



Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Cabinet

Thursday 16th March 2023

Invest Telford Performance Report

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| Cabinet Member: | Cllr Lee Carter - Cabinet Member: Neighbourhood Services, Regeneration and the High Street |
| Lead Director: | Katherine Kynaston - Director: Housing, Employment & Infrastructure |
| Service Area: | Housing, Employment & Infrastructure |
| Report Author: | Kathy Mulholland - Inward Investment & Business Support Service Delivery Manager |
| Officer Contact Details: | Tel: 01952 567572 Email: kathy.mulholland@telford.gov.uk |
| Wards Affected: | All Wards |
| Key Decision: | Key Decision |
| Forward Plan: | Yes – 18 January 2023 |
| Report considered by: | SMT – 14 February 2023 Business Briefing – 2 March 2023 Cabinet – 16 March 2023 |

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

It is recommended that Cabinet:-

- 1.1 Approves the launch of Invest Telford to further the promotion of the Borough for investment and the support provided to businesses, including the new website and prospectus, currently being finalised
- 1.2 Approves the co-production of a new Invest Telford Economic Strategy for the Borough to be presented for approval to Cabinet in the Autumn

Invest Telford Performance Report

- 1.3 Endorses the focus of the Council's new, business grant programme as proposed in paragraph 4.14
- 1.4 Notes the contribution that the Council's approach to business and investment support is having on the local economy, businesses and residents

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 Driven by the Council's economic development strategy – Enterprise Telford - recent years have seen exceptional rates of growth and investment in our Borough. Illustrated in the infographic and the case studies throughout this Report - this is delivering for our businesses, our residents, our High Streets. It is creating jobs, skills and generating revenue invested directly into front line services. Our Strategy has established Telford & Wrekin as an investment focus regionally and nationally – a town of makers and innovators.



- 2.2 The report also highlights the challenges that the economy now faces and how the Borough is responding to these challenges initially through the launch of our new Invest Telford website and prospectus and over the next 6 months the co-development of a new Economic Strategy and Taskforce with our partners. This will embed Telford's Vision for 2032 of an inclusive borough where everyone can fulfil their potential in a thriving economy and will provide a roadmap for economic growth across the Borough for the next 10 years.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 The Council's existing economic development strategy, 'Enterprise Telford' is built around a commitment to be '**business winning and business supporting**' and a pledge to provide a service to all investors and businesses that is fast, responsive and deal focussed.
- 3.2 Economic growth is critical to the Borough's residents and communities providing jobs, raising skill levels, delivering services and infrastructure. However business confidence locally and nationally is fragile and it is even more important to be focussing on economic growth and resilience at a time when so many are challenged by rising costs and the ongoing impact for many of Brexit and Covid.
- 3.3 The following Summary illustrates how we are delivering against our commitments and the impact this is having.

4.0 Summary

- 4.1 At the heart of our strategy is a 'Pledge' to business. The Pledge offers to any business, whether expanding or looking to land in the Borough, a bespoke package of support tailored to need including access to finance, land and premises, recruitment and skills and supply chain connections. We have created a more competitive investment environment than regional and national destinations, including those designated as Enterprise Zones.
- 4.2 Our approach to economic growth is underpinned by a number of essential elements:
- Tailored Business Support including
 - Business Grants & Incentives
 - Skills for Growth
 - Job Promotion
 - Telford Land Deal and Growth Fund,
 - Creating new sector investment opportunities
 - Investment into transformational infrastructure
 - Marketing our Offer
- 4.3 The following sections set out more details illustrated with case studies and testimonials to show the impact for business and residents.

Tailored Business Support

- 4.4 The Business Growth Hub delivered by the Council's business support team provides a one stop shop for all business needs and has acted as a showcase to attract inward investment. The Hub provides a point of contact and signposting to other organisations, funders and government agencies including the Marches LEP (who provide some financial support for the Hub), Department of Trade & Industry, Chamber of Commerce and Federation of Small Business as well as sector bodies including Make UK and the local Business Board.

4.5 The Council's Team has supported businesses with more than 23,000 direct interventions with many businesses also accessing 'self help' via the website, communications and connections into other services. The package of support is tailored to need but includes a number of elements some of which are illustrated below:-

Business Grant Support

4.6 The Team have secured more than £7m of grant support for Telford's business community, directly creating more than 500 jobs with many more in the supply chain and as businesses expand further. The Council's approach to financial support has constantly adapted to reflect business conditions and specific challenges in the Borough. Other highlights include:

- During the extreme flooding of Ironbridge in early 2020, we deployed 79 grants to affected businesses, totalling almost £150,000 in support.
- Throughout the pandemic we worked closely with services across the Authority and provided support to businesses. We distributed more than £1.16m in Covid grants to businesses to support productivity in addition to £102m of business rates grants and relief.
- We bid for £600k of European funding to create a small grant scheme that covered the Marches and supported businesses to purchase small equipment items or to access professional support in aiding their recovery. From a recent evaluation survey we know that 99% of grant applicants were still trading and that 98% of respondents found the grant support 'very' important in helping them survive the impacts of the pandemic.

