Public Document Pack

Telford & Wrekin Co-operative Council

Protect, care and invest to create a better borough

Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Cabinet

Thursday 3 December 2026

10.00 am

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

Democratic Services:	**Jayne Clarke / Paige Starkey**	**01952 383205 / 380110**
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Cabinet Members:

Councillor L D Carter	Leader of the Council
Councillor C Healy	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member: Neighbourhoods, Planning & Sustainability
Councillor P Davis	Cabinet Member: Strong Communities, Local Pride & Veterans
Councillor N A M England	Cabinet Member: Safer Streets and Better Housing
Councillor Z Hannington	Cabinet Member: Finance and Resident Services
Councillor A D McClements	Cabinet Member: Culture, Tourism & Leisure
Councillor K Middleton	Cabinet Member: Public Health and Unlocking Opportunities for All
Councillor O Vickers	Cabinet Member: Jobs, Transport & Digital Connectivity

Councillor S A W Reynolds	Cabinet Member: Children, Young People, Education & Skills
Councillor P Watling	Cabinet Member: Adult Care and Independent Living

Invitees

Councillor A J Eade	Conservative
Councillor W L Tomlinson	Liberal Democrat

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5.0	**Annual Public Health Report 2026 Healthy Neighbourhoods - Prevention First** Cllr Kelly Middleton - Cabinet Member: Public Health and Unlocking Opportunities for All To receive the Annual Public Health Report 2026 Healthy Neighbourhoods – Prevention First.	**11 - 46**
6.0	**Culture Strategy for Telford and Wrekin** Cllr Angela McClements - Cabinet Member: Culture, Tourism & Leisure To approve the Telford and Wrekin Culture Strategy.	**47 - 96**
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Telford & Wrekin Co-operative Council

Protect, care and invest to create a better borough

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday 12 November 2026 at 5.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Third Floor, Southwater One, Telford, TF3 4JG

Present: Councillors L D Carter (Chair), C Healy (Vice-Chair), P Davis, N A M England, Z Hannington, A D McClements, K Middleton, S A W Reynolds and O Vickers.

Also Present: Councillors A J Eade (Conservative Group Leader) and Cllr W L Tomlinson (Liberal Democrats Group Leader)

Apologies: Councillor P Watling.

CAB-27 Declarations of Interest

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member: Neighbourhoods, Planning & Sustainability declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to Agenda Item 8, in respect of condition-discharge work carried out by Red Kite Ltd on the Phoenix School site, an allocated site within the draft Local Plan.

CAB-28 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

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

CAB-29 Leader's Announcements

No announcements were made.

CAB-30 Cost of Living Strategy 2026 - 2029

The Cabinet Member: Public Health and Unlocking Opportunities for All presented the new Cost of Living Strategy 2026-2029. Members were advised that although inflation had reduced significantly from its peak, many residents continued to face financial pressures arising from higher food, housing and energy costs. The strategy committed over £9m of Crisis and Resilience Funding over the next three years, with a renewed focus on supporting residents facing immediate financial hardship whilst building longer-term financial resilience.

The Cabinet Member highlighted a range of measures contained within the strategy including continued emergency welfare support, discretionary housing payments, additional holiday activity provision, enhanced advice

services through Citizens Advice and Age UK, supermarket vouchers for pensioners, free school meal auto-enrolment and continued support through Family Hubs, Live Well Hubs and the Here to Help Bus. The strategy built on significant support already delivered since 2022 and sought to help residents move beyond crisis intervention towards improved financial resilience and independence.

Cabinet Members welcomed the Strategy and the continued commitment to supporting residents facing financial hardship. Members highlighted the importance of free school meals, holiday activities, affordable transport, welfare advice and concessionary leisure opportunities in improving outcomes for residents. The importance of prevention, early intervention and helping residents to build long-term financial resilience was also emphasised. The benefits of the borough-wide £2 bus fare cap and wider support available through Family Hubs, Live Well Hubs and community-based services were noted.

The Liberal Democrat Group Leader welcomed the strategy and support for vulnerable residents, whilst noting the pressures that continued to arise from wider economic conditions. He particularly highlighted the benefits of home energy improvements and the importance of ensuring residents could access advice and support services. He also welcomed plans to improve Ask Tom, noting the importance of ensuring residents could easily contact the Council during times of hardship.

The Conservative Group Leader welcomed support for residents experiencing hardship and stressed the importance of providing both emergency assistance and opportunities for people to become more financially independent.

In response, the Leader highlighted the Council's investment in energy support, community outreach and digital improvements, including enhancements to Ask Tom to improve residents' access to services.

RESOLVED – that:

a) **progress and impact of the previous Cost of Living Strategy 2022-2025, through which the Council has invested to support residents, delivering practical support to help households manage the impact of rising living costs and ensuring that targeted assistance reached those most impacted be noted;**

b) **the new Cost of Living Strategy 2026–2029, which commits to further investment of over £9m with a renewed focus on responding to financial hardship and crisis and strengthening financial resilience, reducing inequalities and helping individuals,**

families and communities to better withstand future economic challenges be approved; and

c) **delegated authority be granted to the Director of Housing, Commercial & Customer Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Unlocking Opportunities for All, to take the necessary steps to implement the recommendations within the Cost of Living Strategy 2026–2029, including the approval and allocation of funding from the Crisis and Resilience Fund, together with any other funding awarded to the Council, to support residents and businesses to manage the impact of cost of living pressures and build longer-term financial resilience throughout the duration of the Strategy within approved budgets and in accordance with the Council's Constitution, Financial Regulations and Contract Procedure Rules.**

CAB-31 Better Homes for All Update

The Cabinet Member: Safer Streets and Better Housing presented the Better Homes for All Update. Members were advised that the programme continued to improve housing standards, tackle rogue landlord activity and support residents facing homelessness and rough sleeping. During the previous two years, the Council had responded to more than 1,000 tenant support requests, undertaken over 700 inspections, served more than 240 improvement notices and secured over £130,000 through enforcement activity.

The report also highlighted progress in homelessness prevention, including support provided to over 1,900 households during the previous two years, reductions in rough sleeping and significant reductions in the use of bed and breakfast accommodation. The Cabinet Member thanked officers and partners for their work, particularly in supporting vulnerable residents and improving conditions within local communities.

Cabinet Members welcomed the progress made through the Better Homes for All programme and highlighted the importance of safe, secure and decent housing. Members welcomed ongoing action to tackle poor housing conditions and rogue landlords, alongside the positive impact of homelessness prevention and rough sleeping initiatives. Support was also expressed for the proposed introduction of the Article 4 Direction in relation to HMOs.

The Leader thanked the Housing Solutions Team for their work supporting some of the borough's most vulnerable residents and recognised the complexity of many homelessness cases.

The Conservative Group Leader welcomed the proposed Article 4 Direction and praised the work undertaken to reduce rough sleeping in the Borough. He noted the importance of maintaining an appropriate balance between landlord engagement and enforcement activity to improve standards.

The Liberal Democrat Group Leader welcomed the report and the progress made in supporting vulnerable residents. He highlighted the importance of continuing to provide assistance to those facing housing difficulties and ensuring residents were aware of the support and advice available to them.

RESOLVED – that:

a) **the continued impact of the Better Homes For All Programme supporting tenants, landlords and communities across the borough by improving housing standards, supporting access to safe and decent homes, tackling poor housing conditions and rogue landlord activity be welcomed;**

b) **the continued focus of Better Homes for All on Engagement, Education & Enforcement set out in the report be welcomed;**

c) **the introduction of the proposed Article 4 Directive which will require all new Houses in Multiple Occupation to have planning approval from February 2027 be noted;**

d) **the impact of work to relieve, prevent and support those presenting as homeless and its multi agency focus recognised in this year's Housing Excellence Awards be welcomed;**

e) **the programme of work set out in the Report, in line with the Council's adopted Homelessness Strategy, to further support individuals and families faced with Homelessness and Rough Sleeping be approved; and**

f) **the Government's renewed focus and new investment into tackling homelessness and rough sleeping and supports the continued national focus on prevention and improving outcomes for those at risk of homelessness be welcomed.**

CAB-32 Council House Building Programme

The Cabinet Member: Safer Streets and Better Housing presented proposals to deliver 300 new Council-owned homes over the next three years through a £53.65m investment programme. Members were advised that the programme would represent the first return to direct council house building at scale in 27

years and would provide a mix of affordable, social rented and specialist accommodation to meet local housing needs.

The report outlined the Council's broader housing achievements and the increasing demand for affordable accommodation, specialist housing and accessible homes. The programme would see individual schemes brought forward on a business case basis and would seek to maximise external grant funding and deliver long-term value to residents and the Council.

Cabinet Members welcomed the proposals and highlighted the importance of increasing the supply of affordable and specialist housing across the borough. Members noted the wider benefits that good quality council housing could bring in reducing homelessness, supporting health and wellbeing and creating opportunities for residents. The long-term value of investing in modern, energy-efficient homes was recognised, together with the importance of ensuring that the programme remained financially sustainable and maximised opportunities to secure external funding whilst creating assets that would deliver benefits for local communities over the long term.

The Liberal Democrat Group Leader welcomed the proposals whilst seeking reassurance regarding the long-term financial sustainability of the programme. He commented on the importance of ensuring that future borrowing and investment remained affordable and also raised questions regarding the continuing impact of Right to Buy on the long-term retention of Council-owned homes.

The Conservative Group Leader noted the proposals to increase affordable housing provision and reflected on previous housing stock transfer arrangements. He recognised the need for additional affordable homes whilst noting the financial challenges associated with delivering large-scale Council housebuilding programmes.

In response, the Leader highlighted recent Government reforms and investment supporting a return to council housebuilding, including changes to Right to Buy arrangements and increased funding opportunities for local authorities.

RESOLVED – that:

a) **the delivery of 300 new Council owned homes over the next 3 years, as set out in the report, significantly expanding the Council's stock ownership and:**

- **increasing the quantity of social and affordable rented properties, managed by the Council, for local residents;**

- **maximising delivery of social rented properties including a range of sizes and locations to support both individuals and families;**
- **including specialist and supported housing targeted to need be supported;**

b) that a Council Homes Fund is included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy reflecting the level of investment outlined in this report be supported and recommended to Full Council for approval;

c) the wider work that is being done to increase the availability of affordable and specialist accommodation in the Borough to meet residents needs be noted; and

d) delegated authority be granted to the Director: Housing, Commercial & Customer Services and Director: Finance, People & IDT in consultation with the Lead Cabinet Member for Safer Streets & Better Housing to approve investment, subject to business case and enter into any documentation necessary to give effect to the recommendations in this report.

CAB-33 Adoption of Telford & Wrekin Local Plan

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member: Neighbourhoods, Planning & Sustainability presented the report on the Adoption of the Telford & Wrekin Local Plan. Members were advised that, following examination by independent Planning Inspectors, the Plan had been found sound subject to modifications and was now recommended for adoption by Full Council. More than 3,000 residents and stakeholders had engaged throughout the plan-making process.

The report was described as a long-term framework for sustainable growth across the borough, supporting housing delivery, employment growth, climate change objectives, infrastructure provision and environmental protection. The Local Plan would provide for six new schools, additional healthcare and transport infrastructure, employment growth and new green spaces whilst maintaining a five-year housing land supply and protecting the borough against speculative development.

Cabinet Members welcomed the report and recognised the significant amount of work undertaken over a number of years to prepare the Local Plan and support its examination. Members highlighted the importance of having an up-to-date Local Plan to provide a clear framework for future housing growth, employment opportunities and investment across the Borough. The benefits of maintaining a plan-led approach to development, supporting the delivery of

key infrastructure and ensuring that communities could continue to grow in a sustainable way were also noted. Members further recognised the role of the Local Plan in supporting environmental objectives and creating certainty for residents, businesses and developers.

The Liberal Democrat Group Leader acknowledged the importance of maintaining an up-to-date Local Plan and recognised the requirement to plan for future growth. He expressed concerns regarding the delivery of supporting infrastructure, particularly transport infrastructure and the impact that additional development could have on existing communities.

The Conservative Group Leader expressed concerns regarding the scale and location of developments proposed within the Local Plan, together with the potential impact on rural areas within the Borough and the character of existing communities. He questioned whether sufficient infrastructure and services would be in place to support the level of growth proposed and referred to concerns that had been raised by residents throughout the Local Plan consultation process. He also raised concerns regarding the Council's five-year housing land supply position and the implications this could have for future development across the Borough.

In response, the Deputy Leader highlighted that the Plan had been independently found sound, included significant biodiversity improvements and would secure infrastructure through the development management process and Section 106 agreements. She also emphasised that the Plan would protect valued green spaces whilst providing for future housing and employment growth. She explained that the adoption of the Local Plan would assist the Council in maintaining a five-year housing land supply and provide a robust framework for managing future development across the Borough.

The Leader thanked officers and everyone involved in the preparation of the Plan and emphasised that, whilst difficult decisions had been required, the adopted Plan would provide certainty, protect communities and support planned growth across the borough.

RESOLVED – that:

a) **the Inspectors have, subject to approval of recommended modifications found the Local Plan sound be noted;**

b) **that this approval will ensure a Local Plan is in place which will protect green spaces, care for existing communities and invest in the future as it will remove the risk of speculative development, create jobs and bring forward new affordable housing opportunities and support regeneration of existing housing stock be noted;**

c) the recommendations set out in the Inspectors' report on the Examination of the Telford & Wrekin Local Plan (Appendix A) and accept their Schedule of Main Modifications (Appendix B) be accepted;

d) the further Local Plan Additional Modifications and Policies Map Modifications (Appendix C, D and E) be approved;

e) the adoption of the Local Plan be recommended to Full Council at its meeting on 26 November 2026 and agreed that it will form part of the Development Plan for the borough;

f) the Local Plan Policies Map (Appendix H and I) incorporating changes set out in Appendix D and F, which illustrates geographically the policies in the new Local Plan 2021-2041 and forms part of the Local Plan documents be approved;

g) delegated authority be granted to the Executive Director of Place (or any other authorised officer), in consultation with the Cabinet Member, to undertake all necessary administrative and publication steps consequential upon and following Full Council's adoption of the Local Plan, including publication of the adopted documents, including the Policies Map and related notices. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Place (or any other authorised officer), in consultation with the Cabinet Member, to update the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, when required; and

h) that on adoption by Full Council, the Telford and Wrekin Local Plan 2031 in its entirety will be withdrawn and cease to have effect be agreed.

The meeting ended at 7.05 pm

Signed for the purposes of the Decision Notices

Debbie Thomas-White
Interim Head of Service: Registrars, Legal and Democracy

Signed .....

Date: Thursday 3 December 2026

Telford & Wrekin Co-operative Council

Protect, care and invest to create a better borough

Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Cabinet

3 December 2026

Annual Public Health Report 2026

Healthy Neighbourhoods - Prevention First

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Kelly Middleton - Cabinet Member: Public Health and Unlocking Opportunities for All
Lead Director:	Helen Onions - Director of Public Health
Service Area:	Health & Wellbeing
Report Author:	Helen Onions - Director of Public Health
Officer Contact Details:	**Tel:** 01952 381366 **Email:** helen.onions@telford.gov.uk
Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key Decision:	Key Decision
Forward Plan:	Yes – 13 October 2026
Report considered by:	SMT – 1 September 2026 HWB – 17 September 2026 Business Briefing – 19 November 2026

1.0 Recommendations for decision

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1.1 Cabinet is requested to endorse and support the recommendations of the Director of Public Health Annual Report 2026, which are aimed at improving local health and wellbeing outcomes, through implementation of the neighbourhood health programme.

2.0 Purpose of Report

2.1 The 2026 Annual Public Health Report focusses on neighbourhood health, the Government's new programme which is part of the NHS 10 Year Plan. It highlights the need to focus on prevention so our residents can stay healthy and independent, spot problems earlier.

3.0 Background

3.1 Working in neighbourhoods is far from new for local authorities, which offer a wide range of services and support in communities that impact on resident's health and wellbeing, for example – lifestyle and public health services, adults and children's social care, housing, employment and welfare support.

3.2 Neighbourhood health is a collective apporach acorss the NHS, local authorities, voluntary and community organisations, and local residents. The goals are to create more joined-up, person-centred support, strengthen community resilience, tackle health inequalities and reduce reliance on hospital-based care wherever appropriate.

3.3 The NHS 10 Year Health Plan and the 2026 Neighbourhood Health Framework expect neighbourhoods to be increasingly recognised as the building blocks of health and care, bringing services together around the needs of local people and communities.

3.4 Voluntary and community organisations and local authorities with the NHS are leaders of Health & Wellbeing Boards and Place Partnerships are already rooted in communities, working alongside residents and are leading the way on prevention. We have a clear understanding of community needs, are able to reach people who may not engage with traditional health services, to reduce loneliness and social isolation, support community resilience and provide practical support and community connections. As well as addressing the wider factors of health such as housing, employment, debt and social inclusion. Place Partnerships, at local authority level, will be taking on responsibility for planning and improving healthcare for their local populations as part of neighbourhood health.

3.5 Neighbourhood health plans need to be developed under the collective leadership of well-established Health & Wellbeing Boards, hosted by each local authority.

3.6 The neighbourhood health shift gives the opportunity to improve local outcomes and reduce inequalities throughout resident's lives, so that residents start well, live well and age well.

4.0 Summary of main proposals

4.1 In Telford & Wrekin work on with partners on the health and wellbeing strategy, children and young people's and adult social care prevention strategies, and the Vision 2032 are clear examples of existing community-focused collaboration to improve outcomes for residents.

4.2 The Telford & Wrekin Integrated Place Partnership – TWIPP is steering the delivery of neighbourhood health in the Borough. TWIPP includes partners from:

- local authority children and adults services and public health;

- the four Primary Care Networks;
- NHS leads from the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and the four local hospital and community trusts;
- our Voluntary and Community Service Alliance.

4.3 On a broader footprint the NHS with TWIPP partners are collaborating with Shropshire – the Council and voluntary sector alliance, to develop the Healthy Neighbourhoods programme. The programme aligns with the approach being taken more widely across Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent to accelerate the shift toward neighbourhood-based models of care that enable earlier intervention and proactive care closer to home.

4.4 The development of Integrated Neighbourhood Teams through our Primary Care Networks is the key initial focus for the NHS Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin, Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Neighbourhood Health Programme. Data on need and demand for healthcare is being used to target prevention and earlier treatment. Four population groups are priorities, and two of those are being worked on in 2026: people living with frailty and people with long-term conditions – such as cardiovascular disease.

4.5 Priority populations for Neighbourhood Health



4.5 The 2026 annual public health report describes how we have been strengthening prevention through TWIPP in Telford & Wrekin, through a series of case studies which showcase how the council, community and voluntary organisations have been working with residents and primary and community NHS services.

4.6 There are six priority themes for prevention agreed for healthy neighbourhoods, and the report uses these themes as a framework for recent case studies.



4.7 Neighbourhood health and prevention agenda connect well with other significant transformation programmes already underway, such as the Best Start in Life as part of the Children & Young People's Strategy, Adult Social Care Strategy and Making Prevention Real Programme and the Sport England place expansion programme.

5.0 Alternative Options

5.1 Producing an independent annual report is a statutory duty for the Director of Public Health and the local authority must publish the report, so not publishing a report would mean this duty is not complied with. Health and Wellbeing Board could decide to not endorse the recommendations of the Director of Public Health, but such a decision would be in spite of the wealth of evidence presented in the report.

6.0 Key Risks

6.1 Failure to implement Neighbourhood Health would risk continued fragmentation of healthcare services and support, making it harder for residents to access joined-up, person-centred care and reducing opportunities to improve prevention and tackle health inequalities. This could particularly affect priority groups such as people with frailty, long-term conditions, mental health needs, children and young people.

6.2 There is a risk of increasing pressure on hospitals and healthcare services. Without a stronger focus on prevention, early intervention and community-based support, the demand for emergency and acute services is likely to continue to grow, reducing the ability to improve outcomes, deliver value for money and meet national objectives.

6.3 The capacity of HWB and TWIPP partner organisations to contribute to delivery of the NHS 10-year Plan ambitions without adequate funding is also a key risk for successful implementation of the programme. This is particularly relevant to Voluntary Community & Social Enterprise sector organisations where ongoing financial stability can be an issue.

7.0 Council Priorities

7.1 Every child, young person and adult lives well in their community.

8.0 Financial Implications

8.1 The annual report and strategy included with this report will be delivered by the Council in conjunction with Health, Voluntary Sector and other partner organisations.

8.2 Public health grant allocations to Council's are determined by Government as part of it's annual funding settlement for Local Government. Telford & Wrekin Council's Public Health grant for 2026/27 is £16m and is expended on service across the Borough's population including services such as working to help people cease smoking, deliver initiatives to support children's health, provide addiction services for drugs & alcohol, provide health checks and deliver sexual health services, and other programmes.

8.3 The Council's Public Health grant is governed by statute and can only be expended on services which promote and further public health to the Borough's population. There are also key indicators required by Government to measure success in certain key areas.

8.4 The Council will work with partner organisations within allocated resources to deliver Neighbourhood and Community health services at the local level as set out in Government and local strategies. These will be delivered within approved capital and revenue resources. Where additional resources are found to be required then this will be considered within the Council's Governance structure for setting future years budgets through it's Medium term financial strategy.

9.0 Legal and HR Implications

9.1 The Director of Public Health has a statutory duty to prepare an annual report on the health of the people in the area of the local authority under Section 73B(5) of the National Health Service Act 2006 (as amended). The report has to be published by the local authority under Section 73B(6). The attached report is produced by the Director of Public Health in order to meet these statutory responsibilities.

10.0 Ward Implications

10.1 Borough-wide impact, but particularly wards with highest levels socio-economic deprivation where residents have worse health and wellbeing outcomes.

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

11.1 Neighbourhood Health is expected to deliver positive social and economic benefits by: improving population health, supporting people to live independently for longer and strengthening connections between health services, local authorities, voluntary organisations and communities. Through a stronger focus on prevention, early intervention and joined-up support, the aim is to improve health outcomes, reduce health inequalities, tackle social isolation and address wider determinants of health such as housing, employment and social inclusion. Involving communities in service design and delivery will build community resilience and ensure services are better aligned to local needs.

