated from time to time.

10.0 Ward Implications

- 10.1 The revised funding formula will affect all schools in T&W, including academies, with the exception of nursery schools, special schools and independent schools and so will impact upon all Wards across the Borough.

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

- 11.1 As noted above, the local schools funding formula now mirrors the national formula as far as possible. This formula allocates substantial funding based on measures

of deprivation and low prior attainment, to assist schools to address educational under attainment linked to the social and economic background of pupils.

12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

12.1 Social and economic inequality is addressed in the local formula as described in section 11 above. In addition, the formula contains funding for pupils with English as an Additional Language.

13.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

13.1 There are no direct implications of the proposed funding formula on climate change and the environment.

14.0 Background Papers

- 1 "Schools Operational guide: 2025 to 2026", Education & Skills Funding Agency, November 2024.
- 2 T&W Schools Forum, minutes and accompanying papers of meetings held on 5 December 2024.

15.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Legal	28/11/2024	28/11/2024	RP
Director	28/11/2004	06/12/24	SW



Telford & Wrekin
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Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Cabinet

Monday 6 January 2025

Long-Term Empty Property Strategy Update

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Richard Overton - Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member: Highways, Housing & Enforcement	
Lead Director:	Katherine Kynaston - Director: Housing, Commercial & Customer Services	
Service Area:	Housing, Commercial & Customer Services	
Report Author:	Ravi Phull - Housing Strategy & Regeneration Service Delivery Manager	
Officer Contact Details:	Tel: 01952 381731	Email: ravi.phull@telford.gov.uk
Wards Affected:	All Wards	
Key Decision:	Not Applicable	
Forward Plan:	Not Applicable	
Report considered by:	Senior Management Team – 3 December 2024 Business Briefing – 12 December 2024	

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 1.1 Notes the actions undertaken in respect to the delivery of the Long-Term Empty Property Strategy.
- 1.2 Re-affirms the Strategy and the approach being taken to address long term empty properties across the Borough.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To provide an update on the impact of the Council's Empty Property Strategy which has seen 312 long term and problematic empties brought back into occupation since the base date, benefitting communities across the Borough.

3.0 Background

3.1 In 2021 Telford and Wrekin Council adopted its Long-Term Empty Property Strategy 2021-2026.

3.2 The Plan supports the priorities set out in the Council's overarching Housing Strategy, specifically:

- Making the BEST use of our existing homes;
- Supporting communities by addressing the blight that empty properties can create; and
- providing homes to support those in housing need including our most vulnerable.

3.3 The Strategy recognises the negative environmental impacts that empty properties bring, such as the increased risk of fly tipping and anti-social behaviour but also that every unoccupied property is a wasted housing opportunity for our residents in need of affordable accommodation.

3.4 Properties which have been empty for less than 6 months are typically part of a natural churn in the residential market linked with changes in ownership, tenancy, refurbishment and probate so the Strategy focusses principally on properties that have been vacant for more than 6 months.

3.5 The Strategy sets a target to bring a minimum of 375 long term empty properties back into residential use over the lifetime of the Strategy with a focus on those longest empty.

3.6 The Strategy sets out a clear approach to how we will engage with owners ensuring we always provide support, advice and guidance wherever appropriate but also take robust enforcement action where informal action does not succeed.

3.7 Partnership working is a key focus to ensure that not only are properties brought back into use, but also that the best outcomes are achieved for the owners of the empty properties, the neighbourhoods affected by them and to maximise opportunities for people to access affordable homes.

3.8 The key objectives of the Strategy are:

- To bring long-term empty residential properties back into use
- To contribute to a reduction in crime and fear of crime in our neighbourhoods
- To increase affordability and choice of housing for residents
- To support our High Streets and Borough Towns by addressing empty residential properties above shops
- To address the negative impact of empty properties on communities, improving visual amenity and reducing antisocial behaviour
- To provide economic benefits through local employment
- To maximise financial benefits through New Homes Bonus and Council Tax recovery

4.0 Summary of main proposals

The following sections provide an update on delivery against each of the strategy objectives:

