



Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Cabinet

6 January 2026

Medium Term Financial Strategy 2026/27- 2029/30

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Zona Hannington- Cabinet Member: Finance, Governance & Customer Services
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Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key Decision:	Key Decision
Forward Plan:	Yes – 11 September 2025
Report considered by:	SMT – 2 December 2025 Business Briefing – 11 December 2025 Cabinet – 6 January 2026

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

It is recommended that Cabinet Members approve:

- 1.1 The proposed revised Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) set out in this report for consultation between 7 January 2026 and 3 February 2026 including a council tax increase for 2026/27 equivalent to £0.72 per week general council tax increase for the average (Band B) property and £0.48 per week for the Adult Social Care precept, which will be fully invested in the provision of

social care services for the most vulnerable members of our community delivering our vision to protect, care and invest to create a better borough.

1.2 Members are asked to note:

1.2.1 The Councils priorities to deliver our vision:

- Every child, young person and adult lives well in their community
- Everyone feels the benefit from a thriving economy
- All neighbourhoods are a great place to live
- Our natural environment is protected, and the Council is taking a leading role in addressing the climate emergency
- A community focussed innovative council providing efficient, effective and quality services.

1.2.2 The continued strong track record of sound financial management of the Council including delivery of a balanced budget for over 17 years.

1.2.3 That 70pence in every £1 the Council spends is allocated to Social Services.

1.2.4 The net investment of £15.8m into Adult Social Care, £2.7m into Children's Social Care and the investment into the Capital Programme totalling £437m over the period. The cumulative net investment into Social Care Services since 2020/21 is over £67m.

1.2.5 That a number of the investments made in this report also generate a financial benefit, as well as fulfilling their primary purpose, which is invested in front line services. This is equivalent to provision of over 585,000 home care hours or over 6million £2 bus fare rides.

1.2.6 The savings of £195.3m delivered since 2009/10 as a result of reduced government funding from 2011 whilst the cost and demand for many Council services have been increasing and in particular for Adult Social Care.

1.2.7 The changes to the Local Government Finance Settlement, which are welcomed by the Council, with the implementation of the Fair Funding Review 2.0 for 2026/27 including a multi-year settlement and an updated formula incorporating updated data for deprivation and population which will better reflect needs.

1.2.8 The changes to the Business Rates System effective from 1st April 2026 which introduce 3 new multipliers as well as a reset of the system and a revaluation.

1.2.9 National and international economic pressures which have resulted in a challenging financial outlook with interest rates and inflation remaining higher than Bank of England forecasts.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To provide an update on the medium-term financial outlook, including key uncertainties and financial pressures and to set out proposals for consultation during the period 7 January 2026 and 3 February 2026. Consultation activities will include holding sessions with key stakeholders including the Voluntary and Community sectors, Town and Parish Councils, businesses, and the Council's cross-party Business & Finance Scrutiny Committee, issuing media releases and seeking views from residents through our website.
- 2.2 After considering the outcomes from consultation, a further report will be considered at Cabinet on 12 February 2026 at which recommendations will be made for consideration at full Council on 26 February 2026 when the budget for 2026/27 will be finalised and the level of council tax for 2026/27 set, all within the context of a four-year MTFS to ensure that the Council's medium-term financial position remains sustainable and robust.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 The current MTFS, which covered the 4-year period to 2028/29, was approved at full Council on 27 February 2025. This included the 2025/26 revenue budget and medium-term capital programme.
- 3.2 Councils across the country continue to face extreme financial challenges with pressures driven by high costs and unrelenting demand pressures for services such as Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care, homelessness and home to school transport. The LGA's submission ahead of the Autumn 2025 budget states "The sector's financial challenges are rooted in a sustained period of austerity combined with rapid increases in cost and demand pressures. While funding levels have increased in recent years, the cuts of the 2010's are far from fully reversed. Core spending power remains 16.4% lower in real terms in 2025/26 compared to 2010/11. Annual spending pressures continually outstrip budgeted resources, leading to annual overspends. Prior to the 2025 spending review the LGA estimated that councils faced a funding gap of £8.4billion by 2028/29 compared to 2023/24. Councils need a significant increase in overall funding to stem the emerging risk of system-wide financial failure and to ensure councils can meet demand for the vital services needed by their communities."
- 3.3 Telford & Wrekin Council is also facing significant budget challenges arising from increasing costs and increasing demand for services. However, Telford & Wrekin Council has a long track record of sound financial management and has demonstrated an ability to take the robust decisions needed to ensure long-term financial sustainability – although this includes difficult choices relating to further cuts to staffing necessitating redundancies, reductions to some services, delivering services differently, reviewing fees and charges and the level of council tax increase.
- 3.4 The Financial Monitoring Report for 2025/26 also on this agenda provides the latest projections in relation to the outturn position for the current year. Many

of the pressures we face in the current year are of an ongoing nature and are likely to increase in future years.

- 3.5 On 11 June 2025 the Chancellor announced the Spending Review which set out budgets for all government departments for the period 2026/27 to 2028/29, and up to 2029/30 for capital investments. The Local Government settlement showed an additional £3.3 billion grant funding in real terms for local authorities in 2028/29 compared with 2023/24, resulting in an average overall real terms increase in local authority core spending power between 2023/24 and 2028/29 of 3.1% per year.
- 3.6 The key announcements relating to local government at a national level include, additional housing investment, early intervention funding for the prevention of homelessness, additional funding for Adult Social Care (via increases to NHS budgets), funding to transform Children's Social Care, a SEND reform (with a White Paper due in January 2026) and consolidation of the Household Support Fund into a new Crisis and Resilience Fund for households.
- 3.7 The Spending Review also reaffirmed the Government's commitment to multi-year allocations and moving to a more up-to-date assessment of each council's needs and resources as part of the 2026/27 Local Government Finance Settlement. The new system will include a long overdue updated assessment of relative needs and resources, a reset of the Business Rates Retention Scheme and will include some transitional measures to smooth the impact of changes. As part of the process, a consultation was undertaken between 20 June and 15 August 2025: The Fair Funding Review, which was seeking views on determining new funding allocations for local authorities and outlined proposals to update the overall funding system. This informed the Policy Statement published by MHCLG on 20 November 2025.
- 3.8 The Budget, presented by the Chancellor on 26 November 2025, set out a medium-term plan for public finances. This included departmental expenditure limits up to 2028/29. The Budget also confirmed the anticipated changes to business rates with the introduction of two lower multipliers for Retail, Hospitality and Leisure to be funded by a new high value multiplier from April 2026.
- 3.9 The reform of funding arrangements is the most significant change in over two decades. There are likely to be winners and losers, and transitional mechanisms will be crucial to avoid services being put at risk. The changes are welcomed by the Council however financial planning is still challenging due to the very tight national government funding position, significant cost of living pressures facing our residents and higher interest rates together with major uncertainties over the future economic outlook. This creates the context within which we must now consider our MTFS proposals. Given the significant cost pressures the Council is proposing setting a detailed budget for 2026/27 only but within the context of a four-year MTFS.

- 3.10 Despite the significant cost pressures, as a large complex organisation delivering many essential services to our community, we need to plan over a medium-term period. This is particularly the case for large capital projects which may take more than one year to complete. Therefore, this report sets out the MTFS covering the period 2026/27 to 2029/30. However, due to the high levels of increased demand for services and cost pressures the projections beyond next year are indicative and will be regularly updated as further information becomes available.

4.0 Summary of main proposals

- 4.1 The Council has a long track record of sustained strong and effective financial management and has demonstrated a willingness to take difficult decisions when required. Despite having to deliver £195.3m of ongoing annual budget savings by the end the current financial year since 2009/10, the Council has continued to manage its budget effectively.
- 4.2 However, due to the current high levels of financial pressure arising from the increased demand for and cost of Adult Social Care, this report recommends a council tax increase equivalent to £0.72 per week general council tax increase for the average (Band B) property and £0.48 per week for the ASC precept. All the funding raised through the council tax increase will be invested in the provision of Social Care services for the most vulnerable children and adults in our community. In 2025/26, Telford & Wrekin Council has the lowest level of council tax for the services that this council provides in both the West and East Midlands and one of the lowest levels of council tax out of all English unitary authorities. Council tax comparisons are included in Appendices 1 and 2. At Band D (the national comparator) council tax in Telford and Wrekin for the services that we provide is £649.21 less pa than the highest Midland Authority. Council tax in the Midlands is, on average, 19% higher than in Telford & Wrekin (£305.07pa more at Band D for the services that this Council is responsible for). At Band D, council tax in Telford & Wrekin is lower than our nearest neighbours by £193.00 for Shropshire Council, £206.35 for Staffordshire County Council and £574.91 for Walsall Council.

Even after the proposed council tax increase which will cost the average resident (based on a Band B property) £1.20 per week, it is likely that the Council will still have the lowest council tax in the midlands for the services that it provides. The increase in the total bill for each household will be affected by the decisions of the Police & Crime Commissioner, The Fire Authority and individual town and parish councils.



- 4.3 As part of the proposed council tax increase, the Council will apply the Government's £0.48 per week Adult Social Care precept for next year. However, all of the funding generated from the total £1.20 per week council tax increase will be invested in the provision of social care services to support the most vulnerable people in our community. The council tax increase will raise £4.7m towards the £15.8m additional investment that is required into our Adult Social Care services next year with the additional investment required being funded through further budget savings.
- 4.4 The Council's net budget for Children's Safeguarding next year will be approximately £52m and for Adult Social Care the net budget will be over £97m giving a total commitment to these two key areas of nearly £150m, equivalent to approximately 70% of the total net revenue base budget.
- 4.5 The scope for additional ongoing revenue investments next year is limited, as further investments in other priorities would require more budget savings to be identified. However, several pressure areas have been addressed during development of the MTFS to ensure that the proposed budget is robust and sustainable.
- 4.6 The current medium-term capital investment programme totals £437m and is set out in Appendix 12. This includes:
- Over £88m to deliver high quality Nuplace and Telford & Wrekin Homes for local people to rent from a responsible and responsive landlord, and investment for affordable and specialist housing programmes,
 - Over £59m to support further Growth Fund initiatives building on our track record of delivering growth, new employment opportunities and meeting gaps in the commercial market, a recent example being Orchard Business Park at Hortonwood delivering 24 new industrial units and creating 75 new jobs,
 - Over £103m for transport and Highways which includes equipping the Council to repair more potholes with the Find it Fix it crews whose targeted approach has resulted in a 15% reduction in the number of potholes in the last four years,
 - Over £41m for education capital projects including investment in school expansion projects to increase pupil places
 - Over £5.5m for a range of housing initiatives, including affordable warmth, empty properties, rough sleeper, disabled facility grants and temporary accommodation.

- £16.3m for Leisure & Cultural Schemes including a new swimming pool, new gym equipment and amphitheatre improvements,
- Over £56m Local Regeneration Fund including Towns Fund investment in Oakengates and Wellington and Levelling Up funding for Station Quarter and the Theatre,
- Over £22m Pride in Place Programme to build stronger communities, create thriving places and drive regeneration with investment in the Woodside, Sutton Hill and Brookside areas.

4.7 Some of the investments highlighted above also generate a financial benefit, as well as fulfilling their primary purpose. For example, NuPlace which provides high quality homes for rent from a reliable landlord, mainly at market rent levels and has enabled brownfield sites to be brought back into use and investment in the Property Investment Portfolio (PIP) to attract and retain jobs for local people and to provide other regeneration benefits for our residents. An ancillary consequence of both these investments is that it is anticipated they will bring long term capital growth which will strengthen the Council's balance sheet as well as generating revenue returns well in excess of the associated loan repayment charges. They will also bring other direct and indirect financial and other benefits to the residents of the Borough including additional income from council tax and business rates which will be used to help front line services such as Adult Social Care, as well as protecting and creating jobs for local people.