11.2 Economically, neighbourhood health aims to make more effective use of public resources by: reducing avoidable hospital admissions, improving management of long-term conditions, cutting duplication across services and shifting care closer to home. Better health outcomes can help more people remain active, independent and engaged in education, employment and community life, while reducing demand on acute health and social care services. Partnership working across sectors encourages investment in local neighbourhood infrastructure, which may contribute to wider social and economic regeneration and improved wellbeing outcomes for residents and the borough.

12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

12.1 Neighbourhood Health is expected to have a positive impact on equality and diversity through the strong emphasis on reducing health inequalities, improving access to services and ensuring support around the needs of individuals and communities. People who often experience poorer health outcomes, including people living with frailty, those with long-term conditions, disabled people, children and young people, people with mental health conditions and those approaching end of life are prioritised.

12.2 To maximise the benefits, neighbourhood health needs to ensure that no groups of people are disadvantaged by changes in the way services are delivered. Particular attention should be given to addressing digital exclusion, accessibility needs, language and communication barriers, and ensuring that seldom-heard communities are actively involved in shaping neighbourhood health plans. Ongoing engagement, monitoring of outcomes and equality impact will be important to ensure that the programme contributes to reducing, rather than widening, existing health inequalities and also supports fair and equitable access for all residents.

13.0 Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environmental Implications

13.1 Neighbourhood Health is likely to have a positive environmental impact by reducing reliance on hospital-based care and increasing access to services closer to where people live. Neighbourhood-based care, community hubs, integrated neighbourhood teams, greater use of digital technology and more coordinated services are expected, and these can help reduce travel for appointments and support more efficient use of health and care estates and resources.

14.0 Background Papers

None

15.0 Appendices

A Annual Public Health Report 2026 Healthy Neighbourhoods – Prevention First

16.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Director	20/08/2026	20/08/2026	HO
Legal	20/08/2026	03/09/2026	ON
Finance	20/08/2026	28/08/2026	RP

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Telford & Wrekin Co-operative Council

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Healthy Neighbourhoods

Prevention First

Telford and Wrekin Annual Public Health Report 2026





Foreword

My report this year shines a light on neighbourhood health, the Government's new programme, which is part of the NHS 10 Year Plan. Neighbourhood Health needs a strong public health approach, with a focus on prevention so our residents stay healthy and independent, spot problems earlier, and where needed the offer healthcare close to home, rather than in hospital.

Working in neighbourhoods is far from new for local authorities, we offer a wide range of services and support in communities that impact on resident's health and wellbeing, for example – lifestyle and public health services, adults and children's social care, housing, employment and welfare support. Our work on with partners on the health and wellbeing strategy, children and young people's and adult social care prevention strategies, and the Vision 2032 are clear examples of collaboration and delivery.

Bringing together services around the needs of local people, rather than organisational boundaries, with a shared focus on improving health outcomes is a foundation of neighbourhood health.

Voluntary and Community Sector organisations, alongside local authorities will be critical partners to the NHS in its major transformation journey over the next decade. This report introduces how we are working with the NHS to develop *healthy neighbourhoods* in Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin, with particular emphasis on prevention first, rather than the shift of treatment and care out of hospital into the community which is also gathering momentum. A series of case studies in the report showcase how the council community and voluntary organisations have been working with residents and primary and community NHS services on prevention. Neighbourhood health connects well with other significant transformation programmes already underway, such as the best start in life and making prevention real in adult social care.

The case studies, framed around our agreed prevention priorities, describe how we are working differently, what impact this is having and what going further looks like. There are obvious opportunities for future action set out, and it is recommended these actions become part of the Telford & Wrekin Place Partnership delivery plan for neighbourhood health and in turn inform the Health & Wellbeing Strategy refresh during 2027.



Helen Onions
Director of Public Health
Telford & Wrekin Council

Acknowledgements

A very big thank you to the working group who have developed this report with me: Louise, Billy, Lauren and John.

We are particularly grateful to the case study contributors inside and outside the Council: Lauren, Jolene, Rachel, Jeni, Steph, Becky, Louise, Diana, Nicky, Lizzie, Wayne and Damion. Thank you for sharing your knowledge, insights and examples of good practice featured throughout this report.

Thank you to those who have been filmed for the videos and the residents who shared their experiences and stories, which help bring this report to life through our case studies.

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Prevention focus themes

Accessible information on healthy lifestyles and self care

Telford online

Healthy conversations

Integrated neighbourhood teams and community hubs

Telford and Wrekin FAMILY HUBS

LIVE WELL COMMUNITY HUB

Person centred care and support

mind Telford

Comprehensive delivery of NHS Prevention Programmes

(with inequalities targeting)

NHS

Early detection and treatment for Long Term Conditions

(with inequalities targeting)

FIT4ALL

Focus prevention activities to reduce inequalities

Working across the system to support those in need

Move to Thrive

Get Yourself Active

Recommendations - opportunities for action

The Government's Neighbourhood Health agenda, if fully realised, has the potential to improve health and wellbeing outcomes significantly for our residents so they start well, live well and age well. The prevention work underway across the Borough, which is showcased in this report, demonstrates the impact that information, community support and healthcare offered in neighbourhoods is having on children, young people and adults.

It is recommended that the Health & Wellbeing Board, the NHS Integrated Care Board and Telford & Wrekin Integrated Place Partnership continue to work together on the neighbourhood health agenda and agree an implementation plan, which:

- **ensures prevention work becomes centre stage, alongside the shift of treatment and care out of hospital into community and primary care in neighbourhoods;**
- **scales up prevention programmes in an equitable way, with a focus on those who need it most;**
- **adopts learning from pilot projects and continues and expands the initiatives which are delivering obvious outcomes; and**
- **supports further investment in Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise organisations allowing local prevention programmes to become sustainable.**

Improving Outcomes: Life Expectancy and Healthy Life Expectancy

Key Messages

- Life Expectancy in males in Telford and Wrekin has improved since 2001-03, but most of this improvement occurred during 2000s and early 2010s, after which progress slowed. Similarly for females life expectancy improved in the past two decades, however most of this improvement occurred during the 2000s with progress slowing markedly since 2010.
- Healthy Life Expectancy in males in Telford and Wrekin deteriorated over the last decade, this trend was also seen nationally following the pandemic, but the decline in Telford and Wrekin has been particularly marked. For female healthy life expectancy has generally declined over the past decade.
- Mental wellbeing is an important contributor to healthy life expectancy. Poor wellbeing and mental ill-health are strongly associated with lower levels of self-reported health – a key driver of healthy life expectancy.
- Improving mental wellbeing, alongside preventing and managing long-term conditions and addressing wider determinants of health such as income, education and social circumstances, will all support improvements in healthy life expectancy.

Life expectancy at birth 2023-25



82.4
years in females
England 83.5



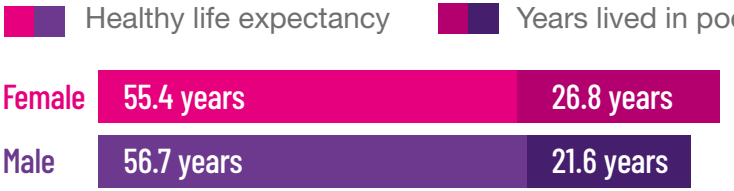
78.6
years in males
England 79.7

Life expectancy gap by deprivation 2022-24

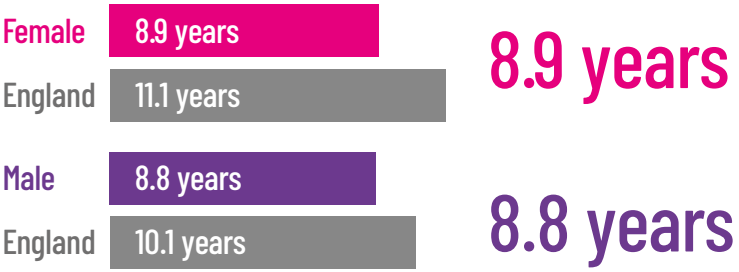
Inequalities in life expectancy by deprivation within Telford and Wrekin (Slope index of inequality)



Healthy life expectancy and years lived in poor health 2022-24



Healthy life expectancy at 65 2022-24

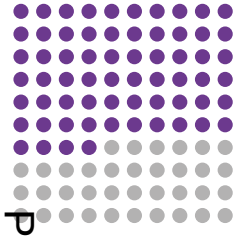


Source: Office for Health Improvement and Disparities: Health of the Region Explorer

Improving Outcomes: Starting well - living well - ageing well

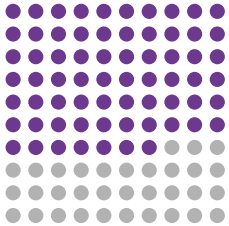
The infographics on this page shows outcomes in Telford and Wrekin across the life course at a glance. The neighbourhood health shift gives the opportunity to improve local outcomes and reduce inequalities throughout resident's lives.

Children achieving a good level of development at 2-2.5 years 2024/25



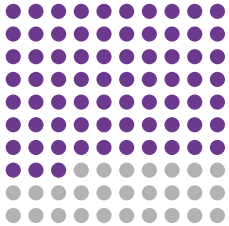
64%

Children achieving a good level of development at 5 years 2024/25



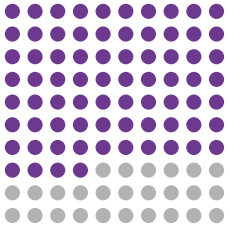
67%

Bowel screening coverage 2025



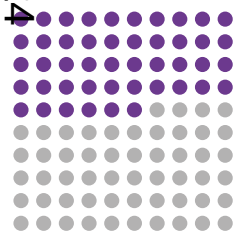
73%

Breast screening coverage 2025



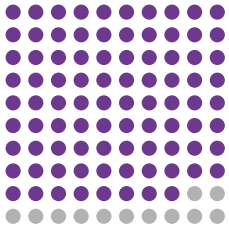
74%

Vaccination coverage: Flu (primary school aged children) 2024



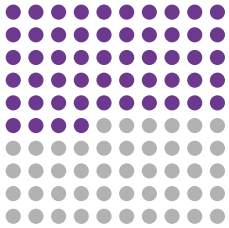
46%

Vaccination coverage: Measles, Mumps and Rubella 2024/25



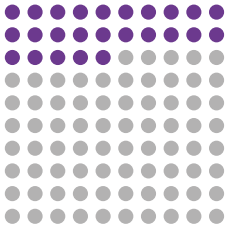
88%

Cancers diagnosed early 2022



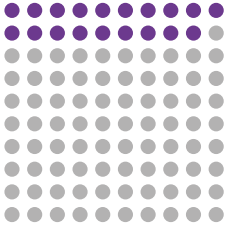
54%

NHS health checks received (40-74 year olds) 2021/22-2025/26



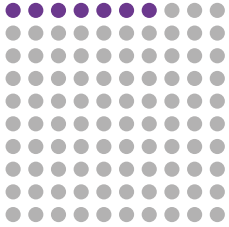
25%

High anxiety prevalence 2022/23



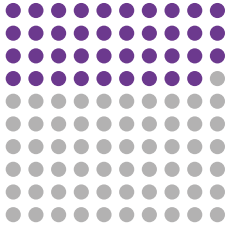
19%

Low happiness prevalence 2022/23



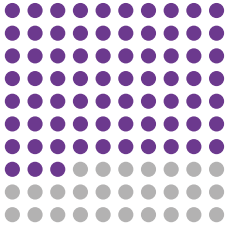
7%

Vaccination coverage: Flu (at risk adults) 2022



39%

Vaccination coverage: Flu (aged 65 and over) 2024/25



73%

Further information on health and wellbeing outcomes in the borough can be found at Telford & Wrekin Council | Telford and Wrekin Insight

Neighbourhood Health National Programme

National Neighbourhood Health Implementation Programme

Moving from treating illness in hospital to developing places which focus on prevention, early intervention and support closer to home.

The NHS 10 Year Health Plan and the 2026 **Neighbourhood Health Framework expect** neighbourhoods to be increasingly recognised as the building blocks of health and care, bringing services together around the needs of local people and communities.

Neighbourhood health is a collective approach across the NHS, local authorities, voluntary and community organisations and local residents. The goal is to create more joined-up, person-centred support, strengthen community resilience, tackle health inequalities and reduce reliance on hospital-based care wherever appropriate.

Voluntary and community organisations and local authorities with the NHS are leaders of Health & Wellbeing Boards and Place Partnership – and are already rooted in communities, working alongside residents and leading the way on prevention. They have a clear understanding of community needs, are able to reach people who may not engage with traditional health services, to reduce loneliness and social isolation, support community resilience and provide practical support and community connections. As well as addressing the wider factors of health such as housing, employment, debt and social inclusion.

Place Partnerships, at local authority level, will be taking on responsibility for planning and improving healthcare for their local populations. Neighbourhood health plans need to be developed under the collective leaderships of the well-established Health & Wellbeing Boards which are hosted by each local authority.

What is Neighbourhood Health?

The Government expects a shift from reactive, hospital-focused care towards prevention, early intervention and support shaped around people, place and community strengths. Neighbourhood health brings services, communities and local partners together to work around the needs of the local population.

Prevention: Supporting people to stay well for longer through early intervention, management of risk factors and action on the wider determinants of health such as housing, employment and social connection.

Personalised Care: Designing support around individual needs, preferences and goals, recognising that people experience health and care differently.

Care Closer to Home: Delivering more services within neighbourhood and community settings, reducing reliance on hospital-based care where appropriate.

Community-Led Approaches: Working with communities as partners, recognising local assets, lived experience and the important role of voluntary and community organisations.

Place-Based: Organising services around the needs of local neighbourhoods, with decisions and resources increasingly shaped by local circumstances and priorities.

Together, these principles support a more preventative, person-centred and community-focused approach to improving health and reducing inequalities.

Healthy Neighbourhoods in Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin

The Telford & Wrekin Place Partnership – TWIPP is steering the delivery of neighbourhood health in the Borough. TWIPP includes partners from:

- local authority children and adults services and public health;
- the four Primary Care Networks;
- NHS leads from the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and the four local hospital and community trusts; and
- our Voluntary and Community Service Alliance.

On a broader footprint the NHS with TWIPP partners are collaborating with Shropshire – the Council and voluntary sector alliance, to develop the Healthy Neighbourhoods programme.

The programme aligns with the approach being taken more widely across Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent to accelerate the shift toward neighbourhood-based models of care that enable earlier intervention and proactive care closer to home to improve patient outcomes.

The development of Integrated Neighbourhood Teams through our Primary Care Networks is the key initial focus. Data on need and demand for healthcare is being used to target prevention and earlier treatment. Four population groups are priorities, and two of those are being worked on in 2026: people living with frailty and people with long-term conditions – such as cardiovascular disease.

Healthy Neighbourhoods vision

> “Working together with our communities to create healthier, happier and well-connected neighbourhoods, where every resident has access to the care, support and opportunities they need to thrive.”

Priority Populations for Neighbourhood Health



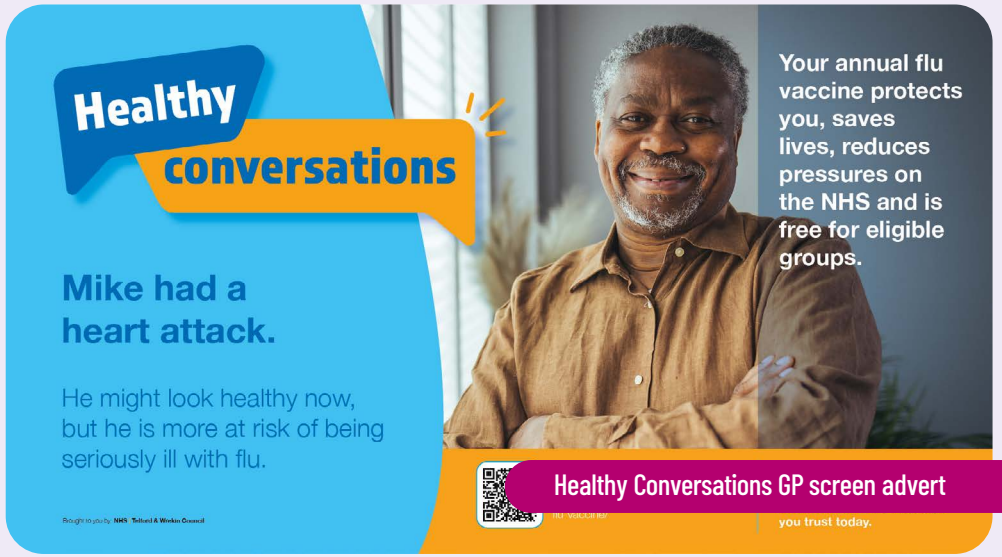
Telford & Wrekin Co-operative Council · Telford & Wrekin VCSE Alliance · South East Telford Primary Care Network · Newport & Central Primary Care Network · TEL DOC · The Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust · Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin NHS · Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust · The Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Foundation Trust · Shropshire Community Health NHS Trust

Accessible information on healthy lifestyles and self-care

- Healthy Conversations
- Digital Inclusion

What this means for residents

- Having clear, easy-to-understand information about healthy eating, physical activity, sleep, mental wellbeing, smoking cessation, alcohol use and preventing disease.
- Information being available in different formats and languages reflecting diversity so that everyone, including people with disabilities, low literacy or limited digital access can benefit.
- Knowing where to go for help, support and local services when needed.
- Feeling empowered to make informed choices about their health and wellbeing.
- Having the knowledge and skills to manage minor illnesses and long-term health conditions, to stay independent for longer.
- Ensuring everybody can access the same health information and opportunities, regardless of their background or circumstances



Healthy Conversations GP screen advert



Digital Inclusion at Leegomery Community Centre, Live Well Community Hub

Healthy Conversations

Why it is important

The quality and consistency of health information is crucial given widespread disinformation available online. Healthy Conversations programme and branding is being used to reach local residents who are traditionally more difficult to engage in health conversations. The aim is to help residents recognise themselves reflected in the campaign.

How we have been working differently

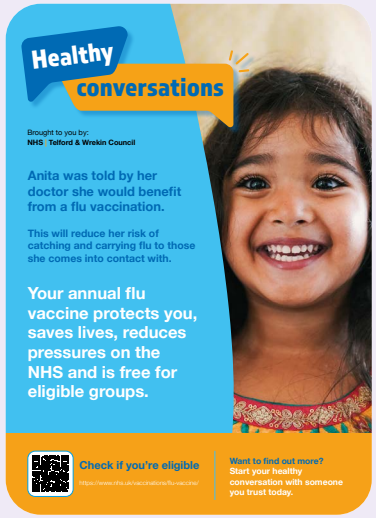
A communications and marketing-led approach underpins Healthy Conversations. TWIPP collaboration has resulted in a move from generic health messaging, towards the use of imagery of real people in life situations. Vaccination uptake, an area of health inequalities which can be a challenging topic to shift attitudes on was chosen as the first campaign. The campaign directly targeted common vaccine myths and worked to bust them with clear, trusted information, while supporting frontline staff to feel confident having these conversations and to see the difference they can make to resident's lives.

Making an impact

The campaign generated whopping 3,836,830 impressions on social media, with 10,552 clicks, and an engagement rate of 5%. Our top-performing post of the campaign gave residents the opportunity to find out where to get their vaccine, which directly contributed to a strong turnout for jabs at local sessions.

Going further

Healthy Conversations is now a rolling campaign programme from TWIPP. Building on the initial success, Pharmacy First version of the campaign is being developed for the Autumn to improve access and continue breaking down barriers to vaccination.





Digital Inclusion

Why is it important?

Digital inclusion is increasingly important as more services move online and adopt a digital-first approach. Without the access, skills, support and confidence to engage with digital technology, residents may not be able to access information, services and support and experience inequalities

How have we been working differently?

AbilityNet, a UK-based charity and Capgemini tech consultancy, have been working the Council and Voluntary and community organisations to help improve the digital skills of digitally excluded individuals, including disabled adults, older people. Live Well Hubs and community outreach programmes are offering targeted, accessible support sessions, based on intelligence of communities most at risk of digital exclusion. The programme includes accessible digital support and skills courses, NHS App support in GP practices, and outreach to unpaid carers, the deaf community and Age UK groups. Fraud and scam awareness sessions with local banks and building societies and West Midlands Cyber Crime Team are also offered.

Making an impact

Supporting and expanding digital inclusion is helping residents to participate in and benefit from a modern digital society, whatever their circumstances. Our community-based digital support offer has engaged over 800 residents to gain confidence and practical skills to access online services, information and support.

> *"Brilliant support and patience. I have hearing and visual impairment."*

> *"Listens to my query and explains to me how to put right with confidence."*

Going further

A community hub model is being developed to make digital support more accessible through voluntary, community and grassroots organisations, helping to create sustainable local support networks. Devices will be allocated to residents without suitable technology, and the Digital Champions Network will be expanded. Awareness of support and opportunities to build digital skills and confidence will become part of social value initiatives, widening partnership working further.



Digital Inclusion at a Council library

Integrated Neighbourhood Teams and Community Hubs

- Live Well Community Hubs
- Best Start in Life Family Hubs

What this means for residents

- Receiving more joined-up support with GPs, nurses, social workers, pharmacists, mental health practitioners and community organisations working together.
- Finding it easier to access help through a local community hub or single point of contact, rather than navigating multiple services
- Getting support earlier, helping to prevent problems from getting worse and reducing the need for hospital admissions.
- Having care and support that is tailored to their individual needs, strengths and circumstances.
- Better connections to community groups, activities and services that support health, wellbeing and independence.
- Increased focus on prevention, wellbeing and addressing wider factors which affect health, such as housing, employment, social isolation and financial wellbeing.
- Stronger community involvement, with local people helping to shape services and identify solutions to local challenges.



Live Well Community Hub at Hadley Community Centre

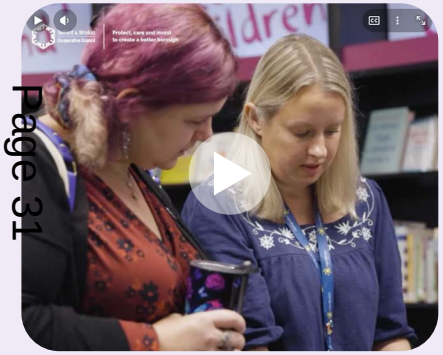


Damson Family Hub at Silver Threads Hall, Donnington

Live Well Community Hubs

Why it is important

Community hubs can bring together a range of services working together in a coordinated, integrated way in neighbourhoods. This means residents can access health, wellbeing, social care, financial support and community services in a familiar welcoming space as a one stop shop. Offering drop-in and appointment sessions in well known community venues provides support earlier and prevents issues from escalating.