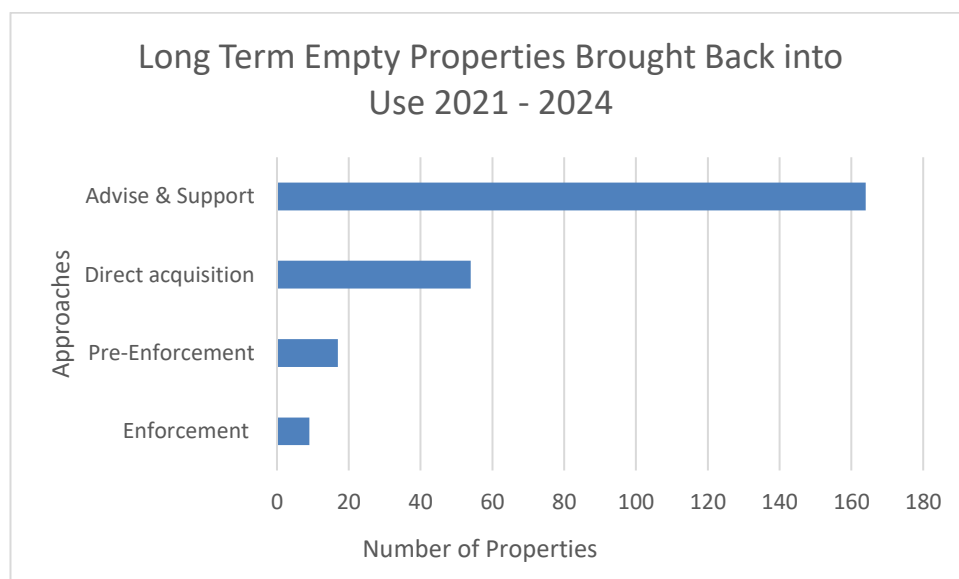
Objective 1 - To bring Long Term Empty residential properties back into use

- 4.1 From June 2021, the base date of the Strategy, we have brought 312 Long Term Empty properties back into use against our target of 375 by June 2026.
- 4.2 This is another 195 long term empty properties since our last update report in 2023. This reflects the proactive approach taken locally recognised as best practice in the last LGA Report (2023). It is also contributing to our having a significantly lower empty property figure (1 in 97 properties) than the national average for all LAs (1 in 48) as measured by Action on Empties, a nationally recognised charity and lobbyist for tackling empty homes, ranking us 44 from 296 Authorities.
- 4.3 We are currently tracking ahead of the target, and we remain ambitious to bring as many properties back into use as possible exceeding our target where possible, to benefit local residents

Of the 312 properties brought back into use:

- 3 properties had been empty for longer than 20 years,
- 12 properties had been empty longer than 10 years,
- 20 properties longer than 5 years and
- 60 properties had been empty longer than 2 years

The following graph shows the different approaches used to achieve this target:

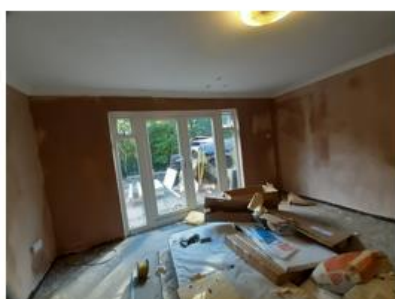
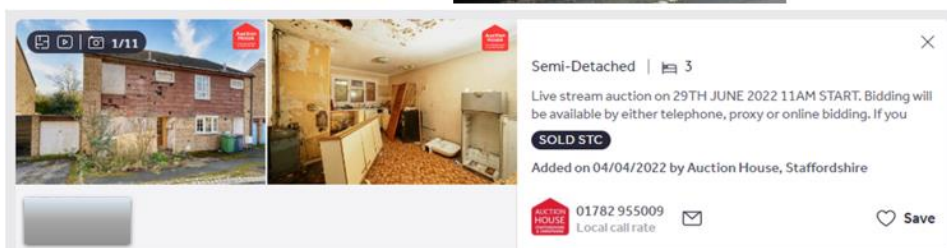


