

CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday 17 July 2025 at 10.00 am in Council Chamber, Third Floor, Southwater One, Telford, TF3 4JG

PUBLISHED ON WEDNESDAY 23 JULY 2025

(DEADLINE FOR CALL-IN: MONDAY 28 JULY 2025)

Present: Councillors L D Carter (Chair), R A Overton (Vice-Chair), P Davis, Z Hannington, C Healy, A D McClements, K Middleton, S A W Reynolds and O Vickers.

Also Present: Cllr T J Nelson (Conservative Group Leader)

Apologies: Councillors W L Tomlinson and P Watling.

CAB-8 Declarations of Interest

None.

CAB-9 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that – the minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2025 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

CAB-10 Leader's Announcements

The Leader provided an update on a number of recent developments across the Borough including the expansion of the Council operated bus service which will look to serve areas currently without access to public transport, including Shawbirch. This initiative would be supported by the continuation of the £2 fare cap and formed part of wider plans to enhance the Council's demand responsive transport service. The Leader thanked Cabinet Members and Officers for their work in securing the necessary budget provision.

The Leader highlighted the Council's recent achievement in securing the Municipal Journal Award for Delivering Better Outcomes in recognition of its work on tackling child sexual exploitation. The Leader expressed his gratitude to staff and lived experience consultees for their contributions, reaffirming the Council's continued commitment to addressing and tackling child sexual exploitation crimes in the Borough.

The Leader had attended the Leader and Cabinet Young Persons Grant Scheme Awards, which was now in its tenth year and had provided financial support to young people pursuing education, careers, or personal ambitions. The Leader set out that as a result of the grant scheme, a former recipient was now running a thriving business in Newport High Street, highlighting how

the Council's support had helped a young person in the Borough to become a successful entrepreneur. The Leader thanked his Cabinet and Officers for organising the event and reiterated the Council's ongoing support for the scheme.

The Leader welcomed the announcement of government backing for the M54-M6 link road, which is expected to deliver significant economic benefits and job opportunities for the Borough. The Leader extended his thanks to Telford MP, Shaun Davies for his continued support in lobbying for the project.

CAB-11 Adult Social Care Market Position Statement 2025 - 2028

The Cabinet Member: Public Health & Healthier Communities presented the Adult Social Care Market Position Statement 2025–2029.

The report set out the Council's strategic direction for shaping and sustaining the Adult Social care market in Telford and Wrekin over the next four years. The Statement, developed jointly with the Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care System, provided an overview of the local context within the health and social care system and outlined the Council's commitment to early intervention, prevention, and person centred care as part of collaborative working with partner organisations.

The report recognised the ongoing financial pressures as a result of the increased demand in Adult Social Care while reaffirming the Council's ambition to deliver high-quality, accessible and innovative services.

The report emphasised co-production with residents, carers and providers, and detailed commissioning priorities across a range of care needs, including support for people with disabilities, mental health needs and older adults. The Statement would be supported by annual Market Sustainability Plans to monitor progress and would guide care providers in shaping services to meet local needs and ensure a stable, innovative, and responsive care market.

Cabinet Members welcomed the Market Position Statement and thanked Officers for their work in developing it. Members highlighted a number of key achievements, including the expansion of specialist supported accommodation for adults with learning disabilities, enhanced support for informal carers and the rollout of new digital technology solutions. Members commended the Council's focused approach to reducing demand and promoting early intervention and prevention, enabling residents to live and age well. The Statement was recognised as a clear demonstration of the Council's ongoing commitment to developing a diverse, vibrant, and high-quality health and social care market that meets the needs and aspirations of local people.

The Conservative Group Leader thanked Officers for their support and the detailed briefings that he had been provided. He welcomed elements of the Market Position Statement, specifically those that focused on early intervention and prevention. He encouraged the Council to continue to refine

its understanding of the specific needs of individuals within the wider population and to consider how best to identify and support future service users. He also welcomed the emphasis on innovation, particularly in relation to extra care provision and digital solutions, however raised concerns about long-term reliance on international carers and highlighted the importance of promoting local workforce participation and work readiness. Due to the complexity of the report, he suggested that future reports be made more accessible to smaller providers by consolidating commercial information.

