



# Borough of Telford and Wrekin

## Cabinet

Thursday 12 February 2026

### Corporate Peer Challenge 2025

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<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cllr Lee Carter - Leader of the Council	
<b>Lead Director:</b>	Ross Cook - Executive Director: Place	
<b>Service Area:</b>	Policy & Governance	
<b>Report Author:</b>	Jon Power – Head of Policy, Insight, Partnerships and Elections	
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<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All Wards	
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Not Key Decision	
<b>Forward Plan:</b>	Not Applicable	
<b>Report considered by:</b>	SMT - 20 January 2026 Business Briefing – 29 January 2026 Cabinet – 12 February 2026	

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#### 1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 1.1 Notes and endorses the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge report at **Appendix B** which highlights that:
  - the Council is a high performing organisation;
  - has strong and effective leadership together with a committed workforce;
  - is valued by partners as an organisation that gets things done; and
  - Has a strong performance culture underpinned by a commitment to continuous improvement.
- 1.2 Notes and endorses the action plan to implement the recommendations as attached at **Appendix A**.

## Corporate Peer Challenge 2025

- 1.3 Approves the timescales for reporting progress to Cabinet and the follow up review to be undertaken by the Local Government Association;
- 1.4 Records its thanks to the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge team who visited Telford & Wrekin Council and undertook the review.

### **2.0 Purpose of Report**

- 2.1 The Council has a commitment to continuous improvement ensuring that services are, and the organisation as a whole is, as efficient and effective as they can be to take forward delivery of its the Council's strategic priorities. As part of this commitment, in October 2025, the Local Government Association undertook a Corporate Peer Challenge of the organisation, at the request of the Leader and Chief Executive of Telford & Wrekin Council, to explore how effectively resources are prioritised and used to deliver the organisation's vision "to protect care and invest to create a better borough". This report sets out the findings of the peer team highlighting areas of best practice and recommendations for consideration by the Council.

### **3.0 Background**

- 3.1 The LGA has, for many years, undertaken peer reviews of local authorities as part of its commitment to support the local government sector and ensure that best practice is shared across the sector. In 2023/24, the LGA revised its approach to undertaking peer reviews and introduced a new framework for a Corporate Peer Challenge. This was in response to the challenging circumstances in which local authorities were operating and the notable increase in the number of councils facing unprecedented financial difficulties. It was felt that the LGA could help to provide an 'early warning' of those authorities who could, without any intervention, find themselves in similar circumstances and, therefore, the Corporate Peer Challenge framework was designed to take a more analytical and 'deep dive' approach to key areas of risk, including finances and governance.
- 3.2 The Council last invited the LGA to undertake a corporate peer review in 2021. As it is considered good practice to have a peer review / challenge every five years, the Leader and Chief Executive invited the Local Government Association (LGA) to undertake a Corporate Peer Challenge ('CPC') of the organisation as part of the Council's commitment to continuous improvement.
- 3.3 The purpose of the CPC was to understand how the Council uses its resources to deliver its priorities through five core themes:
  - local priorities and outcomes;
  - organisational and place leadership;
  - governance and culture;
  - financial planning and management; and,
  - capacity for improvement.
- 3.4 The CPC was undertaken on site from 14<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> October 2025, and involved thematic interviews and focus groups with over 120 people including Cabinet

members, ward members, Scrutiny Chairs, the Senior Management Team, employees and a broad range of partners including representatives from the Police, Fire Service, Health, community and voluntary sector partners and local businesses.

3.5 The full membership of the Peer Challenge Team was:

- Chief Executive – Paul Simpson, Derby City Council,
- Leader – Anthony Burns, St Helens Borough Council
- Opposition Member – Gareth Barnard, Bracknell Forest Council
- Place lead – Paul Lakin, Bury Council (Executive Director)
- Monitoring Officer – Charlotte Benjamin, Middlesbrough Council
- S151 Officer – Amy Oliver, Leicester City Council
- Regional LGA Peer Challenge Lead – Sarah Sprung

3.6 Following the CPC, the LGA has produced a short report (see **Appendix B**) of their findings.

3.7 The CPC is not an inspection and, therefore, there is no overall grade or assessment given for the CPC. The CPC team has identified the Council to have strong leadership and culture that is working effectively to deliver its vision to “protect, care and invest to create a better borough” commenting that:

