



Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Business and Finance Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 24 June 2026

6.00 pm

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

Democratic Services: Paige Starkey 01952 380110

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Committee Members: Councillors N A M England (Chair), J Kaur (Vice-Chair), L Lewis, G Luter, R Mehta, S Syrda and R Tyrrell

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7.0 Chair's Update

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BUSINESS AND FINANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

Present: Councillors N A M England (Chair), N Page (Vice-Chair), L Lewis, G Luter, S Syrda and R Tyrrell.

In Attendance: J Dunn (Director: Prosperity & Investment), A Lowe (Director: Policy & Governance) and P Starkey (Senior Democracy Officer (Scrutiny)).

Apologies: Councillor J Kaur.

BFSC22 Declarations of Interest

None.

BFSC23 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

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

BFSC24 Innovative Approaches to Alternative Accommodation

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

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

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

The Committee welcomed the establishment of the joint working group, noting the benefits of drawing on external expert witnesses and learning from other authorities. Members expressed support for progressing with the working

group to address housing need, particularly single-person accommodation and opportunities to utilise existing buildings.

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

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

BFSC25 Telford Land Deal

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

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

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

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

the delivery of 24 small business units at Orchard Business Park, as well as enabling the Council to address viability gaps in emerging developments.

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

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

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

Members noted the update.

BFSC26 Work Programme Review

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

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

Members noted the updated work programme.

BFSC27 Chair's Update

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

The meeting ended at 6.28 pm

Chairman:

Date: Wednesday 24 June 2026



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Business and Finance Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 24 June 2026

Terms of Reference 2026/27

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Zona Hannington – Cabinet Member: Finance and Resident Services
Lead Director:	Anthea Lowe – Director: Policy & Governance
Service Area:	Policy & Governance
Report Author:	Ashley Hickman – Democracy & Scrutiny Assistant
Officer Contact Details:	Tel: 01952 382589 Email: ashley.hickman1@telford.gov.uk
Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key Decision:	Not Key Decision
Forward Plan:	Not Applicable
Report considered by:	Business and Finance Scrutiny Committee – 24 June 2026

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

It is recommended that the Business and Finance Scrutiny Committee:

- 1.1 Review and agree the Terms of Reference set out at Appendix A.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To set out the Terms of Reference for the Business and Finance Scrutiny Committee outlined at Appendix A.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 The Constitution requires that Full Council should agree at its Annual Meeting the Terms of Reference for each of its Committees to enable the Council to efficiently conduct its business.

3.2 At the Annual Meeting of the Council on 21 May 2026, Full Council delegated authority to each Committee to review its own Terms of Reference.

4.0 Summary of main proposals

4.1 For the Committee to review and approve it's Terms of Reference.

5.0 Alternative Options

5.1 There are no alternative options arising from this report.

6.0 Key Risks

6.1 There are no key risks arising from this report.

7.0 Council Priorities

7.1 A community-focused, innovative council providing efficient, effective and quality services.

8.0 Financial Implications

8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

9.0 Legal and HR Implications

9.1 The Terms of Reference provides a clear governance framework, defining the scope, functions, and decision-making parameters of the Business and Finance Scrutiny Committee. This ensures transparency, accountability, and alignment with the Authority's statutory duties and constitutional arrangements.

10.0 Ward Implications

10.1 There are no ward implications arising from this report.

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

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

12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

12.1 There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

13.0 Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environmental Implications

13.1 There are no Climate Change, Biodiversity or Environmental implications arising from this report.

14.0 Background Papers

Terms of Reference 2026/2027

1 [Council Constitution](#)

15.0 Appendices

A Business and Finance Scrutiny Committee Terms of Reference 2026/27

16.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Legal Services	11/06/2026	11/06/2026	ON
Finance	27/05/2026	02/06/2026	ER

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BUSINESS & FINANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Membership

1. The group will be made up of elected members of the Scrutiny Assembly, as appointed at Annual Council in line with the political balance of the Council.
2. The Committee may include Co-opted scrutiny members but they must not exceed 50% of the number of elected members.
3. In addition to standing co-optees, the Committee may appoint additional co-optees for one-off reviews to supplement the skills, knowledge and experience of members of the Committee on that particular issue (subject to the rule on total number of co-optees above).
4. A Vice-Chair may be appointed by majority decision of the Committee.
5. The quorum for a meeting is 3 elected members.

Functions

6. The Committee will be the main mechanism by which Scrutiny members will scrutinise and monitor issues relating to the following key areas:
 - Service & Financial Planning including Budget and Income Generation, Property Investment Portfolio, Property Management and Revenues
 - Commercial Projects
 - Economic development projects including broadband
 - Skills and employability
 - Support to business and growth sectors
 - Business investment
 - Attracting funding for Telford & Wrekin
 - Partnerships
 - West Midlands Combined Authority
 - Local Enterprise Partnership
 - Visitor Economy including tourism operation and development
 - Pride Programme
 - Workforce issues
 - HCA Land Deal
 - Local Plan (Jointly with Environment Scrutiny Committee)
7. The Committee will set its own work programme. The following points may be taken into consideration when considering the work programme each year:
 - areas where significant change is proposed and the potential impacts
 - performance in areas where significant change has been implemented;

- areas of financial overspend;
- areas receiving a high level of budgetary commitment;
- areas where there is a high level of user dissatisfaction;
- reports and action plans produced/agreed with external partners;
- areas that are key issues for the public or have become a public interest issue covered in the media.

