



Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Cabinet

Thursday 26 March 2026

Economic Development Strategy update

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Ollie Vickers – Cabinet Member: The Economy & Transport
Lead Director:	James Dunn – Director: Prosperity & Investment
Service Area:	Prosperity & Investment
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Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key Decision:	Key
Forward Plan:	Yes – 26 February 2026
Report considered by:	SMT – 17 February 2026 Business Briefing – 5 March 2026 Cabinet – 26 March 2026

1.0 Recommendations for noting:

Cabinet is asked to:-

- 1.1 Note progress in the delivery of the Councils Economic Development Strategy 'Our Fair & Inclusive Strategy for Economic Growth 2024-2032' (the EDS)
- 1.2 Note the successes and opportunities in the borough and activity in the supporting skills for business through the Telford Together programme.
- 1.3 Continue to support for the delivery of the EDS and the Councils approach to securing inward investment and support for existing local businesses through the activities of Invest Telford.

2.0 Purpose of Report

2.1 The purpose of this report is to highlight the activity and progress of Inward Investment and Business Support in the delivery of the Councils EDS. The report provides updates in the following key areas:

- Activity of Invest Telford in support of the EDS
- Invest Telford Partnership
- Successes and opportunities for growth in the boroughs strategic defence sector
- Telford Together programme of skills activities supporting business
- Delivery of programmes through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund

3.0 Background

3.1 Telford has a strong economic base and is recognised nationally as a key destination for inward investment and job creation. In recent years, the borough has secured significant inward investment in the manufacturing sector which remains a significant portion of the boroughs economy (15.4% of jobs compared to 7.3% nationally). The borough has diverse economic sectors including agri-tech, Information Technology, advanced manufacturing, food and beverage, construction and defence sectors. Telford continually ranks highly in national reports such as Centre for Cities and GC Insight’s Growth outlook report for housing stock growth, population growth and as a high growth business hotspot.

3.2 Key economic statistics include:

Telford offers a dynamic growth opportunity for businesses with its thriving business environment, strategic location, skilled workforce, and impressive track record of success.

Growth and economic strength



High growth economy

One of the top five fastest-growing places in the UK. Population expected to hit 200,000 by 2034. (ONS, 2024)



Leading productivity growth

Telford leads the Midlands in productivity growth—outperforming regional and national trends. (ONS, 2022)



Housing growth leader

Ranked 1st in the UK for housing stock growth (2022–23). (Centre for Cities, 2024)

Opportunity and investment



Top ranked for opportunity

Ranked 4th in the UK Opportunity Index for future growth potential. (Lambert Smith Hampton, 2024)



Strong track record in investment

Home to over 300 international businesses, making Telford a proven inward investment hotspot. (Beauhurst, 2022)



Strong business survival rate

4th lowest rate of business closures in the UK, proof of a supportive ecosystem. (Centre for Cities, 2024)

Strategic location and connectivity



Outstanding connectivity

Strategic location with direct motorway access, rail links and proximity to major airports. Defence Fulfilment Centre has delivered over £1bn in goods. (Gov.uk, 2025)



Advanced manufacturing hub

Home to one of the highest shares of manufacturing jobs in the UK—double the national average. (ONS, 2023)