4.7 **Case Study: Samplas Ltd grant beneficiary – starting post pandemic with the Small Business Recovery Grant followed by significant funding through the Business Growth Programme:**



SAMPLAS
Recycling

"We're so grateful to the Enterprise Telford team who have been fantastic from start to finish – guiding us through the application process and helping us to secure the funding to turn the dream of buying new machinery into reality."

"These are tough times for many businesses, I'd recommend the team to other businesses calling on their support and expertise to unlock additional funding to enable growth and make day-to-day operations much more efficient."

Sam Woods, Director

- First engagement post pandemic
- Small Business Recovery Grant £3k for a small granulator - 2020/21
- £88k from the Business Growth Fund secured in 2022 for more equipment to support growth plans
- Doubling the firm's production levels and allowing more scrap plastics to be stripped down and bailed ready for redistribution

4.8 A key focus is on small and medium sized enterprises (SME's) with a range of grants to support expansion, innovation and job creation. The Business Growth

Programme as an example, offers grants from £10,000 to £175,000. The personalised application support offered has resulted in Telford out-performing the rest of the Marches area, securing more than £3m of grant for our manufacturing businesses, creating 350 jobs.

4.9 **Case study: Coopers Gourmet Foods, recipients of a £100,000 grant through the Business Growth Programme**



Coopers Gourmet Foods

"We've received significant funding support, via the Marches Growth Hub Telford. We're now based in a state-of-the-art food processing facility and investing in new equipment to improve productivity."

Ivan Watkiss, Managing Director

- Supported since relocated to Telford in 2014
- £30k Marches Building Investment Grant secured in 2014 and a further £77k in 2018 after expansion of its manufacturing base and product range
- Supported during COVID
- Secured £60k through the Business Growth Programme to support a new tray bake line in 2022 with an additional £40k in 2023 for equipment that will allow production to double

The graphic features a circular inset image of two men in white lab coats standing in front of a white delivery van with 'Coopers' branding and the phone number '01743 441 811'. The van also has the slogan 'Order - never forgotten.' and the website 'coopers-sausage-rolls.co.uk'.

4.10 **Case study: Premier Garden Supplies were recipients of a £98,500 grant which has helped them to revolutionise its manufacturing processes.**



Premier Garden Supplies

"We're now in our tenth year and this business was founded by myself and my wife in our back garden. We're absolutely thrilled with this funding which has enabled us to transform our day-to-day operations.

The machinery we've purchased is helping us to produce fence panels which are of a much higher quality and the turnaround on products is much quicker. The new machinery has also led to the creation of several new operating jobs.

We're very grateful to Elliot Payne and the Enterprise Telford team who helped us every step of the way and went above and beyond to help us get the funding over the line."

Paul Sharp, Director

- Engaged in July 2020, contact maintained, following a move to new premises despite the pandemic
- Provided 121 specialist support in 2022
- £98,500 grant secured through Business Growth Programme in 2022 which has revolutionised the manufacturing processes with cutting edge

The graphic features a circular inset image of a woman and a man standing in front of a white van with 'PGS' branding and the website 'www.premier-garden-supplies.co.uk'. The van also has the slogan 'For All Your Fencing Needs'.

4.11 The Council team has led the development and implementation of a business start-up programme delivering this across the Marches providing coaching and mentoring support to both aspiring entrepreneurs and trading businesses with growth aspirations. In Telford 168 individuals benefitted from the start-up

programme with 33% going on to start a business and 65 existing businesses accessed growth support.

4.12 More recently we have launched a specialist business growth programme, which uses a panel of 'growth hub gurus' - specialists from digital marketers to financiers allowing us to tailor support to businesses of all sizes across the borough. This supports Telford's Vision 2032 for an economy where entrepreneurs and small businesses thrive – particularly important in an area where some 5,000 businesses (of 5,710) are micro enterprises – and where community owned businesses are increasingly important in supporting residents.

4.13 **Case study: Beneficiary - Specialist Business Growth Support Programme**

The Little Green Pantry

"Having the support of an expert business consultant when making a risky move from a market stall to a high street shop was invaluable for me.

"My consultant gave me tailored advice and reassurance during a stressful time and also signposted me to a government backed recruitment scheme which eventually enabled me to employ my first member of staff.

"Without this I wouldn't have been able to grow my business in the way that I have and it has also helped me and my new employee to develop personally."

