

## **CABINET**

**Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday 19 September 2024 at 10.00 am in Council Chamber, Third Floor, Southwater One, Telford, TF3 4JG**

**PUBLISHED ON WEDNESDAY 25 SEPTEMBER 2024**

**(DEADLINE FOR CALL-IN: MONDAY 30 SEPTEMBER 2024)**

**Present:** Councillors R A Overton (Vice-Chair), L D Carter (Chair), C Healy, A D McClements, R Mehta, K Middleton, P Watling and O Vickers.

**Also Present:** Cllr T J Nelson (Conservative Group Leader) and Cllr W L Tomlinson (Liberal Democrats Group Leader)

**Apologies:** Councillor Z Hannington and S A W Reynolds

### **CAB-9 Minutes Silence**

The Leader moved a moment of silence in memory of Councillor Chris Turley following a recent period of ill health.

### **CAB-10 Declarations of Interest**

None.

### **CAB-11 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2024 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

### **CAB-12 Leader's Announcements**

The Leader noted the Council's ongoing response to support local residents who would be entitled to claim Pension Credit. Over 600 elderly residents had been written to in recent weeks who would qualify for Pension Credit and the Winter Fuel Payment worth up to £300 to help towards fuel bills during the colder weather. The Leader offered reassurance that the Council would continue its efforts to provide support and guidance to residents and would continue to work with Age UK in the coming months.

The Leader announced the recent opening of the new Quad located in the Station Quarter Development. The Quad had received its first cohort of students from Telford College and would eventually host up to 300 students to study maths and digital skills. The Leader commented that the Quad would also be home to over 120 start-up businesses, tying into wider growth fund investments in the Borough such as Agri-Tech in Ni Park. The Leader extended an invitation to Group Leaders to visit the newly opened facility.

The Leader was delighted to report that the Council had been shortlisted for the Anti-Slavery Day Award by the Human Trafficking Foundation in recognition of outstanding contributions towards statutory services as part of the ongoing work of the CSE Inquiry.

### **CAB-13 Vision 2032 - Annual Review**

The Leader of the Council presented the report of the Executive Director: Place.

The report was first presented to Cabinet in 2022 and set out the vision for the Borough for the next ten years. The vision had been developed through wide ranging engagement with residents, analysis of data and collaboration with key strategic partners.

To recognise some of the key challenges facing the Borough, the fundamental goal of the vision was to build a more inclusive Borough through the following four ambitions: -

- All neighbourhoods are connected, safe and clean
- Everyone is able to live a healthy, independent life
- Everyone benefits from good education and can fulfil their potential in a thriving economy
- The environment is protected for the benefit of everyone.

The vision described the ambitions and aspirations for the Borough against these main themes and what is to be achieved by 2032.

The report also highlighted some of the key achievements of the Council in the last twelve months: -

- Being the first council in the West Midlands to be judged outstanding in successive inspections by Ofsted for Children's Services;
- Leveraging of £70m investment to further develop Oakengates, Wellington Town Centres and Station Quarter;
- Investing over £65m to support further growth initiatives to bring new job opportunities to the Borough;
- Launching 6 new bus routes to carry over 300,000 passengers to provide better access to work, school and leisure facilities; and
- 30% decrease in anti-social behaviour through further investment into the Council's Safer & Stronger Communities programme.

Cabinet Members noted the progress of delivery of the vision through regular partnership meetings with key strategic organisations and recognised some of the key achievements including £70m investment for transformational projects in Wellington, Oakengates and Station Quarter, over £65m funding for the Council's Growth Fund to support job opportunities and employment and a 30% decrease in antisocial behaviour through the Safer Stronger Communities Programme. Cabinet Members also welcomed the planned

strategic partnership meeting to be held in November which would provide an opportunity to update the Vision.

The Leader of the Conservative Group commented on the need for a Council vision and that the Council's aspirations were worthwhile. He asked officers to consider inclusion of other significant partners particularly those involved with secondary education and civil servants, highlighting that secondary education was fundamental for providing the foundations needed for life skills for young people in the Borough.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group welcomed the report and applauded the aspirations of the Council but asked that officers consider the financial implications due to the current climate. He welcomed the introduction of the new bus routes and the positive impact these would have on providing extra services to areas in the Borough where services were currently limited.