People and planning



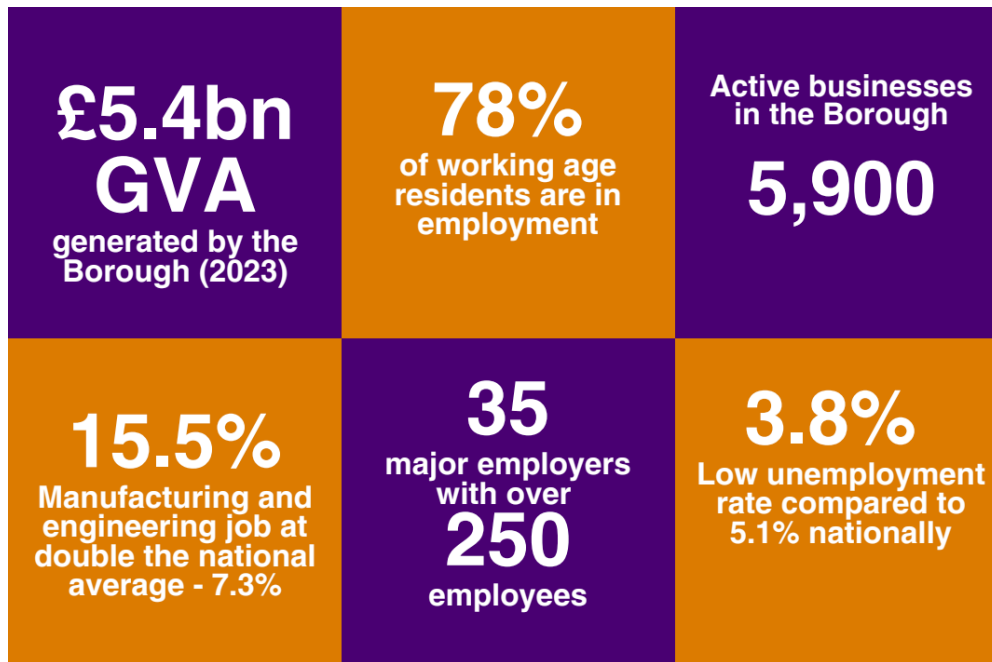
Skilled workforce on tap

155,000 students at 14 universities within 60 minutes. 16 more universities within 90 minutes. (Office for Students, 2025)



Most efficient planning authority

100% of major planning applications decided on time—well above national average. (Gov.uk, 2025)



4.0 Summary of main proposals

Economic Development Strategy Action Plan



Delivery of the Economic Development Strategy 2024

- 4.1 Launched in 2024, Telford & Wrekin Council's Economic Development Strategy was shaped following an independent external review and peer to peer learning with other high performing councils – one of a number of actions that we continue to work towards.

Since the launch of the Economic Development Strategy 2024, Invest Telford, have worked closely with partners and focused on translating strategic ambition into tangible delivery. Significant progress has been made against the Pillars within the Strategy, including:

- **Promoting our Place**, through continued hard work to attract inward investment into the borough and our promotion of Telford & Wrekin as a place to live, work and study.
- **Supporting our Businesses**, through continued delivery of the UKSPF majority funded Thrive Telford programme and the launch of the Invest Telford Partnership
- Greater emphasis on strategic collaboration and deepening our activity with local skills providers to **Build our Talent Pipeline**.
- Alongside that, the delivery of our Innovate Telford scheme and greater connections between our businesses and Higher Education, aligns with pillar four and support for an **Innovation Culture**.
- **Improving Local Infrastructure** and **Sites & Premises** are supported by ambitious investment at Station Quarter and the development of our Local Plan
- **Outstanding Quality of Life** is continuously worked towards by supporting residents into good quality employment, investing in our high streets and an exciting events schedule for local people.

4.2 A major milestone has been the establishment and launch of the ***Invest Telford Partnership (ITP)***. This action directly responds to the Strategy's commitment to strengthening strategic collaboration between the public and private sectors following the cessation of the Local Enterprise Partnership. The ITP provides a senior-level forum for strategic businesses to engage with the Council and partners, shape priorities, and contribute intelligence on skills, investment, and growth barriers.

4.3 In parallel, the Council has launched ***Telford Together***, a schools and employer engagement programme designed to strengthen links between local businesses, education providers, and young people. This programme supports the Strategy's long-term ambition to build a resilient local talent pipeline by improving employer visibility in schools and helping young people better understand local career opportunities.

4.4 The Council has also continued to actively promote ***the Quad at Station Quarter*** as a focal point for business incubation and innovation. Working in partnership with Harper Adams University and Telford College, the Quad is being positioned as a space that supports start-ups, scaling businesses, and *vertical education integration*—connecting schools, further education, higher education, and employers within a single, high-quality environment.