8. The Committee will consider matters referred by the Scrutiny Management Board, and will exercise discretion as to whether a suggestion falls within the remit of the Committee to scrutinise.

Meeting Administration and Proceedings

9. The Committee procedure rules as set out in the Council's Constitution apply to this Committee.

10. The meetings will follow the principles of scrutiny - ie no party whip will be applied and a constructive, evidence based approach will be used.

11. If the Chair and Vice Chair (if appointed) are unable to attend a meeting the members present will elect a Chair for the meeting.

12. All Scrutiny Committee meetings will be held in public, unless exempt information is being considered or discussed. Scrutiny Committees may appoint sub-groups to carry out investigative work as part of a review and these sub-groups may hold informal meetings but will report back their findings to the Scrutiny Committee.

13. The meetings will be administered by Scrutiny Services and Democratic Services. Meetings will be held regularly and dates will be agreed by the members of the Committee at the start of each municipal year. Members of the Committee may call additional meetings as required to follow up concerns identified in their scheduled meetings or sub-sets of members may form working groups that meet outside the scheduled meetings to investigate specific issues.

14. Relevant Cabinet Members, Executive Directors, Directors and Service Delivery Managers will attend the Committee at the request of the Chair. Representatives from partner organisations may be invited to attend.

Sensitive and Confidential Information

15. From time to time members may become privy to information of a confidential nature. If this happens, members must maintain this confidence. Members are unable to request personal/confidential information from Officers about an individual or family.

16. Information obtained as a result of membership of the Committee is sensitive and should be treated as being confidential by members.



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Business & Finance Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 24 June 2026

Business & Finance Scrutiny Work Programme 2026/27

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Zona Hannington – Cabinet Member: Finance and Resident Services
Lead Director:	Anthea Lowe – Director: Policy & Governance
Service Area:	Policy & Governance
Report Author:	Paige Starkey – Lead Democracy Officer
Officer Contact Details:	Tel: 01952 380110 Email: Paige.Starkey@telford.gov.uk
Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key Decision:	Not Key Decision
Forward Plan:	Not Applicable
Report considered by:	Business & Finance Scrutiny Committee – 24 June 2026

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

1.1 It is recommended that the Business & Finance Scrutiny Committee:

- a) Review and agree the work programme as outlined at Appendix A.

2.0 Purpose of Report

2.1 To set the work programme for the Business & Finance Scrutiny Committee as outlined at Appendix A.

3.0 Background

3.1 Scrutiny now operates a two-year work programme to allow for Committees to undertake in-depth work over a longer period of time.

3.2 Work programmes for Scrutiny committees are reviewed annually, with a period of consultation taking place in the months running up to a new municipal year. The public, key stakeholders, and Council officers are asked to put forward scrutiny suggestions for inclusion on the coming year's work programme.

3.3 Following the consultation period, a draft work programme is taken to Scrutiny Management Board for comment before being sent onto individual committees for final approval.

3.4 The Constitution states that Scrutiny committees are to set and undertake their own programme of work, meeting as required to deliver the work programme.

3.5 Work programmes can be amended throughout the year if the Committee or Scrutiny Assembly deem it necessary.

4.0 Summary of main proposals

4.1 For the Business & Finance Scrutiny Committee to review and approve the draft work programme as outlined at Appendix A.

5.0 Alternative Options

5.1 There are no alternative options arising from this report.

6.0 Key Risks

6.1 There are no key risks arising from this report.

7.0 Council Priorities

7.1 A community-focussed, innovative council providing efficient, effective and quality services.

8.0 Financial Implications

8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

9.0 Legal and HR Implications

9.1 In accordance with the Committee's Terms of Reference, the Committee will set its own work programme for the municipal year, will consider matters referred to it by the Scrutiny Management Board, and may make recommendations to Cabinet and Full Council following scrutiny.

10.0 Ward Implications

10.1 There are no ward implications arising from this report.

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

11.1 There are no health, social and economic implications arising from this report.

12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

12.1 There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

13.0 Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environmental Implications

13.1 There are no climate change, biodiversity and environmental implications arising from this report.

14.0 Background Papers

1 Council Constitution

15.0 Appendices

A Business & Finance Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2026/27

16.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Legal Services	27/05/2026	11/06/2026	ON
Finance	27/05/2026	01/06/2026	MLB

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Business & Finance Scrutiny Work Programme 2026/27

Issue / Topic	Brief Description	Directorate	Council Values/Priorities	Format	Meeting Comments
24 June 2026 – Committee Meeting					
Terms of Reference	For the Committee to agree the Terms of Reference for 2026/27.	Policy & Governance	A community-focussed, innovative council providing efficient, effective and quality services.	Committee Agenda Item	Constitutional Function.
	Outcomes:				
Work Programme	For the Committee to agree the proposed work programme for 2026/27.	Policy & Governance	A community-focussed, innovative council providing efficient, effective and quality services.	Committee Agenda Item	Draft work programme delegated to each scrutiny committee by SMB on 3 June 2026.
	Outcomes:				
Pride in Our High Street	For the Committee to review the impact of the Pride in Our High Street programme and how the scheme has supported local businesses/traders.	Prosperity & Investment	<p>Every child, young person and adult lives well in their community.</p> <p>Everyone benefits from a thriving economy.</p> <p>A community-focussed, innovative council providing efficient, effective and quality services.</p>	Committee Agenda Item	Carried over from 2025/26.
	Outcomes:				

