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Telford & Wrekin Co-operative Council

Protect, care and invest to create a better borough

Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Business and Finance Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 5 November 2025

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), N Page (Vice-Chair), J Kaur, L Lewis, G Luter, S Syrda and R Tyrrell**

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BUSINESS AND FINANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Business and Finance Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday 17 September 2025 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), G Luter, S Syrda and R Tyrrell.
In Attendance:	M Brockway (Director: Finance, People & IDT), R Phillips (Registrars, Public Protection, Legal & Democracy Service Delivery Manager) and P Starkey (Senior Democracy Officer (Scrutiny)).
Apologies for Absence:	Councillors J Kaur and L Lewis.

BFSC7 Declarations of Interest

None.

BFSC8 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

BFSC9 Financial Monitoring 2025/26

The Director: Finance, People & IDT presented a report to the Committee which outlined the Council's financial position for the 2025/26 financial year, outlining the Council's early year budget position and associated pressures.

It was reported that the Council was on track to remain within budget by year-end without needing to draw on the Budget Strategy or General Fund reserves. Adult Social Care (ASC) remained the most significant financial pressure, with a projected overspend of £45.6m due to sustained demand, an increase in complexity of care needs, and extended care durations. The overall pressure for the Council was £4.9m and had been managed through the use of contingencies, including £2m allocated specifically for ASC, £0.75m one off contingency for general pressures and £2.1m of the general contingency of £3.95m used, leaving £1.8m of the general contingency remaining available for other pressures should they arise before year end.

Members heard that the Council's preventative approach in social care, which focused on early intervention and promoting independence, had delivered both financial and social benefits. Other pressures included a £0.268m liability from historic teacher pensions and a £4.66m deficit carried forward as part of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), which was being managed under a statutory override extended to March 2028.

On a Council-wide level, financial gains of £0.989m had been realised through Section 31 grant receipts under the business rates retention scheme and the release of provisions for savings shortfalls. The Capital Programme stood at £138m, with a £135m forecasted spend and some rephasing expected into 2026/27. Income collection rates for Council Tax, NNDR, and Sales Ledger were below target, though recovery efforts were ongoing.

Members discussed the implications of the Fair Funding Review, which was expected to introduce a multi-year settlement framework and reassess local needs and resources. The Director: Finance, People & IDT explained that while exact figures would not be known until December 2025, the consultation process focused on relative needs and deprivation, and early indications had suggested that the Council could receive increased funding as a result although the scale of any gain remained uncertain.

In response to questions raised about usage of contingency funds in relation to the overspend in ASC, the Director: Finance, People & IDT advised that if pressures in the service continued beyond the allocated contingencies, the Council had a budget strategy reserve of £2.174m which it would be able to draw upon if required. Additionally, the Council had a strong track record of identifying in-year savings and bringing forward planned savings to restore balance to the budget.

In response to a question asked in relation to the Council's historical use of contingencies and reserves, the Director: Finance, People & IDT explained that while contingencies were reviewed and used as needed each financial year. In instances where the contingency had been fully used, the Council was able to identify in year savings to bring the budget back into balance. Members heard that the Council's budget strategy reserve had remained in tact for several years, reflecting a strong financial monitoring position.

In response to a question raised about how the Council accounted for population growth and demographic changes, the Director: Finance, People & IDT explained that the Council's Insight Team had provided detailed population data broken down into age group to inform future planning including ASC purchasing forecasts. While the Council can model expected changes based on population trends and current demand, it was noted that unanticipated increases in demand could still occur such as residents staying in care for prolonged periods resulting in budget pressures that could be difficult to predict.

In response to a question asked in relation to underspend and rephasing of the Capital Programme into 2026/27 and the effect on future budgets and income targets, the Director: Finance, People & IDT advised that while there had previously been income pressures linked to the Council's property investment portfolio, these had been offset by benefits in treasury management. Members heard that in the current financial year and at the time of the meeting there were no reported variations in either area.

In response to a question raised about in year financial performance monitoring, the Director: Finance, People & IDT explained that budgets were devolved to individual budget holders who had the responsibility for single or multiple cost centres. The Finance Team would continue to meet regularly with budget holders and Service Delivery Managers (SDMs) to review financial monitoring forecasts, which would then be consolidated into Directorate-level reports and escalated to the Senior Management Team (SMT), Business Briefing and Cabinet. Any emerging pressures would be addresses collaboratively between service areas before further action was taken. In terms of identifying overspend, it was highlighted that for ASC financial data was available within two weeks of month-end, supported by systems and care plan data, enabling a quick turnaround and early intervention.