Keli King, Owner

- Supported since June 2021
- Moved from market stall to High Street Shop in July 2021
- Received a £10,000 PIOHS start up grant, a £750 digital grant and more recently a £500 eco grant

4.14 Over the next few months the Council will launch a range of new grants channelling our UKSPF investment programme into areas of local business need and demand. The £5.8m programme will include a focus on export support, grants for start up, growth and 121 consultancy and a new focus on supporting clean growth with investment into energy efficiency and new generation capacity. The programme will also provide investment to deliver new incubation space at Station Quarter and to ensure residents benefit from business growth and skills support targeting those furthest from the jobs market.

Skills for Growth

4.15 Recognising the critical importance of skills for business growth and to raise skill levels locally the Council provides a Skills for Growth programme. Available for businesses expanding and new investors it also offers support for those businesses restructuring or facing redundancies matching them with recruiting firms. The recognition of the programme is illustrated with 7 of the top 10 Telford employers accessing skills, recruitment or redundancy support through the Council Team, including HMRC, Avara Foods, Lyreco and Denso. With an average of 150 direct business engagements per annum this is again a collaborative tailored service from recruitment, pre employment work based academies with Telford College to create a pool of work ready employees, apprenticeship support, academic and other vocational learning through to upskilling of the existing workforce to increase efficiency and productivity.

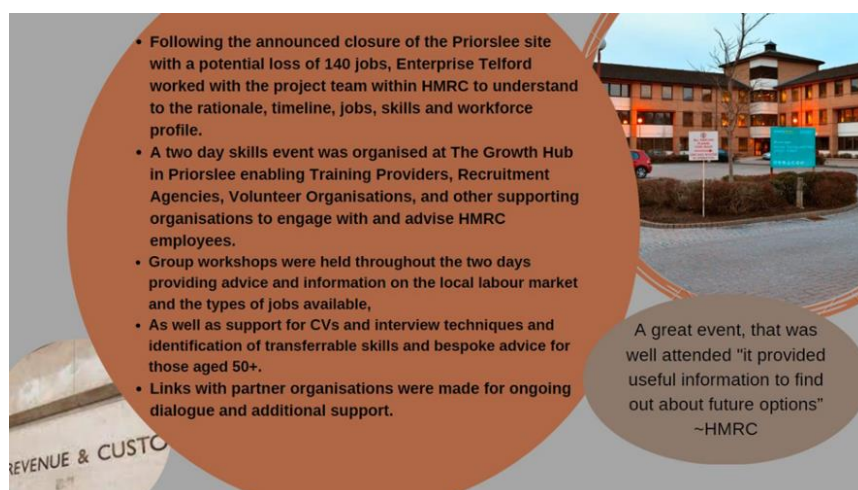
Invest Telford Performance Report

- 4.16 Using business intelligence to inform training provision ensures that it remains relevant and is driving up skills levels. Coordinated by the Council the HR forum is a network of businesses, enabling sharing of information and best practice, business networking and testing new initiatives.
- 4.17 Close working with our networks and a mapping exercise of training provision has enabled cross referring, targeting of funding and a more streamlined service for businesses.

Showcasing Job Opportunities

- 4.18 Links with the Council's **Job Box service** and its strong partnership with DWP maximise opportunities for residents facing unemployment to access new opportunities. Since its launch Job Box has worked with over 7000 residents across the borough through online and face to face support. Jobs are advertised via the Job Box Facebook page and a regular programme of job fairs are held at the central Southwater One Hub.
- 4.19 Today the Council will host the Apprenticeship & Skills Show 2023 at the Telford International Centre. This annual event, pre Covid, had become one of the largest in the region with over 4000 job seekers attending across all ages. This year's event has attracted widespread business interest and support from schools, Telford College and local universities and will showcase hundreds of job and apprenticeship opportunities across the Borough.
- 4.20 **Telford Jobmatch** provides a matching and recruitment service for businesses. Redundancy support is offered to businesses and their employees including access to CV, job search and interview techniques support. Links are made with other recruiting businesses where skill sets are similar minimising the impact of redundancies on the local economy. In one year alone 4 business specific employment fairs were arranged for employees facing redundancy, including Brintons, where 60 staff were at risk.

4.21 Case Study: HMRC redundancy support



- Following the announced closure of the Priorslee site with a potential loss of 140 jobs, Enterprise Telford worked with the project team within HMRC to understand to the rationale, timeline, jobs, skills and workforce profile.
- A two day skills event was organised at The Growth Hub in Priorslee enabling Training Providers, Recruitment Agencies, Volunteer Organisations, and other supporting organisations to engage with and advise HMRC employees.
- Group workshops were held throughout the two days providing advice and information on the local labour market and the types of jobs available,
- As well as support for CVs and interview techniques and identification of transferrable skills and bespoke advice for those aged 50+.
- Links with partner organisations were made for ongoing dialogue and additional support.