The Leader confirmed that the Council would continue to undertake due diligence when managing finances and would also continue to reach out to various partners to help achieve the Vision.

**RESOLVED – that:**

- a) **the progress made specifically by Telford & Wrekin Council delivering Vision 2032, the ten-year vision for the borough, as set out in the annual review be acknowledged; and**
- b) **the proposed timescale to report progress on delivery of Vision 2032 with partners following the strategic partnership meeting planned to be held in November be approved.**

**CAB-14 Telford & Wrekin Becoming Carbon Neutral - update report**

The Cabinet Member: Neighbourhoods, Planning and Sustainability presented the report of the Director: Housing, Customer and Commercial Services.

The report provided an update on the progress the Council has made over the last 12 months to meet its target of becoming Carbon Zero by 2030 and the additional work undertaken to reduce carbon emissions by 61% and the development of a corporate climate change risk register.

In 2019, the Council declared a Climate Emergency and set out an ambitious target to ensure its activities and operations are carbon neutral by 2030. The report highlights ongoing improvements the Council has made to key buildings including investment in leisure facilities to improve energy efficiencies and sustainability, funding into cycle routes as part of the Council's Active Travel Scheme and enhancing Council-owned green spaces and nature reserves to support climate adaptation and implement mitigation measures.

The Council had continued its investment into housing schemes such as NuPlace to provide properties that are more affordable to heat, tackling fuel poverty and health impacts of living in cold and damp conditions.

The Council's Corporate Decarbonisation Action Plan reflects the organisations priorities for Climate Change and is divided into the following themes:-

- Adaptation
- Affordable Warmth
- Biodiversity & Carbon Sequestration
- Borough Resources/Waste
- Corporate Catering
- Corporate Estate
- Highways and Transport
- Investment in Business
- Planning Policy
- Plastic Free
- Communications and Engagement
- Performance and Monitoring

There were several actions the Council was seeking to address as a result of factors outside of its control. Electrical grid connections remained a huge constraint on the expansion of renewable energy generation and the Council was working with partners to continue to lobby Central Government and the National Grid to overcome barriers for delivery.

Cabinet Members recognised that Climate Change continues to be one of the most significant issues that affects the Borough's residents, communities and businesses and welcomed the measures that had already been taken to reduce energy in key buildings, invest in affordable warmth and housing programmes to provide energy efficient properties and improve walking and cycling routes. It was noted that the importance of climate change was a culture which was embedded into the Council's service strategies and Cabinet Members thanked officers for their work.

The Leader of the Conservative Group commented on the amount work of the Council had done so far in response to the mitigation of carbon emissions and thanked officers for their work. He was pleased to see further improvements had been made to cycle routes and transport networks and asked officers to continue to assess these routes to ensure not only they remain available to residents but are also maintained and accessible. It was noted that the Local Plan presents an opportunity to look at urban densification and avoid building on green field space. He also raised concerns around electrical grid connections and the ability to accept and transmit electricity and supported the Council in its efforts to request a timescale from Central Government on when the grid will be updated to the flexibility it needs to both receive and accept power.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group welcomed the report and was pleased with the amount of nature reserves the Borough currently has. He noted the importance of lobbying as a Local Authority to strengthen planning standards for new homes and suggested that buildings are retrofitted with insulation. Acknowledging that some houses need to be built in green spaces, it was requested that officers reconsider the use of green spaces for building works as part of the Local Plan.

The Cabinet Member: Neighbourhoods, Planning and Sustainability advised that the Council would continue to lobby Central Government around the reduction of plastic production and building home standards. The Local Plan has a landscape first approach, and green spaces would continue to be considered as part of this approach. It was recognised that electric grid connections remained a challenge however the Council was working closely with National Grid, West Midlands Combined Authority and neighbouring local authorities in developing regional energy plans.