4.5 Alongside these strategic initiatives, Invest Telford has maintained a strong focus on active account management of key businesses, in line with the Strategy's commitment to retention and expansion. This has included:

- Quarterly engagement meetings with Magna Cosma
- Newly established strategic relationships with Babcock International at MOD Donnington

Economic Development Strategy Update

- A programme of Leader, Chief Executive and Cabinet Member visits to major employers, including Fabweld Steel Products, McPhillips Construction, Coforge, Transicon, Different Dog, HCI Systems Ltd, and others

4.6 Local businesses have welcomed the Councils approach and with quotes below reflecting this;

Alex Thurstan, Co-founder of Different Dog, said: “We are thrilled to consolidate our operations in Telford. The support from the Invest Telford team has been fantastic signposting us to support to assist with our move to Telford. Moving to Telford gives us the capacity to grow a thriving business community and will help us realise our mission to change more dogs’ lives with real, nutritious food.”

Tony Smith, Managing Director of HCI Systems Limited, said: “I’m excited to join HCI Systems at such a pivotal time. Telford and Wrekin is home to incredible talent and innovative businesses, and we are eager to work closely with local partners to drive mutual success. Invest Telford has been instrumental in supporting our ambitions, and we look forward to playing our part in the borough’s growth.”





- 4.7 These engagements provide direct insight into business confidence, investment plans, workforce challenges, and supply chain issues, ensuring that the Council remains responsive to employer need.
- 4.8 Progress has also been made against skills-related actions within the Strategy. The Council continues to work closely with partners and holds a place on the steering group for the Marches Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), ensuring that Telford & Wrekin’s employer priorities are reflected in regional skills planning.
- 4.9 Building on this, the Skills for Growth programme has been launched in partnership with local education providers and Shropshire Chamber of Commerce. This initiative brings together Harper Adams University, Telford College, and In-Comm Training to provide businesses with a coordinated, employer-led skills offer and a single point of contact for skills enquiries—directly aligning with the Strategy’s ambition to simplify and strengthen employer access to skills provision.

Invest Telford

- 4.10 Over the course of 2025 Invest Telford has engaged and worked directly with over 300 local businesses, spanning start-ups, SMEs, scale-ups, and strategic employers across key sectors including manufacturing, defence, professional services, digital, and low carbon.
- 4.11 This level of engagement reflects Invest Telford’s role as the Council’s ‘front door’ for business support, investment facilitation, and economic intelligence, and has provided a strong evidence base to shape programme delivery, skills interventions, and inward investment activity.



Key Sector Focus: Defence as a Strategic Growth Sector for Telford & Wrekin

- 4.12 Defence is a key sector for Telford & Wrekin’s economy, rooted in both historic specialisms and national priority. The borough has a long-standing defence manufacturing and engineering heritage, underpinned by major operational and industrial assets such as MOD Donnington and a strong concentration of advanced manufacturing capability.
- 4.13 Telford & Wrekin’s competitive advantage lies in the intersection of industrial capability, skills availability, and strategic land assets. The area has an established workforce with transferable skills in mechanical engineering, fabrication, logistics, electronics, and advanced manufacturing—skills that are directly aligned to the needs of the defence sector. This is complemented by the presence of further education provision capable of scaling and adapting training to meet defence-specific demand, and by the availability of large, well-connected employment sites suitable for secure, high-specification industrial development.

Key defence sector partners



4.14 Defence also offers long-term economic resilience - defence investment is increasingly driven by sustained increases in government expenditure and long-term procurement pipelines – with recent policy announcements placing emphasis on renewed focus on access to supply chains for SMEs. As such, increased investment across the defence sector provides Telford & Wrekin with opportunities for stable job creation, supply chain growth, export-oriented activity, and productivity-enhancing investment.