A great event, that was well attended "it provided useful information to find out about future options"
~HMRC

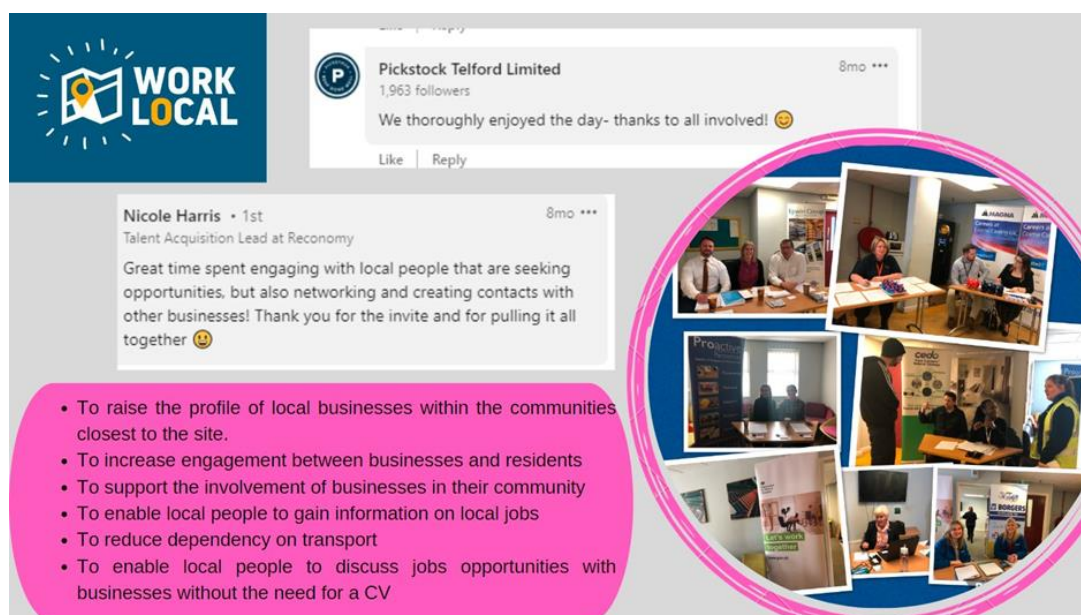
- 4.22 There remain many misunderstandings around jobs and roles in some of our industries and the skills required at all levels. Working with the Corporate

Communications team video and social media content has been developed for major recruiters including Pickstocks, Magna Confectioners and Corbetts, showcasing their local operations with their employees talking directly about their experience, duties and rewards. Material has been shared on Telford Jobbox and through Council social media to raise awareness of the businesses and roles available.

4.23 Using local intel from our business community we have also put in place specific solutions to address recruitment and retention and enable local residents to access local employment – two initiatives are illustrated below:

4.24 **Work Local** – recognising that employers are not targeting the communities most local to them when recruiting and that residents often are not aware of the opportunities on their doorstep these local jobs fairs – working to date with 30 businesses - bring the two together in venues within the community. Alongside this a number of major employers have worked with the Council to undertake ‘CV-blind’ recruitment – allowing job seekers to get in front of businesses to show their willingness and suitability for employment. Working locally also reduces the dependency on, and cost of transport and has an added environmental benefit.

4.25 **Work Local event**



4.26 **Work Express** – launched in December the Council subsidised bus service provides a link to key employment sites from areas of high unemployment. Fares are capped at a maximum of £2 per single journey for adults and provide significantly quicker journey times aiming to work with business shift patterns. The new service had over 2,900 passengers in the first month of operation. This is continuing to grow through promotion via Council social media, account management, networks such as the HR forum, business social media channels and the Growth Hub Newsletter.

Telford Land Deal & Growth Fund

- 4.27 The unique Land Deal and Growth Fund underpin our pledge to business. The Land Deal has seen Government recycle funding from land sales in Telford into site preparation and infrastructure to support growth. The Council is leading the marketing and disposal of all public land which is delivering 2,800 new homes, 8,500 new jobs and 300,000 sqm of commercial floor space. It has generated a gross profit share for Telford and Wrekin Council of almost £7m since the Deal started. This has been reinvested into further opportunities for business expansion including start up and incubation units.
- 4.28 The **Growth Fund** allows the Council to capitalise on investment demand by acquiring land and property, building bespoke premises and strengthening and diversifying the Council's Property Investment Portfolio. It enables the Council to react quickly to investment opportunities that come to the market and brings additional essential income into the Council to support service delivery. This unique Council approach and willingness to invest in acquiring land or property to be then leased to investors, is enhanced by our ability to deliver design, build, and ongoing building management as well as by our business support package.
- 4.29 **Case Study: Kensa Creative, new build offices and grant funding support**



kensa.