Click here to watch

How we have been working differently

Live Well Hubs are currently running across the Borough in accessible community venues: Madeley, Sutton Hill, Woodside, Wellington, Donnington, Hadley, Leegomery and Malinslee. Built on the successful first Hub at the Anstice in Madeley, they integrate a wide range of services and support to improve health and wellbeing. Promotion through social media, videos and community storytelling has increased awareness and engagement. Live Hubs continue to evolve through co-production with residents, community groups and local partners, such as Town and Parish Councils.

Making an impact

Residents are receiving more holistic support through a single visit, often engaging with multiple services that they may not otherwise have accessed.

An elderly resident attended the Live Well Community Hub launch after receiving a text invitation from her GP practice. Initially seeking advice from Citizens Advice, discussions identified wider needs, including support for a terminal illness, maintaining independence at home and reducing social isolation. Through the Hub's joined-up approach, she received practical advice from the Independent Living Team on aids and equipment to support her independence in the kitchen. She was referred to a Social Prescriber for additional emotional and community support following multiple bereavements. Our resident was connected to local opportunities to reduce loneliness and an appointment was arranged through her GP surgery for ongoing support.

Going further

The Live Well Community Hub model is continuing to grow through stronger partnerships, greater community engagement and a focus on local needs and health inequalities. Expanding organisations involved, improving referrals and using resident feedback to enhance services, while ongoing platform development and promotion will increase awareness and access to support.

Best Start in Life Family Hubs

Why it is important

Life experiences from pregnancy through the early years shape children's health, development, learning and future opportunities. School readiness is measured by assessing children's level of development at aged 2-2.5 years and at 5 years old. Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and those who are disadvantaged have lower levels of school readiness. In Telford and Wrekin 67.3% of 5 year olds reached a good level of development in 2025. For 2-2.5 year olds in good level of development was 64.3%, which is lower than the England average.

How we have been working differently

The Telford and Wrekin Best Start in Life Plan sets out an ambitious partnership vision for improving early childhood outcomes. Our eight Best Start Family Hubs, delivered by the council and community and voluntary organisations such as CAB, Families in Telford and HomeStart, offer comprehensive information, advice and support for families across the Borough. Health Visitors have started to offer drop-in clinics for parents and babies from the Family Hubs and these sessions have become increasingly popular with families.

Making an impact

Drop In's are currently offered from 16 different locations across Telford and Wrekin, parents and carers can pop along, with no prior appointment or booking required to meet a Family Hubs Practitioner for support, signposting and advice around:

- Parenting and behaviour support
- Online and community safety
- Information on workshops and courses
- SEND support
- Domestic Abuse support
- Information about groups and support options in families' local communities



Click here to watch

Going further

The Best Start in Life Plan is delivering a range of initiatives to improve services and support for families. To improve joint working across the NHS and children's services a new School Readiness Integrated Neighbourhood Team is being created which will offer extra support, for example for infants with communication and language development challenges.



Damson Family Hub at Silver Threads Hall, Donnington

Person Centred Care and support

- Calm Cafe
- Social Prescribing

What this means for residents

- **Being listened to** and having their views, preferences and goals respected.
- **Having more choice and control** over decisions about their health, care and support.
- **Receiving care tailored to their individual needs,** rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.
- **Being treated as a whole person,** considering physical health, mental wellbeing, social circumstances, culture and personal strengths.
- **Working in partnership with professionals** to develop care plans and make decisions.
- **Receiving coordinated support** so services work together around the individual.
- **Getting help to stay independent** and maintain quality of life for as long as possible.
- **Support for self-care and self-management,** helping people build confidence to manage their own health and wellbeing.



Calm Café

Why it is important

Support in communities that strengthen social connections, reduce isolation and improve access to local assets can improve mental wellbeing. Young adulthood is a key stage for building independence and confidence. Accessible community-based support can strengthen resilience, social connections and self-help skills, helping young people with emotional and mental health challenges thrive and prevent issues from escalating into crisis.

How we have been working differently

The new 18-25 Calm Café has provided a youth-focused, open-access space where support is goal-focused, relationship-based and delivered in the community.

Alongside emotional wellbeing support, young adults can access practical help with housing, finances and other challenges affecting their mental health. Through consistent engagement and trusted relationships, staff can intervene early, prevent escalation and support young people to develop independence and resilience.

Making an impact

> *"For young people like XX, the Calm Café is not optional – it is essential, preventative, youth-focused, and it fills a gap that no other service currently provides."*

Going further

The Calm Café model has had very meaningful impact for young people, as it has for older adults, and these should be further developed and expanded.



Social prescribing

Why it is important

Health is shaped by much more than health care alone. Factors such as loneliness, social isolation, poor housing, financial hardship, unemployment and low confidence can have a significant impact on both physical and mental wellbeing. Social prescribing recognises these wider determinants of health and provides a person-centred approach that helps individuals access practical support, community activities and local services that improve their health and quality of life. Across Telford and Wrekin, social prescribing helps residents address issues that cannot be resolved through clinical interventions alone.

How we have been working differently

Social prescribing services are embedded within Primary Care Networks, enabling closer collaboration between GP practices, voluntary and community organisations, local authority services and wider health partners. In Telford and Wrekin, services are delivered by Telford Mind in South East Telford PCN, Newport and Central PCN, and TELDOC. The approach focuses on understanding what matters to people and connecting them with support relating to mental health, housing, finances, employment, physical activity and community participation.

Making an impact

Through personalised support, our Social Prescribers are helping people identify solutions, build confidence and connect with community resources that support long-term wellbeing.

Rebuilding Confidence After Bereavement: Following the loss of a loved one, linking with our Social Prescribing support, allowed a service user to connect with local wellbeing and community groups, helping them rebuild confidence, develop new social connections and improve their wellbeing.

Tackling Financial Stress: A resident experiencing anxiety due to debt and financial difficulties was supported to access specialist financial advice services. With practical support in place, they reduced financial stress, felt more in control and were better able to focus on their health and wellbeing.

Supporting a Return to Community Life: Our Social Prescribing service helped a resident with a long-term health condition who had become isolated and lacked confidence to engage in community activities. Through personalised support, they were connected to local groups and are now attending regularly with increased confidence and independence.

Going further

Social prescribing will continue to support residents facing challenges such as loneliness, financial hardship and poor wellbeing. We will strengthen links between primary care, community organisations and local services to help more people access timely, personalised support that improves health, wellbeing and independence.

NHS prevention programmes

- Lung Cancer Screening
- Winter flu vaccination

What this means for residents

- **Support to stay healthy and well for longer,** rather than only receiving treatment when unwell.
- **Access to vaccinations and immunisations** to protect against serious diseases.
- **Screening programmes** that help identify conditions like cancer or cardiovascular disease at an early stage.
- **Health checks and risk assessments** to detect potential health problems before they become more serious.
- **Support to adopt healthier lifestyles,** including help with stopping smoking, healthy eating, physical activity and maintaining a healthy weight.
- **Earlier intervention** to reduce the risk of developing long-term conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and respiratory illnesses.
- **Improved wellbeing and independence,** helping people remain active and connected to their communities.
- **Reduced health inequalities,** by targeting support to those most at risk of poor health outcomes.



Lung Cancer Screening and Smoking

Why it is important

Quitting smoking at any age reduces the risk of smoking related illness or mortality and has both physical and mental health benefits. The NHS Lung Cancer Screening Programme offers lung health checks to people aged 55-74 with a history of smoking, helping identify lung cancer and other conditions earlier when treatment is often more effective.

How we have been working differently

With nine specialist Stop Smoking advisors, the team has more than doubled in size, with over 1000 referrals to the service over the last six months, and around half choosing to engage with stop smoking support.

Through close partnership working with NHS colleagues, primary care, acute services and community pharmacies, we've developed an integrated referral and nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) pathway, ensuring people receive timely, personalised support to quit smoking, including those who are housebound or face barriers to accessing services.



Click here to watch

Making an impact

Between January and July 2026, 549 people accessed Telford & Wrekin's Stop Smoking Service following a lung health check, with almost half successfully quitting smoking after four weeks. More than 1,000 people referred through the screening programme were contacted by the Stop Smoking Service in the first six months, with around half choosing to engage with support.

> *"Quitting together made it much easier than we ever thought it would be. The Lung Cancer Screening Programme gave us the push we needed, and the stop smoking support helped us stay on track. We both feel healthier, have more energy, are breathing better, and have more money in our pockets. Most importantly, we would not have done it without the help."*

Going further

We'll continue to strengthen partnerships across health and care services to support Telford and Wrekin's smoke free ambition. Alongside personalised behavioural support and access to evidence-based quit aids, we'll explore additional treatment pathways and improve access to support for groups at greatest risk of smoking-related harm and health inequalities.

Winter flu vaccination

Why it is important

Flu vaccination for people in certain age groups and with health conditions reduces the risk of serious illness and disruption in nurseries, schools and workplaces, as well as reducing pressure on NHS health services at a critical time of year.

How we have been working differently

To increase uptake of the flu vaccine in key groups ahead of families mixing at Christmas, the Council's Health Protection Team commissioned a local pharmacist to deliver flu vaccinations in two nurseries and a community centre. This required new dedicated work from partners across TWIPP.

Locations were selected to improve access for our most underserved communities, using working relationships developed during the pandemic. The locations, timings and the walk-in nature of the clinics was designed to make them as accessible as possible to people.

The clinics were arranged, advertised and promoted using established community relationships with schools, early years settings care homes, this built on the Healthy Conversations and vaccination education work.

Making an impact

This neighbourhood inequalities initiative aimed to improved access to vaccines in community settings outside of traditional NHS clinics. Provisional data for 2025/26 across the whole NHS flu programme shows vaccination coverage improved across all target groups in Telford and Wrekin compared to last year.



First community clinic at the Park Lane Centre in Woodside

Going further

The intention is to develop this work further over the upcoming flu season, using the experience gained to start earlier and reach a wider audience, all with a focus on reducing the impact of inequalities.

Focused prevention to reduce inequalities

- Get Yourself Active
- Move to Thrive
- Childhood immunisation

What this means for residents

- **Extra support for people and communities who face the greatest disadvantage** and health challenges, whatever the reason.
- **Earlier help to prevent illness,** especially for those at higher risk of poor health.
- **Improved access to services,** ensuring people can get the care, advice and support they need regardless of where they live or their circumstances.
- **Targeted programmes** such as smoking cessation, weight management, vaccination, screening and mental wellbeing support for those who would benefit most.
- **Reducing unfair differences in health outcomes** between different communities and population groups.
- **Helping everyone have the same opportunity to live a long, healthy life.**



Move to Thrive

Get Yourself Active

Why it is important

Being active can support physical health, mental wellbeing, independence and social connection. Yet opportunities to move are not always equally accessible for Disabled people.

How we have been working differently

Get Yourself Active Local brings together Disability Rights UK, the Energize partnership, the council and VCSE organisations with carers and people with experience of disability to create a more inclusive environment where movement is considered part of everyday support and wellbeing, rather than an optional extra. Rather than standalone initiatives, a collaborative approach has developed across three strands:

- **Training health and social care workers** to confidently encourage movement;
- **Embedding physical activity** into everyday social work practice through Moving Social Work training;
- **Co-production** working directly with disabled people to shape activities and provider offers.

Making an impact

This collaborative approach through TWIPP is helping more people to be active in ways that suit their individual needs and preferences.

- 123 Social work professionals trained in Telford and Wrekin, with strong leadership buy-in helping embed learning into everyday practice.
- Co-production training has reached 16 physical activity providers, with 24 more registered across Shropshire Telford and Wrekin.

> *"It's been a privilege to work with Disability Rights UK, our local partners, and people with lived experience to explore how we can shift the narrative around movement. This requires all of us to work together to build a system where movement can be embedded into the way we live, work, and deliver services."*
>
> **Michelle Pullen, Communities, Health and Social Care Programme Manager, Energize STW**

Going further

By continuing to bring together councils, VCSE organisations, health and social care professionals, activity providers and people with lived experience, partners are sharing learning, building understanding and maintaining momentum towards a common goal: creating more opportunities for disabled people to be active in ways that suit them.

The Council is continuing to actively seek new products, initiatives and other ways to support and encourage inactive residents to access our leisure facilities and green spaces, including with Energize and partners as part of the Sport England Place Expansion Programme.



Get Yourself Active session

Move to Thrive

Why it is important

People living with dementia and their carers can benefit greatly from opportunities to stay active, connected and engaged within their communities. However, some residents, particularly those who are housebound or living with early onset dementia, can face additional barriers to accessing suitable support and activities.

How we have been working differently

Move to Thrive, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, provides research-based, person-centred physical activity opportunities that support wellbeing, maintain independence and help people continue doing the things that matter to them.

Age UK Shropshire Telford & Wrekin, the Alzheimer's Society, Community Resource, Adult Social Care and other local organisations have been working together to delivers twice-weekly community sessions alongside tailored support for residents who are unable to attend group activities. There is an at-home service for housebound residents and one-to-one support for people with early onset dementia, developed in response to feedback from participants and partners. Support workers and trained volunteers help people access sessions and remain connected to local opportunities.



Move to Thrive session

Making an impact

In year one:

- 102 group sessions delivered, averaging 6.4 people living with dementia per session (437 attendances in total).
- Three tailored at-home movement sessions delivered for housebound residents.
- A 10-week one-to-one programme delivered for a person living with early onset dementia.
- 12 training courses reaching 104 professionals, volunteers and carers.
- A before-and-after mood survey showed positive improvements across all measured areas, particularly confidence, self-esteem and overall wellbeing.

> *"Since coming on a Tuesday, [Stan] has grown in confidence and made friends... I am worried that if the sessions stop he will become a bit of a recluse again."*
>
> **Pat, whose husband Stan attends with early-stage Parkinson's**

Going further

Building on the success of its first year, Move to Thrive is continuing to develop dementia-friendly physical activity opportunities across the Borough. Love to Move instructors, including trained volunteers will extend the offer, so more people will stay active, connected and independent.

Childhood immunisation

Why it is important

Vaccination is a key prevention initiative and inequalities are often caused by vaccine hesitancy which includes:

- **Confidence:** Level of trust in vaccine and healthcare professionals
- **Complacency:** Perceived lack of need or value for vaccine
- **Convenience:** Barriers to accessing appointments

Working within our communities and building relationships, using clear messaging, and training health care colleagues to improve the way they communicate about vaccination can all improve vaccine uptake.

How we have been working differently

A targeted project has been designed to increase MMR and HPV vaccination uptake in young people, where levels of uptake are lower in our most underserved and disadvantaged communities.

Every professional and volunteer that parents encounter is confident to discuss vaccines. We visited schools and community groups to educate then offer a vaccination opportunity.

We worked closely with our school aged immunisation partners, education colleagues, family hub colleagues, local cancer prevention charity Lingen Davies, community and faith leaders.

We have listened to our young people, teachers and community leaders facilitating education sessions and postcode specific Facebook promotion with information in formats that are accessible. The project has been given longevity through the Making Every Contact Count principle building confidence in professionals to have healthy conversations and work in partnership.



Click here to watch

Making an impact

So far 38 targeted education sessions have taken place communicating with over 3,000+ students, 250 professional interactions, and over 130 direct family conversations, with 75 immunisations given.

> *Thank you for an engaging and expertly presented assembly. We really valued your time, enthusiasm and expertise.*
>
> **Head of Year 8, Telford Langley School**

Going further

An ongoing partnership programme is being developed to sustain this important initiative. Reaching the needs and preferences of underserved communities will allow information to be shared in formats and language they relate to, from trusted voices. Students in one school alone spans 43 languages, so we are co-producing visual and easy-read resources with Year 8 and sixth form students to close this gap.

Early detection and treatment of Long Term Conditions

- Falls Prevention
- Healthy Hearts

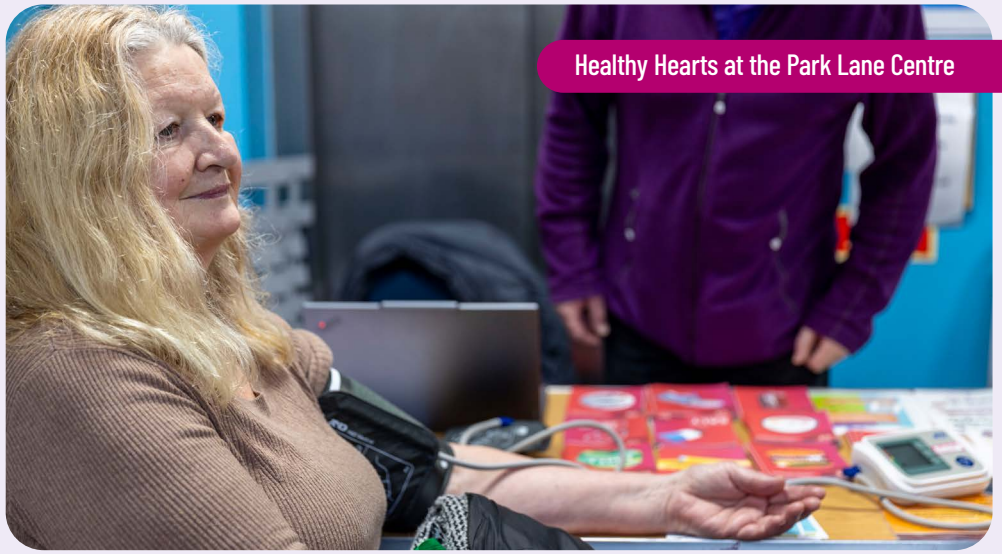
What this means for residents

- **Identifying their health problems sooner,** often before symptoms become severe.
- **Quicker access to tests, diagnosis and treatment,** helping to prevent conditions from worsening.

Better health outcomes, as many conditions can be managed more effectively when found early.

More support to stay independent and maintain quality of life.

- **Reducing the risk of complications,** hospital admissions and avoidable ill health.
- **Helping people live well with long-term conditions** through ongoing care and support.



Healthy Hearts at the Park Lane Centre



Healthy Hearts at the Park Lane Centre

Falls prevention

Why it is important

As the Borough ages, falls are a leading cause of injury, hospital admission and loss of independence for older adults. Across Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin, more than 18,300 people attended hospital following a fall in the last six months. Falls can have a significant impact on confidence, mobility and wellbeing, often increasing the need for health and social care support.

Integrated working can help across residents stay active, independent and connected through falls prevention and strength and balance programmes.

How we have been working differently

Public Health, Adult Social Care, Primary Care, Community Services and wider health partners have been using local intelligence. In partnership we've expanded falls prevention support to provide accessible, person-centred options for residents across community and care settings.

- **Fit4all:** Our established falls prevention programme, taking a hybrid approach to engage residents in both community and care settings.
- **Moving On:** Community classes are helping residents to continue exercising after Fit4all, supporting long-term physical activity and independence.
- **Broader access:** Weekly online exercise sessions for care homes and extra care settings are now being offered so residents unable to attend community venues can access falls prevention.

Making an impact

Our falls prevention offer is growing fast, with over 3,500 attendances this year, up 1,502 on last year. Community Moving On classes and Digital Online sessions are helping residents like rebuild strength, confidence and independence, while over 1,100 digital attendances reached our most frail residents in care homes.

> *"C would fall quite regularly, almost weekly. C now has had only a few falls over the last six months and has told me that he feels stronger."*

Going further

A Falls Prevention Pathway, which matches individuals to the right support is being developed, including a digital at-home offer, and physical activity conversations are being embedded into routine assessments to identify support earlier. An infra-red thermal imaging pilot project in care homes, which detects falls and provides insights around an individual's behaviours and habits to prevent falls has reduced conveyances to hospital by over 80%, and the use of the technology is being extended for a further 12 months.



Fit4All session

Healthy Hearts

Why it is important

South East Telford includes neighbourhoods in the most deprived 10% nationally and rates of life expectancy are lower. The Healthy Hearts Pilot, developed with South East Telford Primary Care Network, brought preventative health services directly into communities to support earlier identification of cardiovascular risk. Almost one in four residents receiving an NHS Health Check were found to have an elevated risk of developing cardiovascular disease, showing the value of reaching residents who may not otherwise engage with preventative healthcare.

How we have been working differently

Using dedicated outreach buses, Healthy Hearts brought NHS Health Checks delivered by GP practices and the Council Healthy Lifestyles Service alongside community organisations into places where residents live and socialise. It focused on building relationships with men and communities experiencing higher disadvantage, offering health checks at community events to make access feel welcoming rather than too health-focussed or clinical.

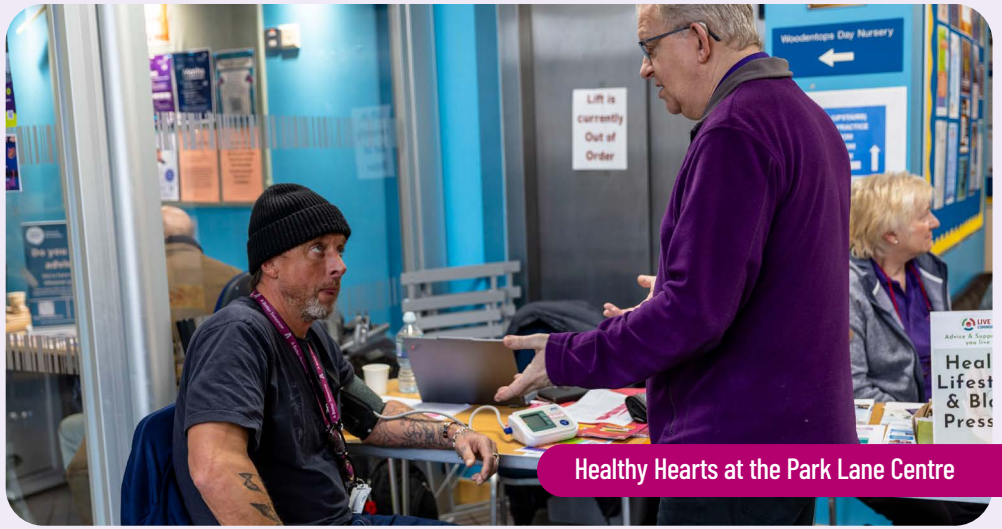
Making an impact

The pilot delivered 283 NHS Health Checks and 369 additional Blood Pressure and Mini Health Checks, through 78 community events across 16 locations. 24% of participants had a QRisk score of 10% or above, enabling earlier intervention. Promotion reached over 137,000 residents, and 26% of participants accessed the service simply by passing the bus.