The Cabinet Member: Public Health & Healthier Communities highlighted that the commissioning intentions were summarised on pages 18 to 20 of the report and provided a more condensed overview. In addition, regular engagement forums had been held throughout the year with partners to break down and communicate information in a more accessible way. Whilst the document was comprehensive and reflected on the breadth of the work, it was acknowledged that ongoing engagement had helped providers and stakeholders understand developments at a more detailed level. In relation to identifying future care needs, the Cabinet Member highlighted the Council's ongoing preventative work, which provided valuable insight into emerging needs and supported early planning for individuals who may require care in the future.

RESOLVED that – the new Market Position Statement 2025-2029 be approved.

CAB-12 Draft Housing Strategy 2025 - 2030

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member: Highways, Housing & Enforcement presented the Draft Housing Strategy 2025–2030.

The draft Strategy set out the Council's vision for delivering high-quality, sustainable and affordable housing across the Borough over the next five years.

Since the adoption of the Council's last strategy, and in line with national trends, the Council had seen a number of changes in the Borough's population including a 13.5% population increase between 2013 and 2023. Residents had faced a number of challenges include the cost of living crisis and a rise in energy prices, which had disproportionately affected lower-earning households. There had also been a significant increase in the number of people presenting to the Council as homeless and requiring housing support and a noticeable trend in the number of landlords exiting the housing market due to financial pressures and anticipated policy reforms.

Developed in conjunction with partners, housing providers and community organisations and building on the achievements of the previous Strategy, the draft Strategy maintained its core objectives to create sustainable and inclusive communities, making best use of existing homes and supporting the most vulnerable residents whilst responding to new challenges such as rising energy costs and increased housing demand.

The draft Strategy also outlined an emphasis on the importance of partnership working, detailing plans to tackle homelessness, improve housing standards and support climate action through low-carbon housing initiatives. The Council would continue to bring long-term empty homes back into use, supporting landlords and tenants through the Better Homes for All Programme and investing in energy efficiency and retrofitting to help residents reduce bills and carbon usage. Through the Local Plan, the Council would look to deliver 20,000 new sustainable and accessible homes by 2040 and efforts would also be made to address stalled sites and drive estate regeneration where it was most needed. The draft Strategy would also continue to provide homes that supported and empowered the Borough's most vulnerable residents, including care leavers, veterans, people with disabilities and those fleeing domestic abuse.

Subject to approval by the Cabinet, the draft Strategy would proceed to public consultation for a period of 6 weeks. Engagement would be undertaken during this period with key lived experience groups such as care leavers before being brought back for final approval and adoption.

Cabinet Members welcomed the report highlighting how a good quality and secure home is fundamental to residents' wellbeing. Members praised the Council's increasingly proactive role in housing, noting the significant achievements made since the adoption of the previous strategy, including bringing over 300 empty homes back into use, improving energy efficiency and addressing issues such as damp and mould. Members commended the creative reuse of historic buildings and high street spaces for housing, as well as the preventable measures put in place for over 4,000 people at risk of homelessness.

The Conservative Group Leader expressed his support for providing residents with access to a secure and affordable home. He welcomed the strategy's focus on making better use of existing housing stock and the Council's continued efforts to address homelessness. However, he raised concerns in relation to the strategy's second objective which focused on creating green, connected and sustainable communities and asked the Council to consider the sustainability of building 8,000 new homes on greenfield land as part of the Local Plan, citing population data included within the report highlighted that the majority of the population growth came from people moving into the Borough rather than natural change. He stated that building such developments on areas of urban sprawl and disconnected estates undermined the Council's goal of creating sustainable communities.

The Cabinet Member: Neighbourhoods, Planning & Sustainability highlighted that many residents had chosen to move to the Borough for its quality of life and strong employment opportunities and that welcoming new residents is a natural and positive part of community growth. The Cabinet Member also addressed concerns about the Local Plan, highlighting that the consultation period had closed however she hoped that any objections to the draft proposals had been submitted, including detailed alternatives for

consideration. It was stated that many housing allocations within the Borough had already been built on brownfield land, such as the Station Quarter development.

RESOLVED that – the launch for consultation of the Council's draft Housing Strategy 2025-2030, included at Appendix 1 of the report be approved.