The Committee thanked the Director: Finance, People & IDT for the detailed report and commended the Finance Team for their strong financial planning and monitoring processes, noting that the Council's approach had ensured stability despite national challenges and sector-wide pressures.

BFSC10 <u>Work Programme Review</u>

The Service Delivery Manager: Registrars, Public Protection, Legal & Democracy presented the updated work programme to the Committee. Members noted that the next scheduled item was an update on the Growth Fund in November and that, in the new year, the Committee would take on its responsibility for scrutinising the Council's budget, with three standard meetings planned for January.

BFSC11 <u>Chair's Update</u>

None.

The meeting ended at 6.24 pm

Chairman: ....

Date: Wednesday 5 November 2025

Telford & Wrekin Co-operative Council

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Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Business & Finance Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 5 November 2025

Update on Growth Fund Investment into Industrial Premises

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Ollie Vickers - Cabinet Member: The Economy & Transport
Lead Director:	James Dunn - Director: Prosperity & Investment
Service Area:	Prosperity & Investment
Report Author:	Dawn Toy - Regeneration & Investment Service Delivery Manager
Officer Contact Details:	**Tel:** 01952 384333 **Email:** dawn.toy@telford.gov.uk
Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key Decision:	Not Key Decision
Forward Plan:	Not Applicable
Report considered by:	Business & Finance Scrutiny – 5 November 2025

1.0 Recommendations for noting:

1.1 The outcomes of Growth Fund investments as set out in this report.

2.0 Purpose of Report

2.1 To update the committee on the Council's Growth Fund investments in new industrial premises, which continue to generate higher-skilled local employment, strengthen and expand the local supply chain, and support the Council's strategic commitment to Protect, Care, and Invest in building a better Borough.

3.0 Background

3.1 The Council's Growth Fund allows the Council to support economic growth. Through the fund the Council offers a full turnkey solution to support inward investment, generating jobs and positively contributing to the local economy.

3.2 The Fund has supported a range of commercial developments such as Rosewood Pet Products and Eden Horticulture Ltd at Hortonwood West and the expansion of

TAFE at Ni.Park. Growth Fund Investments at Ni.Park have also supported the growth of companies such as HCI Systems and ITConsec Ltd and in response to the lack of supply, delivered a range of units to support small businesses at Leasows Court, Telford. The newest developments at Orchard Business Park and Ni.Park have continued to respond to the gap in provision, delivering a range of smaller, high spec premises to the market.

3.3 To date the Growth Fund (a combination of prudential borrowing and external Homes England Profit share), has invested £30.5m (£24.7m prudential borrowing and £5.8m HE profit share) to deliver new industrial premises in the borough. Cumulatively, this £30.5m investment committed to date through the Growth Fund is estimated to deliver an ongoing gross return on prudential borrowing of 7.76%. The additional rental income as well as the additional business rates of approximately £0.4m is being invested directly into delivering front line services across all the Borough's communities including older people being supported in residential care or alternatively older people being supported with domiciliary care to remain in their own homes.

3.4 In addition to the revenue return the investments have also seen capital growth of £6.41m above the Councils investment.

4.0 Summary of main proposals

4.1 First launched in November 2015, the Growth Fund enables the Council to capitalise on investment demand enabling the Council to acquire land and property, build premises, invest in strategic infrastructure, and strengthen and diversify the Council's Property Investment Portfolio. The Growth Fund enables the Council's Estates and Investments team to react to secure inward investment opportunities and address gaps in the market. It allows the Council to react to new potential investments that assist in growth of the Borough and support businesses and jobs. This unique Council approach and willingness to invest in acquiring land, property or infrastructure is enhanced by our ability to design, build, deliver and provide ongoing building management and business support.

4.2 In 10 years over £30.5m has been committed into a range of industrial investments which are anticipated to help deliver approximately 415 new and safeguarded jobs. These investments are forecast to generate an average ongoing gross return on prudential investment, of 7.76%, (3.08% net of borrowing costs, at an assumed all in rate of new borrowing of 4.68%), excluding additional business rates income which will be generated.

4.3 The Council's ability to provide land, build and lease properties and offer a full turnkey solution funded through its Growth Fund alongside the Council's Invest Telford business pledge and the Telford Land Deal continues to drive a high number of investment enquiries. The Borough continues to attract significant interest from all sectors.

4.4 The Council has continued its investment into smaller business units to support business start-ups and provide grow on space. A development of 24 units at Hortonwood, known as Orchard Business Park, is the latest high-quality estate.