> *"I would not have booked a GP appointment myself and only attended because I saw the bus advertised on Facebook."*

Going further

Learning from the Healthy Hearts is shaping future cardiovascular prevention and outreach work, focused on extending neighbourhood engagement with men and minority ethnic communities, strengthening referral pathways into Healthy Lifestyle Services, and adopting a blended drop-in and appointment model to reduce inequalities across the Borough.



Healthy Hearts at the Park Lane Centre

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Telford & Wrekin Co-operative Council

Protect, care and invest to create a better borough

Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Cabinet

3 December 2026

Telford and Wrekin Cultural Strategy 2027-2032

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Angela McClements - Cabinet Member: Culture, Tourism & Leisure
Lead Director:	Katherine Kynaston – Director: Housing, Commercial & Customer Services
Service Area:	Culture & Events
Report Author:	Jon Bielstein – Group Manager Culture
Officer Contact Details:	**Tel:** 01952 380992 **Email:** Jon.Bielstein@telford.gov.uk
Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key Decision:	Key Decision
Forward Plan:	Yes – 14 May 2026
Report considered by:	SMT – 3 November 2026 Business Briefing – 19 November 2026 Cabinet – 3 December 2026

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1.1 Note the impact and achievements of the borough's existing cultural programme including Theatre on Tour and the borough-wide Events Programme and its contribution to community wellbeing, participation, place-making, economic growth and civic pride.

1.2 Approve the proposals for an expanded cultural events programme in 2027 featuring an extended Theatre on Tour and Amphitheatre programme and a new borough-wide Festival (TF Fest).

1.3 Endorse the development of the Telford @ 60 programme to celebrate the Telford's Diamond Jubilee engaging residents and partners in celebrating the borough's heritage and communities and supporting participation in cultural activity.

1.4 Approve proposals to launch a £100,000 community culture & arts grant programme to support Town & Parish Councils and voluntary and community organisations to develop events and activities to form part of the T@60 '60 Moments' celebration.

1.5 Approve the Telford and Wrekin Cultural Strategy as the borough's new place based, framework for cultural development.

1.6 Support the establishment of a Telford and Wrekin Cultural Partnership to provide leadership and coordinate delivery of the Strategy and to maximise opportunities for investment and collaboration noting the Council's role as a key partner.

1.7 Following the Borough's identification by DCMS/Arts Council England as a priority place for cultural development support the development of a Place Partnership funding bid.

1.8 Grant delegated authority to the Director of Housing, Commercial & Customer Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Culture, Tourism & Leisure to take the necessary steps to implement the Council's contribution to the delivery of the Cultural Strategy and Partnership and to submit proposals for Place Partnership investment.

2.0 Purpose of Report

2.1 Building on the success of Telford & Wrekin Council's existing cultural programme, including Theatre on Tour and the borough-wide Events Programme, the report sets out an ambitious programme of cultural investment and celebration, centred on an expanded 2027 events offer, the 2028 Telford @ 60 Diamond Jubilee programme and a new £100,000 T@60 Cultural Communities Grant Programme open to Town & Parish Councils and community groups to be part of creating new cultural events and activities. Together with the adoption of a new Cultural Strategy, creation of a Cultural Partnership and pursuit of national cultural funding opportunities, these proposals aim to strengthen community wellbeing, participation, civic pride, place-making and economic growth across the borough.

2.2 The new Cultural Strategy based on wide ranging engagement with stakeholders, creatives and residents, establishes a shared vision for culture across the borough and provides a framework through which partners and investors can work together to maximise the social, economic and environmental benefits that culture can bring to Telford and Wrekin. The Strategy will frame the Council's future delivery of cultural activity and events which will continue to grow, and support further

engagement by partners and communities to broaden programming, extend community reach and deliver economic benefits. It also provides the context to attract funding from Arts Council England and other funders and work with key stakeholders like National Trust as they develop their plans for the Ironbridge Museums.

2.3 This report demonstrates how culture contributes to the borough's priorities and wider ambitions for healthier communities, stronger neighbourhoods, opportunities for children and young people aligned with our Child Friendly Telford and Wrekin commitment, stimulates economic growth and pride in place. It recognises culture not as a standalone activity, but as a catalyst for wider social, economic and community outcomes.

3.0 Background

3.1 Over recent years Telford & Wrekin Council have continued to invest in culture and developed an increasingly ambitious and accessible cultural programme, working with Town & Parish Councils, residents, artists, cultural organisations, educational institutions, businesses and community groups to create opportunities for participation and enjoyment across the borough.

3.2 This approach recognises that culture is not simply about arts and entertainment. Culture plays an important role in helping people connect with one another, supporting wellbeing, developing skills, celebrating local identity, animating public spaces, attracting visitors and strengthening communities. As a borough with a distinctive heritage, diverse communities and significant ambitions for growth and regeneration, Telford and Wrekin is well placed to harness culture as a contributor to wider outcomes for people and place.

3.3 The extent and impact of this work was recognised in the LGA Culture peer review which included Paul Bristow, Director, Strategic Partnerships and Place Policy, Arts Council England. The panel recommended that to ensure growth and sustainability of existing activity and to further connect the diverse local network of creative organisations, artists and venues, that a place based, partnership led Strategy be developed setting out shared ambitions and priorities for sector development. The Cultural Strategy 2027-2032 stems from that recommendation.

3.4 The new Cultural Strategy builds on strong foundations and sets out a long-term vision for how culture can contribute to the lives of all residents and the future success of the borough. It establishes some immediate term actions including for the Council but through the new Partnership this will develop further into a shared Delivery Plan and basis for a bid for Place Partnership funding to the Arts Council.

4.0 Impact and Achievements

4.1 Over the past year, Telford & Wrekin Council has continued to build on its ambitions to make culture accessible to all, delivering a packed programme of free and low-cost events, performances, festivals and community activity reaching residents across the borough and attracting visitors from beyond its boundaries.

This has involved and compliments the work done by many other organisations and individuals.

4.2 The programme has generated more than 100,000 attendances including both residents and visitors, increasing year on year, demonstrating both public appetite for cultural activity and the growing profile of Telford and Wrekin as a destination for cultural experiences.

4.3 The continued delivery of a programme of free and affordable activity remains particularly important at a time when many households are experiencing financial pressures and is a key commitment in our Cost of Living Strategy.

4.4 Based on attendance levels and recognised visitor economy benchmarks, the programme is estimated to have generated in excess of £2 million of additional economic value for the borough through visitor spending, supporting local businesses and hospitality venues, boosting employment, retaining local talent, increasing high street footfall and benefitting the wider visitor economy.

4.5 Culture increasingly contributes to the delivery of wider priorities across the borough and supports the Council's ambition to Protect, Care and Invest to Create a Better Borough.

4.6 The Cultural Strategy supports the ambitions of the borough's Health and Wellbeing Strategy by creating opportunities for people to connect with others, participate in community life and access shared experiences that contribute to positive wellbeing. Across the borough, culture is increasingly taking place in parks and green spaces and with a continued focus on accessibility through family-friendly activities, accessible venues, and measures that support participation by residents with disabilities and additional needs.

4.7 By reducing barriers to participation and creating opportunities for social connection, culture helps build safer, stronger, inclusive and resilient communities supporting the wider ambition of enabling residents to live happier, healthier and more fulfilled lives.

4.8 Culture also contributes to the ambitions of Child Friendly Telford and Wrekin creating opportunities for children and young people to participate, develop confidence, express themselves and influence decision-making. The borough's strong educational offer, including its highly regarded Telford & Wrekin Music service, demonstrates the role creativity can play in supporting educational attainment, confidence, aspiration and opportunities for young people. We have facilitated a partnership that in 2027 will see Royal Ballet and Opera bring world class expertise to Telford primary school teachers to inspire creative ways to teach dance across the primary curriculum.

4.9 The new Cultural Strategy illustrates what we have heard from children and young people as part of stakeholder engagement and how we are responding. This emphasised their priorities to be involved in shaping places and services that affect them and co-production of cultural activity and opportunities.

4.10 Cultural activity also supports place-making and regeneration which in 2027 will see the animation of more public spaces including our borough town high streets, the new Betty Harris Square (Station Quarter), Oakengates Square and Wellington Market

Highlights from 2025 and 2026

Festivals and Events

4.11 The Council's headline events programme opens with **Spring into St George's** Day in Telford Town Park, bringing together residents and visitors for a free day of family entertainment, featuring jousting, birds of prey demonstrations, creative workshops and the Made in Telford showcase. The event celebrates local talent, community spirit and cultural participation.

4.12







4.13 The first **Telford Krazy Races** in July 2026 attracted over 7,000 spectators to Telford Town Park with 26 teams representing businesses, charities, and community groups from across the borough. The event raised more than £5,000 for local charities and community causes including Lingen Davies Sunflower appeal and Cuan Wildlife Rescue. It generated significant positive publicity for Telford, increased visitor footfall, and demonstrated the power of large-scale cultural events to entertain and support local economic activity.





4.14 **Telford Balloon Fiesta** continues to grow, this year featuring 37 hot air balloons, a sold-out Night Glow with 7,500 attendees that evening alone, and a packed programme of free family entertainment across the Bank Holiday weekend. Culminating in **Telford Carnival** this celebrated everything that makes Telford and Wrekin unique, through music, dance, creativity and cultural expression.



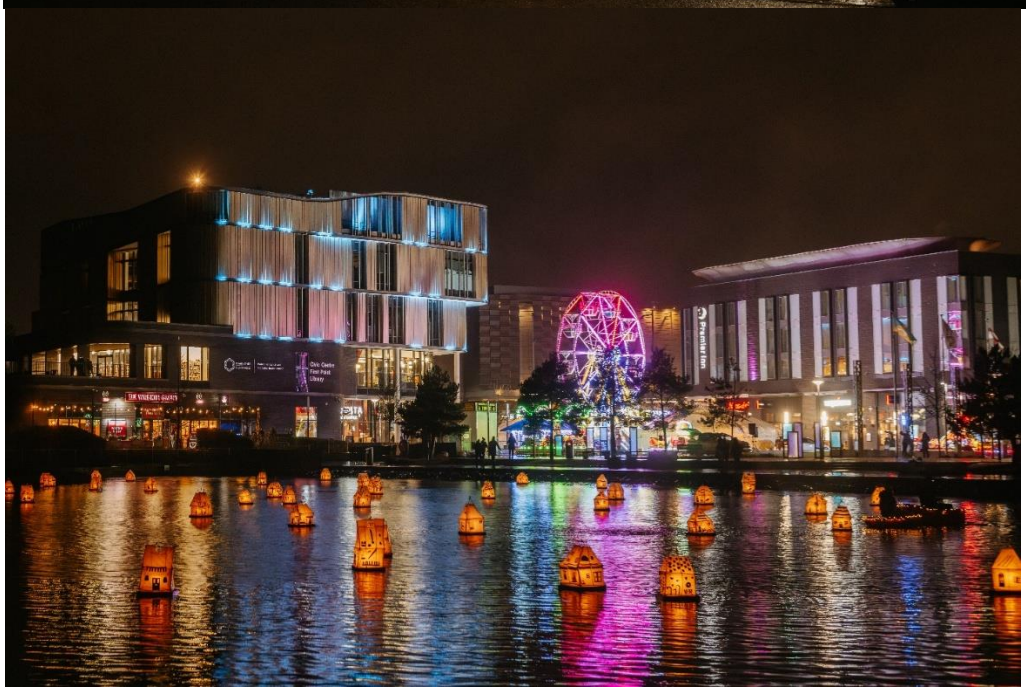
4.15 The Fiesta remains one of the borough's largest and most popular cultural celebrations, attracting visitors from across the country with postcode data showing visitors drawn from Devon to Northumberland and the Welsh coast to East Anglia reinforcing Telford's reputation as a destination for major events and a showcase for new audiences and generating significant economic impact.



4.16 The inaugural Telford Day was held in Southwater on 29 November 2025, establishing a new annual celebration of civic pride and identity for the borough. The event saw the raising of the new Telford Flag, designed by local schoolgirl Amelia. Featuring the iconic Iron Bridge, a cog symbolising the borough's industrial heritage and green reflecting its parks and open spaces, the flag has quickly become a symbol of civic pride and belonging. The celebrations also included the

Telford My Home lantern parade, with illuminated house-shaped lanterns and fairy-lit coracles creating a striking floating light installation on Southwater Lake, alongside entertainment in Southwater Square.





4.17 Telford Day 2026 was celebrated in Ironbridge Gorge as part of a weekend of community and festive activity which also marked the launch of Ironbridge 40, a year-long programme celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Gorge's UNESCO World Heritage designation. The event brought together residents, community groups and visitors and commenced a wider programme of cultural, heritage and learning activity that will continue throughout 2027. Further details of the Ironbridge 40 programme are set out in paragraphs 5.10 to 5.14 below.

4.18 Building on the success of the 2025 festive programme, which included record attendance at Christmas in Southwater, the popular Festive Gardens and the pantomime at Telford International Centre, the 2026 programme will once again provide a vibrant and inclusive seasonal offer for residents and visitors. The pantomime Jack and the Beanstalk will provide the centrepiece of the programme, supported by cross-promotion with activities at Telford Ice Rink, the Southwater Christmas Market, local hospitality businesses and Telford Carol-oke, a community Christmas sing-along in Southwater Square featuring local school choirs. The ever-popular Festive Gardens will return, continuing to provide an affordable and accessible family experience, with ticket prices held at just £8 for a family of five. Together, these events will support the town centre economy while bringing residents and visitors together to celebrate the festive season.

Theatre on Tour

4.19 Whilst the new Telford Theatre takes shape, the **Theatre on Tour** programme has continued to expand, taking professional theatre, live music and participatory activity directly into communities. During 2026 activity was delivered through an increasingly diverse venue network including Belmont Hall, Charlton School Theatre, The Anstice, The Little Theatre, Dawley Town Hall, Cosy Hall, The Wakes, Harper Adams University and other community venues.

4.20 Delivered in partnership with Arts Alive, a National Portfolio Organisation funded by Arts Council England, the programme helps ensure that residents of all ages can engage with cultural activity regardless of location or circumstance.

Amphitheatre

4.21 As well as outdoor performances in Hartshill Park, Oakengates, and Bowring Park, Wellington the reopening of the **Telford Town Park Amphitheatre** marked a significant milestone in the delivery of the Telford Theatre on Tour outdoor programme, bringing live performance back to the venue after more than 25 years. Over the summer, the Amphitheatre hosted 19 event days, with a mix of live music, theatre, comedy and family entertainment, attracting more than 8,000 attendances in a setting in the heart of our award winning Town Park.

4.22 A particular highlight was the delivery of six days of free live music, comprising a two-day reopening celebration and four dedicated local band showcase events providing performance opportunities for local musicians and community groups. The opening weekend alone featured nine acts, including Shades of Grey, Caradoc & The Loachra, Stomping Jacks, Collision, The Endings, Jester, Hadley Male Voice Choir, Midnight Jukes and Broadcast Alley, showcasing the breadth and quality of local musical talent across the borough.

4.23 The reactivation of the Amphitheatre has established a strong platform for future programming with more local musicians and artists approaching the Council for Summer 2027.

4.24 The response to the reopening of the Amphitheatre highlighted the positive impact the venue has already had on local pride and community connection. One resident described the Amphitheatre as having been transformed from "*something of an eyesore*" into a community asset that had '*strengthened their pride in Telford'* and confidence that public investment can improve quality of life and bring communities together. Social media feedback from the public described the reopening as "*a fantastic afternoon*", *"a lovely event"* and *"a wonderful thing to do for our town"*.
"This project is something Telford & Wrekin Council should be proud of. It has made me feel proud of my town and I hope it is the first of many investments that continue to strengthen our community."

Resident feedback following the Amphitheatre reopening











5.0 Looking Ahead

5.1 The next two years represent a significant opportunity to build on success including celebrations for Telford@60 in 2028.

5.2 The Council and its partners will continue to deliver a year-round programme of activity **expanding Theatre on Tour** to more venues, **opening the Amphitheatre for a longer summer run** and ensuring high-quality, accessible cultural opportunities through new festivals, performances, community events, creative programmes and outdoor spaces.

TF Fest 2027

5.3 Joining the Council's established events programme, **TF Fest** will be a new borough-wide festival of culture running from May to November 2027, designed to celebrate the identity, heritage, communities, businesses and culture of Telford and Wrekin's towns.

5.4 Built around the idea of **"A Festival of Towns"**, the programme will shine a spotlight on a different borough town each month with themes to include music, dance, heritage, outdoor arts, young people and enterprise whilst encouraging participation, collaboration and celebration across the wider borough.

5.5 The proposal recognises that Telford is unique created through the coming together of historic towns, villages and communities, each with its own stories, traditions, character and sense of identity. TF Fest seeks to celebrate these differences whilst strengthening the shared story of Telford and Wrekin as a place. It will culminate in Telford Day 2027 planned for Dawley.

5.6 The festival will provide a practical opportunity for community organisations, businesses, Town and Parish Councils, artists, cultural organisations and residents to collaborate in developing content benefitting footfall on the high street and activation of new public spaces. This includes the Betty Harris Square (Station Quarter) and Oakengates Square. It will include a focus on youth-led activity and support for local artists and performers and importantly demonstrate the impact of a coordinated, borough-wide approach to culture to funders like the Arts Council with scope to seek match funding.

5.7 TF Fest will also act as a significant stepping stone towards the celebration of 60 years of Telford as a New Town in 2028, testing new ideas and creating a pipeline of projects that can be revisited, expanded and celebrated during Telford@60.

5.8 2027 will also see new venue opportunities including the completion of the refurbishment of **Wellington Market** and the return of late night events providing a platform for local musicians and emerging talent complementing the successful live music programme established through the Amphitheatre.

5.9 Supporting our ambition to connect and promote the wealth of existing activity we will launch a **borough-wide digital cultural listings platform**, creating a single point of access to cultural activity across Telford and Wrekin. The platform will

enable community groups, promoters, artists and venues to promote events and develop themed cultural trails and festivals. It will also support TF Fest programming and improve audience development, whilst increasing the visibility of grassroots cultural activity across the borough.

Ironbridge 40: Celebrating a World Heritage Legacy

5.10 November 2026 marked the launch of **Ironbridge 40**, a year-long programme celebrating the 40th anniversary of Ironbridge Gorge's designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The programme commenced with the hosting of Telford Day in the Gorge and a weekend of illuminations, community participation and cultural activity. Activities included iron casting demonstrations and a community lantern parade featuring lanterns depicting engineering, industry, nature and imagination, marking the start of a year celebrating the area's global significance and continuing contribution to the Borough's cultural identity.

5.11 Running throughout 2027, Ironbridge 40 brings together heritage, culture, education, innovation and community engagement to showcase the unique story of the Gorge and its role in shaping the modern world. The 12 month programme will include opportunities for residents and visitors to explore the area's heritage through storytelling, public art, learning initiatives, creative participation and place-based events.

5.12 Key elements of the programme include ‘Your Gorge. Your Stories.’, a community heritage project capturing memories and personal connections to the Gorge; the ‘Thomas Parker Young Innovators Challenge’, which connects the Gorge's tradition of invention with future skills and innovation; the ‘Made in the Gorge’ initiative celebrating contemporary makers and creative businesses; and the ‘Ironbridge Gorge Coracle Trail’, encouraging visitors to discover more of the Gorge and its communities.

5.13 The 40th anniversary programme supports the Cultural Strategy's ambitions to strengthen civic pride, increase cultural participation, celebrate local distinctiveness, support learning and skills development, and grow the visitor economy. It also provides a platform to engage children and young people with the Borough's heritage while promoting Ironbridge Gorge as a destination of national and international significance. Through links with World Heritage UK and the six other UK World Heritage Sites celebrating the same milestone, the programme will further raise the profile of the Borough and its internationally recognised heritage assets.

5.14 The programme will conclude in November 2027, bringing together the stories, memories, creative work and community contributions gathered throughout the anniversary year and creating a lasting legacy from this significant milestone.

TELFORD @ 60

5.15 These investments build towards the 60th anniversary of Telford in 2028 – our Diamond Jubilee and a unique opportunity to celebrate the borough's story, achievements and aspirations for the future.

5.16 Plans for the year-long programme respond directly to calls from residents during Cultural Strategy engagement for communities to shape, develop and deliver activity of their own, celebrating the stories, places and people that matter most to them, whilst strengthening local pride, participation and belonging.

5.17 To enable this the Council is launching a £100,000 **Telford @60 Cultural Communities Grant Programme** supporting Town and Parish Councils, schools, voluntary organisations, community groups and cultural organisations to develop local celebrations, creative projects, heritage activity and cultural commissions as part of Telford @60. Forming part of the 2028 **"60 Moments**" programme this will enable communities across the borough to create events and activities that celebrate the people, places and stories that have shaped Telford's first sixty years. Arts Council England have agreed to provide advice on how projects could also benefit from their match funding.

5.18 This approach will help create **a lasting legacy** including stronger community partnerships capable of sustaining local events and activity, increased resident participation, volunteering opportunities, new creative commissions and a growth in visitors and economic benefits. It also aligns with Arts Council England's principles and provides context for a Place Partnership bid to sustain and grow cultural activity through external investment.

5.19 More details of the T@60 celebrations will be confirmed in 2027.

Telford Theatre

5.20 The opening of the new Telford Theatre represents a significant investment in cultural infrastructure in the borough. The Theatre with its main auditorium and studio alongside rehearsal and community spaces will provide a focal point for performance, participation, skills development and creative learning whilst strengthening opportunities for residents, schools, artists and community organisations.

5.21 Working alongside Theatre on Tour and a growing network of community venues, the Theatre will act as a hub within a wider borough-wide cultural network and support future partnership and investment opportunities.