4.8 However, of course, we cannot continue to deliver everything that we do currently in exactly the same ways as we have done previously and need to continue to make savings where we can. Since 2009/10 the Council has delivered savings totalling £195.3m, this report contains details of our approach to identifying savings opportunities and to consultation and engagement on these proposals so that we minimise their impacts as far as possible. The report also puts forward new proposals that will deliver ongoing savings, including from additional income, of £19.1m commencing 2026/27. Despite the significant budget savings that we have had to make, the Council is still a large organisation delivering many services to local people and it is essential that we use our remaining revenue and capital resources as effectively as possible to deliver the greatest possible benefit for local people. The Council has consistently said that it will continue to protect the most vulnerable in our society and prioritise the protection of services to vulnerable adults and children in our community. The Council is committed to ensuring that we always meet the assessed needs of vulnerable people as we make changes to services, we will always place priority on these essential services and will not let financial pressures mean that we fail to meet the assessed statutory needs of vulnerable residents.

4.9 The Council will retain specific reserves and provisions to make prudent provision for likely risks including insurance excesses, bad debts etc. £21.7m has been retained in the Budget Strategy Reserve and the General and Special Fund balances totalled £4.4m at the start of the current financial year.

Further details of the reserves and provisions held by the Council are included at Appendix 5.

- 4.10 A consultation period on the proposals included in this report will run from 7 January 2026 through to 3 February 2026. The Business & Finance Scrutiny Committee will scrutinise the budget proposals. Cabinet will agree final recommendations to full Council at their meeting to be held on 12 February 2026 and final decisions on the budget and council tax for 2026/27 will be taken at full Council on 26 February 2026.

5.0 National Context

- 5.1 Since 2010 there have been significant cuts in public spending and periods of severe financial constraint. Local authorities have been particularly affected by funding cuts during this period because the Government protected many other areas of public spending – but not local government.
- 5.2 In recent years, as the Government cut funding for local authorities, they assumed that councils would increase council tax by the maximum permitted up to the referendum limit, including the introduction of the Adult Social Care precept. This has seen a direct transfer of the responsibility for funding local government services from grants provided by central government to council taxpayers. As a Council with a comparatively low level of Council Tax (see appendices 1 and 2) and most properties in Bands A and B a 1% Council Tax increase raises significantly less than in an area which has a high level of Council Tax and has a large proportion of properties in higher Council Tax bands.
- 5.3 There has been an increase in the numbers of councils requiring Exceptional Financial Support (EFS). In 2025/26 29 councils required EFS in order to balance their budgets, of these 26 has social care responsibilities. Since its introduction in 2020/21 42 local authorities have accessed over £5billion through EFS. Locally, in the face of increasing demands for key services at the same time as we have been subject to cuts in our funding from Government, the Council has exercised very active budget management and financial control by Cabinet Members and officers across the Council. The Council has demonstrated a consistently strong track record of sound financial management for over 17 years despite having to deliver £195.3m ongoing annual budget savings/additional income by the end of 2025/26.
- 5.4 Adult Social Care has faced significant additional pressures from the increase in the number of people needing access to social care services and specialist care. The Borough's population increased by 14.9% in the decade to 2024. This was the highest of all West Midlands upper tier local authorities and the 9th largest population growth of all 151 upper tier local authorities in England in that period. The population in the Borough for those aged 65 plus increased by 27.6% in the decade to 2024, in comparison to England's 15.5% increase. This was the highest increase of all West Midlands upper tier local authorities and the fourth highest of all 151 upper tier authorities in England. The population of Telford & Wrekin is projected to grow to 208,000 by 2032. This represents an

increase of 10.0% from 2022, greater than the projected growth in England (6.4%) and West Midlands (5.9%). By 2032, 21% of the Borough's population are projected to be aged 18 years and under, a decrease from 24% in 2022 but remains above the average for England (20%). By 2032, 20.3% of the borough's population are projected to be aged 65+, compared with 17.7% of the population in 2022. This represents an increase of 26.1% from 2022, compared to a projected increase in England of 20.7%.

5.5 On 20 November 2025 the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution published a written ministerial statement which was accompanied by a policy statement of the 2026/27 to 2028/29 local government finance settlement. This included the governments formal response to the summer consultation on Fair Funding Review 2.0, the governments formal response to the 2025 consultation on the delivery of the business rates reset and a policy paper on delivery of the business rates reset. The policy statement confirmed that the Government will deliver a three-year local government finance settlement in December 2025 for 2026/27 to 2028/29 which will be the first multi-year settlement in a decade. The policy statement is a significant step in the Fair Funding Review firming up many of the proposals within the consultation and will see the needs of local authorities reassessed through the new relative needs formulas taking into account more up to date data around deprivation and population.

5.6 On 26 November 2025 the Chancellor delivered her Budget to the House of Commons. This included the anticipated changes to the business rates system.

6.0 Fair Funding Review 2.0 and Reset of the Business Rates Retention System

6.1 Significant changes were made to the local government finance system from 2013/14 including the localisation of a share of business rates, the replacement of the national Council Tax benefit scheme with local Council Tax Support schemes and the transfer of responsibility for Public Health services from the NHS to councils with the introduction of a ring-fenced Public Health Grant funded by the Department of Health and Social Care. This change to the local government finance system represented a significant transfer of risk from the Government to councils but also brought opportunities and incentives to encourage growth in local communities in line with the Government's national drive to increase the availability of housing and jobs.

6.2 The Fair Funding Review 2.0, alongside the reset to the Business Rates Retention system, will see the most significant change to local government funding since 2013/14. The Fair Funding Review 2.0 is aimed at better aligning funding with need across the country by updating formulas used to calculate local authorities need for services relative to one another. These formulas haven't been updated for decades and use data that is significantly out of date. There are currently 15 formulas used in the needs assessment which will be simplified to 9 formulas from 2026/27 onwards. The formulas will be kept up to date with the use of projections and regular resets.

- 6.3 The government has confirmed that the £600m Recovery Grant, introduced in 2025/26 to support the most deprived local authorities, which are least able to fund their own services through locally raised income, is going to continue across the multi-year settlement with amounts guaranteed at 2025/26 levels.
- 6.4 The settlement will include £3.4billion in new grant funding for adult and children's social care across the three years resulting in a 2.6% average annual increase in core spending power over the spending review period. The government is simplifying more than 30 funding streams worth nearly £47billion across the multi-year settlement including the merging of £21.5billion of existing funding into four new consolidated grants as follows:
- Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant (£2.4bn) – includes Homelessness Prevention Grant, Rough Sleeping Funding and DA Safe Accommodation Grant.
 - Children, Families and Youth Grant (£3.1bn) – includes social care prevention grant, supporting families funding, new investment of £547m, Holiday, Activities and Food Grant, Pupil Premium Plus Post-16 grant.
 - Public Health Grant (£13.45bn) – main Public Health Grant, Drug and Alcohol Treatment and Recovery Improvement Grant, Local Stop Smoking Services and Support Grant and Swap to Stop scheme funding.
 - Crisis and Resilience Fund (£2.5bn) – Household Support Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments.
- 6.5 A number of existing grants totalling £25.3billion will also be redistributed using the new Fair Funding Assessment including:
- Social Care Grant (£17.8bn)
 - Adult Social Care Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund (£3.15bn)
 - Employers National Insurance Contributions (£1.51bn)
 - New Homes Bonus (£0.87bn)
- This will result in a significant increase to the level of revenue support grant received as these grants are rolled in.
- 6.6 The Government will include transitional arrangements in the new reformed system to enable authorities to adjust to the new funding allocations. This will be achieved through the use of funding floors; however, the majority of social care authorities will receive a real term increase.
- 6.7 Other issues facing the Council include:
- Reductions in interest rates set by the Bank of England have been slower than anticipated. This could impact on the generation of assumed capital receipt values and on Council budgets for local Council Tax support (if unemployment increases or household incomes fall) and the budgets for homelessness, housing benefit etc.
 - The impact on commercial income from loss of business through external factors

- The levels of demand for key front-line services – particularly children’s safeguarding and Adult Social Care services.
- The levels of pay awards from April 2026 and future years.
- The impact of the significant changes to the Business Rates Retention system from 2026/27 including the introduction of 3 new multipliers, a system reset and revaluation which could result in an increase in level of appeals.
- Other legislative changes that will impact the Council such as the Renters Rights Act and the extension of free school meals eligibility.
- Projections of what the council’s budget gap might be in 2027/28, and later years are therefore extremely difficult to make. Projections are based on the Council’s budget model which will be regularly refined and updated as and when additional information becomes available. It is however certain that the actual position will be different from the projections for 2027/28, and later years included in this report.

7.0 Autumn Budget Statement November 2025

7.1 The Chancellor presented her budget on 26 November 2025 to the House of Commons. The Office of Budget Responsibility also published its Economic and Fiscal Outlook update. The majority of relevant announcements for local government were around business rates reform and a council tax surcharge which billing authorities will be required to collect on behalf of central government. Announcements relevant to local authorities included:

- New Council Tax surcharge from 2028/29 to be collected alongside council tax at a flat rate charge to owners. This will be based on new valuations to be prepared at 2026 prices for hereditaments over £2m, starting at a £2.5k surcharge.
- Mayoral Strategic Authorities and other growth funding – new designated areas, extension of pilots, skills funding devolution.
- SEND and the extension of the DSG statutory override – the government will set out substantial plans for reform of special educational needs provision early in the new year to deliver a sustainable system which will support children and families. Future funding implications will be managed within the overall government Departmental Expenditure Limits once the statutory override ends in 2027/28 which means that local authorities will not be expected to use general funds after 31 March 2028. Details around the government’s plans to support local authorities with historic and accruing deficits will be provided in the Local Government Finance Settlement.
- Living wage increase of 4.1% to £12.71 per hour and 8.5% for 18–20-year-olds to £10.85 per hour from April 2026
- Adjustment to treatment of earnings in Housing Benefit and Universal Credit to remove reductions to benefit for increases in working hours

- Administration of pensioner Housing benefit and Pension Credit to be brought together from Autumn 2026
- £48m additional funding to boost capacity in the planning system including additional investment to recruit an extra 350 planners in England by expanding the Pathways to Planning Graduate Scheme and creating a new Planning Careers Hub. The Council have already had the benefit of taking 2 Graduates through this scheme.
- Investment of £18m over two years in up to 200 playgrounds across England.
- Providing additional funding to enhance Trading Standards capabilities.
- Local authority charge points capability funding - £100m to accelerate installation of charge points where people live and work.
- Overnight Visitor Levy – the government has set out a plan to introduce a new overnight levy that will apply to visitors at accommodation providers. It would be up to mayors and other local leaders to introduce a modest charge. The government is seeking views on this proposal.
- The government will provide an additional £1.5billion capital investment to tackle fuel poverty through the Warm Homes Plan, in addition to the £13.2billion of funding allocated at Spending Review 2025.
- By 2029/30, the government will commit over £2billion annually for local authorities to repair, renew and fix potholes on their roads
- The government is adjusting how earnings are treated for Housing Benefit and Universal Credit claimants in supported housing and temporary accommodation, so that most claimants will not be subject to reductions in income for working more hours.

7.2 The Chancellor confirmed the changes to the business rates system, which were anticipated, with the introduction of two lower multipliers for Retail, Hospitality and Leisure (RHL) to be funded by a new High-Value Multiplier. The RHL multipliers are 5p lower than the existing national multipliers, 10.4% below the national standard multiplier and 11.6% below the national small multiplier. This is alongside a reset of the business rates system and a revaluation to reflect changes in property values since 2023. There will be a transitional relief scheme for businesses from 2026/27 for 3 years of the rating list which will cap business rates increases each year to a set amount.