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Issue / Topic	Brief Description	Directorate	Council Values/Priorities	Format	Meeting Comments
16 September 2026 – Committee Meeting					
Housing Investment Programme - Annual Update (Nuplace)	For the Committee to receive an annual update on the Council’s Housing Investment Programme, including key achievements over the last year and current progress of delivery of the programme.	Prosperity & Investment	Everyone benefits from a thriving economy. A community-focussed, innovative council providing efficient, effective and quality services.	Committee Agenda Item	Standing Item.
Outcomes:					



Issue / Topic	Brief Description	Directorate	Council Values/Priorities	Format	Meeting Comments
4 November 2026 – Committee Meeting					
Innovative Approaches to Alternative Accommodation Working Group Report	For the Committee to receive a report outlining the findings of the joint Working Group’s review into alternative accommodation to help meet the housing need across the Borough.	Policy & Governance Prosperity & Investment Housing, Commercial & Customer Services	Every child, young person and adult lives well in their community. Everyone benefits from a thriving economy. A community-focussed, innovative council providing efficient, effective and quality services.	Committee Agenda Item	Formal report outlining the recommendations from the working group.
Outcomes:					

Issue / Topic	Brief Description	Directorate	Council Values/Priorities	Format	Meeting Comments
6, 14, 19 January 2027 – Committee Meeting					
Medium Term Financial Strategy (Budget)	For the Committee to consult on the draft budget & policy framework proposals published by the Leader and any alternative proposals developed by opposition groups.	Finance, IDT & People	Every child, young person and adult lives well in their community. Everyone benefits from a thriving economy. A community-focussed, innovative council providing efficient, effective and quality services.	Committee Agenda Item	To fulfil the Committee’s role as a consultee on the Council’s draft budget and to consider any alternative proposals.
Outcomes:					



Issue / Topic	Brief Description	Directorate	Council Values/Priorities	Format	Meeting Comments
10 March 2027 – Committee Meeting					
To be determined.					
Outcomes:					



Issue / Topic	Brief Description	Directorate	Council Values/Priorities	Format	Meeting Comments
To be scheduled					
Financial Monitoring	For the Committee to receive a report on the Council's Financial Monitoring position for 2026/27.	Finance, IDT & People	<p>Every child, young person and adult lives well in their community.</p> <p>Everyone benefits from a thriving economy.</p> <p>A community-focussed, innovative council providing efficient, effective and quality services.</p>	Committee Agenda Item	Standing Item.
Outcomes:					
Leisure Services	For the Committee to receive an update on the Council's leisure service is extending its offer to meet residents needs, including through accessible provisions and targeted programmes to contribute to the Council's wider health, youth and prevention priorities.	Housing, Commercial & Customer Services	<p>Every child, young person and adult lives well in their community.</p> <p>A community-focussed, innovative council providing efficient, effective and quality services.</p>	Workshop	Carried over from 2025/26.
Outcomes:					

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Issue / Topic	Brief Description	Directorate	Council Values/Priorities	Format	Meeting Comments
To be scheduled					
Wellington Market Regeneration	For the Committee to review the Council's investment into the regeneration of Wellington Market focusing on the support provided to businesses/traders and the wider economic impact on the town.	Prosperity & Investment	A community-focussed, innovative council providing efficient, effective and quality services. All neighbourhoods are a great place to live. Everyone benefits from a thriving economy.	Site Visit	Carried forward from 2025/26.
	Outcomes:				

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Telford & Wrekin
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Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Cabinet

Thursday 11 June 2026

Pride in Our High Street Update

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Ollie Vickers – Cabinet Member: Jobs, Transport & Digital Connectivity
Lead Director:	James Dunn – Director: Prosperity & Investment
Service Area:	Prosperity & Investment
Report Author:	Daniel Turner – Invest Telford Team Leader
Officer Contact Details:	Tel: 01952 380127 Email: Daniel.turner1@telford.gov.uk
Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key Decision:	Not Key Decision
Forward Plan:	Not Applicable
Report considered by:	SMT – 12/05/2026 Business Briefing – 21/05/2026 Cabinet – 11/06/2026

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 1.1 Note the work of the Pride in Our High Streets (PIOHS) programme in supporting resilient local high streets, local businesses and communities of the borough, including:
 - **133** new businesses supported through grant programmes
 - Across the lifetime of the programme, **138** shopfront improvements delivered through façade grants and a further through the earlier façade improvement scheme
 - **116** eco and digital grants awarded

1.2 Note the continuation of the PIOHS programme. Development of the Elevate programme including potential new initiatives, such as: 'Spend Booster'.

2.0 Purpose of Report

2.1 To highlight the continued positive impact of the Pride In Our High Streets (PIOHS) programme to support the regeneration and revitalisation of the borough's high streets.

2.2 PIOHS has been a key pillar of Telford & Wrekin Council's business support package over the last ten years and continues to be incredibly popular in the borough towns in which it is delivered. High streets are a vital component of the boroughs economy and continue to be places where people shop, work, socialise and connect. This report outlines over ten years' worth of delivery of the programme, including case studies and testimonials. The report also outlines the sheer number of businesses supported, from retailers who were already based in our borough towns, to businesses who have grown, expanded and started up.