Priority Place for Culture

5.22 The borough has been designated a Priority Place for Culture by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, recognising the role culture already plays, and can further play, in supporting the borough's future development and creating opportunities with investment of £100,000+ potentially sustained over a number of years.

5.23 This designation presents a major opportunity to strengthen relationships with national agencies and reflects confidence in Telford and Wrekin's ambition, track record and potential to use culture as a driver of wider social and economic outcomes.

5.24 Using the foundations of the new Cultural Strategy and Partnership it is proposed to develop a bid for Place Partnership investment in 2027 maintaining commitments to community based arts and culture while recognising the role that the New Theatre will play providing a focal point for new performance. Areas of investment will be developed through the Partnership but based on other successful bids could support new festivals or music circuit development, addressing barriers to participation or areas of the borough without cultural venues or provision, innovative partnerships e.g. with health or to further young people's engagement.

6.0 Culture is Belonging – Telford and Wrekin Cultural Strategy 2027 - 2032

6.1 As highlighted in this Report we have a wealth of cultural activity but there is more opportunity. The LGA and Arts Council England Cultural Peer Review recommended we build on this foundation with the creation of a place-based, partnership-led framework to support future growth and inward investment.

6.2 The Strategy has been developed through extensive engagement with residents including children and young people, cultural organisations, artists, community groups, educational institutions, businesses and stakeholders. This engagement identified a strong appetite for culture that is accessible, community-focused and reflective of the borough's unique identity, heritage and aspirations.

6.3 A consistent theme throughout engagement was the importance of culture in creating a **sense of belonging**.

6.4 Residents told us that *culture already exists within communities* across the borough and is not limited to traditional arts venues. Participants highlighted the importance of making cultural opportunities accessible, supporting local creativity, celebrating the borough's heritage and ensuring that children and young people can play an active role in shaping future activity.

6.5 Young people in particular emphasised the importance of participation, influence and ownership, expressing a desire not only to attend cultural activities but to shape and create them.

"We want our voices to count in every decision that affects us... young people bring energy, resilience and creativity to our communities."

6.6 These conversations informed the Strategy's vision and reinforced a sense that Telford and Wrekin is at an important moment in its cultural development. As one stakeholder reflected:

"Feels like Telford's just on the cusp of something. Just at that tipping point."

Strategic Priorities

6.7 The Strategy establishes five priorities that will guide future cultural development across the borough. The full Strategy in Appendix 1 sets out a series of specific actions under each to kickstart delivery:

Belonging to our Communities
Creating opportunities for communities to participate in and shape cultural activity within the places where they live.

Belonging through Opportunity and Creativity
Supporting artists, creative organisations and cultural enterprises whilst developing creative skills, employment and learning opportunities.

Belonging to the Next Generation
Ensuring children and young people can access, participate in and influence cultural activity.

Belonging through our Shared Story
Celebrating the history, heritage, diversity and identity that make Telford and Wrekin unique.

Belonging to our Landscape and Environment
Using parks, green spaces and the natural environment as places for creativity, participation and cultural experiences.

Delivering the Strategy

6.8 The Cultural Strategy is intentionally partnership-led and will not solely be owned or delivered by the Council. It provides a borough-wide framework through which all stakeholders can work together around shared ambitions.

6.9 To support delivery, the Strategy proposes the establishment of a Telford and Wrekin Cultural Partnership. Building on the engagement of key stakeholders including National Trust, the Partnership will provide leadership, coordinate activity, strengthen collaboration, support funding bids and maximise opportunities for investment.

6.10 Whilst leadership will increasingly be shared through the Partnership, the Council will remain a key delivery partner. The Council will continue to invest in cultural activity, operate cultural facilities, deliver events, support funding applications, convene partners and champion culture through wider regeneration, health, skills and community programmes.

6.11 The Strategy also responds directly to the priorities of major funders positioning the Borough to maximise opportunities to attract external funding and deliver outcomes that no single organisation could achieve alone.

6.12 Ultimately, the Strategy seeks to ensure that more residents have opportunities to take part in culture, more communities can shape the activity that takes place around them, and more partners can work together to maximise the contribution culture makes to the future success of Telford and Wrekin.

7.0 Alternative Options

7.1 The Council could choose not to adopt the Cultural Strategy and to reduce or cease to deliver cultural activity and events directly. However, this would remove all the benefits illustrated throughout the Report, to residents, local artists and the wider economy stimulated by investment into culture. It would also limit opportunities to coordinate activity across partners, attract external investment, maximise the contribution culture makes to wider borough priorities and respond to recommendations arising from the LGA and Arts Council England Cultural Peer Review.

8.0 Key Risks

8.1 Key risks include failure to secure external funding, limited partner capacity to deliver shared ambitions, public expectations exceeding available resources and maintaining momentum beyond Telford @60. These risks will be mitigated through phased delivery planning, establishment of the Cultural Partnership, continued community engagement and the pursuit of external funding opportunities.

9.0 Council Priorities

9.1 The new cultural strategy directly supports the Borough Partnership Vision 2032 and the Council's priorities:

- Every child, young person and adult lives well in their community.
- Everyone feels the benefit from a thriving economy.
- All neighbourhoods are a great place to live.
- Our natural environment is protected.
- A community focused innovative council providing effective, efficient and quality services.

9.2 The Cultural Strategy plays an important role in delivering the ambitions of **Child Friendly Telford and Wrekin** by ensuring children and young people have opportunities to participate in, shape and benefit from cultural activity across the borough. Through initiatives such as youth-led creative projects, cultural education programmes, Telford Day, community festivals, libraries, arts participation and events in parks and public spaces, the strategy supports the Child Friendly wishes relating to being heard, feeling proud of where they live, having fun, and accessing opportunities to develop skills and confidence. By embedding the voices of children and young people in programme design and creating accessible cultural experiences for all communities, the strategy helps strengthen belonging, wellbeing and aspiration while ensuring that culture contributes to making Telford and Wrekin a place where every child can thrive.

10.0 Financial Implications

10.1 Service and Financial planning (S&FP) approved funding of £500k for two years - 27/28 and 28/29 and this £1m is held in corporate contingency.
During the 2025/26 year-end process £123.3k was approved and held in a reserve. There is also an ongoing Events base budget of £200k. The recommendations referred to in section 1 and the increased resources required to deliver the programme will be funded from these funding streams.

11.0 Legal and HR Implications

11.1 The Council has powers to support and facilitate cultural, community and wellbeing activities, including through its general power of competence under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011. In implementing the proposals within this report, the Council will need to ensure compliance with its Constitution and applicable legal requirements, including in relation to decision-making, procurement, subsidy control, grant funding, contractual arrangements and the Public Sector Equality Duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. Appropriate legal advice will be obtained as individual projects, partnership arrangements, funding agreements and grant schemes are developed and implemented.

12.0 Ward Implications

12.1 All wards will be impacted by these proposals.

13.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

13.1 Proposals will contribute to improving health and wellbeing outcomes across the Borough as illustrated in the Report. Significant inequalities continue to exist between communities and the new Strategy will support community-centred approaches to improving wellbeing, extend opportunities for all residents to access and be part of developing affordable cultural activity.

13.2 Investment into cultural activity delivers economic benefit generating footfall and spend, creating employment opportunity and providing an attraction for new residents and the establishment and growth of new businesses.

14.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

14.1 Increasing participation and social inclusion are central to the Arts Council England's Strategy and our Strategy will align delivering opportunities for everyone to participate and benefit from cultural and artistic activity.

14.2 All our proposals will pay due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty, ensuring that equality considerations have been embedded throughout the engagement process. We have and will actively consider how our decisions and actions will affect people with different protected characteristics, and seek to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations within

the communities we serve in line with our statutory responsibilities under s149 Equality Act 2010.

15.0 Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environmental Implications

15.1 The Theatre redevelopment will reduce the carbon footprint of this facility contributing to our commitment to be Carbon Neutral as an Authority by 2030. All our events consider ways to reduce carbon impact e.g. through use of venues and locations accessible by public transport.

15.2 The Arts Council Strategy also includes an investment principle around environmental responsibility stating that cultural organisations should lead the way in responding to the climate emergency. Creative bodies are well placed to innovate and provide solutions to environmental impacts as well as to educate and inform through their art.

16.0 Background Papers

None.

17.0 Appendices

A Telford and Wrekin Cultural Strategy 2027-2032

18.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Director	18/10/26	29/10/26	KK
Legal	30/10/26	02/11/26	DTW
Finance	30/10/26	03/11/26	AEM

Culture is belonging

Telford and Wrekin Cultural Strategy 2027-2032

October 2026







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Commissioned by

Telford & Wrekin Co-operative Council

Protect, care and invest to create a better borough

Foreword



Cllr Angela McClements
Cabinet Member for Culture, Tourism & Leisure

Culture is about how we live – our heritage, behaviours, values and beliefs – and how these are expressed through creative or artistic activity. This can include dance, music, theatre, poetry, fashion, craft, sculpture, visual & digital arts and the creative businesses that make them.

Telford and Wrekin is both new and ancient. Its identity encompasses the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution, historic towns and villages, the development of the New Town. We are a borough that continues to rapidly grow and prosper, its strong and connected communities and rich diversity, its significant green architecture, and a place that is continually reinventing itself.

Culture can help link those different stories, change perceptions, connect and revitalise communities, increase access to education, attract and retain young people and bring footfall to our High Streets. I am proud of our existing cultural offer which spans the borough and is delivered not just by the Council but through many partners, Town & Parish Councils, artists and creative businesses – in community venues and spaces embedded in our neighbourhoods.

As a Council we have continued to invest in opportunities for everyone to access cultural activity with over 100,000 pa enjoying our free family Events Programme from Balloon Fiesta, Spring into St Georges and Carnival to Christmas in Southwater. Through Theatre on Tour we are celebrating and animating many of our borough venues and parks and in 2026 for the first time in over 25 years included music, drama, comedy and family productions in the refurbished Town Park Amphitheatre.

This investment underpins our partnership Vision 2032 and Council priorities. It is creating a place where all residents including our children and young people can prosper regardless of their background, knowledge, skills, needs or experience; supporting collaboration; celebrating our heritage and innovation – telling the story of Telford's historical significance from the Industrial Revolution to a hub for advanced manufacturing and enhancing health and wellbeing and quality of life for all residents.

I want to thank the hundreds of stakeholders and residents who have contributed their time and energy both to the work we are already doing and developing this Strategy. We are ambitious for our Borough and want to build on our growing reputation with partners like Arts Council and the commitment of partners and residents to do more together. This Strategy has been shaped by the voices of communities, young people and the cultural sector. Their collective view is captured in comments like *'culture is a fundamental part of everyone's DNA…' 'its about belonging…' 'we've got a big story to tell'.*

This Strategy establishes a collective framework for collaboration in cultural development and as we look forward to celebrating Telford's 60th birthday in 2028 and the opening of our new Theatre we are committed to working with the new Cultural Partnership to sustain and grow the positive contribution cultural activity can make to everyone's lives.

Telford & Wrekin Co-operative Council

Protect, care and invest to create a better borough

Executive summary

> *"Telford was respectfully designed around existing communities, so they could retain their own identities.* ***Telford is a place of cultures, plural.***"
>
> Stakeholder consultee

The **Telford and Wrekin Cultural Strategy** outlines a roadmap for strengthening the cultural offer by fostering more collaboration between communities, cultural practitioners, and partners. New investments are building on strong foundations, helping to develop venues, established events programmes, public places and spaces. The National Trust will play a huge role in how heritage and culture work together to tell the story of Telford for new generations.

A period of research, **consultation and engagement** with public and stakeholders alike has revealed a shared vision, and a set of ambitions for the borough as a whole and the towns that make up Telford. This common purpose provides a solid foundation for the strategy.

The strategy aims to position Telford as an exemplar for cultural innovation, sustainable growth and community participation that creates opportunities for all to enjoy, celebrate and participate, and enhances a shared sense of place. The ultimate aims of the strategy are to drive creative, social, economic and environmental impact through cultural development initiatives that tap into all the energy and skills of Telford and its partners. The **vision** is clear: Culture will be woven into everyday life across Telford and Wrekin. Culture creates **belonging** throughout our 'town of towns', empowering people to exchange, learn and innovate together to shape thriving communities and a growing cultural economy.

The **strategic priorities** focus on a number of connected areas where Telford can build on success to date, and continue to be ambitious. These are: **local communities, opportunity & creativity, young people, our shared cultural narrative, and our relationship with our landscape**.

This strategy has a five-year lifespan, which will set the tone for working together for the long-term. In that time it aims to drive **real and lasting change** in how people see and engage with culture. New investments will increase cultural consumption and participation. But the programmes that connect these venues through important milestones like **Telford's 60th anniversary** will also see communities shaping the cultural services. They will influence the cultural offer and the opportunities they bring where they live and across the borough as a whole.

A new way of working together will build on these investments, creating opportunities for cultural activity to make real and **lasting contributions to the place agendas** that are most important – especially health, education, careers, skills and social confidence and mobility.

This collaborative way of working will take shape through an **independent cultural partnership**, working with but not through the Council to bring new opportunities to Telford and Wrekin as a whole and across its diverse towns – a strategy that truly delivers for a 'town of towns'.



The Little Theatre Donnington

Spotlight
Community Venues Network

A network of community-led venues support grassroots activity, participation, and social connection to where people live.

Venues such as The Belfry in Wellington, Donnington Little Theatre and The Anstice in Madeley are important and valued by their communities. And they do everything! Concerts, dances, artist studios, exhibitions, creative workspace, amateur performance, providing opportunities for artists and residents to create and share. They listen and offer activities that are familiar and in demand, whilst still finding space to experiment and try new things.

Spotlight
National Trust

From Spring 2026 the National Trust has taken on the care and management of the places that represent the birthplace of the industrial revolution within the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site. A globally-important UNESCO World Heritage site, the ten museum sites within the Gorge are a huge part of Telford's identity.

The Trust has a clear goal – to grow the number of people that visit Ironbridge Gorge's sites, tackle the barriers that often prevent people from engaging with heritage and continue and deepen the site's strong appeal for families through events, programming and storytelling that bring its unique history to life. The Trust is already becoming an invaluable partner in cultural heritage storytelling and engagement for Telford.



Museum of Iron © National Trust / Paul Harris



New Telford Theatre

Spotlight
Telford Theatre

Telford & Wrekin Council secured funding from government to remodel and expand Telford Theatre @ Oakengates. After 60 years, it was time for an upgrade, but not just in the facilities, but the ambition of its activity as a modern theatre. Upgraded state-of-the-art facilities will include a separate studio theatre, rehearsal rooms and other community-facing spaces, turning Telford Theatre into a true cultural and social hub.

By drawing more people to Oakengates, the theatre will boost both daytime and evening economic activity, participation in culture and stimulate further investment to support the visitor economy.

Spotlight
Telford Theatre on Tour

Working with Arts Alive, the programme supports community venues to host professional live performances and film through local partnerships.

Theatre on Tour takes cultural experiences directly into neighbourhoods through local halls, community spaces, parks and outdoor locations. These familiar and easy-to-access places have helped to broaden audiences. The return of Telford Town Park Amphitheatre is a further illustration of investing in spaces where people can discover culture. It's not all about the traditional venues. Culture can engage new audiences in all sorts of places and spaces. Theatre on Tour will connect with the new theatre to continue to increase accessibility and support the ambition that all communities can access and participate in cultural experiences close to where they live.



Wind In The Willows

10 Context



Harmony Singing Madeley

1.1
The opportunity for Telford and Wrekin

*"People are drawn here because there's a culture...**growing our own communities**...It's not a disparate group of towns but a rich inheritance of caring for each other. You can feel it underfoot."*

Stakeholder consultee

Telford's cultural context

New towns come in all shapes and sizes. Telford and Wrekin is both new and ancient, and at its best when all its towns and villages come together, from Newport to Ironbridge. There is an opportunity to combine the best of both worlds – rich in heritage and contemporary in its culture and communities. As Telford prepares to celebrate its 60th birthday, we can continue to build confidence in what we can achieve as a cultural place.

Telford is investing in its creativity. Leading this cultural regeneration the new Telford Theatre, soon to open its doors and building on a successful touring programme. The National Trust is now a major new custodian of its world-famous industrial heritage. Wellington's Market and Orbit, animating new public squares, taking culture into local neighbourhoods like Sutton Hill Community Hub, embedding culture into Pride in Place plans in South Telford. The list goes on… This strategy responds to the needs of those who live and work here. It also builds on the evolving national cultural policy landscape.

Who culture is for – and how it can work

Telford is a place that is growing. As the population grows (young and older) it is becoming more diverse. Just as with transport, health or education, culture needs to adapt as a living part of every community. Telford has recently been designated a Priority Place for cultural development (Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and Arts Council England), creating opportunities to attract more investment to increase and connect activity and accessibility for all residents.

The cultural strategy connects place, people and communities – a vision that's relevant to everyone. Culture as a part of identity, education, experience, everyday life.

Belonging – an opportunity and a responsibility

Telford has earned the right to be culturally proud and optimistic. Culture can help to shape where Telford goes next – in partnership as a town of towns. Culture can use its networks, ideas and innovation to support, grow and sustain great work across the borough.

Telford has the ability to decide who it is and how it wants to celebrate, protect and develop its culture. This strategy will direct an action plan shaped and delivered by Telford's cultural partners – local and regional. This strategy **belongs** to everyone. Over time, this will become a strong, independent cultural partnership. Telford can respond to the challenges we face with one voice and one strategy.

1.2 An insights-led approach

> *"Everyone is **part of the Telford family**, irrespective of background, but respectful of background."*
>
> Stakeholder consultee

> *The word 'new' is great. But we're not anymore, we're 60 years old - but we are **green and contemporary**. The first Industrial Revolution was visionary. So being contemporary and always being visionary is something that Telford could hang its hat on.*
>
> Stakeholder consultee

A comprehensive Insights Report has informed this strategy. This section is a concise summary of its main findings, based in large part on a detailed programme of consultation and engagement with over **150 organisations, stakeholders and members of the public**, including young people. The strategy development also took the opportunity to capture perspectives from a productive UK Town of Culture 2028 application.

Cultural participation and production

- Despite growing engagement, Telford and Wrekin has lower than national average cultural participation.
- There are relatively few cultural organisations operating locally.
- There is a good number of cultural & creative professionals, but a low number of creative businesses. Creative professionals may be living locally, but working elsewhere.
- The Youth Music service is excellent, alongside other strong provision in cultural education.
- Production should encourage co-production – enfranchising residents (especially young people) with the means to create and share cultural activity.

The glue that binds our culture together

- Telford and Wrekin's cultural assets starts with its buildings, most often its community centres and libraries. The principle of embedding culture in places people use for other social purposes is a great fit for Telford as a 'town of towns'.
- Telford and Wrekin lacks built cultural assets, especially for a town of its size. Whilst the new Telford Theatre and next phase of Wellington Orbit will go some way to addressing this, there remains a gap in supply of music venues and artist studios / makerspaces.
- There is also more to add in the supply chain e.g. sound recording studios, rehearsal spaces, digital suites.
- A balance of nurturing existing cultural assets should be complemented by improving the 'connections' between them.

Funding & investment

- The inward investment from strategic national funders is lower than average, which could be addressed with a more collective approach.
- Telford and Wrekin has been designated as a Priority Place for cultural investment by the Department for Culture, Media & Sport.

1.2

> *For every pound of council funding, **community groups** raise four or five more.*
>
> Stakeholder consultee

> *Feels like Telford's just on the **cusp of something**. Just at that tipping point.*
>
> Stakeholder consultee

- Telford and Wrekin should further leverage Council investment in culture to attract more inward investment. In turn, this could increase both cultural participation and cultural enterprise.
- Telford and Wrekin should seek to attract and grow creative enterprise, to boost cultural vibrancy within the borough.
- Culture should be seen as an embedded part of cross-cutting local priorities – health, wellbeing, education, economic development and community cohesion. Councils can be at the vanguard of this by designing their plans and programmes accordingly.

Developing governance & leadership

- To reach the next stage of cultural development, Telford and Wrekin must establish a place-based cultural governance vehicle. This could take the form of a Cultural Compact, a Place Partnership, or similar model.
- Such an organisation will need a host or accountable body. Options for the most appropriate home will be explored, working with major funding bodies.
- Any such cultural partnership model should hardwire the voice of local communities, including young people, into its design, creating opportunities to shape culture and not just participate or consume it.

Emerging opportunity areas

A strategy is about making choices – setting priorities. These 'opportunities' will need to be assessed with the realities of ambition and achievability in mind.

- Community-led programming.
- Participation-led regeneration.
- Informal participation models.
- Better local communications of cultural offer.
- Cross-sector partnerships.
- Confidence-building – to participate in and create cultural activity.
- Place positioning.
- Walking / storytelling assets.
- Green + culture integration.
- Authentic heritage interpretation.
- Civic space activation.
- Cultural tourism (connecting with heritage tourism).
- Building profile and positioning for Telford nationally through a confident, culture-rich narrative.

1.2



Public engagement was delivered across the borough. Residents and young people participated directly across a Youth Vision Day and two Community Conversations. 440+ organisations and residents were invited to take part. Engagement took place across the borough. Young people were mentored and supported as co-facilitators, embedding youth representation throughout the engagement process.

These graphics provided a summary of these sessions, and connect with the strategic priorities. The illustrated minutes were produced by an artist-illustrator.

1.2



Public engagement revealed five key takeaways that supported the parallel stakeholder engagement and consultation.

These were:

1. Culture already exists everywhere
2. Accessibility determines participation
3. Young people want ownership, not simply provision
4. Residents want to build on existing strengths
5. Culture is fundamental to community wellbeing

Hundreds of ideas were collected, informing one shared vision.

1.2



Youth Vision Day
16 June 2026

"Young people should help shape culture, not just take part in it."

"Give us more opportunities to be creative."

Young people consultees

Young people have some specific views and needs:

- Safe spaces to gather and create.
- Opportunities to try new things and develop creative skills and work experience pathways.
- Don't just be consulted, but have a voice in cultural planning.

And residents of all ages were clear what they wanted to see next.