- 7.3 The LGA's initial response to the Budget was "The Government has acted on LGA calls to provide greater financial certainty and a simpler funding system, which are hugely important for councils. While funding levels have increased in recent years, councils will be rightly anxious that today's budget does not provide the increase in funding they desperately need to ensure their financial sustainability, protect services, support local communities, and address national priorities. Councils work tirelessly to deliver on the ambitions of residents and are key to solving many of the challenges the Government is looking to address. However, local government finances remain under severe pressure with councils facing huge cost pressures in areas including adult social care, temporary accommodation, SEND, and home to school transport."

8.0 Local Context

- 8.1 Telford & Wrekin Council is a high performing local authority providing good quality services for the lowest council tax in the Midlands region for the services that the Council is responsible for.

Making the borough a better place to live

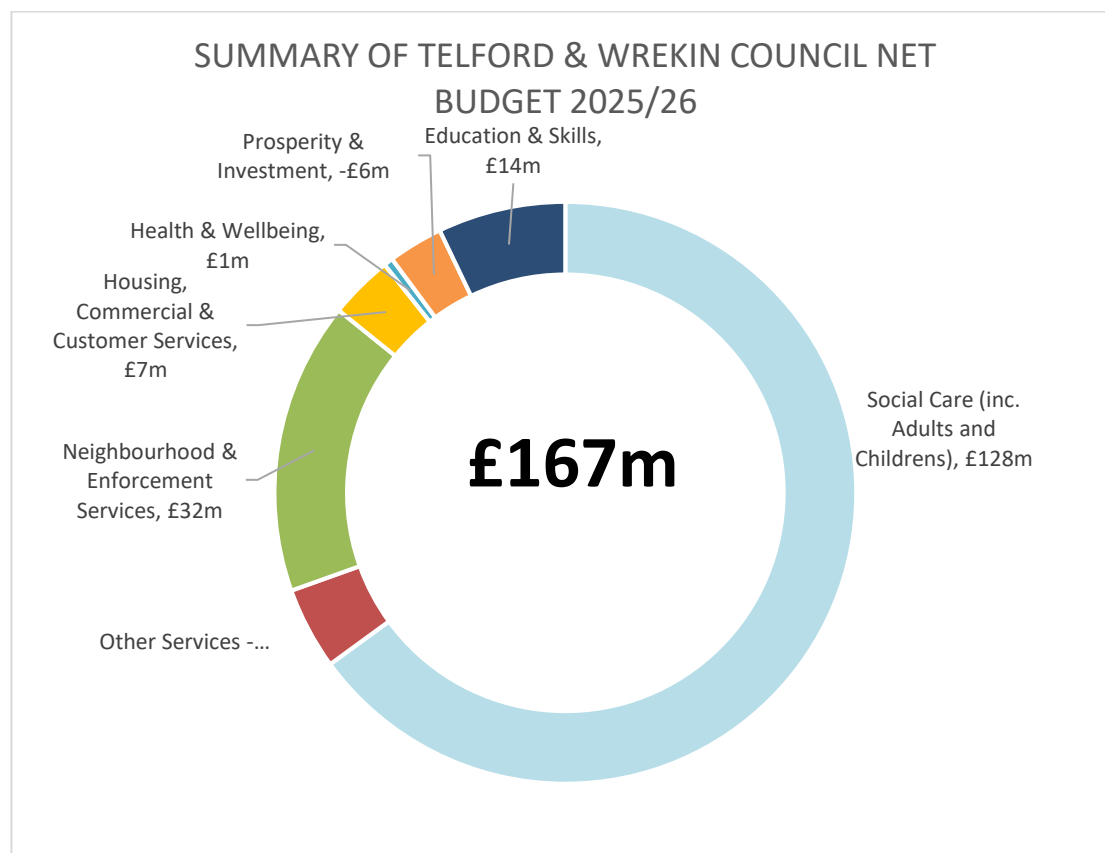


- 8.2 The Council has sought to offset part of the loss of Government grant by generating income by adopting a more commercial approach to many existing services. We have sought to ensure that this approach spreads fixed costs, maximises use of any spare capacity and where possible brings environmental, social, or economic benefits to our residents. We were the second council nationally to open a commercial solar farm and are continuing to invest in Nuplace, a wholly owned company, which offers high quality homes, mainly at market rents.



- 8.3 Primarily Nuplace was established to increase the supply of private rented accommodation in the area, to regenerate brown field sites that the Council had been unable to sell and to drive-up standards in the wider private rented sector by offering a high-quality alternative to private tenants. However, Nuplace also generates a surplus after paying all associated costs. The return is used to help reduce the amount of cuts that we would otherwise have to make to the front-line services that the Council provides to our community.
- 8.4 The Council is also committed to investing in the Borough's future. Ensuring that the Borough is an attractive place to live, work, learn and visit is essential if we are to attract new businesses that will create jobs and bring prosperity to the area and the people that live here. The Council also benefits from retaining a share of any additional business rates (between "reset periods") which also helps to minimise the cuts that we have to make to front-line services.
- 8.5 As part of our "Business Winning, Business Supporting" Approach, the Council continues to make investments in our Property Investment Portfolio through our "Growth Fund". Unlike some councils all property investments are within the Borough. The primary purpose of the Growth Fund is to attract new jobs to the Borough from inward investors, but it can also retain existing jobs in companies looking to expand and which may otherwise move out of the borough. Any net return after covering all associated costs is used to support front line services as well as additional retained income from business rates between any reset periods.
- 8.6 On 27 February 2025, the Council approved a detailed one-year service and financial planning strategy for the current financial year within the context of a four-year MTFS. The one-year detailed strategy was agreed because the Government only provided a one-year funding settlement. The Council remains committed to key themes from this earlier strategy and will continue:
- To work with partner organisations, including Town & Parish Councils and voluntary sector and community groups to seek to identify ways to mitigate the impact of some of the cuts to services that we can no longer afford to provide. These discussions have been very successful, and the Council is committed to extending this approach further through Partnership Deals with some transitional funding potentially available where appropriate.

- 8.7 The budget set for the current year and which forms the basis for the budget for future years is summarised in the chart below:



- 8.8 The chart shows that in 2025/26, £128m, or 76% of our net budget, is spent on social care for adults and children. Financial Management reports to Cabinet during the year have consistently highlighted that at Telford & Wrekin adult social care services are facing pressure despite the significant additional ongoing investments made in recent years, additional ongoing investment is therefore required to ensure a robust MTFS in future years.

9.0 A Council Working to Protect, Care & Invest to Create A Better Borough

- 9.1 Despite our severe financial constraints, Telford and Wrekin is a progressive Council with ambitions to improve the Borough and the lives of residents. The Council has an ambitious investment programme to protect, care and invest to create a better borough.



- 9.2 Our Council Plan agreed by Cabinet in February 2022 and updated in November 2024, sets out how as a Co-operative Council, the organisation wants to take forward the Borough over the medium term. It is a Plan which is centred on tackling the inequalities that exist in our communities. We will build a strong, clean economy and will ensure that all communities benefit from this - that the very real differences between our communities are “levelled- up” and that all of our communities are resilient, healthy and prospering. Core to all of this will be the action we take to protect our environment and playing our part in tackling the climate emergency. In October 2022, Cabinet agreed a 10-year vision for the borough providing the organisation with a long-term plan for the sort of place we want the borough to be in 2032, outlining our ambitions but also the challenges we want to have addressed. Vision 2032 has been developed with our key strategic partners including the NHS, Police, Telford College, and Harper Adams University providing a series of shared ambitions that we can collectively work together to achieve.
- 9.3 Despite the severe financial challenges we face, our mission is clear. We will support residents and businesses, attract new jobs and investment and promote clean growth in the borough, whilst seeking to protect, as far as we are able to, priority front-line services and are working co-operatively with our residents and partners to deliver these.
- 9.4 From our on-going engagement with local people over many years, we are clear that they and their families have some fundamental priorities which we as a Council will work with them to achieve. We know that the people of Telford & Wrekin want to live:



- **In a safe community** – we work in partnership with West Mercia Police to ensure that Telford & Wrekin remains a low crime area. Our work to

support and safeguard children from sexual exploitation has been recognised by Ofsted as amongst the best in the country.

- We have worked to get Telford designated as a White Ribbon Town where domestic violence is not tolerated. Our Public Protection team deliver our enforcement agenda to ensure that local services and facilities are safe, that nuisances are tackled and houses in multiple occupation are better managed. We have made a commitment as a Council to always look after the most vulnerable in our community despite the significant budget challenges that we face.



- **In a clean environment** – we work in partnership with Idverde and Veolia and also with our Town and Parish Councils to ensure that our streets, parks and public spaces are clean and tidy and that we have first class waste collection and recycling services. Household Recycling Rates are currently 49.2% and we continue to provide a collection service for green waste at no extra charge to the public.



- **In a place with good roads and pavements** – each year we invest in a major programme to repair and maintain our roads and pavements. We have also secured significant amounts of Government funding to improve many roads, roundabouts and junctions so that congestion caused by more cars using our roads in the future will be reduced or avoided. The results from the National Highways & Transportation Survey (NHT) for this year have us second in the region for overall satisfaction with roads, we are fourth nationally and third out of all unitary authorities. We have:
 - 626 miles of road,
 - 743 miles of footpaths,

- 132 cycle ways,
- 20,000 streetlights,
- 120 roundabouts
- Through our 'Pride in Your Community' initiative and through creative use by elected members of their ward fund allocations, we have also made lots of small improvements in communities and on estates that can make a big difference to everyday life.



- **Where there are first class schools and education facilities** – we work in partnership to support our primary, secondary and special schools and performance is amongst the best in the West Midlands. We will continue to invest in maintaining and extending school buildings.
- **Where they have a job and there is a thriving economy** – through our Enterprise Telford approach, we are attracting more new businesses to come to our Borough every year bringing new jobs. We have also supported many existing businesses to succeed and expand.



- Through our 'Pride in your High Street' initiative, we have sought to give local businesses the key skills to both survive and thrive in our town centres. We work to protect local jobs; we have lobbied Government to retain key activity in our town. We also work, through our Job Box and Apprenticeship schemes, to ensure local people, and particularly young people, have the skills they need to get a job.

9.5 As a co-operative council, we place residents at the heart of our decision-making. Our commitment to protecting, caring for, and investing in the borough is shaped by ongoing dialogue with the community. We consult with residents not only to hear their views, but to gain a deeper understanding of how proposed changes may affect those most impacted. This insight is essential to

shaping fair, informed, and responsive decisions that reflect the needs and priorities of our diverse borough.

- 9.6 Throughout the year, we've undertaken focused engagement activities to ensure that key issues are explored in depth before any decisions are made. Over the past 12 months, we've consulted on a wide range of significant topics, including:
- Housing Strategy
 - Supported Bus Service
 - The Council's budget for 2025/26
 - Residents Survey 2024/25
 - EV Charging
 - Draft Statement of Licensing Policy
- 9.7 Residents can also get involved and have their say on a range of different subjects through our Community Panel. This is intended to be a representative group of residents who volunteer to give their views and ideas on a range of local issues and services. When they sign up, they identify themes of interest, so we only contact them about what they wish to be consulted about.
- 9.8 We also have over 200 volunteers supporting our Mystery Customer programme, as we want to understand what it's really like to be a customer of our services — to gain insight into what people expect and the standard of service they receive. This programme enables us to continually and consistently capture customer feedback, which helps us identify what's working well and where improvements are needed. The insights gathered play a vital role in shaping service delivery, driving up standards, and ensuring that our services meet the needs of those who use them.
- 9.9 While many other councils have focussed on making cuts while neglecting growth and stopped major development projects, we continue to prudently invest to create jobs and safeguard the future prosperity of the Borough and its residents.
- 9.10 Underpinning our relationship with the community is our vision to **Protect, Care and Invest to create a better borough** and our Co-operative values. These values are at the heart of all that we say and do as an organisation enabling us to deliver our five corporate priorities:
- **Openness and Honesty** - being open and honest in the way we work and make decisions and communicate in a clear, simple and timely way.
 - **Ownership** - being accountable for our own actions and empower others with the skills to help themselves.
 - **Fairness and Respect** - responding to people's needs in a fair and consistent way.