3.0 Background

3.1 Telford & Wrekin Council's PIOHS programme was launched in 2015. In that time, we have seen a reduction in empty units, driven more footfall to our borough towns and supported hundreds of businesses to access vital grant funding. The intervention through PIOHS has enabled business to access funding that has helped them to 'startup', grow on as well as become more sustainable. The

Pride in Our High Street Update

programme has started to be replicated across other Local Authority areas showing the Councils leadership in vital area of the economy.

- 3.2 Like many other unitary authority areas across the West Midlands and the UK, Telford's borough towns are threatened by changes to the high street. The 'up-front cost' of doing business, changing consumer habits and the rise of internet shopping have changed how residents interact with their local high streets. By investing in a tailored, local programme to support businesses on our high streets, Telford & Wrekin has seen results.
- 3.3 The programme supplements Telford & Wrekin Council's ambition as a business winning, business supporting local authority and is key for the continued economic growth of the borough.



The Ironbridge Book Shop - Video

4.0 Summary of main proposals

- 4.1 This report provides both a review of the PIOHS programme over a ten-year period, an update on the most recent delivery of phase four of the programme, reflections on the 2025 High Street Heroes competition, a spotlight on a number of PIOHS case studies with business owner testimonials and finally, a look ahead to the rollout of phase five.

4.2 A Decade of Supporting High Streets

4.3 Sustaining Growth & Investment

- 4.4 PIOHS has delivered sustained growth in new business formation, particularly in independent and micro-enterprises. We have overseen £725k worth of public investment directly supporting start-ups through the programme. This has subsequently leveraged approximately £2.46m in private sector investment, demonstrating strong confidence in the local economy and the creation of 440+ jobs, contributing to local economic resilience and jobs for local residents.

4.5 PIOHS Start Up Grant Enquiries 2025 to Date:

The PIOHS inbox has received 722 enquiries to date, encompassing general grant queries, market trial grants, Start Up eligibility enquiries, diversification requests,

shop frontage improvements, and wider requests for advice on available grant support.

4.6 Evolution of Business Support

4.7 As the nature of high street usage and consumer behaviour has evolved, so too has the PIOHS programme has adapted proactively. The early stages of the last decade of delivery of PIOHS were characterised by reactive support mechanisms.

4.8 More recently we have introduced, targeted programmes through the Revive & Thrive programme in 2019 (Start-Up Grants, Trial Grants, Eco, Digital).

4.9 The current approach (phase four) is tailored and strategic, with a focus on:

- Digital adoption and new digital technologies (digital grants)
- Environmental sustainability (eco grants)
- Business diversification and resilience (diversification grants)

4.10 Changing Business Landscape

4.11 Across the borough towns, we are seeing a shift away from reliance on national chains towards an appreciation for spending money with locally rooted, independent businesses. This intelligence comes directly from the shop owners we speak to whilst gathering intelligence and grant applications to support the retailing of locally sourced products.

4.12 There has clearly been a structural shift across the retail economy (online growth) and changes in consumer behaviour, but there have also been a number of strategic policy decisions and economic shocks which have increased pressure on small business owners, including economic uncertainty following Brexit, significant disruption during COVID-19 pandemic and rising operational costs impacting business sustainability, such as utility costs.

4.13 Despite this, the borough has demonstrated strong recovery and adaption with growth in:

- ‘experience-led’ businesses (hospitality, leisure, services) – The Orbit in Wellington being a prime example, as well as the Ironbridge Book shop - both of which have received grants through the PIOHS programme.
- Another example is the creative and artisan sectors – where PIOHS has supported Creative Training Spaces in Wellington, receiving a start-up grant and hosts the locally renowned Welly Arts.
- In Oakengates Business Retreat Boutique provides a place to connect, create and unwind in their café and business hub. The business was supported by the PIOHS programme including eco-grants.
- A recent grant award to Mytchel Ram Sports will provide a gym and sports therapy service in the heart of Dawley this summer.

4.14 Current Delivery Model

4.15 In terms of the current delivery model for PIOHS, at the launch of this phase of the programme, Telford & Wrekin Council committed to a total funding package of £1 million to support local high streets.

4.16 This package of support was split out into a number of grant programmes:

- Start-up grants of up to £10,000 to help businesses set up on the high street in empty retail units
- Start-up trial grants of up to £2,500 to help businesses test the waters on the high street first, often as pop up shops or a market stall
- Facade grants for shop units to help paint shop frontages, replace signage or improve shutters and make high street units look more attractive
- Eco grants to help businesses purchase energy saving products and become more sustainable
- Digital grants to help businesses become more effective and efficient in today's digital world.

4.17 Following the success of the above package of support, Diversification grants were launched in November 2025 – aimed at supporting businesses of all types in the Borough towns, the grant programme was designed to support businesses seeking to expand or evolve their existing operations, building on their current strengths – encouraging innovation and resilience by helping businesses explore new products, services, or markets.

4.18 An example of this has been Tails from the Gorge which have been awarded £1,500 to enable the business to buy a dog bath. This can be used by tourists before they take their dogs back to accommodation or as a booked service with the business owner who is also a registered veterinarian nurse. This supports the diversification of business which sells pet products.