- Local people prioritised across all engagement activities.
- More inclusive and accessible cultural opportunities.
- Better promoted local activities.
- Improved evening transport, connections communities.
- Continued support for grassroots organisations and local artists.
- Celebration of Telford's unique identity and distinct towns.
- Opportunities for communities to create culture together.

1.3
A definition of culture for Telford and Wrekin

> *Telford has a twin-track history. It's both **ancient and modern**.*
>
> Stakeholder consultee

> *It's incredibly easy to live here. It was designed with purpose and an understanding of **work-life balance**. Culture is an important part of that.*
>
> Stakeholder consultee

Our definition of culture

'Culture' means many things to many people and is often used to refer to food, sport, religion and heritage. Culture should be understood broadly. It includes the arts, heritage, museums, libraries, music, theatre, dance, visual arts, festivals, events, film, literature, craft, design, digital creativity and the creative industries. But culture in Telford is also found in communities, traditions, stories, landscapes, neighbourhoods, public spaces and the ways people come together.

This Cultural Strategy deliberately moves beyond framing culture just through its arts venues and events, to include social and community networks, the digital world, learning and skills.

This broader understanding matters. A place's culture is what its people think it is. It happens everywhere - in libraries, parks, schools, high streets and community centres. It happens through festivals, walking routes, local heritage, creative businesses, voluntary activity and informal networks. It happens wherever people make, participate, perform, celebrate, learn, share stories or express the identity of their community.

Our definition of creativity

'Creativity' is the process through which people apply their knowledge, skill and intuition to imagine, conceive, express or make something that wasn't there before. In other words, how we use our imagination. Creativity is present in all areas of life. In this Strategy we can think about the process of making, producing and participating in 'culture'. We also see the traditional boundaries blur as new technologies and other societal changes alter the ways in which many artists, curators, librarians and other practitioners work, as well as how culture is made and shared.

We're excited by these changes, which we expect to accelerate over the next decade – and in response, we will become more flexible about the range and type of cultural activities that we support over the years to come.

> **Culture is both something people experience and something people create.**
>
> Stakeholder consultee



Spotlight
Wellington Orbit – community-led cultural place-making

The Orbit is a community-run 63-seat cinema, café and arts venue in the heart of Wellington. It provides access to film and cultural experiences, creating opportunities for people to connect, volunteer and participate in local life. The project emerged from a long-term ambition to strengthen Wellington's cultural and evening economy. Alongside film screenings, the venue provides space for events, participation and social connection. The latest phase will bring the upper floors into use – flexible spaces for exhibitions, performance, rehearsal, and community outreach.

Spotlight
Events in Ironbridge Gorge

Ironbridge shows exactly how festivals and events can animate heritage and local identity. For example, the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Festival brings together arts, crafts, heritage activity, music, open studios and community events across the Gorge, creating opportunities to experience local culture in historic settings and public spaces. And most famously, hosts the Coracle Regatta! The Ironbridge Gorge Brass Band Festival transforms the Museum of Iron into an accessible open-air performance space. Inspired by the landscape, Embers Fire Festival celebrates fire-based cooking with world-class chefs and family-friendly activities.

These events show how culture activates places and creates new connections between people and heritage that remains relevant, accessible and embedded within everyday life.


Embers Fire Festival


Ironbridge Gorge Heritage Festival



Telford Balloon Fiesta

Spotlight
Free events – spectacle & community

There is perhaps no better example of Telford's commitment to free events for residents and visitors than the Ballon Fiesta.

Staged across a summer weekend, it lights up the night sky and attracts thousands of people to the town centre to enjoy the balloons and a host of family-friendly activities. Each year sees new additions to the programme, which brings music, food, parades and art together under the night sky. The weekend culminates in Telford Carnival, celebrating the diversity of our communities.

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Spotlight
Free events – investing in culture

The Town Park offers many spaces for creative and cultural activity. One of the most interesting is the waterside amphitheatre, now fully refurbished.

As an outdoor venue is can host any many forms of performance – spoken word, comedy, choral, local bands, theatre… Summer 2026 saw it stage open-air theatre productions as diverse as *Macbeth*, *The Tempest*, *Jeeves & Wooster*, and *Peter Rabbit*, alongside showcasing local bands, to over 7,800 total visitors.



Town Park Amphitheatre

2.0 Strategy



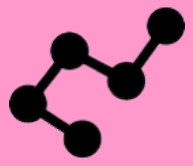
McFly in Town Park

2.1
Vision

Culture will be woven into everyday life across Telford and Wrekin. Culture creates **belonging** throughout our 'town of towns', empowering people to exchange, learn and innovate together to shape thriving communities and a growing cultural economy.



2.2 Principles - How will we deliver together?



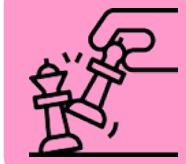
EXCHANGE
network, share knowledge, develop skills, incubate



EXHIBIT
communicate, show, perform, sell, storytelling, access



EXPLORE
communicate, advocate, listen, measure, debate research, data-inspired



ENERGISE
celebrate, promote, disrupt, surprise, challenge



EXPORT
ideas, partnerships, talent, programmes, best practice



ELEVATE
develop, practise, rehearse, meet, connect talent

Why do we need shared principles?

When we have common purpose, and feel inspired, we're happier and more productive. This can help shape partnerships, approaches, funding bids. Shared principles help to set the tone for Telford's cultural development, and align with values expressed by Telford & Wrekin Council, especially openness, ownership and involvement.

These **Principles** have come directly from the many conversations that have informed this strategy.

They will act as the founding principles of how we want to work together to deliver this strategy and build a cultural partnership that lasts.

These principles were a spontaneous and direct output from the community consultation days.

2.3
Priorities
for a culturally–powered place

I am struck both by the ambition of the strategy and by the emphasis on ***belonging as a foundation for change****. The vision that culture means belonging feels* ***particularly powerful and has resonance*** *with a number of areas of work currently taking place across the borough.*

Stakeholder consultee

Built on the strong foundations of the vision, stakeholder commentary, co-working principles and an action plan, the strategy has 5 thematic areas of focus – its **Priorities**.

We live in fast-moving times – national policy, funding landscape, social and technological change. So these will be reviewed at regular intervals to maintain relevance and impact, tracking progress and adjusting course where needed, and also tap into new ideas and opportunities.

This Cultural Strategy is owned by its many and varied stakeholders. It is everyone's to support and work with – an invitation and a responsibility.

This strategy can then be part of wider place-based plans, starting with every part of Telford & Wrekin Council, but quickly extending across our network to include cross-sector partners as diverse as schools, the National Trust and local community charities.

Between 2027-2032 we want to:

1. Create a **cultural partnership** model through which everyone works together to improve cultural practice – creating opportunities to support local creativity, build our collective skills, align goals, and build a joint case for further investment in culture.
2. Maximise the potential of capital **cultural investments**, most notably the new Telford Theatre.
3. Continue to build a programme of **cultural development** – growing confidence and resilience, from local community projects to signature events, including Telford at 60 in 2028.
4. Support the delivery of **place strategies**[1], embedding the role of culture and encouraging creativity in their delivery in key social and economic agendas, including improving health & wellbeing outcomes, and tackling inequality. Work proactively with cultural and community organisations to build our **collective capacity**.
5. Make Telford's **landscape and public realm** ever more accessible, welcoming and creating places for artists and residents alike.

1 Strategies including but not only: Child Friendly, Safer & Stronger Communities, Library & Residents Hubs, Destination Management, Local Cultural Education Partnership, Pride In Our High Streets, Skills, Harper Adams Partnership, National Trust, Local Transport, Cycling & Walking, Health & Wellbeing, Local Nature Recovery.

2.3
Priorities

> *Sharing **different cultures** and that for me is very much what a new town should be about.*
>
> Public consultee

> *[We want] events and activities that invite people from across **communities** to meet and build **connections**.*
>
> Public consultee

1 Belonging to our communities

Culture helps build connections across Telford's communities. This means creating ways for people to participate close to home and being aware of everything going on; maximising use of our already busy community spaces; supporting communities to develop their own cultural activity; removing participation barriers.

Belonging through…

1. Expanding Telford Theatre on Tour to more venues, with more community-embedded programming.
2. A venue network (shared digital platform) to create sustainability and growth of venues independently programming, and cross-promotion of venues and grassroots events.
3. More programming in non-traditional venues, e.g. libraries, parks, civic and faith centres.
4. Supporting community festivals / events, including the Telford at 60 grant scheme to develop events, engagement and physical legacy.
5. Supporting ongoing development of Telford Day, rotating activity around the borough.
6. Mapping community spaces for creative use.
7. Creating shared evaluation metrics to enhance monitoring and planning.
8. Create a shared evaluation framework for cultural activity to enable monitoring, evaluation and programme development.



Telford Carnival

2.3 Priorities

> *You've got to have a **bold ambition** and then find the funding... You have to believe that you can find the funding if the ambition is good enough.*
>
> Stakeholder consultee

> *A future where people from a range of backgrounds build their **skills & careers** in the arts.*
>
> Stakeholder consultee

2 Belonging through opportunity & creativity

Culture is also an economic opportunity. Telford's history is one of innovation, making and reinvention. The strategy seeks to translate that spirit into opportunities for contemporary creative talent and enterprise. Its ambitions include embedding culture within place-making and regeneration, developing creative careers and skills, providing spaces for making and rehearsal, supporting creative entrepreneurship and start-ups, and connecting local talent with wider opportunities.

Belonging through...

1. Embedding cultural place-making in regeneration and capital investment planning.
2. Building a national reputation for the new Telford Theatre through all its programmes.
3. Supporting creative sector growth through Invest Telford, working with The Quad's Incubator Units.
4. With external funding sources, piloting creative business incubators with grant funding.
5. Delivering the borough-wide TF Festival in 2027 – building local partnerships towards Telford at 60.
6. Skills bootcamps for locally-based creatives.
7. Boosting rehearsal / makerspace provision.
8. Establishing national creative partnerships with institutions to develop talent locally.
9. Using the new Local Plan to update planning policy for use of public realm – events and festivals.



CultureKind Chinese Community

2.3
Priorities

> *It's got pockets of very old communities. But it's very **young culturally**.*
>
> Stakeholder consultee

> *We want our **voices** to count in every decision that affects us… young people bring **energy**, **resilience** & **creativity** to our communities.*
>
> Teenage consultee

3 Belonging to the next generation

Telford is a young place with a growing population. Children and young people should not simply be audiences; they should help create their cultural future. The strategy therefore seeks greater youth leadership and agency, including youth involvement in cultural governance, spaces in which young people feel welcome, young producer programmes and opportunities for emerging creative practitioners.

Belonging through…

1. Youth representation in the cultural partnership.
2. Youth co-ownership of place & space activation – building welcome and participation.
3. A young producers' programme, e.g. summer school kickstarter, capacity / capability-building initiatives.
4. Seeking funding to set up young creative programme (theatre / college co-design / delivery).
5. Supporting small festivals & gig nights to showcase emerging talent and build young audiences.
6. Explore opportunities to access seed funding to support strategy-aligned proposals.
7. Assess viability of empty (high street and other) properties as meanwhile creative spaces.
8. Embedding culture and creative industries in a skills hub; using the new Theatre and venues network to develop creative career paths for young people (with further & higher education partners).



2.3
Priorities

> Culture helps us remember that there was something here before the new town. That gets often forgotten.
>
> Stakeholder consultee

> *We need a **big statement** here of what Telford is and where it's going. It's industrial in a new modern way. It is **forward thinking**.*
>
> Stakeholder consultee

4 **Belonging through our shared story**

Telford has an extraordinary story, but heritage is not only about preserving the past. The Cultural Strategy sees heritage as a source of identity, creativity, learning and innovation. It seeks stronger connections between heritage and contemporary culture, more opportunities for residents to explore the borough, and a more coherent cultural tourism offer.

Belonging through…

1. A cultural passport app – linked to active travel – for residents to enable access to cultural experiences.
2. Delivering on the potential of music and outdoor arts, raising the profile of grassroots venues and connecting people to them including through Telford's new public spaces and squares and the Town Park.
3. Co-designing oral histories and digital heritage programmes between culture and heritage partners.
4. Seek innovation funding to enhance heritage crafts and skills apprenticeships.
5. Revising Telford's cultural heritage narrative (with National Trust), linked to borough-wide visitor offer.
6. Embedding cultural heritage context and content for Telford at 60.
7. Developing a cultural infrastructure masterplan & 'investment prospectus' as a legacy of Telford at 60.
8. Building regional cultural development partnerships.



The Anstice

2.3
Priorities

> *"Telford has a lot to offer in that regard in terms of the **natural beauty** and affordability."*
>
> Stakeholder consultee

> *It's (**nature**) a really easy thread to pull with Telford because of the number of trees and the way that it was created. It's actually at the heart of its **DNA**, isn't it? ...I think it's really easy to tease that out and **develop** it.*
>
> Stakeholder consultee

5 Belonging to our landscape & environment

Telford's parks, countryside, waterways, agricultural landscapes and green spaces are part of its cultural identity. The strategy envisages cultural activity increasingly taking place outdoors, stronger partnerships between cultural and environmental organisations, active travel initiatives, environmentally responsible events, and projects connecting creativity, nature, health and wellbeing.

Belonging through...

1. Remapping and renewing the interpretation of all the public art and art trails in the borough, enabling a holistic approach to public art commissions.
2. Investing further in existing walking & cycling trails, outdoor festivals and land art.
3. Formalising the cultural, wellbeing and conservation partnership with local partners, including charitable, academic, NGOs / agencies.
4. Developing and publishing a green cultural events toolkit to raise standards in design, compliance, conservation and accessibility.
5. Developing cultural initiatives (temporary and potentially permanent) to celebrate Telford Tree City of the World status, connecting with and as a legacy from Telford at 60.
6. Supporting community growing and reuse programmes with creative partners.



Coracle Regatta



Wellington Community Art Gallery

Spotlight
Artists' collectives

In Ironbridge, Maws Craft Centre supports an established community of crafters, artists and makers alongside a programme of creative courses and workshops for adults and children. Fusion provides artist studio space and is home to Footprint Gallery and its changing exhibitions programme, while Green Wood Centre combines studio provision with specialist craft and skills development opportunities. In Wellington, Wellington Community Art Gallery supports local artists through exhibitions and events, while new space at The Orbit complements the existing artist studios and creative activity at The Belfry Arts Centre.

Spotlight
Community Libraries

The borough's Community Library network demonstrates how investment can strengthen access to culture, learning and social connection. Facilitated by Telford & Wrekin Council and local Town & Parish Councils and their local partners, the library network is an important civic space at the heart of our towns. The newest is at Oakengates, helping to set new standards in community engagement.

Recent funding secured through the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and Arts Council England's Libraries Improvement Fund have enabled modernisation and new services like children's areas, meeting rooms and better accessibility, for example at Newport Community Library. The changing role of libraries as flexible community spaces now support culture, creativity, digital inclusion and wellbeing alongside their traditional role in reading and information.



Newport Community Library



Telford Carnival

Spotlight
Grassroots cultural diversity

Telford and Wrekin's local organisations provide connection between communities, using culture, shared experience and support to create stronger relationships across the borough. By creating welcoming spaces, supporting volunteering and enabling people from all backgrounds to work together through programmes like Telford Carnival, they demonstrate how community-led thinking can contribute to inclusion, wellbeing and a stronger sense of belonging. Community hubs create accessible spaces where people can access support and develop activities that respond to local needs. They provide facilities for community activity and opportunities for collaboration between cultural organisations, local residents, faith groups and voluntary organisations.

Spotlight
Abraham Darby Music School & Telford Youth Music

With Telford & Wrekin Music and The Music Partnership

Music education is a longstanding strength within Telford and Wrekin and continues to provide opportunities for young people to develop skills, confidence and ambition through high-quality creative experiences. Haberdashers' Abraham Darby has established a national reputation. Through sustained investment in instrumental tuition, extracurricular activity and ensemble performance, they've developed programmes that support participation at every level — from beginner musicians through to nationally-recognised ensembles. With subsidised tuition, a Saturday music college and over 10 ensembles, they create pathways for young people to access high-quality music opportunities regardless of prior experience.



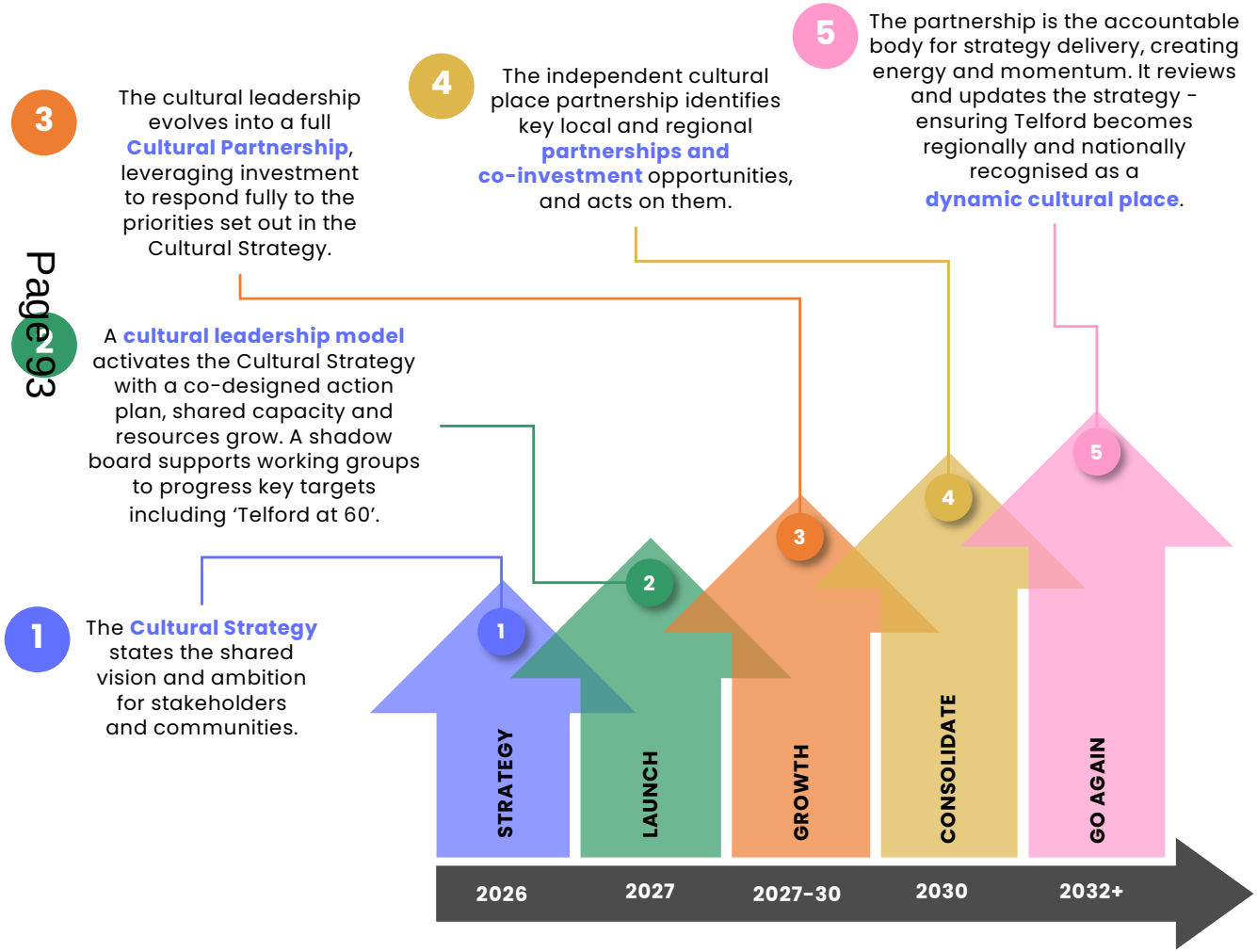
Haberdashers' Abraham Darby

5.0 Delivery



Telford Balloon Fiesta. Image: Dave Atkinson

3.1
Leadership through partnership



To achieve Telford's cultural ambitions there needs to be clear **place-based cultural leadership**. Historically, Telford & Wrekin Council has provided much of this leadership, but there is a need for a more collaborative and sustainable way to build capacity, investment, partnerships and shared ownership as we deliver Telford's long-term cultural ambitions.

As delivery cannot be put on hold while this model is developed, it will be phased in. Throughout each phase, governance will be collaborative, to enable networks, ideas and new joint projects to flourish. A full **Cultural Place Partnership** will be the result, with the ability to lead, secure investment, and work with the Council as a proactive partner.

This means the **Council's** role will increasingly be one of partner, enabler, investor, commissioner, and connector, alongside its role as a direct provider of some cultural services.

GOVERNANCE & LEADERSHIP.
This strategy provides the road map to deliver positive and sustainable impacts for Telford and Wrekin's communities, artists and creatives.

3.2
Monitoring success

> *An outcome of this programme should be that there is some sort of **homegrown production company**, dance company, theatre company, whatever, from people that have participated in some sort of programme and you know, they start up their company and hopefully in 10 years' time look at something like becoming an NPO.*

Stakeholder consultee

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Developing the right metrics

The strategy targets a range of outcomes, requiring a range of measures to track how well the strategy is delivering over time, including :

- Participation
- Demographic and geographic data
- Opportunity for young people and local creatives
- Attraction and retention of creative talent
- Increased collaboration
- New investment
- New or improved cultural spaces
- Environmental and educational outcomes
- Skills development
- Qualitative feedback from participants and communities.

The Cultural Strategy describes a trajectory from awareness of culture, to ultimately embedding it within the daily life of Telford and Wrekin. The right measures will enable the strategy to be effectively monitored.

Action planning

The Action Plan is the primary tool to respond to the vision and goals of the Strategy. To be established within the next 6 months it will cover an initial 24-month period, with (bi-) annual reviews through the lifetime of the strategy.

At the start of this strategic 5-year period, regional and national funding policies and programmes are under review and often changing rapidly. The action plan will need to be revised to respond to this – focused on delivery but also evolving as it is informed by wider policies, funds and plans, not least that of WMCA and ACE.

This Action Plan will be a trackable, operational guide for progress in delivering the Strategy, with clear performance indicators and regular review points.