Rheinmetall Investment: A Major Vote of Confidence in Telford

4.15 The announcement by Rheinmetall in May 2025 confirming Telford as the location for its new UK large-calibre barrel production facility represents a landmark inward investment and a major vote of confidence in the borough's economic fundamentals.

4.16 Rheinmetall's decision reflects confidence in Telford's skilled workforce, established defence manufacturing pedigree, proximity to MOD customers, and the availability of suitable land and infrastructure, whilst also reflecting the proactive work of the Invest Telford team and colleagues across the council. The project is expected to create more than 400 jobs directly and indirectly through the supply chain and inject over £400 million into the UK economy over the next decade, with Telford positioned at the heart of this impact.



- 4.17 Importantly, this investment builds on Rheinmetall's existing presence in Telford through Rheinmetall BAE Systems Land (RBSL), reinforcing the borough's status as a nationally significant defence manufacturing location. For Telford & Wrekin, the investment validates long-term work on skills development, investor support, and land readiness, and strengthens the case for further defence-related growth and clustering.
- 4.18 The decision of Rheinmetall to locate in Telford was not an act of chance but as a direct result of Invest Telford proactively engaging as soon as they entered the market looking for the most suitable location. Through engagement and a compelling narrative/pitch to Rheinmetall at senior level Telford was chosen over several other shortlisted locations.

National Policy Context: Defence as an Engine for Growth

- 4.19 The UK Government has made defence a central pillar of its Modern Industrial Strategy, most notably through the publication of the Defence Industrial Strategy (DIS) 2025: Making Defence an Engine for Growth. The Strategy sets out a clear ambition to use defence spending to drive economic growth, innovation, and productivity across all regions of the UK.

Regional Defence and Security Clusters (RDSCs)

- 4.20 The Government, with strong MOD backing, is also signalling its intent to grow defence capability through place-based collaboration by supporting the development of Regional Defence and Security Clusters (RDSCs). These clusters are designed to bring together industry, academia, and government to accelerate innovation, strengthen supply chains, and create regionally embedded defence ecosystems.
- 4.21 Within this context, the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) is leading work to develop a West Midlands Defence and Security Cluster, building on the

region’s strengths in advanced manufacturing, engineering, cyber, and defence-adjacent technologies.

4.19 Telford & Wrekin Council is actively involved in this work and is represented on both the steering group and the working group for the West Midlands cluster. This ensures that Telford’s defence assets, supply chain businesses, and skills capabilities are fully integrated into regional planning and that the borough plays a proactive role in shaping the cluster’s priorities, governance, and delivery.

Telford Defence Gateway

4.20 Demonstrating the strategic importance of defence to the borough, the Leader and Chief Executive of Telford & Wrekin Council have held direct meetings with Ministers for Defence in Westminster to articulate the case for a Telford Defence Gateway. This emerging concept would see major investment, regeneration, and modernisation focused around MOD Donnington, building on its reputation as a nationally significant hub for defence logistics, manufacturing, and innovation. The Defence Gateway ambition aligns with national objectives around sovereign capability, supply chain resilience, and productivity, while offering transformative regeneration and employment opportunities for the borough.

Telford Land Deal

4.21 Invest Telford continues to work closely with end user businesses who have moved into sites and premises made available through the Telford Land Deal. Highlights of which are outlined in the graphic below.

Since the start of the Telford Land Deal

Gross sales income £60.3m	Profit share to Council (gross) £15.7m	Jobs 2493
Commercial floor space 209,038m² <small>(2,250,066ft²)</small>	Housing units 1583 <small>(684 affordable)</small>	Brownfield land developed 50.71 ha <small>(125.3 acres - equivalent to 86 football pitches)</small>
Private sector investment £504m	Business Rates (gross) £4.5m	Council Tax £2,611,950 pa

Delivery of UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Programmes 25-26

4.22 Over the past 12 months, Invest Telford has played a central role in designing, commissioning, and delivering a comprehensive suite of UK Shared Prosperity Fund programmes, focused on enterprise creation, business growth, innovation, skills, and productivity.