4.19 Empty Units

4.20 Bucking national and regional trends, Telford continues to see a far more positive picture in terms of empty retail units across our borough towns. As the infographic below shows, between 2017 and 2026, borough town empty unit rates are consistently below that of the national average. Whilst the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was felt, 2021-2022 saw a return to a downward trend.

4.21 The team continue to work exclusively with businesses who increase footfall to the borough towns, prioritising unique, growing businesses who have a credible and realistic business plan and a sound financial footing. This ensures that PIOHS does not facilitate saturation of businesses in the same locality.

4.22 The sharpest fall in empty units has been seen in Wellington since 2021, whilst Madeley had limited empty units in 2026, with Oakengates also quickly approaching that number.

4.23 Empty Unit data collected March 2026

- 4.24 Based on the current national high street vacancy rate of 13.5%, the borough's 727 retail units could be expected to include around 98 empty premises. However, locally only 24 units were recorded as vacant in March 2026.
- 4.25 This represents approximately 74 fewer empty units than would be anticipated at the national average, demonstrating the significant positive impact of the *Pride in Our High Street* programme and associated business support interventions in maintaining occupancy and supporting town centre vitality.
- 4.26 This highlights the borough's high streets as significantly outperforming national trends. Since collating the borough's high street data, there have been some changes in Newport as 5 of the 8 empty units are currently under offer and 1 of the empty units in Dawley is now occupied by a business leaving only 2 empty units.

Table 1 – Empty unit data

Borough Town	Number of Retail Units	Number of Empty Units	<i>Equivalent at national vacancy rate of 13.5%</i>
Dawley	56	3	7
Ironbridge	66	2	9
Madeley	76	0	10
Newport	190	8	25
Oakengates	123	1	16
Wellington	216	10	28
Total Units	727	24	98

4.27 Cross-council collaboration

- 4.28 A wide range of teams across the Council support, this includes:
- Working closely with Estates & Investment on investment in Wellington
 - Joint working with relevant partners and council colleagues on the regeneration of Oakengates
 - Deploying the team to Donnington to work with local retailers on modern, improved shop facades
 - Working with colleagues in our Visit Telford team, supporting businesses who rely heavily on tourism and visitors to the borough
 - Working with colleagues in our in house Events team to ensure that local businesses are aware of upcoming, council-led initiatives and how these events can help to drive footfall locally

- Working with the Enforcement Team and Heritage Officer to ensure our High Streets are following the legal guidance with signage and relevant planning consents
- Working with the World Heritage Site Coordinator on the management plan and heritage issues
- The team work closely with Enforcement colleagues to identify and troubleshoot issues and challenges arising on our high streets across Planning and Environmental Health teams
- Taking on board feedback and intelligence from residents and retailers, the council has also been proactive with the provision of free parking across borough towns and prime retail areas

4.29 High Street Heroes 2025

- 4.30 On Small Business Saturday (an annual national event) we announce our High Street Heroes, this has been running since 2021. To date we have awarded over 150 High Street Hero Awards. The awards have been central to raising the profile of local businesses and the PIOHS programme. Voted by the public, the awards continue to grow in popularity and are a way for businesses to showcase what they do, increase PR about their offer and most importantly, raise the profile of shopping, eating, drinking and visiting local.
- 4.31 A total of 29 High Street Heroes were crowned in towns across the Borough in 2025 – nominated by local residents, members of the public and businesses who use their services and feel they make a valuable contribution to the local community.
- 4.32 Councillors presented business winners with trophies and certificates in six Borough towns including Dawley, Ironbridge, Madeley, Newport, Oakengates and Wellington in the run up to Small Business Saturday on Saturday 6 December.
- 4.33 Nominations for the latest round of High Street Heroes opened in September 2025 and over 1500 nominations were received. High Street Heroes range from hair salons, cafes and butchers to pubs, dance companies and clothes shops.
- 4.34 This year there was also a '*Not on the high street*' award which was won by The Park in Wellington which isn't on a Borough town high street but received some of the highest votes for Wellington.

4.35 The 2025 High Street Heroes winners are as follows:

Dawley: Mo's Barbers, Elephant & Castle, Amanda's Ow Bist'Ro, Chasni

Ironbridge: Kiddos Kingdom, Ironbridge Interiors, Crust & Crumbs, Darbys, Moonshine & Fuggles

Madeley: The Indian Melting Pot, Sweet Little Things, Foresters Arms, Anstice Pharmacy, Yutopia Spa

Pride in Our High Street Update

Newport: The Travel Store, The Stag & Scotch Micropub, Immi's Cakes & Bakes, Pretty Puds

Oakengates: Bangla Pride, Shelly's Creations, Station Hotel, Ste's Cutz, Crown Inn

Wellington: Powerpoint Stores, Boardroom Gaming Cafe, Park Street Kitchen, Zoe Trends, Odd Pals, The Park (not on the high street).



4.36 Case Study One – Book Nook, Ironbridge

4.37 Book Nook opened its doors at 4, The Square after receiving a start-up grant through Telford & Wrekin Council's Pride in Our High Street programme.

4.38 Owner Meg Prince already runs The Ironbridge Bookshop next door to the unit and has seized the opportunity to grow her business offer.

4.39 Meg researched into what customers want and converted Book Nook into a dedicated space for events such as author days, poetry sessions and children's reading times. Experiences also include hobby sessions, craft workshops, table top gaming (which is very popular and not offered locally), board game events, literacy sessions and reading workshops.