- **Involvement** - working together with our communities, involving people in decisions that affect their lives and be prepared to listen and take on new ideas.

Our Vision, Priorities and Values



- 9.11 Our MTFS is the financial expression of our priorities. Through the development of a sound MTFS we maximise the use of revenue and capital resources and ensure that we allocate the funding that is available in the best way to deliver as far as possible on or overall vision to Protect, Care and Invest to Create a Better Borough. “Service Strategies” are prepared for each of the Council’s directorates. These demonstrate how the budgets for each directorate are used to support the work of each directorate and the linkages to each corporate priority. Service Strategies for 2026/27 have been included in Appendix 4. The Capital Programme is analysed by corporate priority later in this report to show how we use our capital resources to deliver our corporate priorities.

10.0 Funding Settlement for 2026/27

- 10.1 The provisional local government funding settlement for 2026/27 was announced on 17 December 2025. The provisional settlement is the first multi-year settlement in over a decade with funding allocations covering 2026/27 to 2028/29 being provided. It should be noted that the settlement will remain an annual event and figures for future years are subject to change until “locked down” by their own settlement. The figures for all years are based on the outcome of the Autumn Budget and Spending Review, announcements of the

2025 Budget and the 20 November Policy Statement. The main headlines are as follows:

- Fair Funding Assessment - MHCLG has published the provisional outcome of the Fair Funding Review which sets the underlying figures for the Fair Funding Assessment. This is split between Baseline Funding Level and revenue support grant.
- Business rates reset, revaluation and multiplier reform – the settlement reflects MHCLG’s latest analysis on the impact of the business rates revaluation, reset and introduction of new business rates multipliers.
- Council Tax – the council tax referendum limit in 2026/27 will continue to be 2.99% for the general council tax increase and 2% for the social care precept.
- Adult social care funding – Additional adult social care funding worth £150m in 2026/27, £250m in 2027/28 and £500m in 2028/29 has been added to RSG and will be distributed using the new adult social care relative needs formula. The Department of Health & Social Care will shortly publish “notional” adult social care amounts which will set out an expectation of how much of council funding should be spent on adult social care.
- Funding Floor Cost – amounts have been allocated in the settlement for transitional protection payments totalling £146.9m in 2026/27, £352.7m in 2027/28 and £567.5m in 2028/29.
- Recovery Grant – the 2025/26 Recovery Grant will continue over the 3-year settlement period.
- Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse grant – brings together existing grants for Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation, part of the Homelessness Prevention Grant, Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant and Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme. This consolidated grant now forms part of core spending power.
- Children, Families and Youth grant – brings together the existing Children’s Social Care Prevention Grant and the Supporting Families element of the Children Families Grant. The total is increased by £330m in 2026/27 and reduces by £124m in 2028/29.
- Core Spending Power – which measures the core revenue funding available to local authorities to fund their core services (includes RSG, Business Rates, Council Tax and specific grants) has increased nationally by 5.7% compared to 2025/26.

10.2 The provisional settlement for Telford & Wrekin has been positive with spending power increasing by 8.8% in 2026/27. This includes over £6m in additional Revenue Support Grant for 2026/27 and increases in ringfenced grants for Children, Families and Youth and Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse.

- 10.3 The deadline for responses to the provisional settlement is 14 January 2026. The Chief Financial Officer will agree a response to the provisional settlement with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Governance & Customer Services.

11.0 Base Budget For 2026/27

- 11.1 The base budget for 2026/27 totals £233.4m and is summarised in Appendix 7. The budget will be restated after final decisions have been taken on the savings and investment proposals contained in this report.
- 11.2 As previously highlighted in this report, there are many areas of significant uncertainty facing the Council and our overall financial position beyond March 2027.
- 11.3 It is with this uncertainty over the medium-term financial outlook facing the Council in mind that the balance between the key components of the overall MTFS need to be considered i.e.:
- New ongoing revenue and one-off capital investments (which also impact on the revenue budget both in the year of spend but also in some cases for many decades ahead),
 - The balance between further savings and the level of council tax increase,
 - The use of a prudent level of one-off resources versus retention of sufficient one-off resources to provide future flexibility and assurance of financial sustainability through the medium-term.
- 11.4 It is essential that we now use the best available information to estimate the potential level of budget shortfall in future years so that we can start to plan ahead now through this MTFS framework which is based on the Council's multi-year budget model. This includes many variables and will be regularly reviewed and updated as further information becomes available. Using current available information and assumptions, the position is summarised in the table below. However, it must be noted that the actual position may be very different to that set out below.

Base Budget Movements from 2025/26

	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	2028/29 £000	2029/30 £000
2025/26 Base Budget	167,639	167,639	167,639	167,639
Changes to Contingencies	(3,250)	(3,250)	(3,250)	(3,250)
Pensions - benefit from triennial evaluation - reduction in employers contribution and	(4,000)	(4,000)	(4,000)	(4,000)

	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	2028/29 £000	2029/30 £000
fully funded position				
Inflation on major contracts and utilities	2,058	3,258	4,458	5,658
Pay Inflation	1,460	3,860	6,280	8,749
Changes to other Government Grants – including grants transferring to RSG	29,862	40,886	40,886	40,886
Adult Social Care additional investment	25,283	31,733	38,688	46,326
Children's Safeguarding additional investment	4,617	6,691	7,962	10,073
Theatre costs	-	250	500	500
Grounds & Cleansing Contract	-	-	-	700
Ongoing Revenue Cost of Council Investment Programme	1,021	1,281	1,281	1,281
Cost of capital Programme	3,555	6,617	7,832	6,472
Savings previously approved	1,978	1,863	1,863	1,863
Other	3,230	2,831	2,571	2,579
Updated Base Budget	233,453	259,659	272,710	285,476
Assumed income from Council Tax	(99,582)	(100,425)	(101,925)	(103,425)
Assumed Revenue Support Grant	(12,968)	(13,202)	(13,466)	(13,735)
Grants Transferred into RSG	(29,052)	(38,704)	(38,704)	(38,704)
Additional RSG	(6,500)	(12,714)	(19,171)	(19,171)
Business Rates (including “top-up” and s.31 grants)	(59,984)	(62,204)	(63,459)	(64,739)
Projected Funding	(208,086)	(227,249)	(236,725)	(239,774)
Base Budget Gap before Council Tax Increase	25,367	32,410	35,985	45,702
Less:				

	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	2028/29 £000	2029/30 £000
Council Tax Core Increase - 2.99% in 2026/27	(1,877)	(1,877)	(1,877)	(1,877)
Adult Social Care Increase - 2% in 2026/27	(2,806)	(2,806)	(2,806)	(2,806)
Base Budget Gap after 26/27 Proposed Council Tax Increase	20,684	27,727	31,302	41,019
Additional Savings	(20,684)	(18,790)	(19,114)	(19,114)
To find from further savings/use of balances/council tax increases in future years	0	8,937	12,188	21,905

Notes:

- The overall position will be firmed up in the February report to Cabinet by which time the Council should have final allocations for most of the grants. The February report will also reflect any additional budget pressures and opportunities that arise over coming weeks.
- The actual amount of business rates available for the budget strategy will be confirmed when the NNDR 1 form is completed and submitted in January 2026. There are significant changes to Business Rates Retention in 2026/27 which include the impact of Revaluation 2026, the Business Rates Reset, two new multipliers for Retail, Hospitality & Leisure and an additional multiplier for businesses with RV over £0.5m. This will make the NNDR1 form far more complex than in previous years.
- No assumption has been made for any increase in either the general level of Council Tax or ASC precept beyond 2026/27. All of the additional funding generated from the 2026/27 increase is to be invested in provision of social care services to support the most vulnerable people in our community.
- The projections for years after 2026/27 are only intended as a broad indication at this stage for planning purposes and the estimates will be further updated as additional information becomes available including any changes in levels of demand and inflation from those currently assumed.
- RSG figures up to 2028/29 are provisional and will be finalised as part of the Local Government Finance Settlement each year. RSG for 2029/30 is outside the multi year settlement and no increase has therefore been assumed.

11.5 After having delivered £195.3m of annual ongoing savings by the end of this year, it is clear that further cuts will be more challenging. Clearly the Council will seek to minimise impacts on our community by working with Town and Parish Councils, local community groups, service users, the voluntary sector, volunteers and other partner organisations. Based on the position summarised above, total savings since 2009/10 began are projected to total just under

£235.4m by the end of 2029/30 (assuming no further council tax increases and based on the medium-term projections currently available – although these will inevitably change as further information becomes available) made up as follows:

	£m
Savings made to end of 2025/26	195.3
Savings previously approved for 2026/27	1.2
Savings now put forward for implementation in 2026/27	15.5
Savings now put forward for implementation in 2027/28 and 2028/29	1.5
Projected further savings/council tax increase required from 2027/28 to the end of the 4-year MTFS period in 2029/30	21.9
Total Projected savings by end of 2029/30	235.4

12.0 Our Approach to Developing Savings Proposals Budget Engagement

- 12.1 From 2017 onwards the Council adopted a new approach to the development of future savings proposals. With many of the more straightforward savings already achieved, identifying further efficiencies has become increasingly more complex. As a result, more time is required to engage with stakeholders on potential options and to explore ways to minimise the impact of changes. We now develop savings proposals on a rolling basis, as opportunities and capacity allow. This approach enables more meaningful engagement with our communities and partners, fostering more innovative and collaborative solutions to the challenges we face across the Borough. It also means that budget engagement takes place throughout the year, rather than being limited to a short, fixed period.
- 12.2 We will commence targeted discussions with our Town and Parish Councils, trade unions, business community and local voluntary and community sector partners and the Business & Finance Scrutiny Committee during January 2026. This is part of an ongoing dialogue that will continue throughout the year as our budget proposals are developed.

13.0 Capital Receipts and Debt Charges

- 13.1 The Council's programme of property rationalisation has not only reduced running costs as we have disposed of buildings and other surplus assets but is also generating significant capital receipts enabling us to fund some investment from internal resources rather than from increased borrowing. Due to a temporary Government relaxation in regulations, the Council is also able to use new capital receipts to fund transformation and statutory severance costs. Debt clearly has to be repaid and adds to pressure on the revenue budget so the generation of capital receipts from the sale of surplus assets helps protect essential front-line services. This reduces the amount of cuts that would otherwise have to be made.

