Telford & Wrekin Co-operative Council

Protect, care and invest to create a better borough

COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday 1 October 2026 at 6.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Third Floor, Southwater One, Telford, TF3 4JG

Present: Councillors E Davies (Chair), E Aston (Vice-Chair), F Doran, G Luter, P J Scott and G Thomas

Also Present: A Bishup (Trading Standards & Licensing Group Manager), J Cornwell (Housing Strategy and Commissioning Programme Manager), L Gordon (Mayor and Member Support Officer) A Hickman (Democracy Officer), K Kynaston (Director – Housing, Commercial & Customer Services), A Singh (Licensing & Night-Time Economy Manager) and D Thomas-White (Interim Head of Service Registrars, Legal and Public Protection)

Apologies: Councillor S Handley

COMSC7 Declarations of Interest

None.

COMSC8 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 July 2026 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

COMSC9 Night-Time Economy Update

The Trading Standards & Licensing Group Manager presented an update report on the Council's approach to supporting safety within Night-Time Economy across the Borough. The presentation outlined the role of Night-Time Economy Officers within the Licensing Team, including the enforcement of licensing and related legislation, responding to complaints, and undertaking proactive project work. Members noted the importance of partnership working with organisations including West Mercia Police, HMRC, Immigration Enforcement and other Council services to strengthen both prevention and enforcement activity.

Members heard details of a range of proactive projects undertaken during the year. This included visits to more than 80 premises during the World Cup, undertaken jointly with the Police, to provide licensing advice and promote

awareness of drug and alcohol support services, the "Ask for Angela" initiative, hate crime and domestic abuse support.

The Committee also noted activity undertaken as part of the 16 Days of Action campaign to end Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), which included providing licensed venues with guidance on preventing drink-spiking, reviewing policies and procedures, and distributing bottle caps and glass covers. Compliance checks had also been carried out covering Challenge 25 procedures, door supervision arrangements, staff training, drug policies and CCTV provision.

The Committee noted that the Night-Time Economy Team responded to complaints from residents regarding both licensed and unlicensed premises and that this work was carried out across the Borough and across all sectors operating within the night-time economy.

Officers informed the Committee that measures were introduced to improve the safety of taxi and private hire vehicle services. Through funding provided by the Community Safety Partnership, drivers licensed by Telford & Wrekin Council were offered professionally fitted CCTV systems free of charge. At the time of the presentation, 48 vehicles had these units installed, providing additional protection for both passengers and drivers. The Community Safety Partnership also provided funding for a Taxi Marshal service, which was delivered to support the safety and wellbeing of the public. The service operated primarily within Telford Town Centre, with additional provision in Newport during key student events.

The Committee was informed that officers worked closely with the police to undertake vehicle compliance checks. Collaboration also took place with Wolverhampton officers as not all vehicles operating within the borough were licensed by Telford & Wrekin Council. Through this partnership, officers from both Wolverhampton and Telford & Wrekin were able to inspect and, where necessary, suspend vehicles licensed by the other authority. It was reported that 18 breaches had been identified by Wolverhampton Officers.

Following questioning on licenced premises visits to promote public safety awareness, the Licencing and Night-Time Economy Manager confirmed that the programme was on-going, and audits were carried out at the venues to ensure policies and procedures were followed. Visits also involved promoting drug and alcohol support services, querying their awareness of the Ask for Angela initiative and providing posters if necessary and distribute bottle caps and glass covers.

Members also queried the uptake of the free professionally fitted CCTV systems available to licensed taxi drivers. The Licensing and Night-Time Economy Manager informed Committee that some drivers were reluctant to

install CCTV due to concerns about recording every journey. However, it was confirmed that recorded footage would only be accessed by the licensing authority where a complaint or incident had been reported and an investigation was required and would not be used for personal journeys driver may undertake in their cars.

The Committee emphasised the importance of promoting awareness of spiking prevention initiatives, as well as the drug and alcohol support services available within the borough. Members also requested that further efforts were made to raise public awareness of the Taxi Marshal service and CCTV installed in licenced taxis.

Following questions regarding the availability of data on reported spiking incidents and drink-spiking cases, as well as the number of Wolverhampton-licensed taxis assessed by Telford & Wrekin Council, the Trading Standards and Licensing Group Manager confirmed that these enquiries would be investigated and that a response would be provided to members via email.