4.40 The second-hand book market is expected to continue to grow and Megan is hoping to attract people from far and wide and drive more footfall to Ironbridge.



4.41 Case Study Two – Wrekin Star Judo, Wellington

4.42 Telford’s only judo club, Wrekin Star Judo Club, had been operating from the upper floors in Wellington Market but moved to larger premises at 1 Church Street in the town after receiving a business start-up grant.

4.43 The larger unit enabled the judo club to host regional and national events through the British Judo Association – raising the profile of Wellington and bringing new footfall to the high street. In addition, the club has also secured £2,000 from Wellington ward members to provide some free taster sessions and community engagement activities.

4.44 Wrekin Star Judo, formed 60 years ago, has a proven track record and in 2024 the club became a not-for profit Community Interest Company (CIC) which helped to broaden its offering, especially in the community. The club hosts a variety of sessions to suit all abilities from age six and above in a fun, inclusive and welcoming environment and this new facility also allows it to offer fitness training and health and wellbeing education.

4.45 The business start-up grant has helped Wrekin Judo Club to set up in the new Church Street premises – funding the cost of new changing rooms, disabled toilet facilities, safety flooring, design and survey costs, tables and chairs and office furniture.

4.46 Wrekin Star Judo Coaches David Thomas and Gareth Mapp are really excited about the move.

4.47 Gareth said: *"We are delighted that, after over 60 years, Wrekin Star has a permanent home in Wellington, a first for local judo. As a volunteer run, social enterprise, we are very grateful for the support that has made this possible, from all of our members and from Telford & Wrekin Council."*

Pride in Our High Street Update

"We have a very diverse membership and look forward to welcoming more of the community into the Olympic sport of judo, for fitness or fun, whatever their experience, age, background or abilities."

- 4.48 Wrekin Star Judo has also been supported by Councillor Paul Davis and Councillor Graham Cook through their Councillors' Pride Fund.



4.49 Case Study Three – Sweet Little Things, Madeley

- 4.50 Sweet Little Things Bakery & Tea Room is the first business of its kind to open on the high street in Madeley – offering homemade cakes, a homely place to sit and eat and takeaway drinks and lunches. The business, which has moved into a unit at Madeley Malls, Russell Square, is also a permanent base where bespoke celebration cakes can be ordered. Owner Leanne Humphries, who has a strong background in the hospitality industry, is well known in Madeley after selling homemade celebration cakes at Madeley Market since 2022.
- 4.51 Sweet Little Things Bakery & Tea Room offers a unique menu, focusing on cake sales to begin but will develop to offer afternoon teas, light lunches and take away breakfast menus - with a constant changing selection of foods depending on the seasons. A fabulous selection of coffees, hot chocolates and mega milk shakes, afternoon treat deals, vegan and gluten free menus will also be available.
- 4.52 Parents and baby sessions, where new mums can meet, will be hosted at the tearooms in the future and free Wi-Fi is available for people wanting to work away from their desks or a change from their home work environment.
- 4.53 Pop up events including school holiday activities, 'knit and natter' evenings and wreath making workshops will also be offered from the unit. Sweet Little Things Bakery & Tea Room is open on Tuesdays to Saturdays (9am-4.30pm) initially with extra opening hours added for pop up events.

4.54 Leanne said:

“I’d outgrown the space at the market stall and the tea rooms will allow me to grow the business – catering for existing customers but welcoming new ones as well. I want Sweet Little Things Bakery & Tea Room to become the place to go – whether you’re a parent waiting to pick up a child from a dance class, elderly or lonely and just want a chat, or a home worker who wants a nice space to have a meeting with Wi-Fi. The tea room will be inviting and welcoming to all and I’m really grateful for the support I’ve received from the Council’s Pride in Our High Street programme to make this move possible - giving me the chance to have a permanent base in Madeley.”



4.55 Case Study Four – Baked Bean, Ironbridge

4.56 Owners Adam Purnell, otherwise known as the Shropshire Lad, and Tess Sharp took on new venture, Baked Bean, alongside Embers Cafe which they also set up in the town.

4.57 The business sells a wide variety of locally produced artisan baked goods such as pastries and cakes, cold sandwiches and fairtrade coffees and drinks in a welcoming setting located on the ground floor of 1 Waterloo Street in Ironbridge.

4.58 Locally sourced ingredients which showcase regional producers and support the community are used and the business has a strong partnership with Hundred House Coffee - a respected local roastery known for high-quality, fairtrade beans.

4.59 The takeaway also features a shop section selling packaged local jams, chutneys, coffee beans and Baked Bean merchandise such as mugs and tote bags.

4.60 Adam said: *“Building on the success of Embers Cafe, we want to create a welcoming, modern take-away shop in the heart of Ironbridge that celebrates local craftsmanship in baking, ethical coffee, as well as providing exceptional customer experience.”*

Pride in Our High Street Update

“Baked Bean will combine the warmth of a traditional bakery with the style and quality of a boutique coffee house and we aim to attract both local residents and tourists visiting Ironbridge — a UNESCO World Heritage Site known for its charm.”

“We already have a thriving business, Embers, and a following of loyal customers. At Baked Bean all of the produce will be made locally and our Head Baker has a first-class degree in pastry and bread making.”