Kensa Creative's search for a new home culminated in the firm building bespoke offices thanks to the teams at TWC.

"Building our own office wasn't the plan because we didn't think it would be possible. The Council's business support team, Enterprise Telford and the biT Group made it work for us"

Scott Clarke, Founder & Managing Director

- Supported since 2014
- Business Equipment Fund secured in 2015 - £3.5k
- Finding a new space for the business to thrive and grow, creating jobs - 2019
- £30k Business Growth Programme Grant secured in 2019
- £10k Telford Growth Recovery Fund secured 2021

Creating New Investment Opportunities

- 4.30 Attracting new Investors and maximising existing business growth are essential to the success of Telford's economic development strategy.
- 4.31 Since the launch of the economic development strategy, the inward investment element of the Council's Business Support team has managed over 700 investment enquiries and directly account manages more than 120 business accounts. This contact continues to identify businesses that are outgrowing their premises and are looking to move to a larger factory or premises, have plans to diversify or connections to companies looking to move or co-locate. At a time when overseas investor numbers are falling, this engagement is essential and the

strength of Telford’s ongoing pipeline of investment enquiries demonstrates the importance of our continued engagement with large strategic companies and potential new investors.

4.32 Case study: supporting an existing business expansion, Global Minds and an illustration of investment in local people

GLOBALMINDS®

- Worked with since 2019 with relocation support, new offices in 2020
- Awarded a £50K BGP grant to support the renovation - 5 new jobs
- Gone from strength to strength now up to approx. 50 employees
- Provided skills and recruitment support - directors proactive with recruitment via the jobs centre in Telford to access new talent
- Investing in local people - Chelsey's CV highlighted digital knowledge from her time at school, but was currently working at bar / pub for her main employment role. After a successful interview she was taken on and trained. Within 6 months she had gone from a new start to an account management role supporting the companies largest client Reassure.

"We are extremely grateful to Enterprise Telford for all their guidance, support and for positively helping us throughout the process. The relocation event is a step-change in our company's growth story. As a result we exceeded our targets in new job creation, created 12 new permanent high-skilled jobs in Telford in less than a year. There is also a 20 per cent increase in revenue, mostly due to signing new clients from the UK, Middle East and USA."

Hema Kumar, Executive Director

4.33 The Council’s proactive generation of enquiries both within the UK and overseas through attendance at events, trade exhibitions and through networking builds this pipeline of enquiries. Links with the Council’s property and architectural and design services and the de-risking and preparation of sites for development plus access to Council Growth Funding ensures we can respond quickly and deliver to investor requirements.

4.34 The current pipeline includes more than a dozen strong inward investment enquiries from multiple sectors, from both UK and Worldwide. Business expansions from companies already located within our borough with a significant investment value are currently being supported and have the potential to create at least 2,000 further new jobs

4.35 Case study – Bridge Cheese growth and new investment

BRIDGE CHEESE

2022 - Another great year, as the doubling of capacity in its Telford production facility brought with it new opportunities for business development and a record-breaking 12 months for turnover

"From the moment the team were engaged it was clear that this was the area that was best suited to meet the requirements. The appetite and eagerness they showed was incredible – even though at that stage the aim was to bring 15 new jobs."

Michael Harte, Managing Director

- 2016 - We've been with Bridge Cheese from the beginning and continue to support their growth aspirations
- The workforce has since grown to 60 and will soon number 80
- Ongoing recruitment support - took part in 'Work Local' event and created video for promotion via Telford Jobbox channel
- Business Growth Programme Grant secured in May 2021 - £172k - currently supporting a additional £10k application
- Regular contact and support throughout the pandemic

New Sector Opportunities

- 4.36 Growth in new and growing sectors is a priority to deliver high value jobs, to raise the profile of the Borough and build resilience into the economy. A Town of ‘makers’ known for its automotive, food and defence manufacturing base the Borough has invested in growing the related agri-technology sector. Recognised as a global growth sector key to future food security the industry is being spearheaded by research and new skills from Harper Adams University.
- 4.37 The expansion of the University, coupled with its new Agri-Engineering Centre for Innovation (Agri-EPI Centre), has created an opportunity to attract high tech businesses from across the world in fields including robotics, sensors, augmented reality systems and enviro-technology. These bring high value jobs and many crossovers into sub sectors of advanced manufacturing.
- 4.38 The partnership between the Council and Harper Adams University has led to the creation of the 25 acre science and enterprise park – Ni.PARK providing a mix of incubation, start up and grow on space for investors in the food and drink and agri-tech related sectors. Phase One is complete and 70% occupied. This unique offer has been picked up by the Department for International Trade and featured as one of their first High Potential Opportunities (HPO’s) marketed internationally to potential investors, promoting Telford’s unique expertise in the sector - and investor offer.
- 4.39 This is just a snapshot of the high tech investors who have made Ni.PARK and the University their home, illustrating the breadth of innovation and varied countries of origin:

4.40 Case Study: early investors in Ni.PARK

Ni.PARK

- SMART OASIS FARM - UKRAINE**
Aeroponic vertical farms based in freight containers.
- ESCUADERO AUTO - UK**
Mechanical systems and design specialist specialising in concept and 3D modelling through to functional prototyping and manufacturing.
- MILKTECH NZ - NEW ZEALAND**
Designed with future proof technology, robotic cup removers controlled by a smart phone increases milk yield.
- UPL - INDIA**
UPL is the fifth-largest crop protection company in the world and a global leader in BioSolutions for sustainable agriculture, with a presence in 138 countries, employing more than 10,000.
- TAFE - INDIA**
TAFE, the third largest tractor manufacturer in the world opened their first UK operation, The Advanced Ag Solutions centre working on world leading electric research & Development
- NOFENCE - NORWAY**
The world's first virtual fence for livestock
- VERTINETIK - NORWAY**
A drone solutions start-up aiming to simplify agricultural technology adoption and guide small and medium sized growers in their journey
- PROVISUR - USA**
Advanced hygiene design, labour-saving automation techniques for food pressing and slicing applications.

Investment into Infrastructure

- 4.41 The Council recognises the importance of infrastructure for business growth from access to broadband to highways and transport infrastructure, town centre regeneration and now new challenges around the infrastructure required to meet business energy needs.

Digital

- 4.42 Through Superfast Telford we invested £5.6m enabling over 9000 premises to access faster broadband which would not have been available commercially. This benefitted businesses in the borough and expanded out the network making it more commercially viable for other operators to invest putting Telford's coverage now at 98.8%. This puts the borough ahead of the UK average of 97.4%. Faster gigabit speeds have also put Telford ahead of the West Midlands coverage of 79.41%.



- 4.43 The focus on access to gigabit capable broadband continues with the Council's Virgin Media 02 Gigabit Project and ongoing work to procure collaborative investment opportunities to improve mobile phone coverage.

Energy Security

- 4.44 More recently, the Business Support and Climate Change and Sustainability teams have been working with local companies and stakeholders to support their ambitious carbon targets and their need for affordable energy an even greater priority in the light of escalating energy prices.



4.46 The Telford Sustainability & Energy Cluster is a new business led group, chaired by Denso, that is bringing businesses and Council Services together to come up with creative solutions around connectivity, energy costs and skills needs - all of which supports the Council's Climate Change Strategy and Borough wide target of being net zero by 2030. Through this cluster the business support team is collaborating in lobbying government and grid operators, identifying gaps in demand and supply capacity and promoting good practice.

4.47 **Case study: The importance of affordable energy to Telford's automotive manufacturing sector**

The importance of affordable energy to Telford's automotive manufacturing sector is recognised by Enterprise Telford and the team have been engaging with all our JLR tier 1 suppliers, as they are all huge energy consumers

- Q1 2022 global energy crisis
- Q1 / Q2 support requested by huge energy consumers
- Sept 2022 Tier 1 JLR suppliers energy collaboration inaugural meeting, Polytec, Stadco, Magna
- November 2022 lobby letter to parliament ref National Grid lack of capacity to support green energy solutions
- November 2022 Tyseley Energy Park exemplar plant visit – Polytec, Stadco, Magna

Tyseley Energy Park

- Situated on the site of one of the oldest companies in Birmingham, Tyseley Energy Park is set to become the energy, waste and transport nexus for the city of Birmingham, showing how novel energy technologies can form an innovative industrial ecology.
- Through collaborative partnerships with experts from academia, government and industry, TEP will shape the way the City develops infrastructure for renewable heat and power, energy storage, clean transport fuels and advanced waste processing

• Jan 2023 re-establishment of business energy cluster – Telford Energy & Sustainability Cluster (TESC) in collab with Climate Change Partnership Group

The infographic illustrates the Tyseley Energy Park as a central hub for energy and waste management. It features several key components:

- Biogas Plant:** Processes organic waste into biogas, which is then used for energy production.
- Solar Power Refinery:** Utilizes solar energy to refine and produce clean transport fuels.
- TESC Plant (Bio-Alloy):** Focuses on thermal catalytic reforming to produce hydrogen and other clean energy carriers.
- Waste Processing:** Shows the flow of waste from various sources into the park's processing facilities.
- Energy Storage and Distribution:** Illustrates how energy is stored and distributed to different parts of the park and surrounding areas.
- CO2 Saving:** Highlights the park's role in reducing carbon emissions through its advanced technologies.