Long Term Empty Property Strategy Update

- 4.4 We understand that there are costs involved in the refurbishment and sale of long-term empty properties. As part of our offer we have worked with our local credit union who provide a low-cost Better Homes for All loan to help owners of empty properties bring them back into use.
- 4.5 We have been engaging with beneficiaries of properties with Class F (owner deceased) exemption. This class has no expiry date and properties in this category can remain empty for very long periods of time, which may lead them to attract anti-social behaviour. Recognising this can also be a difficult time the team have actively worked to support people to apply for probate which to date has resulted in 28 properties being brought back into use or now in probate.
- 4.6 Another area of focus is long term empty properties on premium council tax rates, where payments are not being made and large council tax debt is accruing. This is highlighted in the case study below:

Case Study

Before



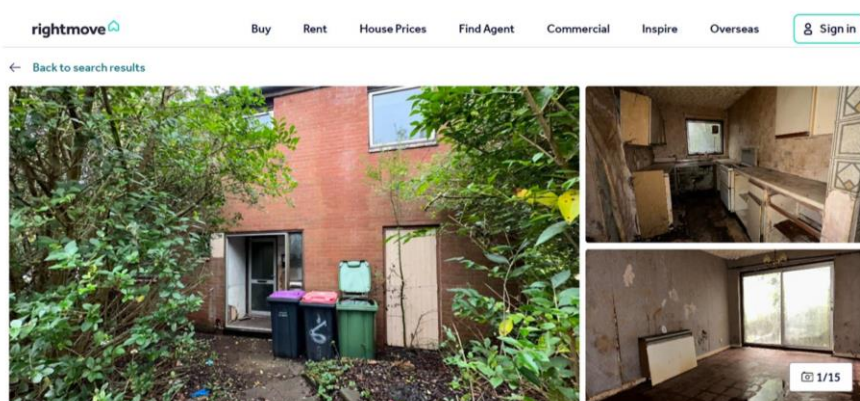
Long Term Empty Property Strategy Update

This was a long term problematic empty property with significant accrued debts. Work ultimately led to an application for an order of sale which was approved giving the Council possession of the property and enabling it to be sold. This repaid the debts of £17,000 and more importantly, to the community, has facilitated the property being fully renovated by the new owner as a family home.

5.0 Objective 2 – To contribute to a reduction in crime and fear of crime in our neighbourhoods & to address the impact of empty properties on communities

5.1 To date 155 of the 312 properties brought back into use have been within our Safer, Stronger Communities Programme areas. Empty properties in these areas where levels of crime and anti-social behaviour are already high can act as

Long term empty over 8 years. In disrepair and attracting anti-social behaviour as it was open to access.



Property had accrued c. £8,000 in unpaid council tax debt.

Empty Property Officer worked with a number of internal and external partners. In order to prevent enforcement action, the mortgage company repossessed the property. It was sold at auction.

hotspots for criminal activity as well as being visually detrimental.

Case Study



This property which had been empty for 8 years and in severe disrepair and a target for ASB has now been completely renovated and is now occupied. This has

benefitted neighbours and surrounding community removing a hotspot for criminal activity.

6.0 Objective 3 – To increase affordability and choice of housing for residents

- 6.1 Of the 312 brought back into use 222 were in Council Tax bands A-C. They were typically 3 bed family homes.

Case Study

Following Telford & Wrekin Homes purchasing an empty property this was let to a family with 3 children who were in temporary accommodation due to homelessness. The family are now living close to the children's schools and family support network which was key as the tenant doesn't drive. Since moving in the tenant has also been able to complete their qualifications and has a stable income and is very settled in their home.

7.0 Direct Acquisition

- 7.1 The Council has acquired 81 properties which have been refurbished and let to key groups including providing move on accommodation for those previously homeless through the Rough Sleepers and Next Steps Accommodation Programmes (RSAP & NSAP) and to provide supported and specialist accommodation supporting vulnerable adults and children. These properties are having a huge impact on the lives of our most vulnerable.

Case Study

Young man, who following family breakdown ended up rough sleeping. A chaotic life including abuse and drug use left him with a history of eviction, deemed too high risk for many housing providers and ultimately hospitalisation. In 2023 he moved into a Council NSAP property and started to engage with services including the Autism Hub and Job Box and reconnecting with his family. He has now moved on to successfully sustain his own tenancy living independently.