*“Telford & Wrekin Council is a confident, high-performing authority with a strong track record of delivery, civic pride, and innovation. The council’s leadership is widely recognised for its approachability, ambition, and commitment to “brilliant basics.” Staff are proud to work for the council, and there is a clear sense of shared purpose across the organisation and its partners. This collective ethos - often described as “Team Telford” - was evident throughout the Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC); and*

*“The Council’s achievements have been nationally recognised, including winning the LGC Council of the Year award in 2025. This accolade reflects the strength of leadership, the quality-of-service delivery, and the deep civic pride that permeates the organisation”.*

3.8 In addition, the CPC identified a number of areas of strength in the work of the Council, some of which are summarised below:-

## People



- Telford & Wrekin Council benefits from strong, visible and collaborative leadership;
- Staff consistently described the organisation as inclusive and supportive, with a strong emphasis on development and a shared sense of pride in their work;

- The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy sets out a clear strategy for managing financial pressures, including demand-led services such as adults' and children's social care.

## Place



- Telford & Wrekin's commitment to delivering 'brilliant basics' is evidence in its relentless focus on clean streets, responsive services and visible leadership;
- The council is seen as a trusted and proactive partner, with effective collaboration across sectors including the NHS, education, town and parish councils, and the voluntary and community sector. Its convening power is recognised and valued, and its ability to lead place-based initiatives is a clear strength;
- The Council's ability to deliver on locally identified priorities is clear. The transformation of children's services is a strong example, and the application of that learning to adult services reflects a deep commitment to improvement.

## Organisation



- Telford & Wrekin Council is a confident and capable organisation with a strong track record of delivery and a culture of pride and commitment among its workforce;
- Scrutiny arrangements are collegiate and transparent;
- Telford & Wrekin Council demonstrates strong performance across a range of service areas, with evidence of effective delivery against its strategic priorities. The council's commitment to 'brilliant basics' is reflected in high-quality frontline services and a culture of continuous improvement;
- Telford & Wrekin Council benefits from a well-established governance framework and a positive organisational culture that supports openness, collaboration and continuous improvement...with staff feeling empowered to raise concerns and challenge constructively.

3.9 The Council's ongoing energy and commitment to making the borough an economic powerhouse was also recognised:

***“Economically, Telford is viewed as a regional powerhouse, with a visible pipeline of investable schemes and a reputation for being ready when funding opportunities arise. The council’s entrepreneurial mindset has enabled significant investment and market intervention.”***

3.10 As well as how we do things, the CPC recognised the difference the Council is making across the Borough:

***“Children’s services are rated Outstanding by Ofsted, adult social care is rated Good by the CQC, and frontline services demonstrate efficiency and responsiveness – housing benefit claims are processed in just four days, and planning application timeliness is among the highest nationally...Telford & Wrekin’s commitment to delivering “brilliant basics” is evident in its relentless focus on clean streets, responsive services, and visible leadership.”***

3.11 Fundamentally the CPC has robustly endorsed the Council’s approach as to how resources are used, particularly the way in which the budget has been managed through robust financial management and discipline, how decisions are made and how the workforce has delivered the corporate priorities, and the difference that is being made to the communities which the Council serves.

***“Telford & Wrekin Council has a strong track record of financial discipline and budget management. The peer team found evidence of robust financial planning and a clear understanding of the council’s financial position across both political and managerial leadership.”***

3.12 The CPC confirmed that the Council is a high performing organisation:

***“Overall, Telford & Wrekin Council is a well-led, ambitious, and resilient organisation with a strong foundation for continued improvement and impact.”***



#### **4.0 Summary of main proposals**

4.1 The CPC review was a robust external review with the peer team recognising that the Council was a well-performing Council. To support the Council in its desire for

continuous improvement and to maintain its strong track record in delivery, the CPC identified eight recommendations to be considered in taking the organisation forward.