- 13.2 The Council, unlike the Government, is not able to borrow to fund revenue services as the Council has to set a balanced revenue budget each year with any shortfall being funded by the use of balances or from further cuts to spending or increased income.
- 13.3 Some capital investment that is incurred to achieve Council objectives such as Nuplace which is offering tenants in the private rented housing sector the option of a high-quality home operated by a long-term responsive landlord not only deliver Council priorities but fund assets which are likely to increase in value over the long term and generate a revenue return greater than the cost of the associated debt charges. The cumulative growth in the Nuplace portfolio was 32% to the end of March 2025 with Nuplace generating a surplus which is used to support essential front-line services and to reduce the cuts to services that would otherwise be required. Debt repayments represent a long-term fixed charge against the revenue budget which reduces the amount of funding available for the provision of front-line services. This spreads the cost of the acquisition of these assets over the useful life of the asset and therefore the cost is borne by the council taxpayers that benefit from the asset. The Council carefully assesses each potential new investment to ensure that it does not expose the Council to an unacceptable level of risk either on an individual basis or when considering the entire debt portfolio of the Council with our approach set out in the capital and investment strategies, the treasury management strategy and prudential indicators reports that are considered by full Council each year.
- 13.4 In Telford & Wrekin debt repayments in 2025/26 accounted for 8.7% of the net revenue budget (including payment to Shropshire Council in respect of pre-unitary authority debt). This calculation does not take into account the income generated from capital schemes such as Nuplace and the Growth Fund for which the income generated covers the cost of debt associated with the capital investment as well as providing a return to the Council. Income from Nuplace is forecast to be £2m in 2025/26 and net additional income from the Property Investment Portfolio, which has been boosted by the Growth Fund investment, is expected to exceed £10.3m.
- 13.5 Our programme of asset sales totals £17.788m over the medium term. The planned profile of these receipts is shown below:

	£m
2025/26	6.877
2026/27	3.571
2027/28	1.340
2028/29	6.000
Total	17.788

- 13.6 Generation of these receipts is a key assumption within the MTFS. The Council has a detailed schedule of asset disposals to address this, which is regularly monitored by officers and all the revenue consequences of temporary financing pending these scheduled disposals are built into the Council's base

budget projections contained in this report. This dependency will continue to be subject to close monitoring. If any delay is experienced in generating expected receipts, mitigation factors could include a combination of re-phasing some capital spending schemes, identification of other assets for disposal or additional borrowing on a temporary or long-term basis although this would increase revenue costs and necessitate further cuts to other services or the use of additional one-off revenue resources such as the in-year contingency or Budget Strategy Reserve.

14.0 Section 106 Agreements

- 14.1 Planning obligations under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), commonly known as s106 agreements, are a mechanism which make a development proposal acceptable in planning terms, that would not otherwise be acceptable. They are focused on site specific mitigation of the impact of development. S.106 agreements are often referred to as 'developer contributions'. The common uses of planning obligations are to; secure affordable housing, to secure financial contributions to provide infrastructure (for example relating to necessary highways works to provide access to the development) and to help fund new educational facilities for the children of families that move into newly built houses. Careful negotiations are undertaken with developers in reaching the s.106 agreement, which are legally binding and clearly state what the funding can be used for.
- 14.2 Legally a S.106 can only be requested when it is:
 - 1. necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms
 - 2. directly related to the development; and
 - 3. fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.
- 14.3 Negotiations have to ensure that developments remain viable and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states where obligations are being sought or revised, local planning authorities should take account of changes in market conditions over time and, wherever appropriate, be sufficiently flexible to prevent planned development being stalled.
- 14.4 The Council publishes an Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) each year detailing income and expenditure against S106 agreements. A copy of the current Infrastructure Funding Statement is attached as Appendix 6.

15.0 2025/26 Projected Outturn Position

- 15.1 As the Financial Monitoring report also on this agenda shows, whilst the Council continues to exercise tight financial control, the Council is still experiencing very significant pressures, in particular for Adult Social Care services. Fortunately, due to our good financial planning and management we have a one-off contingency earmarked specifically for social care, a one-off contingency for income and inflationary pressures and also our general budget contingency. We have also identified in year savings to bring the budget back into balance. Work to seek to reduce this pressure is continuing but clearly further demand pressures may be experienced in key services, for example

winter pressures in the hospital which can impact on Adult Social Care, so the actual outturn will be different, either better or worse, than currently projected as we are only part way through the year. It is, therefore, essential that all Cabinet Members and budget holders continue to exercise tight financial control and to deliver all planned savings. The position will continue to be closely monitored particularly for key services but also for seasonal factors such as winter road gritting and any potential costs arising from flooding events.

16.0 Savings Proposals For 2026/27

- 16.1 By the end of the current financial year, the Council will have delivered ongoing budget savings, including additional income, of £195.3m since 2009/10. Despite the proposed £1.20 per week (Band B) council tax increase (which includes the ASC precept) which will raise around £4.7m, it is necessary for the Council to find further budget savings in order to deliver a balanced budget without using an unsustainable level of one-off balances.
- 16.2 Appendix 9 therefore includes a schedule of additional savings that if after consultation with service users and other stakeholders were all delivered would generate a total saving of £19.1m including additional in year savings for 2025/26. This includes savings of £9.8m from 2026/27 onwards. Clearly after already having delivered £195.3m of savings, these savings now put forward will include some proposals that are more challenging. As explained elsewhere in this report, extensive consultation with service users and partners will be undertaken to identify ways to mitigate the impacts of the proposals or to identify alternative options.
- 16.3 Whilst additional investments totalling £15.8m net of savings into Adult Social Care and £2.7m into Children's Safeguarding and Family Support in 2026/27 is put forward in this report, it is not possible, even in this service to continue providing the same services in the same ways. To ensure that the Council can continue to always meet the assessed needs of vulnerable adults and children in our community, it is necessary for new approaches to be taken to deliver the best outcomes for our clients and to ensure that we operate as efficiently as possible. Continuous improvement plans are therefore in place for both Children's Safeguarding and Adult Social Care. Details of these Continuous Improvement strategies are included as Appendices 10 and 11.

17.0 Revenue and Capital Investments

- 17.1 Due to the tight financial position faced by the Council the scope for new ongoing revenue investments is limited. However, the Council has always said that it will meet the assessed needs of vulnerable adults and children and in order to do this next year, significant additional investment will be made available to Adult Social Care totalling £15.8m and Children's Safeguarding and Family Support totalling £2.7m, after allowing for planned savings, in 2026/27. In total the net budget for Adult Social Care and Children's Safeguarding is nearly £150m next year.

- 17.2 The Council is proposing a significant capital programme which totals over £436.5m and is summarised in Appendix 12. This is a very significant set of investment proposals and demonstrates the Council's commitment to **Protect, Care and Invest to Create a Better Borough**. The proposed package of capital investments will bring significant benefits to the Borough. The Council has a successful track record of securing external funding to support the capital programme with over £179m of government grants, and external funding supporting the capital programme for 2025/26 to 2029/30 and a further £7.5m of government grant committed beyond 2029/30.
- 17.3 Nuplace was established to give tenants in the private rental sector the opportunity to rent high-quality, well-maintained homes from a long-term responsive landlord and by increasing competition in this sector of the housing market standards will be driven up. The initiative has already seen:
- 608 homes delivered, across thirteen sites including 56 refurbished properties across the Borough. Of these properties, 97 are for affordable rent or built to an adaptable standard, with the remainder being rented on the open market.
 - Nuplace's growing portfolio now provides a range of homes for over 1,500 people across the Borough with houses available within North and South Telford and Newport.
 - The diversification of Nuplace by the establishment of Telford & Wrekin Homes, involving the acquisition, refurbishment, and rental of properties at locations across the Borough. This will continue to raise standards in the private rented sector.
 - Works are underway to complete a further 177 homes including both new build and converted properties. The programme has resulted in over 47 acres of brownfield land being regenerated, addressing sites that might otherwise blight communities.
 - The portfolio is performing well with a cumulative void rate to 31 March 2025, of 0.84% since the first site was completed.
 - Since 2015/16 - cumulative net incremental income of £13.8m to 31 March 2025 has been generated for the Council which has benefitted front line services such as social care services.
 - In addition, Council Tax and New Homes Bonus payments are estimated to have generated an additional £4.0m cumulatively to the end of March 2024.
 - The Nuplace investment portfolio £122.8m. Cumulative growth in the portfolio is 32% to the end of March 2025.
 - In addition to delivering much needed housing, the programme has delivered considerable added value in terms of local employment, apprenticeships, supply chain development and the delivery of a range of community projects.

- Since 2015/16 to 31 March 2025, Nuplace has delivered a cumulative profit before tax of £4.6m.

In total, the Council's investment in NuPlace and Telford & Wrekin Homes will be £169.1m since NuPlace was established.

17.4 The Council's Growth Fund, which has now operated for 10 years and:

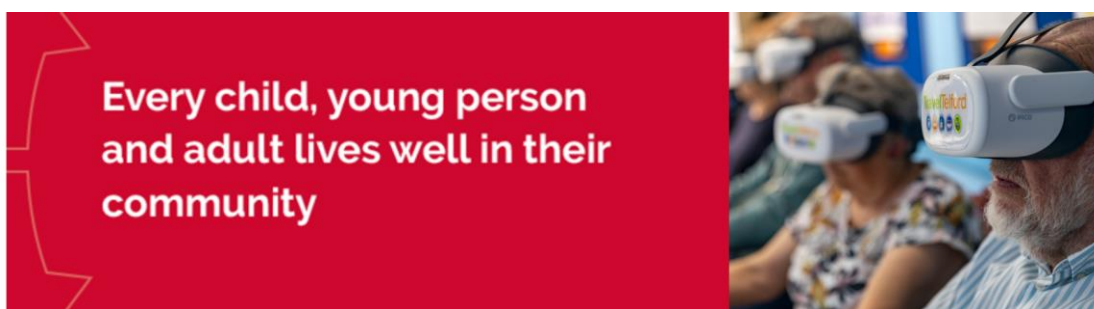
- Enables the Council to provide land, build and lease bespoke properties and offer full turnkey solutions, and continues to drive a high number of investment enquiries drawing in new investors.
- The Fund in conjunction with locally retained profit share from the Telford Land Deal, and Local Regeneration Fund Grants has additionally supported a range of public sector development schemes. This includes the wider development within Telford Town Centre at Station Quarter. This investment will support the delivery of enhanced access routes and high-quality public realm across the area and the new 4000sqm (43,055sqft) Digital Skills and Enterprise Hub (The Quad) accommodating a coordinated offer for both education and flexible space for new businesses.
- The £136.1m investment to date through the Growth Fund will deliver an ongoing return, including additional business rates income, after borrowing costs but more importantly this project is attracting and retaining jobs for residents of the Borough.

The funding committed to date into a range of investments is anticipated to help deliver approximately 1,445 new jobs.

17.5 The proposed Capital Programme will also see:

- Over £103m for transport and Highways which includes equipping the Council to repair more potholes with the Find it Fix it crews whose targeted approach has resulted in a 15% reduction in the number of potholes in the last four years,
- Over £41m for education capital projects including investment in school expansion projects to increase pupil places
- Over £5.5m for a range of housing initiatives, including affordable warmth, empty properties, rough sleeper, disabled facility grants and temporary accommodation.
- £16.3m for Leisure & Cultural Schemes including a new swimming pool, new gym equipment and amphitheatre improvements,
- Over £56m Local Regeneration Fund including Towns Fund investment in Oakengates and Wellington and Levelling Up funding for Station Quarter and the Theatre,
- Over £22m Pride in Place Programme to build stronger communities, create thriving places and drive regeneration with investment in the Woodside, Sutton Hill and Brookside areas.

17.6 The following tables analyse the capital programme against each corporate priority:



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

We want everyone in the borough to fulfil their potential, to be the best they can be. To do this it is essential that children and young people get the best possible start to life, that they receive a “good” or outstanding” education, that they learn how to stay healthy and well, and that as adults they can access lifelong learning to develop their skills. We know that everyone, whether child or adult, thrives best when they live in a community with family, friends and networks of support. The Council and our partners will work to this goal where it best meets the interest of the person. Our other four priorities will support the delivery of this priority.