- 7.2 In addition by the end of March 2025 Telford & Wrekin Homes, which is part of Nuplace, the Council's wholly owned housing company, will have acquired 36 empty properties as part of the Telford & Wrekin Homes Programme, which have been refurbished, breathing new life into outdated housing stock.

Case Study

Fleeing from domestic abuse the family approached the Housing Solutions Team desperate for a property in Donnington near to the children's school. They were nominated for a Telford & Wrekin Homes property that had been acquired as an empty. They have been living in the property now for 18 months and are safe and settled.

8.0 Objective 4 – To support our High Streets and Borough Towns by addressing empty residential properties above shops

8.1 Once again the focus is on problem properties. Currently we are working on a parade of shops with a number of flats above in Donnington. Three of these have been empty for over 5 years and have been accruing unpaid council tax. Following legal action against the freeholder, the freehold was sold at auction. The new freeholder is carrying out renovation works and 2 flats are already occupied.

9.0 Objective 5 – To provide economic benefits through local employment

9.1 Where possible, the council utilise local skills and employment to bring empty properties back into use.

9.2 We have recently awarded a tender to a local contractor for the refurbishment of a long term empty bungalow acquired by the council. This will be used to house key groups in the borough.

10.0 Objective 6 – To maximise financial benefits through New Homes Bonus and Council Tax recovery

10.1 There is a financial benefit of bringing empty properties into use. Currently TWC receive approximately £1,500 per property completed or brought back into use, through New Homes Bonus. This is reinvested into frontline services. The scheme will continue in 25/26 with future years to be confirmed as part of the Local Government Finance Settlement.

10.2 In April 2024, following national legislation the Council extended the 100% premium levy onto properties which had been empty for longer than 12 months. As a result by June 2024 316 properties that had been empty for between 1 and 5 years were subject to the 100% premium. In addition, 37 properties that have been empty between 5 and 10 years were attracting the 200% premium and 300% council tax was being charged on 12 properties empty longer than 10 years. Ensuring the application of the premium provides revenue but also an incentive for owners to address long term empties. Officers prioritise contact with owners of properties in the higher levy bands to offer support, advice and explore routes to bring the properties back however these are typically some of the most problematic with owners hardest to engage.

11.0 Partnership Working

11.1 As the case studies illustrate successful outcomes often come following a lengthy period of engagement and support being provided to owners. In addition, we work in partnership across services and with external organisations to maximise impact and support wider outcomes.

11.2 Officers work closely with the Private Sector Housing team to assess physical conditions in empty properties to determine if hazards exist and take action under the Housing Act 2004 if necessary.

Long Term Empty Property Strategy Update

- 11.3 We regularly work with the Police and Fire Service, taking referrals and working closely where conditions pose a safety risk, or there are signs of criminality or unauthorised occupation.
- 11.4 We also work with the Planning and Public Protection teams where we find accumulations of rubbish, fly tipping or insecure and overgrown gardens.
- 11.5 We work closely with Council Tax investigation officers to ensure any false claims of second home status are swiftly investigated and the correct council tax is levied.
- 11.6 We continue to build strong relationships with our Registered Social Landlords to avoid long term voids. Where appropriate we are acquiring properties directly ensuring that these provide quality rented accommodation and/or meet specialist housing needs.
- 11.7 As a member of the West Midlands Empty Property Officers Group and The Empty Homes Network we ensure we keep abreast of any developments in legislation as well as continually developing our approach through peer to peer learning.