The Leader recognised the work of the Environment Scrutiny Committee as a consultee for monitoring the progress of the Council's Adaptation Plan.

**RESOLVED – that:**

- a) **the progress the Council has made over the last 12 months in its journey to become carbon neutral by 2030 and that it has now reduced its carbon emissions by 61% from a 2018/19 baseline be noted;**
- b) **the importance of climate adaptation and the additional work the Council has done to develop a corporate climate change risk register as set out in section 4.33 of the report be noted; and**
- c) **that the purpose of the report in relation to the Council's response to the Climate Emergency Declaration and referral to Full Council for information as part of the 'Matters Determined by the Cabinet' report be noted.**

**CAB-15 Progress on the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan**

The Cabinet Member: Inclusion, Engagement, Equalities and Civic Pride presented the report of the Director: Housing, Customer and Commercial Services.

The report provided an update on the progress made on the four year Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy and Action Plan and the Council's Equality Objectives under the Public Sector Equality Duty, including proposed new actions that were identified as part of regular progress meetings.

Since its implementation in July 2022, the EDI Strategy and Action Plan has delivered a range of actions, demonstrating the positive steps that the organisation had taken to meet its equality objectives and the overall vision. Key achievements included the continuation of employee led groups, delivery of face to face EDI training sessions for Elected Members, the launch of an inclusive recruitment champion scheme and creating a communications dashboard taking into consideration images and languages used for Council adverts, recruitment and social media.

Whilst a lot had been achieved in the previous 12 months, there was still a lot to deliver longer term with the key actions set out in the report. The Council would shortly be launching phase two of its diversity calendar, delivering further EDI training as part of the internal Leadership Development Programme and launching a new volunteer scheme to help support Armed Forces veterans and their families. Awareness raising events would also be taking place for Black History Month in October, Disability History Month in November and Holocaust Memorial Day in January. Progress on these actions would continue to be monitored throughout the year.

Cabinet Members welcomed the report and the work and dedication to celebrate diversity across the Borough and throughout the organisation. It was noted that employee led groups had continued to grow and provide support to staff. The EDI strategy cut across all services and departments and there was a very positive culture in relation to inclusiveness.

The Leader of the Conservative Group provided comments about unconscious bias and suggested that some of the language used within the report could be reviewed.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group welcomed the report and acknowledged the need for continued EDI training to be able to support residents.

The Leader recognised the ongoing work of the Council and its continual commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion which was demonstrated when measures were put in place following the events across the country earlier in the year which required officers to work with community groups across the Borough.

**RESOLVED – that:**

- a) the progress the Council has made over the last year with regards to its 4-year Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy and Action Plan be noted; and**
- b) the publication of an updated action plan with suggested new EDI actions as set out in section 5 of the report be agreed.**

## **CAB-16 Representation on Outside Bodies**

The Cabinet Member: Finance, Governance & Customer Services presented the report of the Director: Policy and Governance.

An annual review of outside bodies had been carried out to assess the needs of the Council and partner organisations in terms of representation and representatives. Partners had been engaged with by email and phone to ascertain their needs and review representative attendance. The reviewed list of outside bodies for which appointments were required was set out in the report.

The report also sought delegated authority to the Monitoring Officer to consider nominations for outside bodies in consultation with the Cabinet Member: Finance, Governance and Customer Services.

The Leader of the Conservative Group asked the Cabinet to consider cross-party nominations for appointments to the LGA General Assembly as encouraged by the LGA to appoint one position to a minority group leader.

The Leader noted the suggestion for future consideration.

### **RESOLVED – that:**

- a) the outside bodies to which the Council historically has nominated to, as set out in Appendix A of the report be noted; and**
- b) authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Cabinet Member: Finance, Governance and Customer Services to consider which bodies to nominate to and which Councillor was nominated.**

The meeting ended at 11.04 am

### **Signed for the purposes of the Decision Notices**

Anthea Lowe  
Director: Policy & Governance  
Date: **Wednesday 25 SEPTEMBER 2024**

Signed .....

Date: Thursday 7 November 2024