Capital	Total £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 & Later Yrs £'000
School Schemes	41,050	17,985	3,249	19,816	
Other Schemes	4,907	3,772	593	542	
Total	45,957	21,757	3,842	20,358	

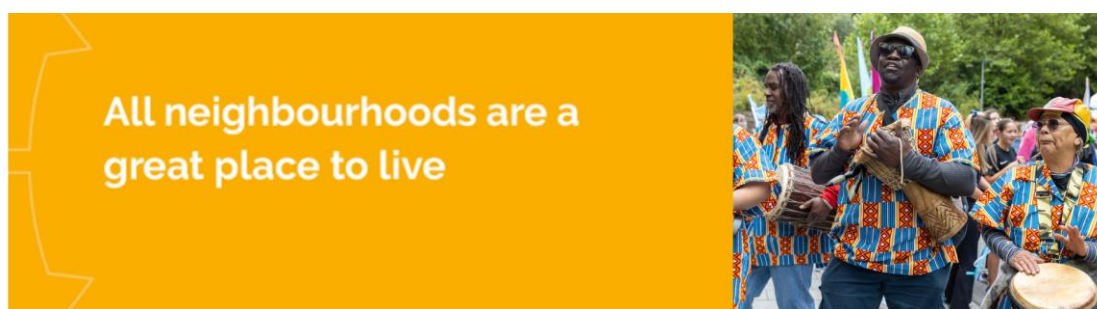


17.6.2 Everyone benefits from a thriving economy

The borough has an outstanding track record of attracting and securing investment to create jobs. Our focus will be to attract investment, drive innovation and support businesses and enable the economy to continue to

grow. This is essential if we want an economy that everyone can benefit from which will enable inequalities across our communities to be addressed.

Capital	Total £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 & Later Yrs £'000
Property Investment Portfolio / Growth Fund	59,930	15,831	24,636	12,436	7,000
Local Regeneration Fund	56,691	19,911	29,780	7,000	
Pride in Place Programme	22,600		2,260	2,260	18,080
HCA Land Deal	532	402	130		
Other Schemes	1,220	200		1,020	
Total	140,946	36,344	56,806	22,716	25,080



17.6.3 All neighbourhoods are a great place to live

We want all our neighbourhoods to be safe and inclusive for everyone, including the young and the old. We want neighbourhoods to thrive and be places where people want to live. We want people to feel pride in, and ownership of, their communities and to feel as though they belong whatever their background. We want our communities to be well connected and for everyone to have access to good, affordable housing.

Capital	Total £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 & Later Yrs £'000
Nuplace - Housing Investment	72,925	25,718	17,591	16,616	13,000
Affordable Housing Programme	16,142	3,396	5,746	7,000	
Highways & Transport	103,468	16,761	17,507	21,752	47,448
Playing Pitch Investment	3,015	2,515	500		

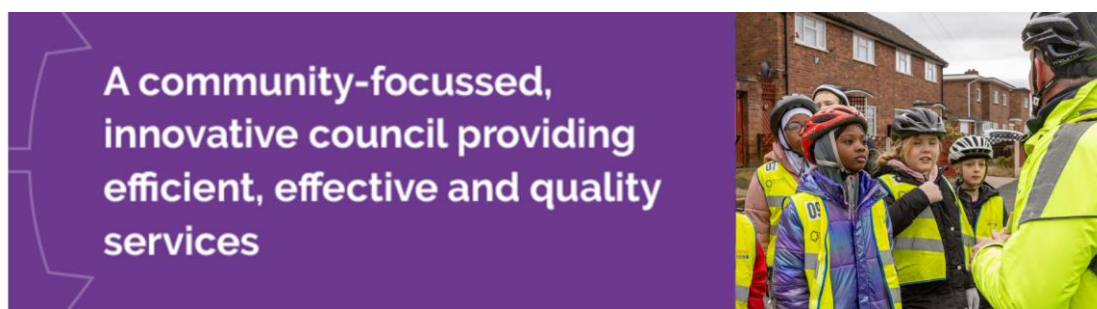
Capital	Total £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 & Later Yrs £'000
Leisure & Cultural Schemes	16,312	2,146	7,501	6,665	
Environmental Improvements & Enhancements	1,933	733	300	300	600
Pride in Your High Street	2,370	665	385	1,320	
Housing Schemes	749	280	469		
Other Schemes	2,294	1,794	500		
Total	219,208	54,008	50,499	53,653	61,048



17.6.4 Our natural environment is protected, and the Council is taking a leading role in tackling the climate emergency

In October 2019, the Council recognised the climate emergency by committing to make the operation of the Council and the borough carbon neutral by 2030. We are committed to protecting our heritage and habitats too, protecting biodiversity both in the way in which the Council delivers its services but also through local planning policy.

Capital	Total £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 & Later Yrs £'000
Climate Change	774	266	508		
LED Lighting Invest To Save	348	348			
Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure	1,596	678	408	510	
De Carbonisation Schemes	1,029	1,029			
Flood Defence	804	700	104		
Total	4,551	3,021	1,020	510	



17.6.5 A community-focussed, innovative council providing efficient, effective and quality services

To deliver our community priorities, we will maximise the use of our resources, ensuring that we work efficiently and effectively together as one system, one organisation. We will continue to develop and support our workforce, our ICT systems and data, and our financial resources. Our decisions about how we do this will be informed by robust engagement and consultation with communities, businesses, partners and stakeholders.

Capital	Total £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 & Later Yrs £'000
Asset Management Plan	3,389	589	700	700	1,400
ICT Investment	14,059	5,794	2,814	1,651	4,000
Efficiency Capitalisation	4,489	1,500	164	625	2,000
Capital Investment Fund	1,000			1,000	
Other Schemes	2,922	1,304	473	381	764
Total	25,859	9,187	4,151	4,357	8,164

18.0 Council Tax

- 18.1 Council Tax in Telford & Wrekin has historically been low compared to other councils. Indeed, it has been the lowest across both the West and East Midlands for the last 8 years for the services that this Council provides. Appendix 1 is a graph comparing Council Tax levels across the Midlands region and demonstrates that Council Tax in this area is the lowest in the Midlands region at Band D (£1,613.67). The average Council Tax at Band D in the Midlands region is around 19% higher than in Telford & Wrekin. At Band D, council tax in Telford & Wrekin is lower than our nearest neighbours by £193.00 for Shropshire Council, £206.35 for Staffordshire County Council and £574.91 for Walsall Council.

- 18.2 Appendix 2 compares our Council Tax to the other unitary authorities in England and shows that we have the second lowest Council Tax at Band D out of 63 unitary authorities being £299.19 less pa than the average for unitary authorities of £1,912.86 which is 18.5% higher than our level at Band D.
- 18.3 As well as a comparatively low level of Council Tax, this area also has comparatively low property values with the majority of our properties being in Council Tax Bands A or B. 59.0% of total chargeable dwellings in Telford & Wrekin are in these two bands, compared to the average across all unitary authorities of just 47.9%. Whilst this is relatively good news for local residents in terms of their Council Tax bill and although we appreciate that Council Tax bills are a significant cost for local households, it means that we do not have the same scope to generate income from Council Tax as many other parts of the country where levels of Council Tax are much higher and average property values are also higher so a 1% increase raises considerably more per property than it does in Telford & Wrekin.
- 18.4 Despite the significant withdrawal of Government grant from the Council over the last 11 years, the Council has worked hard to keep Council Tax in Telford & Wrekin as low as possible recognising the financial pressures that our residents face despite the Government's deliberate and sustained policy of shifting the cost of funding local government services away from grants from central government and on to council taxpayers. The LGA have said "*the LGA has continually highlighted that council tax rises – particularly the adult social care precept – have never been the solution to the long term pressures faced by councils. This is particularly the case for social care where increases in costs and demand do not align with capacity to raise council tax. Increasing council tax raises different amounts of money in different parts of the country, unrelated to need*".
- 18.5 In the CSR and the local government finance settlement the Government have assumed that councils will increase their level of council tax by the maximum permitted without incurring the costs of a referendum. In this council's case this Government assumption is that we will increase our council tax by a total of 5% including 2% in respect of the ASC precept. It is therefore proposed to increase council tax by a total of £1.20 per week (based on Band B), including the Adult Social Care precept, for 2026/27 in line with the Government's assumptions. All of the additional income generated which will amount to around £4.7m will be used to fund additional investment in social care services to support the most vulnerable people in our community. The increase will be the average increase across the whole borough in the Telford & Wrekin part of the council tax bill and may vary slightly for individual households dependent which part of the borough they are located within and would amount to £1.20 per week for the average (Band B) property in the Borough. The increase in the total bill for each household will also be affected by the decisions of the Police & Crime Commissioner, The Fire Authority and individual town and parish councils.

19.0 Base Budget, Balances and Contingencies

19.1 Base Budget

19.1.1 A summary of the Base Budget position is included at Appendix 7 which shows a net base budget of £233.4m for 2026/27 which will be restated after final decisions have been taken on the savings and investment proposals contained in this report. Assuming a council tax increase of £1.20 per week (for average Band B) for next year and that all the savings put forward are agreed there is no requirement for the use of balances at present in 2026/27. Appendix 8 includes an analysis of the main changes in moving from the 2025/26 budget to the 2026/27 base budget.

19.2 Balances

19.2.1 Appendix 5 summarises the overall reserves and balances position of the Council after taking account of the various earmarked reserves and the risks faced by the Council. This currently shows over £21.7m available which could be taken into account as part of medium-term budget strategy considerations.

19.2.2 The Government has extended the temporary ability to fund the one-off costs of service reform projects from new capital receipts. Taking advantage of this opportunity offered by the Government will result in higher levels of debt than would otherwise have been the case and therefore higher debt charges as all capital receipts would otherwise be used to fund planned capital projects. However, whilst the debt charges are ongoing, they will be more than offset by the ongoing savings generated from the invest to save measures. To take advantage of this flexibility Full Council would need to approve an updated "Efficiency Strategy" which will be included in the Service & Financial planning report to be considered at Cabinet in February. This flexibility is in place until March 2030. In addition to this flexibility, the Council also holds some specific funds to support service transformation. Currently there are uncommitted balances in the Severance fund and the Invest to Save Fund totalling £0.6m which are available to support restructure savings and the delivery of future savings.

19.2.3 Given the exceptionally high level of uncertainty over the Council's medium term financial position as previously highlighted in this report, it is important to retain as much flexibility as possible by limiting the use of available one-offs until the medium-term position becomes clearer. The level of usable one-offs gives a good level of comfort that the proposals contained in this report are financially robust given the projected levels of spending in Adult Social Care in 2026/27 have been fully allowed for in the proposed budget.

19.3 Risk Management and Financial Resilience

19.3.1 Local Government has faced unprecedented financial challenges since 2010 and the Council has faced significant grant cuts at a time when demand for many services, such as safeguarding vulnerable children and adults, have been increasing. The Autumn Budget and Policy Statement in November did confirm that the Government is committed to reforming the approach to local government funding so that it reflects an up-to-date assessment of a need and local revenues through the Fair Funding Review 2.0. The multi-year settlement in December which included the impact of the Fair Funding Review will help financial planning through to 2028/29. As an organisation that provides a vast range of essential services to the community and spends over £500m per annum financial resilience and risk management are very important considerations when agreeing our MTFS.