Station Quarter

4.48 The Council has overseen the transformation of infrastructure in Telford Town Centre, delivering the creation of Southwater as a regional leisure/retail offer, a new bus station and the new Silver Swallow bridge linking the railway and Town Centre. Station Quarter represents the next major transformation introducing town centre living, alongside a new central academic campus offering young people across the borough accessible, modern learning from school to FE and HE. Anchored by a new Skills & Enterprise Hub being delivered in partnership with Telford College, this will provide the critical skills businesses need alongside incubation space for potential high growth businesses with a wrap-around, on site, Council run business support service. The Council's recently announced successful Levelling Up bid will see close to £5m invested in consolidating 6th form provision alongside the Skills Hub offering a further offer to young people and a competing offer for the c.500 young people who currently leave the borough post-16.

High Streets

4.49 The Council has long realised the threats to the infrastructure of our high streets and has invested over £10m in High Street regeneration including through its

unique Pride in Our High Streets and Place Plan programme. The programme has supported 52 new businesses to open, awarded 220 grants, leveraged more than £2.1m in private sector investment, created more than 260 jobs and invested £1.95m into high street infrastructure improvements to date. Through our investment we have successfully reduced the number of empty premises across our high streets from an average of 9% to 4% which compares to a national average of 13.8%

Marketing Our Offer

- 4.50 Essential to growth is the Marketing of Telford's offer to existing and new investors. The Council Team continue to market through attendance at events, exhibitions and by engaging with business intermediaries. However post Covid with the changing the marketing landscape there is increased use of social media and in particular Linked In to build business relationships.
- 4.51 Investment opportunities including T54 and latterly Station Quarter have featured in Regional marketing campaigns. Midland Engine funded by Government to target overseas investment into the region has regularly featured Telford in its 'pitchbook' to investors putting site opportunities and local businesses in front of 20 overseas trade missions visiting the Region.
- 4.52 The business support team has developed a range of targeted promotional channels which showcase support programmes and enable Council services to share communications with Telford's businesses. This includes promoting commercial opportunities through the Care Leavers Covenant. During Covid these channels were invaluable in getting messaging around workplace operations and grant support out to businesses. Most recently the Cost of Doing Business Micro-Site has been established alongside the Council's Cost of Living Programme to further support to businesses impacted by energy and inflationary price rises.
- 4.53 The **Hello Telford** platform is a unique tool for businesses, encouraging collaboration and trading between Telford businesses. There are more than 230 businesses and partners actively using the site with a monthly newsletter achieving an email open rate of over 53% showing a highly engaged business audience.
- 4.54 Across our other business promotion media our reach continues to grow:
- Weekly Newsletter reaches 2,615 businesses on a range of business support topics and event promotion with an average email open rate of 39%.
 - Enterprise Telford LinkedIn has more than 700 followers, Borough-wide and across multiple industry sectors. There are regular social posts including event promotion, promotion of partner activities, other internal team business engagement and information for businesses.
 - Our business twitter account has 2,680 Followers, averaging 15 Tweets per month, averaging 346 profile visits per month (last quarter).

4.55 The 2022 Community Pride Awards showcased investment by large and small enterprises attracting considerable support from businesses keen to be recognised for their contribution to their local community

4.56 **Case study – supporting the Community Pride Awards**



4.57 In addition to the business media channels, 'boosting business' is a key theme across the Council's corporate marketing and social media channels. With a monthly reach of around 400,000 this regularly focusses on High Street investment, new investments linked with the Land Deal and video features on local companies recruiting.

Conclusions & Next Steps

4.58 The Council's approach to economic growth has generated Council Tax and Business Rates that have underpinned the delivery of Council Services. It supports the Council's Strengthening Families agenda, Health & Wellbeing and Education & Skills strategies. It is central to delivering levelling up supporting our Safer Stronger Communities programme providing jobs and opportunities with investment aimed at ensuring this is accessible to all. The strategy has grown the number of successful businesses in the Borough, sought to minimise the impact on the High Street, built on Telford's sector strengths and opportunities, stimulated and supported innovation by our businesses and is working to align a skilled workforce with business need. There has been investment into Telford's connectivity, recognising the essential role that transport and digital connectivity play in connecting communities and facilitating growth.

