

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Governance Committee held on Friday 31 October 2025 at 4.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Third Floor, Southwater One, Telford, TF3 4JG

Present: Councillors N Page (Vice-Chair), S Davies, S J Reynolds and W L Tomlinson

In Attendance: L Gordon (Member Support Officer), A Lowe (Director: Policy & Governance), R Phillips (Registrars, Public Protection, Legal & Democracy Service Delivery Manager) and M Wallace (Member Support Officer)

Apologies for Absence: Councillor L Lewis, C Chikandamina, R Tyrrell and O Vickers

GOV36 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Shaun Davies MP declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 5 as the Honorary Vice-President of the Local Government Association. The interest was deemed non-prejudicial and the Councillor remained presented.

GOV37 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 8 October 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

GOV38 Committee on Standards in Public Life Annual Report 2024/25

The Service Delivery Manager: Registrars, Public Protection, Legal & Democracy informed Members of the Committee that each year the committee was required to receive the Annual Report of the Committee for Standards in Public life. The Committee for Standards in Public Life was a national body that promoted ethical standards for Local Government. Members heard that 2025 marked the thirtieth anniversary of the Nolan principles, which laid the foundation for code of conduct in public life nationally. The report reflected on the legacy of the Nolan principles and looked at the potential challenges that lay ahead, which included cultural shifts and the use of artificial intelligence.

Members commented that they had observed a significant improvement in the openness and approachability of officers in recent years, and that the cultural shift was to be commended. It was suggested that the Committee undertake



an annual self-assessment of the Council's processes and handling of issues when they arise, this was welcomed by the Committee.

The Committee noted that a large amount of time was taken up with Parish and Town Council code of conduct issues and questioned whether it would be appropriate to introduce a cost for these services. The Director: Policy & Governance advised that training had been provided to Parish and Town Council's to help them manage issues, but agreed to consider cost recovery, noting that introducing a cost could also act as a deterrent.

RESOLVED – that the Governance Committee note the contents of Annual Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life.

GOV39 Governance Update from LGA Peer Reviews Conducted Nationally

The Committee received a verbal update from the Director: Policy & Governance, on governance learning derived from Local Government Association (LGA) peer reviews conducted nationally.

The Director: Policy & Governance explained that the LGA peer challenge process was designed to provide assurance and identify areas for improvement within a Local Authority. The process involved two phases: an initial documentary review followed by an on-site visit, typically lasting four days. Members heard that the framework had been strengthened in the last 12 months and focused on five key themes, including governance and culture. Following a review, councils received a report within three months, which was to be published alongside an action plan, and a follow-up visit was to take place within 12 months.

The Committee was provided with examples of governance-related findings and recommendations from recent peer reviews from other Councils nationally. In 2021, a newly established unitary authority was advised to strengthen scrutiny arrangements and improve relationships between Cabinet and the Corporate Management Team. Recommendations included enhancing corporate accountability and embedding cultural change. In 2022, an authority that had moved from a Cabinet to a Committee system was advised to review its governance arrangements, clarify roles and responsibilities, and ensure respectful behaviour. Recommendations focused on shared priorities, officer-member relationships, and reviewing committee structures against best practice. In 2023, a council operating under no overall control was found to have issues with collective responsibility and organisational culture. Recommendations included improving internal control, refreshing organisational values, and reviewing governance structures such as Informal Cabinet and the Strategic Executive Board. In 2024, a metropolitan council was advised to undertake a governance review to



improve decision-making, strengthen scrutiny, and drive cultural change to foster a 'one council' approach. Finally, in 2025, a unitary authority was commended for strong staff commitment and member development but advised to improve information flow between members and officers and reinvigorate cultural connections. Recommendations included establishing a statutory officers board and enhancing visibility of leadership.

Members were assured that Telford & Wrekin had strong governance arrangements in place, including regular statutory officer meetings, a clear standards regime, annual constitution reviews, unqualified audited accounts, robust risk management, and a recognised Member development programme. The Committee heard that staff survey results indicated high levels of staff satisfaction, and initiatives such as the Chief Executive's "Ask Me Anything" sessions supported openness and engagement.

The Committee thanked the Director for their report and agreed that continuous improvement and benchmarking against the best-performing councils was important. Members commented on their experience of participating in a peer review, describing it as rewarding and noting the breadth of expertise among attendees.

The Committee noted the update.

The meeting ended at 4.48 pm

Chairman: _____

Date: Thursday 8 January 2026