12.0 Next Steps

- 12.1 The Empty Property Officer and Assistant currently have a caseload of 148 active, problematic, empty properties. These include 10 properties which have been empty for over 20 years, 14 for over 10 years and 39 for over 5 years.
- 12.2 Alongside this we continue to respond daily to 'report an empty' alerts, calls from the public, partners and councillors, providing advice and support. We also continue to proactively target empties in our Safer Stronger areas moving straight to enforcement action where properties are showing signs of escalating into a neighbourhood nuisance.
- 12.3 We are working with legal services to streamline our enforced sale and compulsory purchase order processes, allowing us to move more swiftly to use these powers, where advice and support is not sufficient and in relation to the most problematic and longstanding cases.
- 12.4 To enable owners to access support directly and maximise the reach of our work, we are developing a guide to all the support, advice and contacts to supplement the information on the Council's website and promote to partners and communities.
- 12.5 We are also working on a communications plan to show the positive outcomes of our work, to incentivise owners of empty properties to bring them back into use and to encourage residents to refer problematic properties to us.

13.0 Alternative Options

- 13.1 The alternative would be to do nothing, which would mean hundreds of properties being left empty at a time of significant housing need and continuing to have a detrimental impact on our neighbourhoods and communities.

14.0 Key Risks

14.1 The continued cost of living crisis and cost of labour and materials may hinder owners of empty homes in need of major refurbishment. Initiatives such as the Better Homes for All loan will help towards mitigating this risk.

15.0 Council Priorities

15.1 The strategy detailed in this report supports the following Council priorities:

- Every child, young person, and adult lives well in their community
- All neighbourhoods are a great place to live
- A community-focussed, innovative council providing efficient, effective and quality services.

16.0 Financial Implications

16.1 The approved Capital Programme contains allocations of £1.1m to support the Capital proposals within this report, to include the acquisition and repurposing of long-term empty properties.

17.0 Legal and HR Implications

17.1 Whilst there is no specific statutory duty requiring the Council to have an Empty Property Strategy, having adopted the strategy in 2021, it is prescient for Cabinet to be updated on progress. The strategy itself sets out the Council's main statutory enforcement options and relevant legislation.

17.2 In relation to Compulsory Purchase Orders, the Council has wide legal powers. Legal advice will be provided in relation to enforcement, compulsory purchase and any other legal matter, as needed, to ensure the Council acts lawfully.

17.3 The proposals contained in this report can be delivered using existing resources.

18.0 Ward Implications

18.1 The work of this strategy affects all wards across the Borough.

19.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

19.1 Empty properties can not only be associated with criminal and antisocial behaviour but can affect the general morale and wellbeing of neighbourhoods and can be a contributory factor to levels of deprivation where properties create long term blight. We are proactive in addressing empties and seek to ensure that residents know of the work we are doing and how to report problematic properties. A number of the properties addressed particularly through acquisition for Telford & Wrekin Homes have provided specialist accommodation improving health and social care outcomes for individuals. Wherever possible we use local contractors supporting local jobs to work on properties we acquire.

20.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

20.1 The work of this strategy aims to provide the best outcomes for all residents, from the owners of the properties, the neighbourhoods and the people making these properties their new home including some of our most vulnerable residents.

21.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

21.1 This strategy ensures long standing, derelict properties are brought up to the correct energy performance standards through refurbishment whether by the owner, through Telford and Wrekin Homes acquisition or ensuring landlords achieve the correct Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating prior to letting. Addressing long term empties within our communities is improving the environment of our neighbourhoods' benefitting residents through reducing incidences of fly tipping and improving attractiveness of properties and streets.

22.0 Background Papers

- 1 Long Term Empty Property Strategy 2021-2026
- 2 Long Term Empty Property Strategy Update 2023

23.0 Appendices

None

24.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Director	26/11/24	28/11/24	KK
Finance	13/11/24	13/11/24	DMR
Legal	26/11/24	26/11/24	SH



Telford & Wrekin
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Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Cabinet

6 January 2025

Better Buses in Telford and Wrekin

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Ollie Vickers Cabinet Member for The Economy	
Lead Director:	Dean Sargeant – Director: Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services	
Service Area:	Neighbourhood Enforcement	
Report Author:	Matt Powell – Service Delivery Manager Strategic Transport & Highway Network Management	
Officer Contact Details:	Tel: 01952 384000	Email: matt.powell@telford.gov.uk
Wards Affected:	All Wards	
Key Decision:	Key Decision	
Forward Plan:	Yes – 22 November 2024	
Report considered by:	SMT – 3 December 2024 Business Briefing – 12 December 2024 Cabinet – 6 January 2025	

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 1.1 Note the continued improvements in bus travel and connectivity across Telford and Wrekin over the last two years that comprises:
 - The provision of seven new bus routes
 - £2 fare cap on Travel Telford services
 - Improved experience through new bus shelters and the Citymapper app
- 1.2 Delegate authority to the Director Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for The Economy to complete all necessary steps to procure the provision of new bus services from July 2025 onwards.