- 4.59 Significant changes in the UK economy means that Telford now needs to re-visit its economic strategy to reflect new challenges. This includes continuing to raise skill levels to meet business need and to connect residents to opportunities, for affordable energy and infrastructure that will make our businesses competitive and to ensure that Telford continues to act as a draw for new investors.
- 4.60 To address this the Council will develop a new 'Invest Telford' strategy in the coming months. This will reflect **Telford's 2032 vision for the economy**. This aspires to a **robust economy that has benefitted from growth in new sectors delivering well paid jobs, many of which are linked to a zero carbon economy**.
- 4.61 The Invest Telford strategy will be co-produced working with the wide range of partners essential to the economic growth of the town. This includes our businesses but also our College and University providers and business representatives such as Telford's Business Board, the Chambers of Commerce and Marches LEP. To secure this sense of ownership early discussions will be held to consider how to bring these groups together as a meaningful, collaborative partnership.
- 4.62 In advance of the strategy, the Council is **refreshing its marketing campaign re-branded Invest Telford, reflected in a modern website and collateral including a prospectus (which is currently being finalised) and new social media channels**. The focus is on sector case studies with businesses and partners talking about their experiences of landing and growing as well as illustrating the wider quality of life opportunities across the Borough supported by videography. The prospectus will showcase the strength of Telford's offer to new investors as well as to business intermediaries and government agencies.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The report sets out a wide range of initiatives, investment and activity being driven by the Council to increase economic growth. Had these not been established then the resulting impact in terms of jobs and inward investment would not have been delivered - or would be significantly delayed. While having a Borough Economic Strategy is not a statutory requirement, the alternative of not developing a new Strategy would leave the Borough without a clear plan for investment and a means to engage partners – including Government – to align their priorities and investment to maximise benefits to local business and residents.

4 Key Risks

- 6.1 The impact of Brexit, covid and more recently war in Ukraine and the energy crisis means economies globally and locally are facing unprecedented challenges. The Council has a key role to play alongside Government and partner agencies in supporting existing businesses to survive and to build resilience and growth into the economy. The development of a new economic development strategy will address the new challenges faced by the national economy and seek to minimise risks to Telford's local economy and community. The strategy will have clear aims and objectives linked to Vision 2032 and will ensure opportunity is afforded to benefit from new jobs and opportunities borough wide. It will also support the

Council in lobbying and making bids to government for funding and inform opportunities for collaborative working with other authorities and agencies. The engagement of businesses and other partners in the creation of the strategy will secure wide ownership and commitment to delivery.

7.0 Council Priorities

7.1 The Council's economic development strategy will underpin the Council's Vision 2032 which aspires to a robust economy that has benefitted from growth in new sectors delivering well paid jobs, many of which are linked to a zero carbon economy.

8.0 Financial Implications

8.1 The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy includes investment to support the economic development strategy, 'Enterprise Telford' and new Invest Telford strategy.

9.0 Legal and HR Implications

9.1 When developing the Invest Telford Strategy appropriate legal advice will be provided including any consultation and equalities requirements. Specific consideration will also need to be given to any subsidy control implications to ensure that any schemes that are developed are compliant with relevant statutory requirements in relation to potential subsidy and other matters. Grant agreement support will also be provided when requested.

9.2 There are no direct HR implications arising from this report.

10.0 Ward Implications

10.1 The development of a new economic development strategy will have a positive impact on all wards providing jobs and skills and supporting businesses at the heart of our communities including our High Streets.

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

11.1 The health of the local economy has a direct impact on the social and economic wellbeing of residents across the Borough. There remain significant inequalities within and between our communities. The Council's approach to economic growth seeks to ensure the benefits are felt across all parts of the Borough and the Invest Telford Strategy will continue to ensure support for businesses of all sizes and sectors and to facilitate the infrastructure that will connect neighbourhoods to jobs and to education and skills.

12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

12.1 The Council's approach to economic growth seeks to provide opportunities for all businesses and residents to benefit from growth. The new Strategy will be developed with regard to the legal requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

13.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

13.1 The Council's approach to economic growth is supporting our aspiration to achieve zero carbon emissions across the Borough by 2030. A range of advice and specific grant support is assisting our businesses to increase energy efficiency and explore energy generation opportunities that will reduce costs, build resilience into their operations and reduce emissions. The Telford Sustainability & Energy Cluster linked with the Borough Climate Change Partnership will take a lead identifying further opportunities and lobbying for investment into grid infrastructure to enable more innovative solutions. As a Borough we have a growing number of 'green tech' businesses developing and delivering technology that is changing business practices including in battery technology and recycling and this is recognised as a growth sector that our new Strategy will foster. Similarly we are seeing specialist skills provision being developed through Telford College to support business growth and the retrofitting of business premises. Where the Council is delivering new business premises these consider the latest technologies including PV, EV charging and other building fabric measures. We are exploring opportunities to retrofit existing commercial premises and Council owned buildings.

14.0 Background Papers

None

15.0 Appendices

A Invest Telford Prospectus (currently being finalised and to follow)

16.0 Report Sign Off

| Signed off by | Date sent | Date signed off | Initials |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| Director | 06/02/23 | 09/02/23 | KK |
| Finance | 06/02/23 | 08/02/23 | DR |
| Legal | 07/02/23 | 10/02/23 | EH |