SME Grant Programmes

4.23 To date, 77 projects have been contracted for business grants/Innovation support, with a total project value of £565k and a UKSPF grant commitment of £375k, pointing to a private sector leverage (or match) of just under £200k. £242k has been paid to businesses to accelerate growth plans, and improve competitiveness, particularly during a period of wider economic uncertainty.

Start Up Telford Programme

4.24 The Start Up Telford programme has been a flagship element of UKSPF delivery over the last year and has supported the creation of a strong pipeline of new local enterprises, key outcomes include:

- Over 100 new businesses launched locally
- Comprehensive pre-start and early-stage support, including:
 - Business planning and validation
 - Financial forecasting and pricing
 - Legal and regulatory guidance
 - Marketing and customer acquisition fundamentals

Telford Growth Enabler Programme

4.25 The Telford Growth Enabler has focused on supporting 31 established SMEs with ambition to grow but facing barriers around strategy, capacity, or capability. Delivery has included:

- In-depth business diagnostics to identify growth constraints
- Access to specialist consultancy support, tailored to individual business need
- Support across areas such as:
 - Leadership and management
 - Market diversification
 - Financial planning and resilience
 - Operational efficiency

4.26 This programme has supported numerous businesses to clarify growth plans, improve decision-making, and take informed steps towards scaling.

Business Advice Service (BAS)

4.27 Telford's BAS has assisted 15 businesses access specific, thematic consultancy style support across a range of topic areas, including:

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- Strategic planning
- Financial planning, including accountancy and accessing alternative finance
- Digital supporting businesses to get on-line and to implement new systems
- Sales and Marketing experts to help businesses look at new ways to reach customers/markets, effectiveness of sales and help diversify products or services
- Clean growth and moving to Net Zero

Innovate Telford Programme

4.28 The Innovate Telford scheme, which is now almost completed, has seen 43 businesses access the Engagement & Readiness strand with 30 accessing further innovation support in the business. The programme has combined:

- Specialist innovation consultancy, including commercialisation and route-to-market support
- Intellectual Property advisory and support
- Grant funding to de-risk innovation activity and accelerate development

4.29 Innovate Telford has been particularly important in helping SMEs that may not traditionally engage with innovation support to explore new opportunities, invest in R&D-led activity, and improve productivity.

Business Energy Advice Service (BEAS)

4.30 Invest Telford has actively promoted and facilitated engagement between Telford businesses and the Business Energy Advice Service (BEAS). At last count (Nov 2025), four Telford & Wrekin businesses had been awarded a grant total of £160,757

4.31 Through this work:

- Businesses have accessed specialist energy advice
- Funding has been unlocked to support decarbonisation and net-zero investments
- SMEs have been supported to reduce energy costs while contributing to a more sustainable local economy

4.32 This activity aligns economic growth with environmental sustainability and supports the Council's wider climate objectives.

Upskilling Programme

4.33 The Upskilling programme has focused on strengthening core commercial capability within 30 local businesses.

4.34 Delivery has included structured support to help businesses:

- Gain a deeper understanding of sales strategy and sales processes
- Improve confidence in pricing, pipeline management, and customer acquisition
- Embed more consistent and scalable approaches to business development

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4.35 This has helped businesses move beyond ad-hoc sales activity towards more deliberate, data-informed growth strategies.

AI Bootcamp

4.36 The AI Bootcamp has been a targeted productivity-focused intervention, supporting businesses at the start of, or early in, their artificial intelligence journey. Key features include:

- Delivery to 12 businesses
- Practical, fundamentals-based support rather than theoretical content
- Focus on:
 - Understanding AI use cases relevant to SMEs
 - Identifying productivity gains and efficiency improvements
 - Building confidence to adopt and trial AI tools responsibly

4.37 The programme has helped participating businesses to demystify AI and begin integrating it into everyday operations to support growth and competitiveness.

Events and Partnership Activity

4.38 Alongside programme delivery, Invest Telford has led and supported a series of high-impact events designed to convene businesses, partners, and stakeholders around priority themes.