- 1.3 Delegate authority to the Director Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for The Economy to complete all necessary steps to procure the provision of future transport modelling to facilitate development of future transport needs across the borough.
- 1.4 Delegate authority to Director: Policy & Governance to execute any legal documentation required to facilitate and implement the recommendations within this report.

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an update on the council's focus to improve bus travel and connectivity across Telford and Wrekin while seeking approval to procure new bus services to ensure the bus network is fit for the future.
- 2.2 This report also seeks approval to secure necessary professional services to undertake detailed traffic and transport modelling in order to shape the transport network of the future ensuring it meets forecast need.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Telford & Wrekin Council is committed to providing a better-connected and affordable bus network, linking residential, leisure and employment sites in line with the Councils Vision for 2032. Well-connected transport links borough towns with key education, employment and shopping destinations while helping to ease congestion and reduce carbon emissions.
- 2.2 In 2021, The National Bus Strategy for England was published and sought to transform the quality of bus services across the country. In 2024 government committed to providing greater powers locally for bus services; as transport authority, the council has a pivotal role in bringing forward positive change to the bus network. This change is underpinned through the council's commitment to partnership working.
- 2.3 Cabinet at their October 2021 meeting approved the creation of an Enhanced Partnership; at the same meeting, Cabinet received an update on the development of a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) as required by the National Bus Strategy. Telford and Wrekin entered into an Enhanced Partnership on 1st April 2022 that seeks to bring together the council, bus operators and user groups with a focus on increasing patronage, improving services and delivering transformation.
- 2.4 The Bus Service Improvement Plan sets the vision for the bus network in the borough, it is updated in line with the Department for Transport (DfT) guidelines and timescales and is published on the council's website.

- 2.5 Bus services in the borough are currently operated in two ways, firstly on a commercial basis by private bus operator(s) and secondly under contract to the Council as a supported bus service(s). With the commercial network, the Council works with private operators to drive continuous performance and improvement but has no direct control over the services. However, with the supported network the council has increased control through contractual management processes.
- 2.6 In delivering on the vision and commitments outlined within the Bus Service Improvement Plan, in 2022 the council undertook detailed engagement with residents to understand the challenges and barriers regarding bus travel. At the time, the survey informed the design of new bus routes which largely focused on improving connections from residential areas to employment, health and education, providing connections in rural areas and delivering affordable reliable services.
- 2.7 On analysis of the survey information, the council tendered seven new bus routes with the first launching in December 2022. Starting with the 100 (known locally as the work express) this efficient route connects residential areas including Sutton Hill, Woodside and Brookside with employment sites at Hortonwood, Halesfield and Stafford Park. Operating from 5am to 11pm seven days a week, this service currently averages 12,800 passenger trips a month and continues to grow. The other six services improve connectivity in rural areas linking Newport and Wellington as well as urban services linking Lawley/Lightmoor with the Town Centre and Wellington.
- 2.8 Since launch, these seven services have now completed over 420,000 passenger trips. During the 2023/24 financial year the 99 to 105 services completed 195,000 total journeys compared to 208,000 journeys between April and November 2024. This demonstrates the continued growth while providing much needed connectivity for residents.
- 2.9 As part of developing the new routes and providing affordable transport, in 2022 the council tendered bus routes with a fare structure of £2 for adult and £1 for child per journey. In contrast to governments recent increase of the national fare cap to £3 from January 2025, this council's fare structure continues into 2025 and remains committed to this and similar fare offers going forward.
- 2.10 If the council had not taken action in 2022 and delivered new routes as outlined, large areas of the borough would have seen a loss or reduction of bus routes. This would have resulted in much of the urban area outside of the main borough towns and areas of south Telford along with the entire rural area to the north of the borough would have had no bus services. As a result of route development and investment by the council, the council replaced older failing routes with new routes

designed with communities and passengers in mind to improve connectivity and reliability of bus services right across the borough.

