

HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Health Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday 11 December 2025 at 2.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Third Floor, Southwater One, Telford, TF3 4JG

Present: Councillors D R W White (Chair), M Boylan and P Thomas.

Co-optees: H Knight and D Saunders.

Also Present: Councillor K Middleton (Cabinet Member for Public Health & Healthier Communities)

In Attendance: C Hall-Salter (Head of Assurance, Transformation and Financial Management), S Hardwick (Lead Lawyer: Litigation & Regulatory), F Mercer (Executive Director: Adult Social Care, Customer Services & Commercial), H Onions (Director: Health & Wellbeing) H Osborne (Chief Executive, Age UK Shropshire Telford & Wrekin) and P Starkey (Senior Democracy Officer (Scrutiny))

Apologies for Absence: Councillors F Doran, C Chikandamina, G Luter, J Urey and S Fogell
Co-optees: H Knight and D Saunders

HAC-11 Declarations of Interest

None.

HAC-12 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 October 2025 confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

HAC-13 Update from the JHOSC

Due to a period of ill health, the Co-Chair of the Joint Health & Overview Scrutiny Committee was unable to attend the meeting to provide an update.

HAC-14 Update from the Health & Wellbeing Board

The Director: Public Health provided the Committee with a verbal update following the meeting of the Health & Wellbeing Board held on 27 November 2025.

Members heard that the Board had received its quarterly progress report on the progress made against the HWB Strategy as well as an update on economic opportunity and employment initiatives, NHS dental performance and access, and oral health improvement work funded through the Public Health Grant within early years settings. The Board had also received updates in respect of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, the forthcoming consultation on the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA), and early childhood safeguarding and development work due to be reported back to the Board in March 2026. Members heard that a workshop had been arranged for January 2026 to enable the Committee to participate in the PNA consultation process.

In response to questions raised in relation to dental access and provision, Officers explained that NHS dental access remained limited in parts of the borough, particularly in areas in South Telford. The Integrated Care Board (ICB) was working to incentivise practices to increase NHS activity, and the Committee would have the opportunity to explore this further at a planned workshop with commissioners.

In response to questions concerning private dental capacity, Officers stated that while the primary focus was on increasing NHS provision, it would be useful for the Committee to consider the relationship between NHS and private capacity at a later stage.

HAC-15 Adult Social Care CQC Continuous Improvement Plan Update

The Head of Service: Assurance, Transformation and Financial Management presented an update on progress made against the Care Quality Commission (CQC) continuous improvement action plan.

Members were reminded that the Council had been rated 'Good' following its inspection in November 2024, with the CQC recognising strengths in assessment practice, co-production, partnership working and leadership. Officers outlined the progress made against the action plan since its publication in February 2025 across a range of areas including the refreshed All-Age Carers Strategy which had been co-produced with carers and people with lived experience and included the commissioning of a Carers Card UK, the co-production of the Joint Market Position Statement, increased use of translation services, updated safeguarding and Mental Capacity Act training, reduced waiting times for Care Act assessments, improvements in the occupational therapy service, and strong operational performance in the jointly commissioned equipment service, which continued to deliver 99% of urgent requests within 24 hours.

As a result of the national CQC assessment programme, of the 88 reports published to date, 3 local authorities had been rated 'Outstanding', 58 had received a rating of 'Good', 25 had received a rating of 'Requires Improvement' and 2 had received a rating of 'Inadequate'. Emerging national themes included the need for improved support for unpaid carers, challenges

in reducing waiting lists while maintaining quality, inconsistencies in safeguarding practice, and the need for a greater focus on prevention and outcome-based commissioning. At the time of the meeting, the CQC was in the process of developing a revised assessment framework for implementation after April 2026.

In addition, the report highlighted the ongoing challenge of expanding supported employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities within the borough. The Executive Director: Adult Social Care, Housing and Customer Services reported that this area of the improvement plan had not progressed as quickly as intended and that further work was underway to identify best practice and strengthen local pathways.