CAB-13 2025/26 Financial Monitoring Report

The Cabinet Member: Finance, Governance and Customer Services presented the first financial monitoring report 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 drawing on the Budget Strategy or General Fund reserves. Adult Social Care continued to face significant financial pressure due to sustained demand and increasing complexity of care needs, with a projected overspend of £4.8m before applying contingencies. The Council had allocated £2m in specific contingency for Adult Social Care, alongside a general contingency of £3.95m, of which £2.113m had been used, leaving £1.837m available for other pressures.

It was noted that the Council's preventative work in social care had focused on early intervention and promoting independence and was delivering both financial and social benefits. The safeguarding service was operating within its approved budget, providing a stabilising outcome amid wider sector challenges. A separate pressure of £268,000 had arisen from historic teachers' pension liabilities.

On a Council-wide level, financial gains of £989,000 had been realised through Section 31 grant receipts under the business rates retention scheme and the release of provisions for savings shortfalls. However, the Dedicated Schools Grant carried a £4.66m deficit into the 2025/26 financial year, with high needs demand expected to increase this further. The statutory override had been extended to March 2028, with further guidance on deficit treatment expected in the next Local Government financial settlement.

In terms of the Capital Programme, the approved programme stood at £138m, with £8.9m spent at the time of the meeting and a forecast outturn of £135m, broadly in line projected forecasts. Income collection was below target across all areas and the Council's income recovery team remained focused on debt recovery.

It was highlighted that there was an ongoing consultation on the Fair Funding Review, which would assess local needs and resources and introduce a multi-year settlement framework. Despite financial pressures, the Council's proactive and responsive approach had ensured stability and alignment with national reforms.

Cabinet Members welcomed the report and expressed their thanks to the Council's Finance Team for their work in keeping the Council on track for a balanced budget, particularly in the face of ongoing pressures in Adult Social Care. Members acknowledged that rising demand, increasing complexity of care and extended care durations were driving significant financial challenges both locally and nationally. However, thanks to the strong financial planning and prudent use of contingencies, the Council was managing these pressures effectively. As a result of early intervention and prevention strategies, the Council had been able to deliver £7.7m in savings and cost avoidance but had also helped residents remain independent for longer.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the 2025/26 revenue budget position, which shows that the Council is projecting to be within budget at year end, without having to use the Budget Strategy or General Fund reserves be noted;
- b) the position in relation to capital spend; and recommends that Full Council approve the changes to the Capital programme detailed in Appendix C and all associated changes to the Medium Term Financial Strategy, including Treasury and Prudential Indicators 2025/26 Financial Monitoring Report 2 be noted; and
- c) the collection rates for NNDR, council tax and sales ledger be noted.

CAB-14 Annual Customer Feedback Report 2024/25

The Cabinet Member: Finance, Governance and Customer Services presented the Annual Customer Feedback Report for 2024/25.

The report highlighted a landmark achievement for the Council as the first local authority in the UK to receive ServiceMark accreditation from the Institute of Customer Services. This national recognition reflected the Council's long-term commitment to delivering excellent customer service and putting residents at the heart of everything it does.

The report outlined the continued improvements in customer satisfaction, with the UK Customer Satisfaction Index score rising to 74, exceeding public sector averages and the Net Promoter score increasing to 19.4 with more customers likely to recommend the Council's services. The Customer Effort Score had reduced to 4.3, outperforming National benchmarks due to the Council's enhanced digital services and streamlined accessibility.

The report also outlined scores relating to feedback and engagement. The Compliments score had risen by 128% over six years, showing growing appreciation for Council services. It was stated that the Council had received only 790 complaints across thousands of interactions, demonstrating resilience and high service standards despite ongoing budget pressures. The Customer Insight Programme engaged 235 volunteers in 158 assignments, achieving 86% satisfaction. Satisfaction with the Customer Contact Centre

reached an overall score of 95% for telephone callers and the Council's digital assistant "Ask Tom" achieved an overall score of 98% satisfaction. It was recognised that there were some initial teething issues with the new automated telephone assistant, however the Council was continuing to refine the system in response to resident feedback.

It was stated that the Council had an efficient enquiry management system, which had remained strong, with 796 Leader and Cabinet enquiries logged and an average of 90% timely responses. A total of 302 Member enquiries had been logged, with an average of 91% timely responses and a total of 253 MP enquiries, with an average of 88% timely responses. The Council also had a strong corporate complaints process with response times improved to eight working days, with 84% meeting the Ombudsman's 10-day standard. Despite a rise in Stage 2 complaints, the upheld rate had fallen to 26%, reflecting robust investigation and resolution.