The units range from 136sqm (1463sq ft) to 976sqm (10,502sqft) and have the benefit of solar panels and EV charging points.

Ni.Park also continues to thrive with the large majority of the 24 units let to businesses linked to the Agri industry. With investment through the Land Deal and Marches LEP funding, the completed infrastructure unlocked land with the ability to provide circa 38,000sqm (409,000sqft) of new employment floor space providing opportunities for companies leading in this sector. This first phase of development included enhanced sustainable measures including the provision of EV charging points and solar panels to each unit. A second phase of development, providing three larger units of 930sqm (10,000sqft) are also equipped with solar panels and EV charging points for tenant use and provide high quality industrial space.

4.5 There continues to be a demand from local companies requiring new premises to expand into and wishing to remain in Telford such as ATW Couriers who moved from Leasows Court to a larger unit at Orchard Business Park and KDS Solutions Ltd, also now trading at Orchard Business Park alongside their original premises at Hortonwood.

4.6 The investments coming forward are still dominated by new investors entering the Borough or existing companies expanding taking additional floor space/premises and is not leading to a major displacement of local companies from other local estates. The void level for industrial premises across all the Borough's estates remains low with Telford & Wrekin Council currently holding nominal voids across the 350 + industrial units within the Property Investment Portfolio. The demand for starter units and grow-on space remains strong as is evidenced through the continuing enquiries for the Councils properties.

4.7 A recent market report of Telford's industrial sector by local agents highlights the limited availability of new and very modern stock at all size ranges with an ongoing shortage of units less than 4000sqm (40,000sqft). However, whilst there are some speculative schemes coming forward from developers which will assist in plugging the supply gap, demand is still outstripping supply.

4.8 The scale of investment continues to see the Borough established as a major inward investment destination and is delivering infrastructure and jobs that are key to the Council's commitment to 'Protect, Care and Invest to create a Better Borough'.

4.9 In addition to the revenue return from investment the Fund is driving additional fee income to the Council through design, project management and planning reflecting the attraction to companies of the Council being able to provide turnkey development solutions tailored to investors needs.

4.10 Recent examples of investments delivered and underway through the Council's Growth Fund include:

Phase 1 Ni.Park, Newport

24 units were completed in Phase 1, many of whom work in partnership with Harper Adams University. Delivered through the Growth Fund, this first phase provides new employment space totalling 3838 sqm (41,311ft2) for a range of occupiers particularly start-ups and smaller businesses.

Phase 2 Ni.Park, Newport

3 units of 930sqm (10,000sqft) were completed in September 2023 providing additional floor space on Ni.Park and potential grow-on space for the occupiers of Phase 1.

All units in both Phase 1 and 2 have been delivered with solar panels and EV charging points, this was ahead of building regulation requirements and provides sustainable units for businesses.

Orchard Business Park - Plot 12 Hortonwood 40

24 new industrial units were completed in September 2023 totalling 5600sqm (60,000sqft). The investment delivers a long-term revenue return to the Council alongside additional business rates and provides additional stock for Telford where there is currently a lack of industrial units of this size. The Council identified a gap in the local market for these small industrial units. The site was purchased from Homes England through the Telford Land Deal.

Future Investments

4.11 As part of the Councils continued commitment to the Property Investment Portfolio, we continue to review opportunities including the delivery of industrial units.

5.0 Alternative Options

5.1 This is an update report on the Growth Fund – there are no alternative options.

6.0 Key Risks

6.1 The risks associated with each individual investment through the Growth Fund are considered as part of the business case approved as part of the decision making process. Where investment is proposed the assessment will be made as to whether the market intervention is required together with an assessment of the level of demand/risk.

6.2 The development of additional units for the market and an ability to support those wishing to invest in commercial property individually or alongside the Council supports growth in new premises and jobs.

7.0 Council Priorities

7.1 The developments supported pursuant to the Growth Fund support following Council priorities:

Everyone benefits from a thriving economy.

All neighbourhoods are a great place to live.

7.2 The investment delivered through the Growth Fund will have a positive impact across the Borough, helping to delivery new infrastructure, deliver new jobs, support businesses to grow and new investment which will support action to reduce unemployment, increase economic independence and address social inequality.

8.0 Financial Implications

8.1 Capital is allocated to sites based upon feasibility criteria with the rate of return for each investment being dependent upon a range of parameters and reviewed by the Council's Finance department on a case-by-case basis. Business cases are approved by the Director, Prosperity and Investment in consultation with the Director, Finance, People and IDT, the Cabinet Member for Finance, Governance and Customer Services and the Cabinet Member for Economy and Transport.