Members were informed that the Adults with Learning Disabilities Commissioner was exploring a range of national approaches to improving access to paid work, recognising the importance of employment in promoting independence, widening housing options and improving life chances. Officers emphasised that this was a borough-wide challenge requiring support from partners across the system. Officers confirmed that supported employment would continue to be monitored within the CQC framework and invited the Committee to participate in a workshop to examine best practice in greater depth.

In response to questions raised regarding demographic pressures and long-term demand, Officers confirmed that the borough faced a significant projected rise in the population aged 90 and over in the coming years, which would increase demand for long-term care. Further investment proposals would be developed through the Council's budget process.

Following a discussion on home care capacity and market stability, Officers explained that there was currently an oversupply of home care, which allowed the Council to select providers that best matched individual needs and secured best value. Work was taking place to explore a geographical zone model to support efficient delivery.

In response to questions regarding workforce turnover and recruitment challenges, Members noted that turnover within the Council's in-house adult social care workforce was relatively low compared to the private sector, though recruitment pressures remained a national issue. The Council continued to work with care providers to support workforce sustainability, including through international recruitment schemes.

Following a discussion around the increase in Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) requests, Officers advised that the increase reflected improved provider awareness and a strengthened assessment process. A restructured DoLS team and improved workflows had resulted in significantly reduced waiting times.

Following concerns raised by Members in relation to supported employment for people with learning disabilities, Officers reported that the Government's

Connect to Work programme launched in September 2025 as part of the wider Job Box offer, was designed to provide tailored employment support, though its impact had not yet been fully realised. Work would continue with partners to identify best practice and enhance local opportunities.

In response to questions regarding Integrated Care Board restructuring, Officers stated that the future operating model remained under development but emphasised strong existing relationships with system partners. Officers reiterated the importance of prevention and neighbourhood health and highlighted the need for continued advocacy to ensure Telford and Wrekin's voice was heard.

Members thanked Officers for their attendance and noted the positive outcome of the CQC inspection, and the progress made by Adult Social Care in delivering the improvement actions.

RESOLVED – that the Committee undertake a review into supported employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities in the Borough.

HAC-16 Age UK

Following a request from the Committee at the last meeting, the Chief Executive of Age UK Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin delivered a presentation which provided an overview of the experiences of older people both nationally and locally.

The Committee noted the national challenges identified by Age UK, including the impact of the cost of living on older people, rising multiple morbidity, digital exclusion, changes in prescription ordering processes, pressures associated with unsuitable housing, and the reduced availability of voluntary sector funding and volunteers since the pandemic in 2020.

The presentation highlighted the significant demographic change within the borough, with increases of more than a third in the 65+ population and over 76% in residents aged 80 and over since the last census. The Committee noted that demand for information, advice, and social care navigation had increased substantially as a result. Age UK had handled more than 3,000 enquiries over the past year, with the largest proportion relating to welfare benefits, social care, legal matters, housing, health conditions and social isolation. The benefits advice service alone had generated £1.6m in additional income for older residents, representing a return of £42 for every £1 invested. In response to questions raised regarding funding and sustainability, Officers stated that the Council continued to support benefits advice through grant funding where permitted but noted that multi-year grants were not always possible due to the timing of national allocations.

Following a discussion on face-to-face access, Officers highlighted the expansion of Live Well Hubs across the borough, which aimed to provide accessible advice and reduce pressure on voluntary sector services.

In response to queries concerning strategic coordination, Officers advised that the Ageing Well Partnership remained the appropriate forum for progressing long-term planning, including work on transport, digital inclusion and housing.

Members thanked Age UK for attending and noted the update.

HAC-17 Work Programme

The Senior Democracy Officer (Scrutiny) presented the updated work programme to the Committee.

Members noted items scheduled for forthcoming meetings, included the NHS 10-year plan, GP access, Dental provision and access, and the forthcoming workshop on the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment.

Members noted the update.

HAC-18 Chair's Update

The Chair thanked officers, Members and external partners for their attendance and contributions at the meeting.

The meeting ended at 3.41 pm

Chairman:

Date: Thursday 5 March 2026