“This will ensure that our products set us apart from what is already on offer in Ironbridge. Our coffee is all fairtrade and supplied by local business – Hundred House, which will elevate our offering.”

- 4.61 The Pride in Our High Street start-up grant has helped Adam and Tess to fund the set-up of the new cafe space and shop, helped with painting and signage and supported the cost of a new coffee machine and till system which needed plumbing and electrics fittings.



4.62 Case Study 5 – Society Market – Newport

- 4.63 Society Market, which opened in 2021 following an investment to transform the former market hall into a sports bar and gastro pub, which has been trading successfully for over five years demonstrating the long-term impact of the PIOHS start-up grant.



4.64 Case Study 6 – Proactive Personnel – Oakengates

4.65 A grant was awarded to support the relocation of Proactive Personnel from Limes Walk, where Towns Fund regeneration works were taking place, to 34 Market Street; the business is an established recruitment agency, operating since 1999 with a network of 12 branches nationwide, delivering employment and workforce solutions.



4.66 Case Study 7 – Mytchel Ram Sports - Dawley

4.67 The Council has awarded a Pride in Our High Street start-up grant to support the opening of Mytchel Ram Strength and Performance on Dawley High Street. The grant has contributed towards essential equipment, security infrastructure, and fit-out works, enabling the business to bring a large vacant unit back into active use and begin trading without delay.

4.68 This investment supports the expansion of an established and profitable local health and wellbeing business, which will relocate and open to the public this summer following a phased development period. The business model is underpinned by an existing client base and diversified income streams, ensuring early trading stability while building towards a full membership gym offer.

Pride in Our High Street Update

4.69 The grant is expected to deliver positive impacts for Dawley High Street by increasing footfall, supporting local instructors and complementary services, and contributing to the longer-term vitality and resilience of the town centre.

4.70 National Recognition - Case Study in Oakengates

4.71 Oakengates provides a strong example of how the Council's *Pride in Our High Street* programme has achieved national recognition over the past decade. The town centre has been acknowledged for its consistent focus on creating a welcoming, well-maintained and community-led environment that actively supports its independent business base.

4.72 Following a recent visit, Andrew Goodacre of the British Independent Retailers Association highlighted the impact of this work, noting:

4.73 "As soon as I arrived I could see that Oakengates was cared for and very community orientated. Bunting, great flowers, clean streets all provided at no extra cost to the high street businesses. On top of that there is free parking, which is so rare these days, but very welcome. Great to see a town centre so focused on supporting its independent retailers."

4.74 This external endorsement reflects the success of coordinated investment and partnership working in Oakengates. It demonstrates how relatively small-scale but consistent improvements—such as high-quality public realm maintenance, seasonal enhancements and business-friendly initiatives—can significantly enhance perception, footfall and local pride. Oakengates continues to serve as a model for how the programme delivers tangible outcomes for residents, businesses and visitors, contributing to the borough's wider reputation for supporting thriving and resilient high streets.

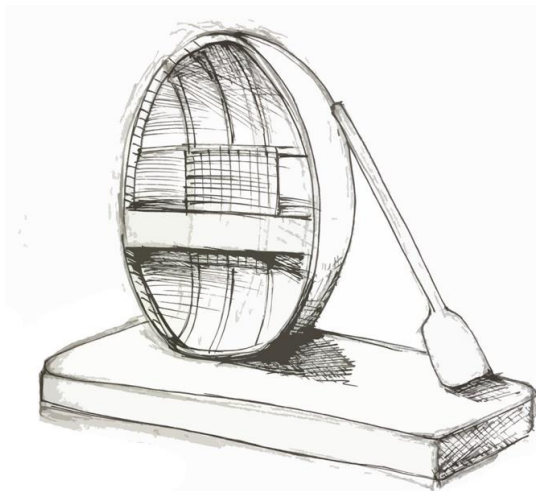
4.75 The *Pride in Our High Street* programme also supported a High Street Celebrations event on 23 May 2026, helping to sustain footfall and community engagement during ongoing regeneration works, with funding provided through the Morris Property Social Fund.



4.76 PIOHS Phase 5

- 4.77 The priority for 2026 onwards is to continue to drive footfall to the high street to boost local spend in all borough towns. A programme of high-street celebration events will be delivered in Oakengates, including a children's summer trail in August. These events are designed to increase footfall, support local businesses, and encourage community engagement through family-friendly activities, street entertainment, and interactive trails that promote greater use of the high street. This is of particular importance in Oakengates during the regeneration works. Working with the Estates & Investment it has been agreed to use the £10k Social Fund from Morris Property to support these High Street Celebration Events.
- 4.78 The proposed Elevate Programme represents the next phase of the Council's long-term commitment to high street regeneration, building on the success of previous Pride in Our High Street programmes to deliver a more ambitious, targeted and outcomes-focused approach from 2026 onwards and the conclusion of the current phase.
- 4.79 The programme is being developed in response to ongoing structural challenges facing our high streets, including changing consumer behaviour, rising costs, and vacancy rates, and sets out a comprehensive package of interventions to boost spend, animate town centres, unlock underused space, and support business growth.
- 4.80 The Elevate Programme will bring together a coordinated suite of initiatives, including business grants, a High Street Spend Booster to drive immediate economic activity, an Activation Fund to support collaborative events and a Test and Scale Grant to support business expansion and job creation.
- 4.81 Coracle Trail Project**
- 4.82 The Coracle Trail is a flagship place-making initiative led through Pride in Our High Street and the Visitor Economy Team, designed to transform the Ironbridge Gorge into a vibrant, interactive cultural destination. The project will deliver a series of 11 semi-permanent, high-quality coracle sculptures positioned across key locations, encouraging residents and visitors to explore the wider area, increase dwell time, and support local retail and hospitality businesses. Rooted in the area's rich heritage, the trail will celebrate Ironbridge's identity while using public art and storytelling to animate the high street and surrounding communities.
- 4.83 The trail will launch in Spring 2027 as part of the 40th anniversary of Ironbridge Gorge's designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, forming a key element of the borough's wider programme of cultural and visitor economy activity. It also supports the anticipated increase in visitor numbers as a result of the National Trust assuming control of the Ironbridge Museum sites providing an opportunity to improve walking opportunities across the wider gorge area.
- 4.84 Delivered in partnership with local artists, schools, and organisations including the Ironbridge Coracle Trust, the project will adopt a strong community-led approach, with schools contributing design concepts that are brought to life through professionally commissioned artworks, ensuring local ownership and pride in the installations.