9.0 Legal and HR Implications

9.1 The Council has the power to carry out the activity referred to in this report, obtained through a number of pieces of legislation, particularly the general power of competence under the Localism Act 2011. Legal Services will continue to provide advice and support in connection with the Growth Fund as necessary.

10.0 Ward Implications

10.1 The Growth Fund is borough wide and impacts across all wards.

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

11.1 The investment delivered through the Growth Fund will have a positive impact across the Borough, helping to delivery new infrastructure, deliver new jobs and support businesses to grow. New investment will support action to reduce unemployment, increase economic independence and address social inequality.

12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

12.1 The impact of the Growth Fund will benefit people with a range of protected characteristics (specific aspects of a person's identify defined by the Equality Act 2010).

12.2 The Growth Fund advances equality of opportunity, by accelerating and supporting the delivery of good quality commercial property, increasing the choice available locally, supporting existing and new businesses, accommodating new jobs and economic independence.

13.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

13.1 The Growth Fund and the developments that are brought forward have been innovative to date incorporating electric vehicle charging points and solar panels ahead of the statutory requirements.

14.0 Background Papers

1 Cabinet – 17 October 2013
2 Cabinet – March 2015
3 Full Council – 3 March 2016, CB-79
4 Cabinet – 13 July 2017
5 Full Council – 21 September 2017, CB-42
6 Cabinet - 12 July 2018
7 Full Council - 26 July 2018
8 Cabinet – 2 January 2020, CAB-35
9 Full Council – 23 January 2020
10 Cabinet - 18 February 2021, CAB-52
11 Cabinet - 19 October 2023

15.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Director	22/10/2025	22/10/2025	JD
Finance	22/10/2025	24/10/2025	DR
Legal	22/10/2025	24/10/2025	EH

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Business & Finance Scrutiny Work Programme 2025/26

Issue / Topic	Brief Description	Directorate	Council Values/Priorities	Format	Meeting Comments
25 June 2025 – Committee Meeting					
Terms of Reference	For the Committee to agree the Terms of Reference for 2025/26.	Policy & Governance	A community-focussed, innovative council providing efficient, effective and quality services.	Committee Agenda Item	Constitutional Function.
	Outcomes: Members agreed the terms of reference for the 2025/26 municipal year.				
Work Programme	For the Committee to agree the proposed work programme for 2025/26.	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 19 June 2025.
	Outcomes: Members agreed the updated work programme for the 2025/26 municipal year.				
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: Members received a presentation on the Housing Investment Programme which outlined the progress made during the 2024/25 financial year.				

Issue / Topic	Brief Description	Directorate	Council Values/Priorities	Format	Meeting Comments
17 September 2025 – Committee Meeting					
Financial Monitoring	For the Committee to receive a report on the Council's Financial Monitoring position for 2025/26	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	Standing Item.
	Outcomes: Members received an update report outlining the Council's current financial monitoring position for the 2025/26 financial year.				

Issue / Topic	Brief Description	Directorate	Council Values/Priorities	Format	Meeting Comments
5 November 2025 – Committee Meeting					
Growth Fund	For the Committee to review the Council's property investment portfolio, with a specific focus on industrial units, assess how it continues to support with business growth and economic development and highlight areas of improvement.	Prosperity & Investment	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	New suggestion received for the work programme.
	Outcomes:				

Issue / Topic	Brief Description	Directorate	Council Values/Priorities	Format	Meeting Comments
6, 15, 20 January 2026 – 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
11 March 2026 – Committee Meeting					
Telford Land Deal*	For the Committee to receive an update on the Telford Land Deal, considering the financial impact on the Council and its value for money.	Prosperity & Investment	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	Standing Item.
	Outcomes:				

*Item to be removed from work programme due to the conclusion of 10 year term and the number of substantive items on the work programme.

Issue / Topic	Brief Description	Directorate	Council Values/Priorities	Format	Meeting Comments
To be scheduled					
Leisure Services	For the Committee to undertake a review of the leisure service offer to better understand how to ensure the Council offer continues to remain responsive to resident needs and is operated efficiently and effectively.	Prosperity & Investment Communities, Customer & Commercial Services	Every child, young person and adult lives well in their community. A community-focussed, innovative council providing efficient, effective and quality services.	Workshop	New suggestion received for the work programme.
	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	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	Carried forward from 2024/25.
	Outcomes:				

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	All neighbourhoods are a great place to live. Everyone benefits from a thriving economy. A community-focussed, innovative council providing efficient, effective and quality services.	Committee Agenda Item	New suggestion received for the work programme.
	Outcomes:				

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