- 2.11 In November 2024, the council received approximately £3.5m as part of government's £1bn funding announcement during the Autumn Budget. While welcomed, this funding is for 2025/26 and will support new tendered services and infrastructure upgrades such as new bus shelters and expansion of real time passenger information through the Citymapper app. The council continues to champion the need for sustained levels of funding to enable effective planning and delivery of bus services going forward. The council is clear that there can be no return to bus service planning purely on commercial basis.
- 2.12 To inform the delivery of new services from July 2025, the council launched a resident survey in November 2024. This survey builds on that undertaken in 2022 and once the results are collated and analysed, they will underpin the approach to procuring new services.
- 2.13 With the security of funding awarded in the short term, the council is looking wherever possible to maintain or improve the current bus network through these proposals. The council will consider efficient use of vehicles on services but is not anticipating a reduction in service levels overall. Particular consideration will be given to maintaining and improving provision to education establishments to support home to school travel options.
- 2.14 Resident feedback confirms that reliable and up to date information on bus services is very important. This has directly informed the investment into on-street real-time information screens at key locations along with the roll out of the Citymapper app. The Citymapper app allows users to obtain specific real-time information on the journeys wherever they are and has so far seen 2045 users sign up. The council will continue to promote the use of the app with plans being developed to provide more information on how to access it at bus stops.
- 2.15 To add to the existing bus network, the council will shortly operate a Demand Responsive Travel (DRT) in The Gorge Parish area. Initially operating as a pilot, this new travel offer will provide transport links across the Gorge into Madeley and the Town Centre. When planning future routes in other areas of the borough, we will consider DRT solutions to compliment the core bus network. The DRT service will operate the same day ticket fare structure as the other Travel Telford services.
- 2.16 As part of developing and planning transport needs for the future, the council undertakes extensive traffic and transport modelling. This information and assessment is used to understand the impact of development(s) on the transport system while developing mitigation proposals. Typically, such mitigation can

include physical improvements to existing infrastructure and/or provision of new transport links such as bus routes.

- 2.17 Travel patterns have changed significantly over the last 10 years and to ensure the transport network across the borough is fit for the future, the council needs to refresh and develop the existing transport model to ensure all travel modes, specifically bus, is captured correctly. Such work will support transport investment needs for the future.

4.0 Summary of main proposals

- 4.1 The council has developed and delivered seven new bus routes across the borough. These new routes have completed over 400,000 passenger trips since launch in December 2022 with fares capped at £2 for an adult. The existing services are due to expire in July 2025 and the council needs to procure new services in order to maintain connectivity while seeking opportunity to enhance the existing bus network where possible.
- 4.2 Provision of the new services have been underpinned by a resident survey that was undertaken in November 2024.
- 4.3 To inform the transport needs of the future the council needs to refresh and develop the existing transport model. In refreshing the existing transport model, it will ensure that all travel modes, specifically bus, are captured correctly. Having a multi-modal transport model will enable the council to have the evidence base to secure investment to deliver connectivity improvements.

5.0 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The council is committed to delivering affordable reliable public transport for residents and businesses.
- 5.2 The Bus Services Act 2017 currently bans the council from establishing its own bus company; the council welcomes governments commitment for local authorities to have more control over buses in the future and continues to monitor this with interest.
- 5.3 The council could choose not to tender new bus services beyond July 2025, but this would result in the market only providing routes that are commercially viable. Not only would this reduce connectivity and productivity it would be preclude the provision of much needed services that do not provide a commercial return and leave a significant portion of the Borough without bus services (as noted within the report).

6.0 Key Risks

- 6.1 There is a risk that the new tenders could be more expensive than the budget available. Should this occur, the council will explore options to maximise service

provision within the budget available while seeking opportunity to secure external funding where possible.

