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 15 October 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-20 Declarations of Interest

None.

CAB-21 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2026 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

CAB-22 Leader's Announcements

No announcements were made.

CAB-23 2026/27 Financial Monitoring Report

The Cabinet Member: Finance and Resident Services presented the Financial Monitoring Report and advised that, despite challenging circumstances, the Council remained in a stable financial position and was projecting a balanced revenue budget for 2026/27. Service pressures continued to be experienced, particularly within Children's and Adult Social Care, with an overspend reported in Children's Services driven by increasing demand and the rising number of children requiring support and residential placements. It was emphasised that the safety, stability and wellbeing of vulnerable children remained the Council's priority.

The financial pressures were being managed through the early identification of risks, savings and efficiencies across services, whilst maintaining reserves and avoiding the need to draw on them. It was further noted that the Council had continued to protect key frontline services despite ongoing financial pressures and substantial savings delivered over recent years.

Borrowing remained sustainable and affordable and the £121 million capital programme would continue to support investment in housing, schools, highways and regeneration projects across the Borough. It was reported that that, rather than managing decline, the Council continued to invest in communities and create opportunities for residents and businesses. It was acknowledged that demand-led pressures within Children's and Adult Social Care would continue to present a financial risk and would be closely monitored throughout the year.

The Council remained committed to financial responsibility, protecting vital services, maintaining reserves and investing in the future of the Borough, and thanks were extended to staff for their work in managing the Council's finances.

Cabinet Members welcomed the report and expressed that Council's strong financial management had enabled continued investment in residents and the future of the Borough despite significant financial pressures facing local authorities. It was recognised that a balanced budget position had been achieved without drawing on reserves, reflecting careful planning, financial discipline and the significant work undertaken by officers and Members. The importance of continuing to support vulnerable children and maintain key services whilst responsibly managing pressures within safeguarding, adult social care and education was highlighted . Substantial savings had been delivered whilst continuing to invest in regeneration, housing, schools and local communities. The importance of securing value for money, challenging waste and making prudent decisions to safeguard the Council's ability to deliver services in the future was emphasised and this would ensure that residents' contributions continued to provide tangible benefits for communities across the Borough.

The Conservative Group Leader raised concerns regaring the current finaicial position, particularly in relation to the ognoing pressures with Children's Services, safeguarding and social care. Budget contingencies had already been utilised and it was felt that there remained risk associated with the use of reserves to manage in-year pressures. He highlighted the growing deficit within the Dedicated Schools Grant, together with the demand and costs within social care and that this would put further pressure on the Council's finances. Concerns were raised in relation to debt levels, the re-phasing of the capital programme, borrowing requirements and the reported shortfall within the prosperity and investment budgets. He acknowledged that the challenges to the budget refelected with the wider national funding pressures and that the Council remained in a stronger position than many other local authoirties due to the retention of its budget strategy reserve. Tribute was paid to the officers for their effective financial management which had helped to maintain the Council's financial resilience and protect the Council from greater risks.

The Liberal Democrats Group Leader placed on record his thanks to the Finance Team for their work in maintaining a balanced budget and welcomed the Council's approach to financial management. The pressure within specialist children's care was largely demand-led and that vulnerable children and young people required appropriate support. He expressed his appreciation to foster carers and adoptive parents for the vital role they played in supporting children and young people, The importance of continuing to invest in preventative and wraparound support was noted. Population growth and increasing demand for services would continue to place pressure on Council finances, particularly within children's and adult social care. The impact of Council Tax increases on residents and the need for adequate Government funding for social care services was highlighted. Despite the ongoing challenges, he welcomed the progress made to date and noted that the Council retained a level of financial resilience which would enable them to respond to future pressures, if required.

The Leader welcomed confirmation that the Council would receive 90% of the Dedicated Schools Grant from the Government. In relation to shortfall within Prosperity and Investment, this had been impacted by reduced rental during the refurbishment of Wellington Market.

RESOLVED – that:

a) **the 2026/27 revenue budget position, which showed that the Council was projecting to be within budget at year end without having to use the Budget Strategy Reserve which remains at £21.7m be noted;**

b) **the position in relation to capital spend and the changes to the Capital programme, all associated changes to the Treasury Management Indicators and Prudential Indicators, be noted and RECOMMENDED TO FULL COUNCIL for approval;**

c) **the collection rates for NNDR, council tax and sales ledger be noted.**

CAB-24 Telford & Wrekin Green Guarantee Scheme Update

The Cabinet Member: Neighbourhoods, Planning & Sustainability presented an update on the Telford & Wrekin Green Guarantee Scheme which set out the Council's continued commitment to protecting and enhancing the environment for both wildlife and residents alike. The report highlighted Authority's strong record and the number of designated Green Guarantee sites had increased from 16 to 22 with a further five sites currently in progress through the designation process.