For Social Care excellence, Adult Social Care had received a "Good" rating from the Care Quality Commission and Children's Services were rated "Outstanding" by Ofsted. The report highlighted how statutory complaints had been responded to quicker than in previous years, with learning embedded across services.

Cabinet Members expressed their pride in the Council becoming the first local authority in the UK to receive ServiceMark accreditation from the Institute of Customer Services. Members described the recognition as a testament to the dedication of staff across the organisation and the Council's long-standing commitment to delivering high-quality services. Members emphasised the importance of continuous improvement and praised the Council's cooperative approach, particularly its commitment to listening to and engaging with residents. It was highlighted that the rise in compliments, which had more than doubled since 2019, was cited as evidence of the Council's strong performance and resident satisfaction and the Council was leading the way nationally in public sector customer experience.

The Conservative Group Leader welcomed the Council's achievement in receiving ServiceMark accreditation and congratulated the local authority on this recognition. He acknowledged the Council's thorough approach to service delivery and noted that the report demonstrated the Council's commitment to enhancing both individual responses and broader service delivery. He also referenced the positive ratings from the Care Quality Commission and Ofsted as further evidence of the Borough's strengths and progress.

RESOLVED that:

- a) that Telford & Wrekin Council has been awarded ServiceMark accreditation by The Institute of Customer Services and as the first Council to achieve a ServiceMark, this recognises excellence in customer service standards across the public and private sector be noted;**

- b) the Customer Feedback Reports for 2024-25 in respect of Adult Statutory Complaints, Children's Statutory Complaints and Corporate Customer Feedback, and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Review Letter 2025 be reviewed; and**
- c) the improvement in complaint handling performance and the increase in positive feedback be noted.**

CAB-15 Child Friendly Telford

The Cabinet Member: Children & Young People, Learning, Employment & Skills presented the report of the Director: Public Health which sought approval to adopt the Child Friendly Telford vision as part of the wider Children and Young People Strategy.

The report highlighted the Council's aim to make Telford & Wrekin the best place in the UK for children and young people to grow up, with a strong emphasis on co-production, ensuring children and young people are actively involved in shaping services and decisions that affect them.

The Council had a strong foundation for supporting children and young people, evidenced by two consecutive "Outstanding" Ofsted ratings for Children's Services and positive recognition for SEND partnership work. The report detailed a wide range of existing initiatives such as Family Hubs, the 5 by 5, and 10 by 10 enrichment programmes, youth forums, free swimming lessons and targeted support for vulnerable children and young carers.

Extensive engagement had taken place with children, young people, families and professionals, including through the Youth Parliament's "Make Your Mark" ballot, which gathered nearly 4,900 responses. This feedback had directly shaped the Council's seven "wishes" for children and young people to be healthy, heard, safe, achieving, independent, to have trusted friends and to be happy.

The report proposed a detailed implementation plan to embed the child-friendly approach across the Council, align existing initiatives with the seven wishes and ensure children and young people are involved in decision-making at all levels. It also recommended the Council's Senior Management Team act as a reporting board to oversee implementation and monitor impact.

Cabinet Members welcomed the report and highlighted how the initiative represented more than a council-led programme but a borough-wide movement to ensure every child and young person had the opportunity to thrive. It was noted that the voices of young people were central to the strategy, with priorities such as being healthy, safe, heard and happy directly shaping the Council's approach. Members praised the range of initiatives already in place, including free swimming, family hubs, youth grants and the urban games and noted the importance of collaboration with partners and communities to improve the experience of growing up in Telford. They also commended the work of Council's Public Health team in engaging young people through emotional wellbeing surveys and events such as the mental

health summit, which led to the successful Year of Wellbeing campaign and the subsequent development of a digital platform to support young people's emotional health.