For more details contact

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Telford & Wrekin Co-operative Council

Protect, care and invest to create a better borough

Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Cabinet

3 December 2026

Child Friendly Implementation Progress Update

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Shirley Reynolds - Cabinet Member: Children, Young People, Education and Lifelong Learning
Lead Director:	Helen Onions – Director of Public Health
Service Area:	Children Services & Public Health
Report Author:	Gabrielle Britton – Project Officer (Child Friendly)
Officer Contact Details:	**Tel:** 01952 380384 **Email:** Gabrielle.Britton@telford.gov.uk
Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key Decision:	Key Decision
Forward Plan:	Yes – 13 October 2026
Report considered by:	SMT – 3 November 2026 Business Briefing – 19 November 2026 Cabinet – 3 December 2026

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1.1 Recognise the progress made towards Telford & Wrekin becoming a Child Friendly Borough; and endorse the next phase of implementation to ensure the Child Friendly programme continues to develop borough-wide so that children and young people are at the heart of decision-making, service design and community development.

2.0 Purpose of Report

2.1 This report provides Cabinet with an update on the implementation progress of the Child Friendly approach across the Council, and the key actions in the next phase of implementation into 2027-2028 are outlined.

2.2 Creating a Child Friendly Telford and Wrekin starts with making sure every child has the opportunities, experiences and support they need to thrive. The programmes 5 by 5, 10 by 10 and our youth offer are all part of the shared ambition for children and young people, building on the strengths that already make our Borough a great place to grow up. That ambition is underpinned by a strong track record, including Telford recently being recognised as one of the best places in the UK to raise a family and our children's services achieving back-to-back Ofsted Outstanding ratings.

2.3 Our achievements provide a strong foundation, but becoming truly child friendly is about what comes next. We are bringing together partners, communities and families to support a shared vision, ensuring children and young people are at the heart of decision-making and to create a Child Friendly Telford and Wrekin, where every child feels valued, supported and able to reach their full potential.

2.4 This update report highlights work which is strengthening the way the voice of children and young people is shaping services and decision-making, including improved feedback arrangements to ensure participation activity is captured, shared with services and considered by decision makers. This increases transparency around how young people's views influence our strategy and policy work and service delivery, while providing clearer feedback to young people on the impact of their contributions.

3.0 Summary of Main Proposals

3.1.1 Our Children & Young People's Strategy, approved in February 2025, included the ambition for Telford & Wrekin to become a child friendly borough, putting children and young at the centre of decision-making. The Cabinet received a further report on adopting the child friendly vision and outlining the approach being taken In July 2025. Aligning young people's voices with the council-wide offers, and working alongside partners and service providers should ensure that services, opportunities, reflect what matters most to young people.

3.1.2 Child Friendly Telford & Wrekin is guided by the **seven wishes**, created by local children and young people themselves, which set out what they need to grow up happy, healthy, safe and successful in Telford and Wrekin. Together, the seven wishes provide a shared vision for the Council, partners, and providers to help every child and young person thrive.


The 7 Wishes
Working together for a happier Telford and Wrekin
A brighter future for everyone
1
I am Heard
My views are listened to and make a real difference.
2
I am Healthy
I can enjoy good physical and mental health and feel well.
3
I am Safe
I feel safe at home, at school and in my community.
4
I am Achieving
I have the opportunities and support to learn, develop and reach my potential.
5
I am Independent
I have the skills and confidence to make choices and prepare for my future.
6
I have Relationships and Friends I Trust
I have people in my life who care about me, respect me and support me.
7
I am Happy
I have fun, feel positive about my future and belong in my community.
Child Friendly Telford and Wrekin
Children and young people at the heart of everything we do
Your voice matters!
Listen
Include
Respect
Make it happen
Happier | Brighter | Telford and Wrekin


Telford & Wrekin Co-operative Council
Protect
Care and Invest
to create a better borough
Child Friendly Telford and Wrekin
Child Friendly Telford & Wrekin
Strategic Delivery Roadmap
Creating a borough where every child and young person can thrive, participate and be heard.
Strategic Foundation
Building the Framework
Internal alignment
Leadership engagement
Governance & reporting
Cabinet endorsement
Evidence & Content Development
Showcasing Existing Good Practice
Collation of Child Friendly examples
Service contributions
Best practice capture
Website content development
External Engagement & Recognition
Embedding Child Friendly Principles
Stakeholder engagement
Child Friendly stamping
Partnership development
Launch readiness
Ambassador Programme
Empowering Young People
Recruitment
Induction & training
Outreach support
Youth advocacy
Digital Development
Creating the Child Friendly Hub
Website design
User experience development
Content integration
Accessibility review
Launch Event
Celebrating Children & Young People
Borough-wide celebration event
Programme showcase
Stakeholder recognition
Website Launch
Going Live
Website go-live
Communications campaign
Public promotion
User engagement
Continuous Improvement
Maintaining Momentum
News & updates
Calendar events
Impact reporting
Ongoing engagement
Annual review & development
A brighter Telford & Wrekin for every child
CHILDREN AT THE CENTRE
WORKING TOGETHER
FAIRER OPPORTUNITIES
BRIGHTER FUTURES

3.1.3 The strategic delivery road map outlines our on-going approach, including the corporate and external alignment phasing approach with partners, identifying our key steps in delivering a Child Friendly Borough.

3.2 Children & Young People's Participation

3.2.1 The participation and voice element of Child Friendly is a crucial component, and there is an ambition that children and young person's voice is captured corporately across service areas to systematically embody the heard wish. Our participation work with young people is wide, covering an impressive range of a cross Council activities. A quarterly participation report now captures engagement activity and within children's social care, and CYP services, the Youth Offer and other offers more broadly, specifically demonstrates how participation contributes to the delivery of the seven wishes.

3.2.2 The latest report (published in August 2026) highlighted the breadth of voice which is being gathered through participation with CYP, creating a holistic and thematic approach to identify gaps in offers and reoccurring patterns of feedback. The report also identified opportunities for future development, supporting the continued embedding of the wishes within service planning, decision-making and engagement activity.

3.2.3 An overview of the breadth and depth of our participation work is shown below.

Child Friendly Telford & Wrekin – Participation as the Foundation for Change

Telford & Wrekin is committed to being a Child Friendly Borough where children and young people are listened to, valued and actively involved in shaping the decisions, services and communities that affect their lives. Participation is therefore not a standalone activity or programme of work; it is a fundamental principle that underpins how Children's Services, partners and the wider Council work alongside children, young people and families.

1.0 Participation Overview – within Children's Services

Participation Activity	Audience
Leavers Come First	Care Leavers (16–25)
Future Voices (formerly Children in Care Council)	Children in Care (8–16)
Kinship Forum	Children and Young People in Kinship Care (11–17)
LGBTQ+ Forum	Care Experienced LGBTQ+ Young People
Separated and Migrant Forum	Separated and Migrant Children and Young People
Sibling Sessions	Children in Care
Family Safeguarding Participation Events	Children, Young People and Families
Care Leaver Participation Activities	Care Leavers (16–25)
Virtual School Enrichment Programme	Children in Care and Previously Looked After Children
Voice of the Child Apprentice Activity	Across all Participation Groups
Family Hubs Child Participation Days	Children and young people accessing Family Hubs Support
CATE Participation	Children and young people affected by exploitation
Children with Disabilities / ICAN2 Short Breaks	Children and young people with disabilities accessing CWD support and ICAN2 short breaks

2.0 Wider Services – Participation Activity

Participation Activity	Audience	Frequency
SEND Participation	Children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), their families and parent carers	Ongoing
Make a Change	Young people aged 11-18 in Telford and Wrekin	Annual Programme
Young Peoples Forum	Young people aged 11-18 across Telford and Wrekin who wish to influence local services, policies and community issues that affect their lives.	Fortnightly
Youth Parliament	Young people aged 11-18 across Telford and Wrekin who participate in the Youth Elections and are represented by elected Members of Youth Parliament	Annual/Cyclical
Voices in Unity Board	Young people aged 10-19 (and up to 25 for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) who want to work alongside professionals to shape youth services, influence strategic priorities and improve opportunities	Ongoing
AFC Telford Kicks	Children and Young People (variety of sessions available for different age groups)	Weekly
Youth Club/4 All Foundation	Children and young people within the local community, including those accessing mainstream youth provision and specialist ICAN2 activities for children and young people with disabilities	Weekly/Ongoing
Crucial Crew	Primary-aged pupils	Responds to local safeguarding and safety prioritise

3.2.4 The participation offer for children and young people growing up in Telford and Wrekin has grown significantly, with a strong focus on providing a diverse range of opportunities for young people to get involved, influence decision-making, and have their voices heard.

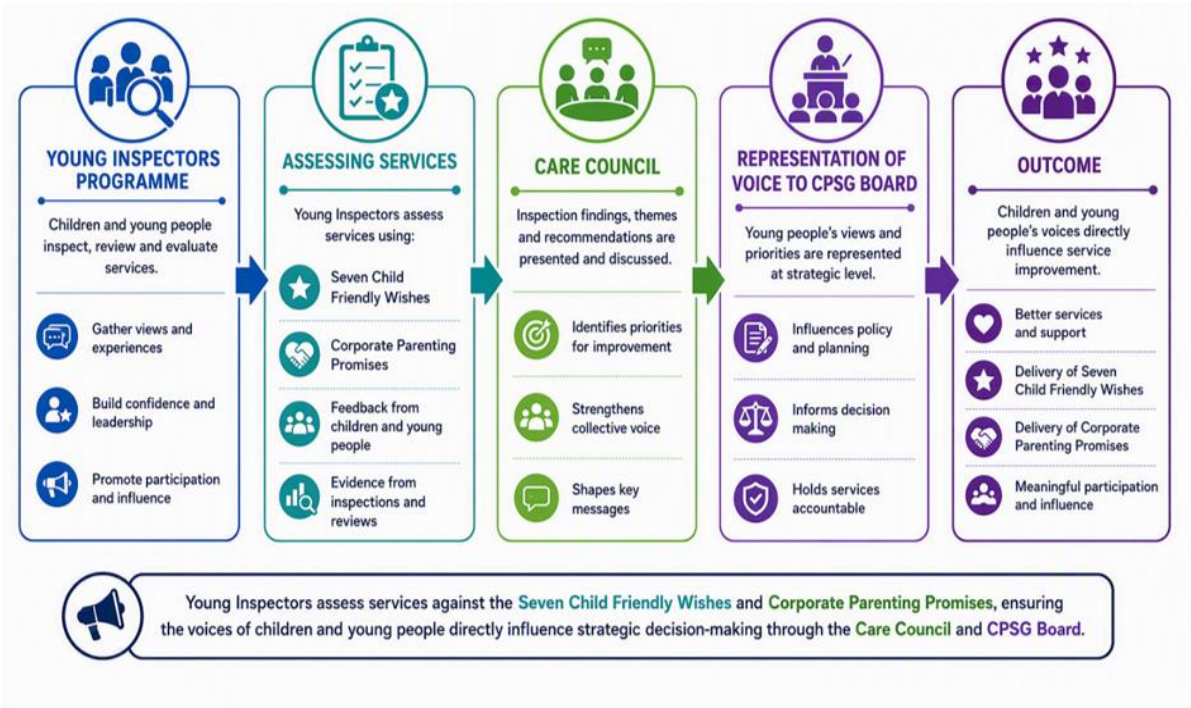
Alongside established participation forums and engagement activities, the offer now includes a broad programme of developmental, educational and wellbeing-focused opportunities. These activities are designed not only to capture youth voice but also to support personal growth, confidence and life skills development.

Young people can access sessions covering topics such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), independent living skills, mental health awareness and wellbeing, and dedicated support forums. The programme also includes sibling sessions to strengthen family relationships, LGBTQ+ Pride celebrations that promote inclusion and belonging, and regular sports and football activities that encourage healthy lifestyles.

Recognising the importance of culture, creativity and social connection, the offer further provides opportunities such as cooking challenges, theatre visits, soft play sessions, and a range of enrichment activities. Together, these contribute to a meaningful participation offer where young people are supported to learn, connect with others, build resilience, and shape the services and communities around them. This offer provides participation provision for Children and Young people that embody and support the seven wishes of Child Friendly, offering opportunities to have their voices heard.

3.2.5 Alongside the quarterly reporting on participation now in place to capture the breadth of voice, it is proposed that the national Young Inspectors model will be adopted. As part of the corporate parenting programme, and the inspectors will become guest representatives of feedback from inspections. Using Young Inspectors as representatives of young voice to champion the heard wish directly will act as a vital feedback delivery method. This will ensure provide a feedback loop from children and young people to decision makers.

3.2.6 The feedback from proposed inspections will offer clear and direct feedback from CYP using a criterion that includes emphasis on the delivery of the seven wishes of Child Friendly. Young Inspectors will feature as a part of on-going work to support and evidence the importance in recognising youth voice. Young Inspectors will feature on the Child Friendly website and support further the opportunities for Young people to influence service change.



3.2.7 A comprehensive participation offer is being developed as part of the Child Friendly Young Person's Zone. This will include a calendar of participation opportunities and key contact information. The Voice and Influence team will be included in upcoming comms promoting Child Friendly and highlighting the work they offer for Children, Young people and their parents/carers/guardians.

3.3 Communications Plan

3.3.1 The Child Friendly communications plan is a key element of the programme, and this includes the creation of the Child Friendly Stamp and Logo with supporting guidance for comms staff and wider teams, to clarify branding hierarchy and placement.

Child Friendly Telford and Wrekin

Child Friendly Telford and Wrekin

3.3.2 The process of collating examples of Child Friendly work across the Council, through service referrals to allow stamping, is on-going, with several early opportunities identified and actioned recently:

- Corporate comms and news stories
- Youth Offer
- 10 by 10
- 5 by 5
- Young Person Newsletter

- Executive/Directors Newsletters
- Best Start Family Hubs promotion
- Young Carers Charter
- BSIL (Best Start in Life) Delivery Plan
- Leisure and Green spaces
- Play Strategy consultation
- Sport England Place Expansion Bid
- Job Box promotion
- Children's Services Policies

These opportunities demonstrate growing awareness of the Child Friendly approach corporately, providing a strong foundation for expanding the recognition process across a wider range of services, strategies, and partnerships. Creating a Child Friendly Telford and Wrekin starts with making sure every child has the opportunities, experiences and support they need to thrive. Through 5 by 5, 10 by 10 and our youth offer we are setting out a shared ambition for children and young people, building on the strengths that already make our Borough a great place to grow up. That ambition is underpinned by a strong track record, including Telford recently being recognised as one of the best places in the UK to raise a family and our children's services achieving back-to-back Ofsted Outstanding ratings.

These achievements provide a strong foundation, but becoming truly child friendly is about what comes next. We plan to bring together partners, communities and families to support a shared vision, ensuring children and young people are at the heart of decision-making and we can create a Child Friendly Telford and Wrekin, where every child feels valued, supported and able to reach their full potential.

3.3.3 A video has been produced capturing early testimonials from those involved in the Child Friendly implementation and youth voice work. Various templates have been produced to support for corporate alignment and branding. These templates promote consistent branding within implementation and have been used to create supporting documentation for staff- including Vision Guide and FAQs.

3.3.4 The existing Child Friendly webpages are in the process of being re-designed, and the website re-design will incorporate the established branding and theming, with an expected launch date in January.

3.3.5 To ensure that co-production is at the heart of Child Friendly implementation, artwork has been created by the Voice of the Child Team, in collaboration with feedback from children and young people. The artwork is being aligned with existing branding for initiates such as: the Leader and Cabinet Member Young Person's Grant Scheme, the 5 by 5 and 10 by 10 initiatives and our Youth Offer web pages.



3.3.6 The communications plan is evolving, with further steps added to provide for on-going implementation. Posters, pamphlets and brochures and other visuals will be created to share the Child Friendly wishes and vision as part of the external alignment phase.



3.4 Corporate Alignment

3.4.1 The Child Friendly referral and stamping process and supporting comms materials, including the FAQs and Vision Guide, were launched at the corporate Leadership Forum session held in September 2026. Through this, positive engagement council-wide has taken place, with referral and stamping becoming corporately embedded and plans with wider comms to teams. Further staff briefings, employee voice groups and lunch and learn sessions are being organised to support ongoing awareness raising and implementation.

3.4.2 Regular Child Friendly briefings are delivered to the Executive Director Senior Leadership Team (SLT), corporate Senior Management Team (SMT) and the Cabinet Member. This is strengthening organisational awareness and understanding, promoting cross service alignment and providing oversight of progress towards Child Friendly.

3.5 Child Friendly Ambassadors

3.5.1 A Child Friendly Ambassador programme is being introduced corporately, and recruitment for this will be council-wide to ensure the seven wishes are being championed across service areas. The Ambassadors will act as a champions for the seven wishes and values of Child Friendly, becoming an employee-led group to further promote the approach.

3.5.2 Ambassadors will identify examples of Child Friendly work within their service area for referral and stamping, and contribute towards on-going Child Friendly promotion such as; the Celebration event (planned for Spring 2027), workshops, corporate alignment promotion, identifying further Child Friendly stamping opportunities.



3.6 Children's and Young People's Board

3.6.1 The CYP Board, developed following the ratification of the CYP Strategy, provides senior leadership, direction, and oversight across services which impact children and young people in Telford and Wrekin.

3.6.2 The Board brings together Directors and the Executive Director to provide strategic oversight of priorities for children and young people, driving collaboration across services, removing barriers to delivery and ensuring timely progress against key objectives. A core function of the Board will be to consider themes emerging from youth voice, engagement and participation activity, using this insight to inform decision-making, shape service development and embed the Child Friendly "Heard" wish across the organisation.

4.0 Alternative Options

4.1 The Children & Young People's Strategy 2025-2028 committed to the child friendly borough ambition, and this was full endorsed by the Cabinet. If the Child Friendly programme was not progressed the borough would lack an overarching framework for embedding children's rights and voices consistently across Council and partnership decision-making.

5.0 Key Risks

5.1 A risk register will be developed as part of the referral process for Child Friendly activity and this will be monitored by the Service Improvement and Efficiency Team and reviewed regularly through the Children Services and Public Health Senior Leadership Team.

6.0 Council Priorities

6.1 Every child, young person lives well in their community.

7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 The actions and proposals outlined in this report have been and will be funded from existing base budgets, supplemented by grant and reserve funding where appropriate. Support will be provided by the Finance team to fully cost proposals, as and when they arise. (TD)

8.0 Legal and HR Implications

8.1 Many of the workstreams contained within this report are underpinned by legislative requirements placed upon the Council. Where activities or actions are not required by legislation, the relevant powers and any applicable statutory restrictions will be

considered on a case-by-case basis, including how those activities support the Council in meeting its statutory obligations towards children within the Borough. Progressing the Child Friendly programme can support the Council's work to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty, but does not itself demonstrate compliance with that duty. Due regard to the relevant equality considerations must be given when individual decisions are taken. The report recognises the need for clear, robust and transparent oversight as the project develops. As individual proposals emerge, legal advice will be sought on a case-by-case basis to ensure that the Council acts lawfully.

9.0 Ward Implications

9.1 All Wards.

10.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

10.1 Becoming a Child Friendly Borough has the potential to deliver positive health, social and economic impacts by supporting improved physical and mental health and wellbeing through greater attention to the wider determinants of children's health, including: poverty, housing, education, community safety, access to green and play spaces, healthy food, air quality and opportunities for physical activity.

10.2 Social impacts include the strengthening of children and young people's participation in decisions affecting their lives, supporting a greater sense of belonging and connection to their communities, and help to ensure services and public spaces are inclusive and accessible. It will also encourage stronger partnership working across the council, schools, health services, voluntary and community organisations and local communities.

10.3 A stronger focus on prevention, early intervention and the conditions in which children grow up has the potential to reduce demand for higher-cost services over the longer term, creating safer, healthier and more accessible neighbourhoods may also produce wider economic benefits for families and communities.

11.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

11.1 Becoming a Child Friendly area is expected to have a positive impact on equality and diversity by embedding children's rights and participation in local decision-making and increasing attention to inequalities experienced by children and young people. Particular benefits, may arise for children who experience disadvantage, discrimination or barriers to accessing services through Child Friendly.

11.2 There is a risk that our participation activities disproportionately engage children and young people who are already well represented through various forums. This can be mitigated through targeted and accessible engagement with under-represented groups, for example through Child Friendly Ambassadors who have lived experience

of care. In addition, our Family Hubs and best start in life programme includes an approach to outreach to ensure engagement of families who experience disadvantage.

12.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

12.1 Becoming a Child Friendly Borough is expected to have positive climate change and environmental implications by strengthening consideration of children's needs in the design of neighbourhoods, transport, green spaces and the wider environment. It provides opportunities to promote active and sustainable travel, improve access to green space, reduce children's exposure to air pollution and ensure that climate resilience and adaptation take account of children's particular vulnerabilities. In the context of environmental inequalities, children living in disadvantaged communities may experience greater exposure to poor air quality, inadequate housing and limited access to high-quality green space. Any additional environmental implications from the programme can be minimised through sustainable procurement and delivery arrangements.

13.0 Child Friendly Telford & Wrekin

13.1 From January 2027 the report template for Cabinet meetings and other formal Committees will include a standard section on how the report proposals contribute to our Child Friendly ambitions.

13.2 Report authors will be required to outline the direct or indirect impact on children and young people within Telford and Wrekin and how the report proposal supports the Council's commitment to becoming a Child Friendly Borough, and the contribution to one or more of the Child Friendly Seven Wishes.

13.3 Authors will be expected to consider how the views, experiences and needs of children and young people have informed the development of the proposals, providing an overview of where the engagement has taken place and how it is being reported back through the communications plan.

14.0 Background Papers

Cabinet Report 17 Feb 2025	Children and Young People Strategy 2025-2028
Cabinet Report 17 July 2025	Becoming a Child Friendly Borough

15.0 Appendices

None.