Skills for Growth – Launch Event

4.39 Invest Telford delivered the launch of Skills for Growth, in partnership with:

- Harper Adams University
- Shropshire Chamber of Commerce
- Telford College
- In-Comm Training
- Telford & Wrekin Council

4.40 The event brought together 40+ employers and skills providers to explore current and future workforce challenges, routes to upskilling and reskilling and practical collaboration between business and education. The launch reinforced the Council's commitment to employer-led skills solutions and closer alignment between industry and providers.

Driving Productivity in Manufacturing event – Ricoh

4.41 A manufacturing-focused event was delivered at Ricoh, in collaboration with Make UK. The event provided:

- Sector-specific insight for local manufacturers
- Opportunities for peer-to-peer learning
- Engagement on productivity, skills, and competitiveness challenges

4.42 This reinforced manufacturing as a priority sector and supported stronger connections between local firms and national industry bodies.

Procurement and Social Value Event

- 4.43 Invest Telford delivered a procurement-themed event attended by 40+ SMEs, focused on improving understanding of public-sector contracting. The session included:
- Updates on changes introduced through the Procurement Act
 - Practical explanations of what social value means in bidding terms
 - Local exemplars demonstrating how SMEs are successfully embedding social value in tenders
- 4.44 This event helped demystify procurement, build confidence among SMEs, and improve readiness to compete for public-sector opportunities.

Key Priority: Skills

- 4.45 Telford & Wrekin Council continues to take a proactive, partnership-led approach to addressing skills shortages and workforce gaps across the borough. This work recognises that skills challenges are multi-faceted, requiring coordinated action across education providers, employers, and public-sector partners, with interventions spanning early intervention, workforce entry, upskilling, and inclusive employment pathways.

Skills for Growth: A Coordinated Employer-Facing Skills Offer

- 4.46 A central pillar of the Council's approach is the Skills for Growth collaboration, which brings together Harper Adams University, Telford College, and In-Comm Training into a single, coordinated partnership offer for businesses. Through Skills for Growth, employers are provided with a single point of contact for ongoing skills enquiries, simplifying what has historically been a fragmented landscape. Rather than businesses needing to navigate multiple providers independently, the partnership enables:
- Faster and clearer responses to employer skills needs
 - Joined-up signposting to appropriate provision (FE, HE, apprenticeships, short courses, and bespoke training)
 - A more responsive and employer-led approach to curriculum and delivery
- 4.47 A key development over the last year has been the deepening of collaboration with Telford College's employer engagement team. Invest Telford and the College now work even more closely to align employer intelligence, reduce duplication in outreach, and ensure that feedback from businesses directly informs skills provision. This closer working has strengthened relationships with strategic employers and improved the College's ability to respond to real-time workforce demand.

Supporting Young People at Risk of NEET

- 4.48 The Council continues to place strong emphasis on early intervention and inclusive pathways, particularly for young people at risk of becoming Not in

Education, Employment or Training (NEET). Our provision continues to gather momentum. MHCLG's announcement of an extension for final UKSPF spend will allow recruitment to continue until June with support delivered out by September 26. 38 individuals are being supported representing a £57k commitment so far from UKSPF funding. This provision focuses on:

- Identifying young people at risk of disengagement
- Providing tailored support around confidence, employability, and progression
- Connecting individuals to education, training, and employment opportunities

4.49 Invest Telford works closely with colleagues in the Education and Skills team to ensure that employer insight and labour-market intelligence informs this work, and that pathways into local employment sectors are clearly articulated. As well as supporting the Stay Near Go Far campaign, working alongside local businesses to emphasise the breadth of career opportunities available to local residents within Telford – including working with local FE and HE skills providers to outline that the requisite skills and qualifications can also be gotten within our borough.

Telford Together and Employer–Education Engagement

4.50 The Telford Together initiative continues to play an important role in connecting businesses, young people, and education providers.