The Conservative Group Leader expressed his support for the Council's aspiration to make Telford & Wrekin a great place for children and young people to grow up, acknowledging the value behind the child-friendly vision. Whilst supportive of the overall aims, he raised questions about the criteria and standards used to define "child-friendly status," suggesting that national frameworks such as UNICEF's Child Friendly Cities initiative might offer useful context. He welcomed the engagement with young people through forums and surveys but encouraged greater emphasis on parental involvement, noting that parents hold primary responsibility for their children. He also highlighted challenges such as low secondary school attendance rates and the impact of drug misuse, including substances.

In response to concerns raised in relation to parental engagement, Cabinet Members highlighted the Council's proactive approach through family hubs, which had supported over 12,000 families in the past year. Led by the Council's Strengthening Families team, the hubs have proactively reached out to families starting from birth registration and through midwifery and social work visits, providing holistic support and addressing issues such as domestic abuse, addiction and mental health within the family unit. It was also stated that long-standing initiatives such as Crucial Crew, which had supported thousands of Year 6 pupils in preparing for secondary school and understanding key issues such as online safety, drug and alcohol awareness and personal safety.

RESOLVED that – the Telford and Wrekin Council working towards becoming a Child Friendly borough, with SMT operating as the reporting Board for agreeing Child Friendly standards, implementation and impact monitoring be approved.

CAB-16 Culture & Communities

The Cabinet Member: Leisure, Tourism, Culture and The Arts presented the Borough's first Culture Strategy, seeking Cabinet's approval and endorsement of the stakeholder engagement approach underpinning its development.

The report outlined the strategy as a borough-wide commitment to celebrating Telford & Wrekin's unique heritage, cultural diversity and community spirit. Cultural investment was not only about enjoyment but also played a vital role in improving health and wellbeing, tackling social isolation, supporting the local economy, and fostering pride and belonging.

The report highlighted that cultural activity had contributed significantly to the Borough's economy, attracting 3.2 million visitors annually and generating £220m return.

The strategy aimed to ensure cultural opportunities were inclusive and accessible to all residents, with a focus on community engagement, creative development, and economic growth. The report outlined the Council's ongoing investment in events and venues, including the delivery of the new Telford Theatre, which had secured £15.5m in Government funding and would feature a 700 seat auditorium, a studio theatre and a community art room, enabling a broader programme of performances and outreach.

The report also noted the expansion of the Theatre on Tour programme and the Council's successful free events programme, which had attracted over 100,000 attendees annually. Refurbishment plans were also outlined for amphitheatre located in the Telford Town Park to restore it as a 400 seat performance venue for music and theatre to further boost tourism, support wellbeing and revitalise the local art scene.

The strategy would be finalised later in the year, setting out a five-year vision for cultural growth.

Cabinet Members welcomed the Borough's first Culture Strategy, describing it as a celebration of Telford & Wrekin's rich heritage, creativity and ambition. They praised the report for highlighting the Council's vibrant cultural offer and its role in making Telford a desirable place to live, work and visit. Members emphasised that the strategy reflected the administration's continued ambition to expand access to arts and culture, building on over 300 years of creative history dating back to the Industrial Revolution. They commended the Council's efforts to take cultural activity into communities through initiatives like the Theatre on Tour programme and the Council's support for volunteer-led events, such as the Ironbridge Brass Band Festival, which was also praised for helping to grow community-led culture and tourism. Members also welcomed plans to restore the amphitheatre in Telford Town Park, recognising its potential as a unique performance venue.

The Conservative Group Leader noted the report and highlighted the borough-wide focus on events and the use of centralised ticketing and council communications to broaden local engagement. However, he observed that the report leaned heavily toward performing arts, which he felt reflected a narrow definition of culture. He urged the Council to consider a broader interpretation in future reviews, to include everyday cultural activities such as sports and fishing.

RESOLVED that:

- a) plans to expand the Council's Theatre on Tour and Headline Events Programmes noting the positive impact these are having across communities be approved;**
- b) the development and submission of a funding bid to develop the Town Park Amphitheatre to provide a new outdoor performance space be approved;**
- c) the progress being made with the development of the new Telford Theatre be noted; and**

- d) the draft Vision and priorities for the Borough's first Culture Strategy be approved and the proposals for stakeholder engagement in the Strategy's further development be endorsed.**

The meeting ended at 11.20 am

Signed for the purposes of the Decision Notices

Anthea Lowe
Director: Policy & Governance
Date: **Wednesday 23 JULY 2025**

Signed

Date: Thursday 25 September 2025