- 4.2 The peer team was on site for four days with the aim of meeting staff, members and partners to gain an understanding of the nature of the organisation and how it operates focusing on its strategic vision. This limited time can, understandably, at times, make it difficult for councils to fully outline details of operational delivery in all areas of the business and to provide a comprehensive understanding to the peer team of all activity taking place and it is pleasing to note that the peer team recognised this as an organisational strength.
- 4.3 It is positive that many recommendations build on commitments that the Council has already made and provides assurance that the authority is delivering in the right areas. The recommendations provide an opportunity to review and reflect on the activity that is already taking place within the organisation and identify areas where existing activity meets those recommendations. The action plan at **Appendix A** highlights where ongoing actions are already meeting the peer team's recommendation.
- 4.4 The Council welcomes the external contribution and has created the action plan at Appendix A to identify actions that are proportionate and deliverable ensuring that, as a high-performing Council with a proven track record of delivery, all activity leads to the most efficient and effective way of delivering services. It should be noted that many of the recommendations are linked and, therefore, some of the actions are relevant to several of the recommendations. For the sake of brevity, and to ensure the document is accessible and not unduly repetitive, these actions have not been entered against each recommendation but, rather, have been identified across various themes as set out in the plan. The action plan should, therefore, be read as a whole.
- 4.5 In line with the LGA timeframes for Corporate Peer Challenges, a smaller team comprised from that which visited us in October 2025 will conduct a follow-up visit to understand the extent to which we have adopted and delivered their recommendations.
- 4.6 The Council will continue to seek appropriate opportunities for further external reviews of services to drive forward continuous improvement to ensure that the organisation is as efficient and effective as it possibly can be to drive the vision to "protect, care and invest to create a better borough".

## 5.0 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The alternative option is not to deliver the actions against the CPC recommendation report. This would impede the organisation's desire to ensure continuous improvement within the context of a well-performing authority.

## 6.0 Key Risks

- 6.1 The purpose of a Corporate Peer Challenge is to take a sector-led approach to identifying any areas of significant risks facing a local authority. The CPC report attached at Appendix B clearly shows that there are no concerns in this regard but has made recommendations to further strengthen our current arrangements to ensure that we continue to perform well and deliver good quality services for our residents supported by a valued and effective workforce.
- 6.2 The main risk associated with this report is that of failing to reflect on the recommendations and take action to consider what steps, if any, are needed to deliver on the recommendations. As can be seen from the attached action plan at Appendix A, the Council has already committed to implementation.

## 7.0 Council Priorities

- 7.1 The recommendations in this report align with all Council priorities: -
- every child, young person and adult lives well in their community
  - everyone benefits 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 tackling the climate emergency
  - a community-focussed, innovative council providing efficient, effective and quality services.

## 8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 The Council has a strong track record of financial discipline and budget management which is integral to delivering its ambitions. The peer team found evidence of robust financial planning and a clear understanding of the council's financial position across both political and managerial leadership. The council is seen as proactive in identifying and pursuing funding opportunities, supported by a visible pipeline of investable schemes and an entrepreneurial mindset that enables it to leverage external investment effectively, one stakeholder reflected *"Telford is always on the front foot. They always have skeleton proposals prepped and can react quickly. They will deliver."*
- 8.2 The Service & Financial Planning Strategy for 2026/27 will include medium term financial projections. The Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2026/27, announced in December 2025, included funding based on a fairer evidenced based system as well as being the first multi-year Local Government settlement in a decade, which will aid the Council's ability to ensure robust financial planning beyond a 12-month period.
- 8.3 Any resources required to deliver the action plan will need to be found within the overall resources included in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

## 9.0 Legal and HR Implications

9.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations contained in this report. The Council has legal duties to ensure it is effectively managed and governed, and by implementing the recommendations of the CPC, the Council will be further demonstrating the seriousness with which it takes this duty. In implementing any recommendations, legal advice and support will be provided as required on an on-going basis.

## 10.0 Ward Implications

10.1 There are no impacts on specific wards although any work undertaken in response to the Corporate Peer Challenge would be borough wide and in-line with our Vision and Priorities.

## 11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

11.1 There are no Health, Social and Economic Implications directly arising from this report. Any work undertaken in response to the Corporate Peer Challenge would have a positive impact on Health and wellbeing of residents in the borough

## 12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

12.1 There are no Equality & Diversity implications directly arising from this report. Any work undertaken in response to the Corporate Peer Challenge have a positive impact on Equality and Diversity in the borough.

## 13.0 Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environmental Implications

13.1 There are no Climate Change and Environmental Implications directly arising from this report. Any work undertaken in response to the Corporate Peer Challenge have a positive impact on Climate Change and the environment.

## 14.0 Background Papers

None.

## 15.0 Appendices

- A Corporate Peer Challenge Report
- B Action Plan

## 16.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Finance	12/01/2026	12/01/2026	ER
Legal	12/01/2026	12/01/2026	RP