- 6.2 There is currently limited bus operators operating in the area; as part of the procurement process the council will ensure that a partner is secured to ensure high quality services are provided with a commitment to continuous improvement.
- 6.3 Not having an accurate multi-modal transport model can restrict the ability to plan for the future transport needs and secure necessary funding. Refreshing and developing a multi-modal transport model will ensure the transport needs for the future are identified with the council having the evidence base to secure necessary investment for delivery.

7.0 Council Priorities

- 7.1 Procurement of new bus services and multi-nodal transport modelling supports the following priorities:
- Every child, young person, and adult lives well in their community.
 - All neighbourhoods are a great place to live; and
 - Our natural environment is protected – we take a leading role in addressing the climate emergency.

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 Bus services in 2024/25 have been funded through a mixture of Government grant, developer contributions (Section 106) and existing budgets.
- 8.2 £1.54m revenue funding has been allocated in 2025/26 which will facilitate the provision of new tendered services. The council awaits details regarding future year financial allocations.
- 8.3 The tenders for the provision of new bus services from July 2025 onwards will seek to secure an initial two-year period with potential extensions up to a further five years. This initial period will be funded by Government Grant (as referred to in 8.2), developer contributions and existing budgets. Costs and funding opportunities for potential extensions will need to be considered as appropriate, and further financial implications considered as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 8.4 Transport modelling services will be procured with a five-year contract length. These services will be provided on a 'Task Order' basis, meaning that individual tasks will be priced as required and there is no fixed requirement to spend a specific amount over the life of the contract. These services will again be funded by a mixture of Government Grant (as referred to in 8.2), developer contributions and existing budgets.

9.0 Legal and HR Implications

- 9.1 The Bus Services Act 2017 currently prevents local authorities from establishing their own bus companies. The proposed Bus Bill will enable Mayoral and Combined Authority areas to operate a franchise model, but does not, presently, extend this ability to unitary authorities.
- 9.2 The council will procure new bus services and transport modelling professional services in accordance with the contract procedure rules and applicable procurement legislation.
- 9.3 There are no HR implications arising from this report or the recommendations.

10.0 Ward Implications

- 10.1 This report impacts on all wards of the borough.

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

- 11.1 Effective and efficient transport network provides the ability for independent travel. Bus travel reduces social isolation and connects communities from rural and urban residential areas with key education and employment destinations, as well as links to the Princess Royal Hospital.
- 11.2 Since 2022 the council operated bus routes have supported over 350,000 passenger trips; procurement of new routes will continue to support connectivity across the borough.
- 11.3 Having an accurate multi-modal transport model will enable the council to have an accurate evidence base that can be used to secure external investment particularly from development(s).

12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

- 12.1 Buses improve connectivity and access for all, and maintaining good coverage across the borough supports this. Infrastructure such as bus stops and service information also support accessibility.
- 12.2 The use of a multi-modal transport model will help the Council understand the effects of proposed changes to the network and quantify impacts for all users of the network across the Borough.

13.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

- 13.1 Transport biggest carbon contributor in the borough. Per individual passenger, the average car emits 54% more tonnes of carbon dioxide when compared to the average bus. An effective and efficient bus network will support the councils plan to become carbon neutral by 2030.
- 13.2 To support the development of the new routes over the last two years, the council has installed 100 new bus shelters across the borough. These bus shelters are

Better Buses in Telford and Wrekin

made from recycled plastic and in most cases use solar or wind to power lights and customer information screens. Use of this equipment saw Wellington bus station as the UK's first off grid bus station installed during 2022 which has received recognition nationally. The council will continue to install recycled shelters as part of the continued investment into improving bus travel across the borough.

- 13.3 We will explore use of EV buses when appropriate external funding, market and technology is available and affordable; in the meantime, we continue to specify the latest emission standard vehicles on our tenders to minimise the environmental impact of their operations.

14.0 Background Papers

Bus Service Improvement Plan – [Bus Service Improvement Plan \(BSIP\) - Telford & Wrekin Council](#)

15.0 Appendices

None

16.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Legal	27/11/2024	28/11/2024	RP
Finance	27/11/2024	28/11/2024	PT
Director	27/11/2024	28/11/2024	DRS