4.51 A key highlight has been the launch event “*Digital Sparks*”, which brought together local businesses and Year 9–10 students for a practical challenge day. The event was hosted at Harper Adams University's Quad Building at Station Quarter, making use of a high-quality, employer-facing environment to inspire and engage young people. During the challenge day. Businesses set real-world digital and workplace challenges for 50 students who worked in teams to develop solutions. Employers (BiT Group, Iconsys and Capgemini) engaged directly with young people, helping to bring to life careers and pathways for them.

4.52 This approach supports early exposure to the world of work, raises aspirations, and helps students develop transferable skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, and communication, while also strengthening relationships between employers and the future workforce.

Strengthening Defence Skills Pathways: Technical Excellence College Bid

4.53 In line with national defence skills priorities, Telford & Wrekin Council is actively supporting Telford College's bid to become a Defence Technical Excellence College. The Council's role has focused on facilitating engagement between the College and local defence-related employers and supporting the College to secure industry letters of recommendation from Telford-based supply chain businesses - demonstrating clear local demand for defence-aligned technical skills

4.54 This work reinforces the borough's ambition to align education provision with strategic growth sectors, ensuring that local people can access high-value, future-proof careers while supporting the needs of employers operating within defence and advanced manufacturing.

Skills summary

4.55 Through coordinated partnerships, targeted early-intervention programmes, and a strong focus on employer engagement, Telford & Wrekin Council continues to address skills shortages and gaps in a comprehensive and inclusive way. The combination of Skills for Growth, NEET support, employer-education initiatives such as Telford Together, and strategic sector-led interventions demonstrates a clear commitment to building a resilient, future-ready workforce that supports both economic growth and social inclusion.

Invest Telford Partnership (ITP)



4.56 The Invest Telford Partnership (ITP) was established in response to a significant shift in the local and regional economic governance landscape, most notably the cessation of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). The closure of the LEP removed a key mechanism for structured, strategic collaboration between the public and private sectors, creating a potential gap in terms of business-led intelligence, coordinated priority-setting, and collective advocacy on issues critical to economic growth.

4.57 The Invest Telford Partnership has therefore been designed as a senior-level, business-led forum that enables meaningful dialogue between strategic employers and the Council, grounded in mutual accountability and shared ambition. A key objective is to ensure that senior leaders from major employers are actively informing local economic strategy, investment priorities, and service design through the provision of candid intelligence and practical insight.

4.58 In addition, the ITP reflects a clear commitment to strengthening collaboration across the “triple helix” of local government, local industry, and education providers. Addressing long-standing challenges around skills, productivity,

innovation, and inclusive growth requires coordinated action across these three spheres.

First Invest Telford Partnership Event – June 2025

4.59 The first meeting of the Invest Telford Partnership was held in June 2025 and saw a focus on one of the most pressing and consistently raised issues for local businesses: skills and recruitment.

Key Actions and Progress Since the First Meeting:

4.60 A number of concrete actions flowed directly from the June 2025 meeting, demonstrating the Partnership's commitment to moving quickly from discussion to delivery.

4.61 Firstly, a detailed paper was produced setting out the latest changes in national and regional skills policy, including reforms to funding, qualifications, and employer engagement models. The paper translated these policy changes into clear, accessible messages for businesses, outlining what the changes mean in practice, where opportunities exist, and how employers can engage more effectively with the skills system.

4.62 Secondly, targeted work has been undertaken between Telford & Wrekin Council, Telford College, and Stoke Heath Prison to explore future employment and skills pathways for ex-offenders. This work reflects the Partnership's commitment to inclusive growth and to supporting employers to access new labour pools while addressing wider social and economic challenges.

4.63 Finally, as a direct outcome of the first ITP meeting, the Principal and Chief Executive of Telford College was invited to present at the second iteration of the Invest Telford Partnership. This provided businesses with a senior-level overview of the College's strategic direction, responsiveness to employer need, and opportunities for deeper collaboration, reinforcing the role of education providers as equal partners within the Partnership.

