

SCRUTINY ASSEMBLY

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Assembly held on Thursday, 16 June 2022 at 6.00 pm in Telford Minster, Meeting Point House, Southwater Square, TF3 4HS

Present: Councillors G H Cook, A R H England, V J Holt, A S Jhavar, J Jones, J E Lavery, J Loveridge, L A Murray, S J Reynolds, G C W Reynolds, K S Sahota, P J Scott, C R Turley, B Wennington and D R W White (Chair).

Also Present: Councillor S Davies (Leader of the Council)

In Attendance: L Gordon (Democracy Officer (Scrutiny)), A Lowe (Director: Policy & Governance), R Phillips (Service Delivery Manager: Legal & Democracy), A Plummer (Democracy Manager), K Robinson (Senior Democracy Officer (Scrutiny)), D Sidaway (Chief Executive), and S Yarnall (Democracy Officer (Scrutiny))

Apologies: Councillors K T Blundell, E J Carter, A J Eade, V A Fletcher, I T W Fletcher, E J Greenaway, T L B Janke, A Lawrence, R Mehta, J M Seymour, M J Smith, W L Tomlinson, K T Tomlinson and D Wright

SA4 Apologies for Absence

There were apologies from Councillors Karen Blundell, Eric Carter, Andrew Eade, Ian Fletcher, Veronica Fletcher, Jayne Greenaway, Thomas Janke, Adrian Lawrence, Raj Mehta, Jacqui Seymour, Malcolm Smith, Bill Tomlinson, Karen Tomlinson, and David Wright.

SA5 Declarations of Interest

None.

SA6 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2019 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

SA7 The Council's Programme for 2022 2023

The Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive presented the Council's programme for 2022-2023.

The presentation set out the Council's priorities and the work that had been carried out to those ends in the previous municipal year.

As an organisation, these priorities were at the heart of everything that was done and significant engagement had been undertaken to ensure that the Council's work delivered for those living and working in the Borough.

The Leader set out a number of key achievements of the Council in 2021/2022:

- APSE Council of the Year 2021
- ADASS peer review - Telford & Wrekin's Adult Social Care Services are 'Exceptional'
- Outstanding Children Services
- LGA Peer review found that "has a relentless focus on neighbourhoods and very high standards that it works constantly to attain and exceed. It is an organisation that is striving constantly to deliver for local people."
- Over one thousand vaccines delivered thanks to 'Betty' the Vaccination Bus and supported the delivery of 63,000 vaccines across the Borough
- Shortlisted for LGC Council of the Year 2022
- Shortlisted for the MJ's 2022 Local Authority of the Year and Senior Leadership Team of the Year awards

Every child, young person and adult lives well in their community:

In the advancement of this priority, the Council had undertaken a number of projects. Among those highlighted were the '10 by 10' initiative, a national first, which encouraged and enabled children to take part in ten life-enhancing activities before the age of 10. Also discussed was the Council's independent living work, championing and supporting specialist housing as well as introducing Virtual House and an Independent Living Centre, both of which showcased life enabling home improvements for those with additional needs. Members were also informed of the work done in relation to Betty the Vaccination Bus, a scheme that had tackled vaccine inequality and enabled over 1000 people to receive a Covid-19 jab by offering a convenient, local, vaccine centre.

Everyone benefits from a thriving community:

This priority had taken on special significance in recent months due to inflationary pressures and the ensuing cost of living crisis. The Telford Land Deal, a national first-of-its-kind collaboration between the Council, HM Treasury, and Homes England, had delivered around 25,000 sq/m of commercial, 2.9 ha of brownfield developed, 188 housing units, and £37m of private sector investment in 2020/2021. The Land Deal had also created 337 new jobs in the Borough in the same year. In total, the Deal had created 1,726 jobs, 941 homes, and redeveloped 19.4 ha of brownfield since its inception. The Telford Growth Fund had also helped to improve opportunities in the Borough, developing new, high skilled, local jobs.

The Administration had been focussed on youth prospects and unemployment in particular, and since 2016, the proportion of 16-17 year olds not in education, employment, or training had been reduced from 6.1% to 3.8%.

Since 2019, the Council had committed itself to improving the Borough's high streets and had provided numerous grants and projects in furtherance of this goal. Schemes such as façade improvement and the Pride in Our High Street programme had been introduced to enliven, modernise, and diversify Telford & Wrekin's high street offer. Pride in Our High Street, beyond bringing life to

the high street, had also brought new businesses, supporting 60 local start-ups, and new jobs, helping 300 residents in work.