The update was noted.

COMSC10 Innovative Approaches to Alternative Accommodation Working Group Report

The Democracy Officer presented the report outlining the work that was undertaken by the Innovative Approaches to Alternative Accommodation Joint Working Group.

Members were reminded that the Joint Business & Finance and Communities Scrutiny Committee Working Group had been established following agreement at a Committee meeting in March 2026. The cross-party Working Group held four meetings on 27 April, 16 June, 10 September and 22 September 2026. It was noted that the final report would be presented to Cabinet on 15 October 2026.

The Committee heard that the purpose of the Working Group had been to examine innovative and alternative forms of accommodation, including the repurposing of existing structures, modular and micro-unit developments, and other creative housing solutions that could help address housing need within the Borough. The Democracy Officer highlighted the increasing housing pressures within Telford and Wrekin, particularly the demand for affordable housing and accommodation suitable for single-person occupancy.

The Committee noted that at its meeting on 27 April 2026, the Working Group had considered various forms of innovative accommodation and the potential benefits associated with different delivery models.

At the meeting held on 16 June 2026, the Working Group had received evidence from a representative of Bristol City Council, who outlined the authority's approach to delivering alternative forms of accommodation and shared lessons learned from their experience.

Members were advised that, on 10 September 2026, the Working Group had examined a range of development options for Council-owned sites, including the GAP housing model and mixed-use development approaches.

The Committee further noted that, on 22 September 2026, the Working Group had considered the potential for a pilot scheme with Housing Plus Group (HPG) to assess the viability of delivering housing on garage sites and explore how innovative approaches could support development on constrained land.

Members expressed concerns regarding the impact of the forthcoming local elections on the progression and delivery of any proposals. Questions were also raised regarding the future direction of the project and the potential sources of funding required to support the recommendations. In response, the Director: Housing, Commercial and Customer Servies acknowledged the challenges associated with developing proposals within the context of the electoral cycle. However, it was emphasised that the recommendations had been informed by extensive evidence gathering and analysis of housing need and demand across the borough. It was noted that the findings clearly demonstrated a requirement for additional accommodation, and that the recommendations sought to ensure that best mix and design was delivered to meet identified needs.

The Director: Housing, Commercial and Customer Servies added that consideration would be given to financial pressures associated with homelessness. It was suggested that the Pride in Place programme be considered as a potential source of funding to support any future development proposals. Members were advised that any decisions relating to financial contributions would be subject to consideration through a decision-making board and would be progressed as a priority.

Members reflected positively on the work of the Working Group and the constructive discussions that had taken place throughout the review. It was noted that the Group had reached a stage where tangible and evidence-based recommendations could be put forward.

Members highlighted that the review had identified a clear need for a greater supply of accommodation for single-person households, as well as larger five-bedroom family homes. It was acknowledged that financial viability would be a key consideration in progressing any future developments, particularly in light of rising construction and material costs. Members added that opportunities existed across the borough, including the redevelopment of a number of

underutilised and dilapidated garage sites. Members concluded that participation in the review had been a positive experience and welcomed the opportunity to contribute to the development of recommendations aimed at addressing local housing needs.

RESOLVED - that the report and recommendations of the Innovative Approaches to Alternative Accommodation Working Group be endorsed and submitted to Cabinet for consideration.

COMSC11 Work Programme Review

The Interim Head of Service Registrars, Legal and Public Protection updated the Committee on the remaining items on the Work Programme. It was confirmed that Tobacco & Vape Enforcement and Councillors' Pride Funds items were scheduled to be considered at the forthcoming Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting scheduled on 11 February 2026.

The Committee was also reminded that new committee items were yet to be scheduled including the Crisis Resilience Fund/Cost of Living Support and VCSE Sector Support. Members noted that the Social Value in Contracts item would take place in the form of a workshop and the Digitisation of Registration Services would be progressed through a Task and Finish Group. It was added that a Pothole Repair Site Visit was in the process of being arranged.

Members suggested that a Wildfire Strategy be considered as a future agenda item and included within the Committee's work programme for further discussion.

COMSC12 Chair's Update

None.

The meeting ended at 6.31 pm

Chairman: .....

Date: Thursday 11 February 2027