5.0 Alternative Options

5.1 A healthy and strong economy is critical to the success of the borough and our communities. The economy provides jobs and investment into the borough that helps create a more prosperous place to live, work and visit. The EDS sets out how the Council will help support businesses to attract new investment and jobs as well as support existing businesses to grow and develop and retain staff. The EDS identified key strategic areas of the economy and helps guide Council policy.

5.2 The alternative to not having an EDS or the support of the Invest Telford Team would significantly reduce the Council's ability to; engage with businesses, manage and secure new inward investment opportunities, deploy grant funding to local businesses, support the upskilling of staff and maintain a competitive advantage over other Local Authorities. This would result in lost inward investment opportunities in an increasingly competitive economic environment, reduced job

opportunities and the potential for companies to seek a more business-friendly environment by relocating.

6.0 Key Risks

6.1 This report provides an update on activity supporting the delivery of the EDS. In the absence of resources, the Council would have to stop delivering its economic development service through Invest Telford. This would likely result in lower productivity, increase business failures, job losses and a far less competitive environment for local business and inward investment. There is a real potential for a cliff edge in funding for business growth activity for local authorities outside of mayoral or strategic combined authorities. We have made contact with the WMCA to find out more about options for access to the Local Growth Fund, but early communication points to non-constituent authorities not having direct access to this funding.

7.0 Council Priorities

7.1 The EDS supports the following 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
- a community focussed Council providing efficient, effective and quality services

8.0 Financial Implications

8.1 The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy provides investment to support the Economic Development Strategy. This includes capital allocations for the Growth Fund, Climate change Programme, Pride In Your High Street and Station Quarter Development as well as revenue funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The Strategy will also support the Council in making future bids to government for funding and explore other funding opportunities.

9.0 Legal and HR Implications

9.1 The Economic Development Strategy falls within the Council's general power of competence under the Localism Act 2011 which permits the Council to do anything an individual may do, subject to statutory limitation and this aligns with Council's promoting the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the area. Any strategy or development under the strategy must be adopted in accordance with the Council's Constitution and general law.

10.0 Ward Implications

10.1 The EDS and the delivery activity to support it covers all wards.

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

11.1 The EDS contributes towards improving the health, social and economic wellbeing of all residents by:

- Improving prosperity of residents and businesses by helping to provide new job opportunities and sustaining existing jobs.
- Through better employment opportunities improving the standard of living for residents and their families.
- Engaging with children and young people to help influence and guide future career opportunities with local employers
- Improving the mental and physical health of residents by supporting a diverse range of economic sectors that can provide a range of job opportunities.

12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

12.2 We are a Patron member of the Shropshire Chamber of Commerce who proactively promote the Armed Forces Covenant.

12.3 We have and will continue to work with Education & Skills team partners to promote employment opportunities for care leavers.

13.0 Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environmental Implications

13.1 The Council has declared a climate emergency and as part of that have developed a Carbon Neutral Action Plan that covers Council operations. The Council recognise that to achieve a carbon neutral borough it needs to engage with other sectors of the economy to help support the mitigation of economic development on the climate.

13.2 The Council has established the Telford Sustainability & Energy Cluster (TSEC) for the purpose of bringing together education institutions, major global investors and home-grown businesses for a collaborative approach to clean economic growth. TSEC meets regularly to share best practice.

13.3 Through the UKSPF programme the Council have helped 18 businesses improve their energy efficiency specifically through energy audits and grants to support the installation of renewable energy, with many more upgrading equipment through our wider SME grant programme.

14.0 Background Papers

- 1 Invest Telford Economic Development Strategy report to Cabinet 4th January 2024

15.0 Appendices

- A Our Strategy for Fair & Inclusive Economic Growth 2024-2032

16.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Director	08/02/2026	11/02/2026	JD
Legal	05/02/2026	05/02/2026	SH
Finance	05/02/2026	05/02/2026	AEM