19.3.2 The key elements underpinning the Council's Financial Resilience are:

- **Setting a robust budget strategy which is deliverable and sustainable**
 - ✓ The Council has a long, proven track record of strong financial management, with no overspends over the past 17 years and has consistently received an unqualified audit opinion from its external auditors
 - ✓ The Council has successfully delivered £195.3m of budget savings since 2009/10
 - ✓ Although very challenging, many savings have been phased over a number of years to allow adequate time for full consideration, consultation and implementation and in order to identify alternatives that mitigate impacts on our community.
 - ✓ An Invest to Save/Capacity Fund is in place to provide additional resources for priority areas and to assist with the delivery of savings; bids are subject to a rigorous business case development and approval process.
 - ✓ The Council has a comprehensive employee restructuring programme which is used consistently and supported by clear, costed rationales to support reductions in ongoing costs whilst maintaining the delivery of essential services and minimising compulsory redundancies as far as possible.
 - ✓ Where required, additional investment has been included in the budget including, £15.8m additional net investment in Adult Social Care and £2.7m in Children's Safeguarding & Family Support has been allowed for in 2026/27
 - ✓ Provisions are included in the accounts where required, to safeguard against potential costs, for example for bad debts and appeals against NDR valuations.
- **Strong and Effective Financial Management**
 - ✓ A robust risk based financial monitoring regime is in place to identify any adverse variances early so that corrective financial management action can take place. Additional in year savings targets have been delivered when necessary to meet service pressures.
 - ✓ A strong and proactive financial management approach is adopted by budget holders supported by their nominated finance officer.
 - ✓ The Council retains a good level of reserves and balances for the medium-term strategy.

- ✓ Continuous Improvement plans are in place to focus on Children's Safeguarding & Family Support and Adult Social Care, areas of high demand and high cost. These are monitored on a regular basis by Senior Managers and Members.
- ✓ All reports considered by Senior Management Team and Cabinet are required to include financial and legal comments prepared by suitably qualified officers to ensure that financial and legal implications are clearly understood before decisions are taken.
- ✓ Decisive corporate action is taken on a timely basis to manage the Council's overall resources in order to address pressures as they, inevitably, arise during the year given the complex disparate range of services provided by the Council.

- **Strong & Effective Capital & Treasury Management**

- ✓ There is an effective Treasury Management Strategy which aims to maximise returns for the Council while minimising risks with a solid long track record of exceeding targets set and always complying with Treasury management parameters.
- ✓ Advice on interest rate projections from independent treasury management advisors has been used when making prudent assumptions on future borrowing costs.
- ✓ Treasury management decisions are managed at a strategic level to deliver best value rather than individual loans being taken out for spending on each separate capital project which often span several years.
- ✓ Funding capital assets (i.e. assets that have a long life) from borrowing ensures that the cost of the asset is charged to the revenue account over the useful life of the asset. Clearly if all assets were paid for directly from revenue, current taxpayers would be paying for assets that will still be available to taxpayers many years in the future.
- ✓ All capital investment proposals are subject to a rigorous business case development process to manage and mitigate risks as far as possible and are funded in accordance with the Council's approved Treasury Management Strategy after taking advice from professional external advisors.
- ✓ Capital Programme resources are available, in accordance with the Prudential Code of Borrowing and capacity may exist to capitalise expenditure planned to be funded from revenue and in extreme circumstances the Minister may authorise an application for a capitalisation direction.
- ✓ The Capital Programme is monitored regularly with regular updates taken to Cabinet and Full Council, together with approval of new allocations and slippage into future years.

- **Reserves & Balances**

- ✓ The Council has General Fund and Special Fund balances as a safeguard against unforeseen costs as well as earmarked reserves and provisions for specific purposes. The Council's main Budget Strategy Reserve has an uncommitted balance of £21.7m and remains available to support the medium-term financial strategy.
- ✓ In extreme emergency circumstances, general balances and some other funds that have been set-aside for specific purposes could be used and then replaced as part of a future strategy.

- ✓ Contingencies have been built into the revenue budget: A general contingency of £3.95m in 2026/27 is held within the corporate core with a further £3.5m for inflation and pay awards also held centrally.
- **Strategic Risk Management**
 - ✓ The Council has a strategic risk register which is used to identify the substantive issues which may impact negatively on the delivery of the Council's priorities and may also have a financial impact. This is reviewed by Senior Management Team to manage risks and mitigate potential exposures both as part of everyday business and as part of decision-making processes.
- **Reducing Dependency on Government Funding**
 - ✓ Despite financial challenges, the Council has a clear goal to attract new jobs and investment and promote growth in the borough and is committed to an investment programme which will safeguard the prosperity of the borough – growth will result in additional Council Tax, new homes bonus and business rates pending proposed changes to the local government finance system and periodic resets of the system thereafter.
 - ✓ The Council has adopted innovative ways to improve quality of life for residents including Nuplace, its wholly owned housing company which provides tenants in the private rental sector the option of renting a high-quality home from a long-term and responsive landlord. The solar farm, the Telford Land Deal (a unique joint arrangement with the Marches LEP and Homes England) and the Telford Growth Fund all bring significant benefits to residents and a net financial benefit after covering all associated costs is also generated which is used to help support the provision of front-line services.
 - ✓ For 2025/26 income streams from NuPlace are projected at £2m after covering all additional costs and the net additional income from the Property Investment Portfolio boosted by benefits from the Telford Growth Fund is projected to exceed £10.3m.
- **Insurance Arrangements**
 - ✓ Appropriate insurance arrangements are in place to safeguard the Council's assets and protect against liabilities.
- **Experienced Finance Team**
 - ✓ The Council employs an in-house finance team who work closely with service managers developing good working relationships and understanding of the issues and pressures facing services.
 - ✓ The Council's finance team includes a good mix of qualified accountants, accounting technicians and other staff with extensive experience built up in the Council, in other public sector organisations and the private sector.
 - ✓ The Council makes sufficient resources available to the Section 151 Officer to enable comprehensive financial management controls to be maintained.
 - ✓ Regular Financial Management reports are produced for and considered by the Senior Management Team and for Cabinet and appropriate action is taken to manage pressures as they arise.
 - ✓ Specialist external knowledge is commissioned for specific projects where appropriate.

19.3.3 These factors, together with the Council's long track record of effective financial management over what has been an exceptionally challenging period of austerity, which was unprecedented both in scale and duration, closely followed by a pandemic and then a cost-of-living emergency provide a level of assurance that the Council is both financially competent and in a sound financial position despite the further challenges that the Council will inevitably continue to face.

19.4.0 Inflation Assumptions and Contingencies

19.4.1 The Council's budget model for future years includes an allowance for pay awards of around 3.2% for 2026/27 and 2% per year thereafter. However, the precise impact of pay awards may vary from national headline rates if further lump sum, as opposed to across-the-board percentage, pay awards are made in future years as was the case for the April 2022, April 2023 and April 2024 pay awards. After many years of considerable pay restraint which have seen the pay of council employees cut in real terms by over 23% compared to CPI (and considerably more for the most senior roles) there is a risk that the Council may not be able to retain or attract suitably skilled staff to deliver services in what is now a very challenging environment, therefore in some areas additional "market factor" allowances are applied to aid recruitment and retention.

19.4.2 In accordance with practice in recent years, no allowance has been built in for general inflation, although provision for contractually committed inflation increases (for example the waste collection and disposal and environmental maintenance contracts) and Adult Social Care costs has been made.

20.0 Education Funding – Dedicated Schools Grant

20.1 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) in 2026/27 will be allocated using four blocks:

20.2 **Schools Block** - funding for all mainstream primary and secondary schools via a local funding formula, although the Government is moving towards a nationally determined funding formula by gradually reducing the scope for local authorities to depart from DfE modelled allocations to individual schools. For several years T&W, with the agreement of the school's forum, has mirrored the national funding formula as closely as possible, so this process has little impact on our funding formula.

20.3 The amount in the block for Telford & Wrekin for 2026/27 is £186m. The like for like increase per pupil is just over 2%.

20.4 This Schools Block now includes equivalent sums for the previously separate School Budget Support and National Insurance grants. It also includes growth funding of £0.7m (for schools with significant growth in pupil numbers or newly opened). However, it does not include any "exceptional" funding for joint use leisure facilities.

- 20.5 For many years, Telford & Wrekin Council (along with a number of other councils) had received this funding for joint use facilities. These exceptional factors resulted in additional DSG being allocated to the Schools Block, over and above the amounts allocated via the DfE's funding formula. For financial year 2024/25 this amounted to £0.648m across 3 joint use sites. It reduced to £0.233m in 2025/26 and has now entirely ceased. These funds were used for the provision of swimming and other sporting activities at joint use sites in the Borough, located at Oakengates Leisure Centre, Stirchley Recreation Centre and Shortwood Pool. The council does not have the financial resources to replace the remaining lost funding but has engaged in discussions with schools at the affected sites in order to ensure continuing provision of leisure facilities for schools and local communities.
- 20.6 **High Needs Block** - funding for Special Educational Needs (SEN) placements and support, special schools, pupil referral units and other alternative provision. The amount allocated in this block for 2026/27 was £42.2m. Whilst this represents an increase of £1.8m compared to 2025/26, the cash increase is only due to previously separate grants being added into the block, in a similar way to the Schools Block described above. Like for like there is no increase to 2025/26 funding.
- 20.7 High needs will remain an area of significant financial pressure both nationally and in Telford & Wrekin, due to the upwards trend in the number and complexity of children and young people with high needs. The government is due to release a White Paper covering the future of SEND provision, in early 2026, including measures to stabilise the financial position. It appears likely that funds that otherwise would have been used to increase the high needs block will instead be allocated to support the "reforms" arising from the White Paper.
- 20.8 In Telford & Wrekin, services are already working to make local provision both educationally and financially sustainable, in particular by supporting mainstream schools to be as inclusive as possible. However, the authority had a DSG deficit of £4.6m at the end of 2024/25, due to high needs pressures and the current forecast anticipates that there will be a significant increase in this deficit by the end of 2025/26.
- 20.9 The government has amended finance regulations, such that any DSG deficit is ring-fenced away from the Council's general fund position until 31 March 2028. This deadline has been extended a number of times. The government has also said that after 31 March 2028, subsequent overspends on high needs will be met from national government budgets, rather than falling to local authorities. At present we therefore await more information from the DfE which will shape the future financial position of high needs.
- 20.10 **Early Years Block** - funding for free entitlement provision for children from nine months old to four years old. Publicly funded provision has significantly increased in recent years:

- From April 2024 working parents of two-year-olds have been entitled to 15 hours per week of free childcare (before this date free provision for two-year-olds was only available for children from deprived backgrounds, children in care or who had left care, children with an EHCP or children in receipt of disability living allowance).
- From September 2024, working parents of children from nine months old have been entitled to 15 hours per week of free childcare.
- From September 2025 working parents of children from nine months old have been entitled to 30 hours per week of free childcare.

20.11 This increased provision was reflected in the allocation of DSG for 2026/27 which is estimated at £35.5m compared to £30.6m in 2025/26.

20.12 **Central School Services Block (CSSB)** –funding for Local Authority central services, which in the main are statutory. Due to the inclusion of funding to cover the additional costs of employer's national insurance for centrally employed staff, the provisional allocation for 2026/27, £1.57m, is substantially higher than the original allocation for 2025/26 of £1.2m, although this was supplemented in-year by the additional funding to cover national insurance costs. The Education Services Grant (ESG) ceased at the end of August 2017 and the Government created this new DSG block specifically for central services. However, the amount allocated is far lower than the previous ESG and Local Authorities need to secure Schools Forum approval to use the CSSB for central services costs, despite the services being statutory. In addition to the CSSB, representatives of maintained schools on the Schools Forum are asked to de-delegate additional funds, (£0.4m in 2025/26) to cover costs of statutory services that apply only to mainstream schools.