16.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Director	23.09.2026	23.09.2026	HO
Finance	28.10.2026	28.10.2026	TD
Legal	28.10.2026	09.11.2026	DTW

Telford & Wrekin Co-operative Council

Protect, care and invest to create a better borough

Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Cabinet

3 December 2026

Corporate Peer Challenge progress review

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Lee Carter - Leader of the Council
Lead Director:	Ross Cook - Executive Director: Place
Service Area:	Policy & Governance
Report Author:	Jon Power – Head of Policy, Insight, Partnerships and Elections
Officer Contact Details:	**Tel:** 01952 382400 **Email:** jon.power@telford.gov.uk
Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key Decision:	Not Key Decision
Forward Plan:	Not Applicable
Report considered by:	SMT - 3 November 2026 Business Briefing – 18 November 2026

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1.1 Notes and endorses the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) progress review report at **Appendix A** which highlights that:

Telford & Wrekin continues to be an excellent council. The strengths recognised in the original CPC remain clearly evident: strong political and managerial leadership, an ambitious delivery culture, sound financial management and a committed workforce."

2.0 Purpose of Report

2.1 Following the completion of the Council's Corporate Peer Challenge in October 2025, there was a requirement to undertake a follow-up review approximately one year later. The follow-up typically takes place over one day and is delivered by a small number of members from the original peer team who assess the progress made since the initial review and report.

2.2 It provides an opportunity to evaluate the extent to which the Council has implemented the agreed action plan and responded to the recommendations. This process ensures continued accountability, supports organisational learning, and helps to maintain momentum in delivering sustainable improvement.

2.3 This report sets out the outcome to the CPC follow up progress review that took place on 11 September 2026.

3.0 Background

3.1 The Corporate Peer Challenge was undertaken on site from 14th – 17th October 2025. As is the practice with all robust external reviews, the CPC identified eight recommendations to be considered in taking the organisation forward.

3.2 Following receipt of the Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) report, the Council developed a comprehensive action plan to respond to the findings and recommendations set out by the peer team. The action plan provided a structured framework to ensure that the Council's response was timely, coordinated, and aligned with its broader strategic objectives, enabling effective oversight and accountability. It also ensured that progress could be systematically tracked, allowing the Council to demonstrate how it is embedding improvements and driving forward change as a result of the CPC process.

3.3 As a result of the ongoing oversight, it was reported to the LGA that all actions had been completed. Where subsequent actions are ongoing, they will continue to be monitored, demonstrating sustained momentum in implementing the recommendations arising from the Corporate Peer Challenge.

3.4 The action plan and supporting evidence were submitted to the LGA ahead of their progress review 'visit' in September 2026.

4.0 Summary of main proposals

Peer Challenge Progress Review

4.1 The Council's Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review was undertaken on Friday 11 September 2026 with the review team meeting with Cabinet members, non executive councillors, the Senior Management Team, Senior officers and employees through a series of virtual focus groups.

4.2 The peer team for the follow-up review comprised:

- **Sam Mowbray**, Chief Executive, Swindon Borough Council and lead officer peer
- **Anthony Burns**, former Leader, St Helens Borough Council
- **Amy Oliver**, Director of Finance, Leicester City Council
- **Sarah Sprung**, Corporate Peer Challenge Manager, Local Government Association
- **Rajpreet Khera**, Local Government Association

4.3 Following the CPC review, the LGA produced a short report (see appendix A) of their findings. The peer team were:

"pleased to see how Telford & Wrekin Council has responded to the CPC with energy, openness and clear ownership. Peers saw ***visible changes in practice*** *across all five original CPC themes and* ***a council that remains confident, ambitious and committed to continuous improvement****. They particularly recognised the* ***stronger golden thread, collective ownership of performance****,* ***broader workforce development, practical digital delivery****,* ***greater communications discipline and improved oversight*** *through the Major Projects Board."*

4.4 In addition, the CPC identified a number of areas of strength in the work of the Council, some of which are summarised below:-

People



- The peer team reflected that the strong, visible and collaborative leadership recognised in the original CPC remains a defining strength. Cabinet and the senior management team demonstrate shared ownership of performance and improvement.

- Strategic oversight for artificial intelligence and data transformation includes consideration of ethics, risk and external challenge. The peer team welcomed the focus on better outcomes and more efficient practice rather than viewing digital change solely as a savings programme.

- The council retains strong governance foundations and constructive relationships between statutory officers, senior management and members.

Place



- The peer team was impressed by how the Major Projects Board has strengthened oversight, bringing major schemes into a single forum where delivery, finance, risk and community benefit can be considered together.
- Peers also welcomed the additional challenge provided by the external review of the property investment portfolio and benchmarking of delegation arrangements.
- Peers saw a deeply rooted culture of continuous improvement. Leaders do not regard delivery of an initiative as the end of the process and expect services to evaluate what worked, identify learning and improve the next phase.

Organisation



- Peers were impressed by the clear golden thread from Vision 2032 through the emerging Council Plan, service plans, performance conversations and individual objectives. They heard how senior leaders show collective ownership of performance and how directors lead discussion of their outcomes and improvement action. In the peer team's view, this strengthens accountability and supports a more consistent organisation-wide approach.
- The peer team remained impressed by the council's strong record of financial management and the close working relationship between finance and services.
- The peer team also heard strong Cabinet ownership. Members described how the CPC has influenced the questions they ask about policy, investment and delivery, particularly whether activity reflects political priorities and benefits communities experiencing inequality. Peers reflected that the council's response therefore extends beyond completing an action plan and is becoming part of its wider improvement approach.

4.5 The CPC confirmed that the Council is a high performing authority:

"The peer team was pleased to find that Telford & Wrekin continues to be an excellent council. The strengths recognised in the original CPC remain clearly evident: strong political and managerial leadership, an ambitious delivery culture, sound financial management and a committed workforce."

4.6 The Council welcomes the next steps set out in the review report and will continue to address and progress these as part of its commitment to continuous improvement and organisational development.

5.0 Alternative Options

5.1 The alternative option is not to hold the CPC review. This would go against the Council's commitment to the CPC process.

6.0 Key Risks

6.1 The purpose of a Corporate Peer Challenge is to take a sector-led approach to identifying any areas of significant risks facing a local authority. The CPC report clearly shows that there are no concerns in this regard but has made recommendations to further strengthen our current arrangements to ensure that we continue to perform well and deliver good quality services for our residents supported by a valued and effective workforce. As can be seen from the attached report at Appendix A, the Council has already committed to implementation.

7.0 Council Priorities

7.1 The recommendations in this report align with all Council priorities: -

- every child, young person and adult lives well in their community
- everyone benefits from a thriving economy
- all neighbourhoods are a great place to live
- our natural environment is protected, and the Council is taking a leading role in tackling the climate emergency
- a community-focussed, innovative council providing efficient, effective and quality services.

8.0 Financial Implications

8.1 The Council has a strong track record of financial discipline and budget management which is integral to delivering its ambitions. The peer team found evidence of robust financial planning, a clear understanding of the council's financial position across both political and managerial leadership and recognised a the close working relationship between finance teams and services areas they support.

8.2 Recommendations regarding Financial Planning and Management from the CPC Action Plan have been taken on board and implemented as part of the development of the 2027/28 – 2030/31 Medium Term Financial Strategy.

8.3 Any resources required to deliver the action plan will need to be found within the overall resources included in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

9.0 Legal and HR Implications

9.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations contained in this report. The Council has legal duties to ensure it is effectively managed and governed, and by implementing the recommendations of the CPC, the Council will be further demonstrating the seriousness with which it takes this duty. In implementing any recommendations, legal advice and support will be provided as needed required on an on-going basis.

10.0 Ward Implications

10.1 There are no impacts on specific wards although any work undertaken in response to the Corporate Peer Challenge would be borough wide and in-line with our Vision and Priorities

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

11.1 There are no Health, Social and Economic Implications directly arising from this report. Any work undertaken in response to the Corporate Peer Challenge would have a positive impact on Health and wellbeing of residents in the borough

12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

12.1 There are no Equality & Diversity implications directly arising from this report. Any work undertaken in response to the Corporate Peer Challenge have a positive impact on Equality and Diversity in the borough.

13.0 Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environmental Implications

13.1 There are no Climate Change and Environmental Implications directly arising from this report. Any work undertaken in response to the Corporate Peer Challenge have a positive impact on Climate Change and the environment.

14.0 Background Papers

1 Corporate Peer Challenge 2025 Cabinet Report, Thursday 12 February 2026

15.0 Appendices

A LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review report

16.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Director	24/11/2026	24/11/2026	RK
Legal	20/10/2026	29/10/2026	EH
Finance	20/10/2026	26/10/2026	ER

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LGA Corporate Peer Challenge - Progress Review

Telford & Wrekin Council

11 September 2026

Feedback report



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Chair: Councillor Eamonn O'Brien **Chief Executive (Interim):** Jenny Rowlands **President:** Baroness Grey-Thompson

1. Introduction

Telford & Wrekin Council undertook an LGA Corporate Peer Challenge from 14 to 17 October 2025 and subsequently published the full CPC report and a CPC action plan setting out its response to the peer team's recommendations.

The Progress Review is an integral part of the Corporate Peer Challenge process. The virtual review took place approximately eleven months after the CPC and provided an opportunity for the council's senior political and managerial leadership to:

- update peers on progress and receive feedback on how the action plan responds to the CPC recommendations
- consider learning, new opportunities and challenges that have emerged since the original peer team was on site
- discuss the early impact of the work and the next steps needed to embed and sustain improvement

The LGA would like to thank Telford & Wrekin Council for its constructive engagement and continued commitment to sector-led improvement. The review took place in an open and positive spirit, with members and officers willing to reflect on progress and identify where further work will add value.

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2. Summary of the approach

The Progress Review took place virtually on 11 September 2026. The council provided its July 2026 action plan and supporting evidence in advance. The action plan sets out the council's response to the eight key recommendations in the original CPC report.

The action plan was the foundation for the review. The peer team tested what had changed since October 2025, whether new arrangements were operating consistently, what early impact could be demonstrated and where activity was continuing to develop.

The original CPC made eight key recommendations across the five core CPC themes. These formed the principal framework for the council's action plan and the virtual progress review:

2.1. Key recommendations

3.1 Strengthen Strategic Alignment

Strengthen alignment between the Corporate Plan and Vision 2032 by embedding clearer commitments to addressing inequalities, inclusive growth, and long-term outcomes. Make equalities explicit and measurable across all service areas to ensure a consistent approach.

3.2 Economic Positioning and Inclusive Growth

Commission an independent economic review to assess Telford's positioning in attracting jobs within emerging growth sectors of the UK economy.

Alongside this, develop a targeted strategy to attract higher-value businesses to the borough, aligned with population and housing growth to support inclusive economic development.

3.3 Governance and Investment Oversight

Ensure governance and communication processes are robust and transparent for capital investment decisions. Strengthen scrutiny's role in strategic decision-making by ensuring earlier and more consistent involvement, particularly in relation to commercial aspirations. Consider introducing non-executive expertise to support scrutiny and provide technical challenge on complex investment cases.

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Review delegation thresholds for capital programme decisions to align with best practice. Ensure consistent contract management across the council to improve efficiency and accountability.

3.4 Commercial Portfolio Governance

Build on and strengthen the council's commercial portfolio by developing a dedicated business plan and governance structure to manage risk and maximise social value. This governance structure should include non-Executive expert oversight to provide additional assurance and strategic input.

3.5 Continuous Improvement Culture

Continue embedding continuous improvement as a cultural norm across all services, building on the council's strong track record. Introduce structured mechanisms for progress tracking, reflection, and shared learning to sustain resilience and improvement.

3.6 Innovation and Digital Transformation

Build on existing innovation successes, such as Magic Notes, to accelerate digital transformation and identify priority areas for AI and digital improvements.

3.7 Telling Your Story

Standardise your presence and messaging across all platforms so that residents understand who is delivering for them in their area. Use case studies to make your message real and relatable.

3.8 Financial Resilience

Continue and enhance scenario-based financial stress testing to assess the impact of economic shocks, interest rate changes, or funding reductions on the council's financial sustainability.

The peer team met the Leader and Cabinet members, senior officers, non-executive councillors and employees through a series of virtual focus groups. The programme concluded with feedback to the council's senior leadership.

The Progress Review team included:

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- Samantha Mowbray - Chief Executive, Swindon Borough Council and lead officer peer
- Anthony Burns – previous Leader, St Helens Council
- Amy Oliver - Director of Finance, Leicester City Council
- Rajpreet Khera - Local Government Association
- Sarah Sprung - Corporate Peer Challenge Manager, Local Government Association

3. Progress Review - Feedback

The council's July 2026 action plan reports that all actions are complete - a self-assessed completion rate of 100 per cent. The peer team was heartened to see the confidence behind that assessment and the pace and ownership with which the council has responded. The review gave peers clear evidence of strong progress across the five original CPC themes and of several new arrangements already operating in practice. Looking ahead, the peer team reflected that the council has a strong foundation from which to demonstrate the longer-term impact of the improvements made. Maintaining a clear focus on outcomes through its established improvement arrangements will help sustain this progress.

The peer team was pleased to find that Telford & Wrekin continues to be an excellent council. The strengths recognised in the original CPC remain clearly evident: strong political and managerial leadership, an ambitious delivery culture, sound financial management and a committed workforce. Peers felt the council had used the CPC as constructive external challenge and made tangible progress without losing the confidence, pace or pride that characterise Team Telford.

Peers were impressed by the clear golden thread from Vision 2032 through the emerging Council Plan, service plans, performance conversations and individual objectives. They heard how senior leaders show collective ownership of performance and how directors lead discussion of their outcomes and improvement action. In the peer team's view, this strengthens accountability and supports a more consistent organisation-wide approach.

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The peer team also heard strong Cabinet ownership. Members described how the CPC has influenced the questions they ask about policy, investment and delivery, particularly whether activity reflects political priorities and benefits communities experiencing inequality. Peers reflected that the council's response therefore extends beyond completing an action plan and is becoming part of its wider improvement approach.

In the peer team's view, the next phase should focus on demonstrating the measurable impact of these changes and ensuring they remain embedded across the organisation. This applies particularly to workforce development, digital projects, communications campaigns, scrutiny and investment governance.

3.1. Local priorities and outcomes

The two key recommendations under this theme focused on strengthening strategic alignment, making equality and inclusive growth more explicit and measurable, and sharpening the borough's economic positioning.

Vision 2032 continues to provide a clear partnership framework for the borough. Relationships between the council and strategic partners have matured and support open challenge as well as joint delivery. The peer team heard how partners are using the framework to consider whether the system is investing sufficiently in prevention and early help, demonstrating that it is operating as a forum for collective place leadership rather than information sharing alone.

Work on the 2027 to 2031 Council Plan is well advanced. More than 12 community events have been held, employees have been engaged and emerging priorities have been discussed with strategic partners. The planned route includes joint Cabinet and senior management discussion, all-member scrutiny engagement, consultation alongside the budget and adoption in February 2027. Aligning the Council Plan and budget through the same route will help ensure commitments are deliverable and funded.

Peers were particularly encouraged by the strengthened golden thread from Vision 2032 through service plans, performance conversations and individual objectives. Directorate plans identify outcomes and measures, senior management collectively

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reviews performance, and directors lead discussion of their areas. The latest staff survey reinforces this positive picture: 93 per cent of respondents understood how their role contributes to council priorities, based on a response rate of almost 50 per cent.

The peer team welcomed the way inclusive growth is becoming more visible in investment decisions. The strengthened Major Projects Board brings the council's main regeneration schemes together and enables Cabinet members and senior officers to consider delivery, budget, risk and intended community benefits in one place. Sutton Hill Hub illustrates this developing approach by connecting physical regeneration with skills, education, health, community activity, safety and pride in place.

The economic review and development of inclusive growth measures provide a sound platform for attracting higher-value employment and ensuring growth benefits communities across the borough. As the Council Plan is finalised, the council can build on this by agreeing a focused set of outcome measures showing how investment improves health, education, employment and housing.

The peer team reflected that, once the Council Plan is agreed in February 2027, the council and its partners will be well placed to begin shaping the longer-term vision for Telford & Wrekin beyond 2032. Vision 2032 is moving into the medium-term planning horizon, so beginning this work early will support broad political and partner ownership of the borough's next chapter.

3.2. Organisational and place leadership

The key recommendation under this theme focused on telling Telford & Wrekin's story consistently so residents understand who is delivering for them.

Peers welcomed how the communications team has translated the recommendations into practical and repeatable controls. A review of more than 600 design jobs found strong use of council branding and led to specific corrections. Place-based audits now check signage and public-facing material across borough centres. Cross-service campaign planning and the continuing Protect, Care and Invest narrative are helping the council present a coherent story, with greater use of residents and frontline

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employees to make technical or contested issues accessible.

The peer team thought the latest residents' survey result was a fantastic achievement: 70 per cent of respondents felt well informed, compared with the quoted national benchmark of 47 per cent. Peers were impressed by the scale of that lead and felt it speaks powerfully to the council's sustained recognition of the importance of communications and the strength of its relationship with residents. This gives the council a strong platform from which to test how branding and storytelling further improve recognition, trust and understanding across different communities.

More broadly, the peer team reflected that the strong, visible and collaborative leadership recognised in the original CPC remains a defining strength. Cabinet and the senior management team demonstrate shared ownership of performance and improvement, and members described how the CPC has sharpened the questions they ask about policy, investment and delivery. Peers felt the council's response is becoming part of its wider approach to improvement rather than standing apart as a separate action plan.

3.3. Governance and culture

The two key recommendations under this theme focused on strengthening governance, transparency and scrutiny of capital investment, and developing robust governance for the commercial portfolio.

The council retains strong governance foundations and constructive relationships between statutory officers, senior management and members. The peer team was encouraged by evidence that scrutiny is becoming involved earlier, before decisions are finalised. Peers heard how Environment Scrutiny has considered policy during its development, while cross-party work is giving non-executive councillors a more active role in shaping options.

The review of legacy garage sites on new town estates is a useful example of pre-decision scrutiny. Scrutiny is considering residents' views, housing potential, legal and practical issues and wider regeneration benefits before Cabinet reaches a decision. Business and Finance Scrutiny has also received more detailed information and challenged areas including adult social care expenditure, supported by input

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from other councils and external contributors.

The peer team considered these developments to be an important step forward in strengthening the influence of scrutiny. There is an opportunity to build on this progress by sharing effective practice across committees, supporting more member-led examination of budget priorities and demonstrating how scrutiny has influenced decisions.

The peer team was impressed by how the Major Projects Board has strengthened oversight, bringing major schemes into a single forum where delivery, finance, risk and community benefit can be considered together. Alongside the Housing Investment Board, Treasury Board and established statutory officer arrangements, this provides a more coherent framework for capital and commercial assurance. Peers also welcomed the additional challenge provided by the external review of the property investment portfolio and benchmarking of delegation arrangements.

The council can build on these improvements by setting out clearly how the different boards and assurance routes connect, where independent expertise is brought in and how member challenge influences significant decisions. Continued development of corporate contract management and proactive communication with non-executive councillors will reinforce transparency and consistency.

3.4. Financial planning and management

The key recommendation under this theme focused on financial resilience and enhanced scenario-based stress testing.

The peer team remained impressed by the council's strong record of financial management and the close working relationship between finance and services. Peers heard how scenario planning supports the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and how management is actively considering ways to address the forecast budget gap in 2027/28. At the time of the review, external audit and value for money work were progressing without significant concerns.

The council is using prevention and service redesign to respond to continuing pressures in adults' and children's services. Interest-rate assumptions are considered within financial planning and the council receives regular advice from its treasury

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advisers. These arrangements provide a sound basis for navigating a challenging and uncertain financial environment.

Building on these established strengths, the peer team encourage the council to continue developing its approach to financial scenario testing, particularly given the scale of its capital programme and borrowing. This would provide further assurance to members by illustrating the potential impact of changes in interest rates, refinancing costs, demand and investment income, alongside the management actions available.

3.5. Capacity for improvement

The two key recommendations under this theme focused on sustaining the council's continuous improvement culture and accelerating innovation and digital transformation.

Peers saw a deeply rooted culture of continuous improvement. Leaders do not regard delivery of an initiative as the end of the process and expect services to evaluate what worked, identify learning and improve the next phase. The peer team heard practical examples from service delivery, events and partnership activity, alongside stronger collective ownership of performance by the senior management team.

Digital work is moving confidently from governance and planning into practical delivery. Strategic oversight for artificial intelligence and data transformation includes consideration of ethics, risk and external challenge. The peer team welcomed the focus on better outcomes and more efficient practice rather than viewing digital change solely as a savings programme.

The peer team was particularly encouraged by Resilience In-View, which is live and has helped identify vulnerable households during flooding. Peers felt this provides a tangible example of improved data infrastructure supporting earlier and more targeted intervention. Child in View, due to launch in 2027, should give practitioners a fuller picture of a child and their household as partner data is incorporated within appropriate assurance arrangements.

The peer team reflected that the planned review in early 2027 is a valuable

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opportunity to assess user experience, data quality, outcomes and professional time saved. Using clear baselines and measures will help the council demonstrate the benefits of digital investment, decide where the approach should be extended and maintain momentum in the next stage of transformation.

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4. Final thoughts and next steps

The peer team was pleased to see how Telford & Wrekin Council has responded to the CPC with energy, openness and clear ownership. Peers saw visible changes in practice across all five original CPC themes and a council that remains confident, ambitious and committed to continuous improvement. They particularly recognised the stronger golden thread, collective ownership of performance, broader workforce development, practical digital delivery, greater communications discipline and improved oversight through the Major Projects Board.

The council's next phase is about building on this strong progress, embedding the changes consistently and demonstrating sustained impact. The peer team's key considerations are to:

- Complete and embed the 2027 to 2031 Council Plan.
- Begin developing a longer-term place vision beyond 2032 once the Council Plan is agreed.
- Use the Major Projects Board and related governance arrangements to track delivery, financial risk, social value and benefits for communities.
- Apply effective pre-decision scrutiny consistently and show members how their challenge has influenced decisions.
- Continue to strengthen councillor financial literacy and make complex financial and investment information easier to engage with.
- Evaluate the impact of workforce programmes, digital products and communications campaigns using clear baselines and outcome measures.
- Develop a focused regional and national influencing proposition with clear ownership, audiences and priority asks.

The LGA would like to thank Telford & Wrekin Council for undertaking the virtual Progress Review and for the openness of everyone who contributed. Senior political and managerial leaders will now want to reflect on the findings and determine how the council takes the next phase forward.

The LGA's ongoing sector support offer remains available. Helen Murray, Principal

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Adviser for the West Midlands, is the main point of contact between the council and the Local Government Association and would be pleased to discuss any further support.

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