All neighbourhoods are a great place to live:

This priority was a major focus of the Council, in striving towards this the multi-agency Safer Stronger Communities project had been introduced in 2020. The project worked to build stronger, more resilient, communities through work with partners such as West Mercia Police to provide community focussed policing for residents. Steps taken included increased PCSO presence and investment in modern street lighting and CCTV.

The Council was pleased that the residents' survey, undertaken in Autumn 2020, showed that 77% of respondents agreed that their neighbourhood was a safe place to live. However, it was recognised that this was simply a base to build upon and improve.

Members also heard about NuPlace, the Council's property development company. The company had developed 400, high quality, private sector rental homes to date and had a further 442 in various stages of delivery. The Leader stated his pride in the quality of life that NuPlace offered residents and how the scheme offered tenants a home for life.

Our Natural environment is protected - we take a leading role in the climate emergency:

The Council aimed to be net zero by 2030; in 2020/2021 the Authority had made significant progress towards this goal with a 33% reduction on carbon emissions on the previous year. This made Telford & Wrekin Council the fourth best performing unitary authority in the country in terms of net carbon reduction. There had been significant investment in pursuit of this target, with investment in LED street lighting and electric vehicles (EV) for the Council fleet. Telford & Wrekin were also encouraging partners to invest in decarbonising.

Members were informed that 8,600 trees had been planted as part of the Trees4TW scheme launched in June 2021. The success of the Borough's Green Guarantee scheme was also highlighted, protecting 200 sites, plus the 17 Local Nature Reserves. Telford had over 2.5 times the Natural England recommended accessible green space per 1,000 residents.

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

To combat the economic challenges faced by residents, the Council had frozen council tax for two years. Telford & Wrekin Council was the only council in the country to do so and would, as a result, have the lowest council tax rates in the Midlands.

The Council had an excellent leisure offer and was the only council in the country to offer free swimming for under 25s. The Authority also offered £1

swimming for over 50s. Such policies were designed to tackle health inequality in the Borough.

The Leader and the Chief Executive also discussed the Council's plans for the future. These included:

- The continuation of the Safer, Stronger Communities work with the scheme expanding into other parts of Telford and further investment in safety improvements such as CCTV, enforcement, and street lighting.
- The Station Quarter development, bringing new opportunities and types of living to the town centre.
- The Youth Climate Summit – Telford would host its first ever youth Climate Summit in July 2022. This would be only the fourth event of its kind in the country and would bring together hundreds of students from across the Borough for talks and activities with universities and key partner organisations of the Council.
- Vision 2032 – Telford & Wrekin Council's longer-term plan for the future, expanding the public health offer, protecting more green spaces, improving electric vehicle infrastructure, and providing a travel strategy to reduce residents reliance on cars.

The key challenges the Council faced were set out for Members. Health service provision was a major challenge for the Borough and the changes to the system would present new challenges. Local government finance was another long-term challenge especially with the impact of inflation in the coming years. Also noted were the anticipated changes to the planning system.

A discussion followed with Members posing a number of questions:

Could some kind of 'community champions' scheme be introduced to help the lonely and isolated?

This was the best of the community's Covid response, pulling together and helping each other. The main thing was how this could be replicated in a safe way.

What could be done to ensure people were living in suitably sized homes?

For many, leaving their family home would be too difficult given the attachment people have to their homes and community. It was important to enable people to continue living in their homes if they so wished but also important that appropriate homes were in good supply. Bungalows were given as an example of a housing stock that the Borough could use more of.

Could more detail be provided on EV charging points on Council owned land?

The Authority did not wish to rush this, as there were technical decisions to be made and to investigate. The private sector was leading the way in terms of car park provision with many supermarkets offering EV charging. However, most people charged their cars at home and so it was important that the Council enabled people to be able to do this if it wished to see greater EV use.

How could Councillors use their Pride Fund to offer assistance to residents at this time of crisis?

The Council was undertaking work on this, with the Authority providing food vouchers to thousands as well as energy support and even mattresses through Telford Crisis Support. However, the Pride scheme could be used to assist too.

Members also raised the issue of public transport stating the need for a more comprehensive, Boroughwide, network connecting all parts of Telford and Wrekin.

SA8 Scrutiny Work Programme 2022 2023

The Director: Policy & Governance provided a brief overview of the draft work programme. Each scrutiny committee would approve the programme at their first meeting of the year. The work programme was dynamic and could be adjusted as the year progressed to adapt to unforeseen priorities.

The Chair requested that Members email any queries to Democratic Services.

The meeting ended at 7.33 pm

Chairman:

Date: Date Not Specified