It was also reported that the Borough's green network had continued to expand with ten sites achieving Green Flag status. A further fourteen sites were currently under review as potential designation sites. Telford had also been recognised as a Tree City of the World.

Approximately 90% of the Borough consisted of green infrastructure. Although it was emphasised that access to open green space was not confined to specific areas, 89% of residents had access to green space within 300 metres of their home, which was important in supporting opportunities for children to play and wildlife to thrive.

Reference was made to a recent survey which had ranked the Borough as the number one local authority area in which to raise a family, with particularly high scores achieved in the environment category. The Council had also been ranked first in the UK Playground Index with residents having access to parks and playing fields within one kilometre of their homes, which contributed significantly to the Borough's attractiveness and quality of life.

The report identified a further fourteen Green Guarantee sites which would provide long-term protection against future development or disposal and the Cabinet Member thanked those Members from all political groups who had put forward suggestions from their wards, many of which had been brought forward as part of the proposals. The protection of green spaces delivered significant health and wellbeing benefits, whilst also providing opportunities to address issues such as flooding and pollution.

The Cabinet Member paid tribute to the Borough's volunteers, including Friends Group and Street Champions, for their valued contributions, environmental achievements and their passion for protecting and enhancing the local environment.

Members welcomed the report and expressed their support for the proposals which sought the continued expansion and protection of the Borough's green spaces. It was recognised that the designation of additional sites was about more than land use, planning and development, contributing to the creation of healthy, sustainable communities through the promotion of wellbeing, active lifestyles, environmental quality and opportunities for residents to live independent and fulfilling lives. Green spaces played an important role in supporting physical and mental health, strengthening communities, advancing preventative health objectives and ensuring the long-term wellbeing of future generations. Parks, open spaces and smaller areas of green infrastructure helped to define local communities, provided opportunities for recreation and access to nature, and formed a key part of what made the Borough an attractive place to live. There was a need to balance growth, housing and investment against the protection of valued green spaces, recognising their contribution to biodiversity, nature recovery, climate resilience and quality of

life. Protecting these sites would provide confidence to communities that valued green spaces would be safeguarded and given appropriate consideration in future decision-making, together with the Council's ongoing commitment to protecting the environment whilst ensuring that future generations could continue to enjoy accessible, high-quality green spaces.

The Liberal Democrats Group Leader welcomed the continued protection and enhancement of green spaces and local nature reserves. He commented that the preservation and creation of green spaces was important in both urban and rural areas, providing opportunities for recreation and supporting mental health and wellbeing. The benefits of the Council working collaboratively with Friends Groups, community organisations and Town Councils was highly beneficial and it was important to secure ongoing support and funding for these groups going forward. As part of any future development and Local Plan proposals, the Council needed to continue to protect and enhance these sites as they remained a key attraction of the Borough.

The Conservative Group Leader supported the proposed new and extended Green Guarantee Sites, recognising that they reflected a balanced approach to the protection of both urban and rural green spaces. It was expressed that Green Guarantee status did not provide statutory protection and he suggested that further options be explored to strengthen long-term protection for these sites. In respect of the pressure on green spaces and rights of way, the importance of ensuring that valued sites remained appropriately protected was emphasised.

RESOLVED – that:

a) **the declaration of 14 new Green Guarantee Sites, the extension of two existing sites and a boundary amendment to one existing site be approved; and**

b) **delegated authority be granted to the Executive Director of Place and Director of Policy and Governance in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Sustainability to complete the declaration process.**

CAB-25 Councillors' Pride Fund 2025/26: Helping to Protect, Care and Invest to Create a Better Borough

The Cabinet Member: Communities & Civic Pride presented the report on the Councillors' Pride Fund 2025/26: Helping to protect, Care and Invest to create a Better Borough which gave an update on the borough-wide impact the Fund which had been allocated during the 2025/26 financial year.

The Councillors' Pride Fund demonstrated the heart of the approach and the difference the investment made to local communities where it mattered most. A sum of £270,000 had been awarded to 385 projects across the borough and covered a wide variety of area such as tackling loneliness, parks and play areas, protecting the environment and providing cleaner and more welcoming spaces.

Match funding had been awarded of 48p for every £1 and this had attracted an £1m of additional funding.

The Fund had allocated more than £2.5m in investment with a total of £3.6m being given to community events and projects since 2019.

Each Councillor was allocated £5,000 and this could prove transformational. The funding also supported larger funding pots and investments. It brought local decision making within community partnerships and raised civic pride.

The Fund helped bring people together strengthening communities and bringing forward a better place to live.