20.13 Significant additional funding is also allocated to schools via the pupil premium grant (PPG). £13.2m was allocated to Telford & Wrekin schools via PPG in 2025/26. The amount of 2026/27 funding has not yet been published, but the rates per pupil have increased compared to 2025/26, from £1,075 to £1,100 for eligible primary pupils, from £2,630 to £2,690 for eligible secondary pupils and from £2,630 to £2,690 for children currently or previously looked after.

21.0 Community Engagement and Communication

21.1 As outlined earlier in the report, we will continue to work closely with a range of community groups and Town and Parish Councils to develop alternative ways of delivering services. By engaging with residents and other partners it can be possible to find alternative ways of delivering those services that support our community. We will continue to engage with a range of partners and service users (experts by experience) who could assist in developing alternative service solutions in those areas that have potential to impact upon our residents.

21.2 Our 2026/27 approach to consultation and engagement on our budget will include communication in relation to key changes to where the Council intends

to spend its budget and highlight areas for new investments. We will ensure that we engage with the community and our partners where there is an opportunity for us to work together to improve outcomes for our residents, or where there is potential for an impact on the community. We will continue to identify those who wish to work with us on developing alternative service solutions.

21.3 As in previous years, communicating and engaging with the community on our future plans is an important part of the budget process and the ways in which we will do this are outlined below. However, the aim is to build more in-depth engagement during 2026/27 and later years involving residents and partners in developing solutions, therefore an important part of our communication plan is to identify those who are willing and able to be part of this process.

21.4 The ways in which we will seek views on our proposed strategy are as follows;

- Discussions at a number of specific forums during January engaging with Town and Parish Councils, the voluntary and community sectors and local businesses through on-line sessions,
- Communications campaign including media and social media, updated budget page on the council website, and direct email communication
- Gathering comments and feedback via a wide range of channels including email, social media, in writing to freepost address and telephone and ward roadshows

Comments can be sent to us at the following E mail address:

yourviewsmatter@telford.gov.uk

21.5 Throughout this process we will also be gathering contacts of those who wish to be involved in more in-depth engagement in relation to our budget process.

22.0 NEXT STEPS & TIMETABLE

22.1 A consultation period will run from 7 January 2026 through to 3 February 2026 to enable the Council's Cabinet to give careful consideration to the views expressed before preparing their final report and recommendations to Full Council on 26 February 2026.

22.2 The Business & Finance Scrutiny Committee will scrutinise the Administration's budget proposals and should also have the opportunity to scrutinise any alternative budget proposals put forward by any Opposition group(s) prior to Cabinet on 12 February 2026. The Committee is scheduled to meet to scrutinise these proposals at three meetings during January. The Chair of the Business & Finance Scrutiny Committee will have the opportunity to present the recommendations of the Committee at the Cabinet meeting on 12 February if required. The Cabinet will determine their final recommendations for consideration by Full Council at this meeting.

- 22.3 Full Council will consider the recommendations from Cabinet and Scrutiny/Opposition Groups on 26 February 2026 when final decisions will be made and the budget and Council Tax for 2026/27 will be determined.

23.0 Previous Minutes

- Full Council 27 February 2025 - Medium Term Financial Strategy report 2025/26 – 2028/29

24.0 Alternative Options

- 24.1 This report sets out proposals for how the resources available to the Council could be used during 2026/27. Clearly the Council must meet its statutory responsibilities, additional investment therefore needs to be made in some priority services. The proposed council tax increase will fund an element of the additional investment needed but further budget savings, over and above the £195.3m ongoing budget savings delivered to date, are clearly also required to ensure a balanced budget is set that does not depend on an unsustainable use of one-off resources.
- 24.2 Development of the Council's budget strategy involves balancing a number of considerations including, the appropriate level of one-off resources to use, what level of council tax increase is appropriate in the current circumstances where demand for key services is increasing, which services we want to prioritise for any new revenue or capital investment and where budget savings (including generation of additional income) may be implemented. Budget holders and Cabinet members consider a number of options in order to be able to set a balanced overall budget for 2026/27 as set out in this report. Any alternative options must meet the legal requirement that the Council sets a balanced budget for next year which must be seen in the wider context of a robust medium term financial strategy. For example, it would not be appropriate to use all available one-off resources to set a balanced budget for next year if this resulted in an unsustainable medium-term outlook.
- 24.3 Alternative priorities and options may emerge through the budget consultation exercise and, if so, can be considered in developing the final set of recommendations for consideration at Cabinet on 12 February 2026 before final decisions are taken at full Council on 26 February 2026.

25.0 Key Risks

- 25.1 Key risks include levels of demand for key services increasing above the level that can be funded from the approved budget, interest rates increasing beyond the levels assumed, inflationary increases in the cost of supplies and services that are higher than have been assumed and income collection levels being lower than expected or a recession impacting on council tax and business rates collection and income from the Council's property holdings and discretionary fees and charges.

25.2 The proposed budget includes a revenue contingency of £3.95m to protect against unexpected changes and the Council also holds a number of specific reserves and provisions e.g. to offset uninsured losses or to cover bad debts. Budget holders actively manage their budgets and the many financial risks and challenges that Council services face. At the start of the current financial year, the Council also held uncommitted general and special fund balances of just under £4.4m and an uncommitted balance in the Budget Strategy Reserve of £21.7m.

25.3 The Council has a long track record of effective robust financial management and, despite the challenges caused by the Government's long austerity programme and the Covid pandemic, has managed to out-turn within budget for the last 17 years.

26.0 Council Priorities

26.1 The development of a comprehensive MTFS is essential to support the effective use of available resources to deliver outcomes for all Council priorities. The report includes an analysis detailing how the capital programme is allocated across corporate priorities and Appendix 4 details the service strategies for each directorate and includes an analysis of the revenue budget used to support the activities of each directorate. The service strategies also detail how each directorate contributes towards the delivery of the Council's corporate priorities.

27.0 Financial Implications

27.1 This report sets out the Council's proposed MTFS for the period commencing April 2026. The financial impacts are detailed throughout the report.

28.0 Legal and HR Implications

28.1 This report develops the proposals for the Council's budget and policy framework which will be consulted upon in accordance with the Policy Framework & Budget Procedure Rules contained in the Constitution. In accordance with the relevant provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the Local Government Housing Act 1989, the Local Government Act 2003 and the Localism Act 2011, the Council has to set a balanced budget for 2025/26 before the 11 March 2026 and has to have regard to the advice provided by the s.151 officer (Chief Finance Officer) on the robustness of the budget and the adequacy of reserves supporting the budget before doing so.

29.0 Ward Implications

29.1 Borough-wide impact.

30.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

30.1 The MTFS includes considerable investment in social care services including net new investment to meet increasing costs and levels of demand, particularly

for complex care cases, and includes the allocation of the Public Health Grant. The MTFS also provides for support of economic development activity and direct provision of industrial and commercial units for local businesses. The Council is a large employer of local people and has considerable spending power within the local economy. Clearly reductions to budgets as a result of budget savings programmes reduces investment in the local economy although conversely the capital investment programme and additional revenue investment into social care services help to support the economy.

31.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

- 31.1 The Council uses Equality Impact Assessments as a tool to ensure our decision making takes into consideration the 9 protected characteristics with regard to the General Equality Duty (GED). We also recognise and give due regard to Care Experienced and Armed Forces Personnel which were previously approved by Cabinet. Whilst we are not legally obliged to do this through the Equality Act yet, we do have an obligation to make sure these groups of people are considered and not discriminated against either, so we think it's the right thing to do. In short, we must demonstrate that we pay due regard to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations. We need to assess and analyse the practical impact on those whose needs are affected by changes to the way that we deliver our services or to our spending. We have adopted a proportionate approach that takes into account the relevance of a proposal with regard to equality. This is a measured response recognising that our resources are best aimed at dealing with those proposals that could have the most significant impact. In order to accomplish this we have followed a process designed to screen proposals and ensure that they are fully explored.
- 31.2 Our process involves carrying out an initial scoping exercise to determine which budget saving proposals may require action or further investigation with regard to equality impact. For proposals where implications are identified and are at a sufficiently developed state a proportionate impact assessment is undertaken. Where a proposal is still at an early stage of development, an equality impact assessment will be undertaken during its development. This is an ongoing process that will continue throughout the year. As we engage with our community and partners to identify where we may need to deliver services differently, we will ensure that we continue the process of screening these proposals to identify if there are any equality implications.
- 31.3 The proposals contained in this report will impact on specific groups of people. An initial Impact analysis, on the savings proposals, highlights limited equality impacts, further work will be undertaken to identify and mitigate adverse impacts as far as possible. We will continue to screen all savings proposals for potential equality impacts relative to the General Equality Duty as proposals are developed further prior to implementation and will carry out further impact analysis where appropriate, prior to any final decisions being taken.
- 31.4 Public consultation will take place between 7 January 2026 and 3 February 2026. The proposals contained in the report will also be subject to Member

scrutiny during this period. Final proposals will be considered by Cabinet on 12 February 2026 who will make recommendations to Full Council on 26 February 2026. The final agreed recommendations will be implemented during 2026/27 and future years.

32.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

- 32.1 The revenue budget and capital programme include specific funding to support climate change initiatives, including capital funding of £4.5m for initiatives to reduce the Council's own carbon footprint, and partnering with government, organisations and residents to reduce emissions across the Borough. This investment is critical to the commitment the Council made in 2019 for its operations and activities to be carbon neutral by 2030, and in supporting the wider aspiration for the Borough to also become carbon neutral. It directly links to the priority that 'our natural environment is protected and the Council has a leading role in addressing the climate emergency', and builds on previous investment that has enabled the Council to reduce its emissions to date by 60% compared to the 2018/19 baseline.
- 32.2 Many of the actions in the Council's climate change action plan that will be funded by this investment have considerable co-benefits. Actions that help to reduce both energy costs and emissions, for example installing insulation, combine significant financial, social, health and environmental benefits. Sustaining investment will also help to mitigate the risks associated with climate change in the UK, as set out by the Committee Independent Assessment of UK Climate Risk for the UK's third Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA3), published in June 2021. These include more frequent flooding and extreme weather events, causing damage and disruption to local infrastructure and services, the impact of increasing high temperatures on people's health and well-being, and an increase in the range and consequences of pests, pathogens and invasive species.
- 32.3 Climate change is already affecting our weather through warmer wetter winters, hotter drier summers and the frequency and severity of extreme weather events. This will increasingly have a significant impact on the cost of delivering Council services. The Council has, therefore, produced a climate change adaptation risk register approved by Cabinet in April 2024 to help manage these risks going forward.

33.0 Background Papers

- Local Government Association 2025 Autumn Budget: LGA Briefing – 23 October 2025
- Local Government Association Statement on Autumn Budget 26 November 2025
- LG Futures 2025 Autumn Budget 2025
- LG Futures Policy Statement: 2026/27 local government finance settlement 20 November 2025

- LG Futures Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2026/27 and illustrative figures to 2028/29
- Medium Term Financial Strategy Report 2025/26 to 2028/29 – Full Council 28 February 2025
- ONS Mid Year Population Estimates 2025

34.0 Appendices

- 1 2025/26 Council Tax Comparison (at Band D) – Midlands Councils
- 2 2025/26 Council Tax Comparison (at Band D) – Unitary Councils
- 3 Savings Delivered to Date
- 4 Service Strategies and Budgets 2026/27
- 5 Reserves and Balances
- 6 Infrastructure Funding Statement
- 7 Base Budget 2026/27
- 8 Analysis of Base Budget Movements
- 9 Savings List 2026/27
- 10 Children's Safeguarding & Early Help Continuous Improvement Plan
- 11 Adult Social Care Continuous Improvement Plan
- 12 Capital Investment Programme

35.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Legal	28.11.25	01.12.25	RP