- 4.85 The Coracle Trail has been designed to be fully accessible and inclusive, offering a free, family-friendly outdoor experience that can be enjoyed by residents and visitors of all ages and abilities. Set within the stunning landscape of the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site, the trail will encourage gentle exploration through well-connected, publicly accessible locations, combining art, heritage, and interactive elements to create an engaging and enjoyable activity. By providing an accessible outdoor attraction that promotes wellbeing, discovery, and time spent in nature, the trail will offer a unique opportunity for communities to come together and experience the area in an inclusive and welcoming way.
- 4.86 To further mark this significant milestone, a special '40th Anniversary Coracle' will be commissioned and unveiled as part of the celebrations, providing a landmark focal point for the trail and a high-profile moment within the commemorative programme. Collectively, the Coracle Trail is expected to drive increased footfall, strengthen the visitor economy, and create a lasting cultural legacy that supports ongoing regeneration and the continued vitality of the borough's high streets.



5.0 Alternative Options

- 5.1 In the absence of the PIOHS programme the boroughs high streets would have experienced continued economic decline compounded by the changes in retail habits and the impact of the pandemic which has accelerated the move to online activity. The likely alternative to council intervention through PIOHS would have been:
- Increased levels of empty shop units
 - An increase in uses such as hot food takeaways, vape shops and betting shops
 - Increased ASB issues due to declining footfall in centres
 - Declining quality of infrastructure and public realm
 - Lack of investment in buildings by private landlords and tenants
 - Decrease in community cohesion due to reduced social connectivity

6.0 Key Risks

- 6.1 The key risks to the programme include:
- Potential for business failures – this has been very low to date.
 - Footfall continues to decline – evidence shows that footfall and economic activity is increasing
 - Future economic shocks (recessions / further pandemics) impacting high streets necessitating large scale intervention – the programme has helped demonstrate the resilience of the high street and residents desire to have good quality locations to meet and socialise that they can be proud of.

7.0 Council Priorities

- 7.1 PIOHS contributes toward the following 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

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 Capital funding for Phase 4 of PIOHS includes a £1m which was made available from within the approved Capital programme. Finance will support allocations of this budget through the Financial Monitoring process to ensure expenditure is of a capital nature.

9.0 Legal and HR Implications

- 9.1 The UK subsidy control regime enables UK public authorities, including local authorities, to give subsidies that are tailored to their local needs, and that drive economic growth. This will need to be considered when providing support which may give a financial advantage. Legal advice will be provided as and when requested in this regard and Legal Services have developed a standard form of grant agreement that will be used in each award of funding.
- 9.2 Any decision made by the Authority can be subject to challenge in respect of its reasonableness or lawfulness. Therefore, a robust and transparent assessment procedure is required so as to avoid challenge of either the process followed or recommendations made by Officers and the Decision Makers.

10.0 Ward Implications

- 10.1 The PIOHS programme impacts wards borough wide as residents can apply for grants for works in borough towns but may live in adjoining wards.

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

- 11.1 The programme has helped to create vibrant and economically active high streets. This has helped to:

- Improve health outcomes by ensuring that high streets remain centres for shopping and commercial activity as oppose to areas seeing an increase in unhealthy uses such as hot food takeaways, vape shops and betting shops.
- Better quality high streets help create places that people wish to visit, especially more vulnerable residents, leading to opportunities to socialise, create communities, breakdown barriers and reduce isolation and loneliness.
- The programme has helped to create over 440 new jobs, these are residents that may have otherwise been out of work and economically inactive. New, local employment opportunities help to raise aspirations and provide people an opportunity to improve their economic wellbeing.

12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

12.1 The programme has helped create safer, stronger communities and has helped improve high streets that serve a range of communities across the borough.

13.0 Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environmental Implications

13.1 The programme has helped invest in new businesses that occupy premises that would have otherwise been vacant. This helps bring properties back into economic use. Further investment in properties by landlords and business owners help to improve the energy efficiency of buildings supported by our Eco Grants.

14.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Director	07/05/2026	07/05/2026	JD
Legal	07/05/2026	07/05/2026	SH
Finance	07/05/2026	07/05/2026	DR