Cabinet Members welcomed the report and highlighted that locally delivered projects made a lasting difference by supporting groups, funding projects and bringing people together. It responded directly to local needs and had a strong focus on enriching young lives and promoting health and wellbeing. This was a good example of early investment enabling children to grow, socialise and thrive. The report recognised that residents were best placed to identify solutions and recognised the support it gave grass-roots organisations, volunteering projects, civic pride and resilience. The impacts and benefits could be seen within strong healthy communities across the borough.

The Leader welcomed the co-initiatives that had been undertaken within the multi-member wards.

The Liberal Democrats Group Leader welcomed the Councillors' Pride Fund and thanked Sean Davies for initiating the fund which had a huge impact supporting young families who were struggling, demonstrating that small sums of money could go a long way.

The Conservative Group Leader welcomed the Councillors' Pride Fund acknowledging that the current scheme made a huge impact locally. He hoped that despite the budget pressures that this first-rate scheme could continue to ensure that Members could make an impact within their Wards.

RESOLVED – that:

a) **the continued impact of the Councillors' Pride Fund which has allocated over £2,538,000 and attracted over £1,000,000 of matched funding, to date, allowing Councillors to deliver the Council's key priorities in their wards and to protect, care and invest to create a better borough be welcomed;**

b) **the importance of this funding in enabling a bespoke and local response to need in individual communities, in supporting community organisations to thrive and offering valued services to residents borough-wide be recognised; and**

c) **the final deadline for applications for the 2026-27 financial year of 1 February 2027 be noted.**

CAB-26 Report of the Business & Finance and Communities Scrutiny Committee - Innovative Approaches to Alternative Accommodation

The Cabinet Member: Finance and Resident Services and the Cabinet Member: Safe Streets and Better Housing presented a joint report on Innovative Approaches to Alternative Accommodation from the Scrutiny Working Group, which sought Cabinet approval for its findings and recommendations.

Cabinet Members expressed their appreciation to Councillor Luter and the cross-party Working Group for their work on the review. They recognised the considerable thought, commitment and effort that had been invested into the process and noted that it demonstrated the value of effective Scrutiny in providing constructive challenge and identified opportunities for service improvement across the Council.

Housing was recognised as a significant challenge that extended beyond simply increasing the number of homes and it was necessary to deliver the right homes in the right locations, whilst taking into account affordability, accessibility and associated costs. The need for one-bedroomed accommodation was acknowledged as a key priority, alongside the expansion of housing provision for young people and care leavers. It was noted that the provision of suitable housing supported not only opportunity but long-term stability and independence.

The Working Group had explored a range of innovative approaches to housing design and delivery. This included consideration of existing initiatives relating to garden pods for fostering households and young care leavers, as well as modular housing, microhomes, building conversions and the use of

under-utilised sites. Any innovation needed to be balanced with practicality, financial viability and effective partnership working. It was recognised that robust financial appraisals were required to assess project funding and affordability. Future work would focus on meeting local housing needs through a sensible and proportionate approach.

Councillor Luter, Chair of the Joint Working Group provided an overview of the work undertaken. He reported that the Working Group had met on four occasions and considered a range of evidence and data. The findings had indicated that one-bedroomed accommodation had accounted for approximately 60% of identified social housing need and highlighted a requirement for an additional 700 affordable one-bedroomed units.

The Working Group had explored a range of housing solutions, including garage conversions, garden pods, micro-units and the conversion of existing structures. Consideration had also been given to the projects undertaken by Bristol City Council and their lessons learnt. The evidence reviewed identified site selection, strong project leadership, robust budget planning and a clear business case as key priorities for future housing programmes. It was further noted that opportunities on Council-owned sites should be considered on an individual basis to ensure that development proposals were appropriate, balanced and sensible.

Innovation went hand in hand with practicality, financial viability and partnership working. Robust financial appraisals were required to look at funding projects and affordability. The next steps would be to look at meeting local housing needs set against a sensible and proportional approach.

In conclusion, Councillor Luter advised that the Council would explore opportunities to develop additional one-bedroomed accommodation. This would include consideration of garage sites, potential sites owned by Housing Plus Group and other practical and deliverable options to increase housing supply.

Cabinet Members welcomed the proposed approach to addressing local housing needs and acknowledged the particular challenges associated with the provision of one-bedroomed accommodation. Support was expressed for the regeneration of underused and disused garage sites that had fallen into disrepair.

The Leader of the Conservative Group welcomed the policy proposals and supported the innovative approach of converting garage sites to provide additional accommodation.

The Leader thanked members of the Committee for their cross-party work and confirmed that a report would be presented to Cabinet at its November meeting.

RESOLVED – that the recommendations of the Business and Finance Scrutiny Committee and Communities Scrutiny Committee be noted and endorsed.

The meeting ended at 6.42 pm

Signed for the purposes of the Decision Notices

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

Signed .....

Date: Thursday 12 November 2026