



HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Health Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday 5 March 2026 at 2.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Third Floor, Southwater One, Telford, TF3 4JG

Present: Councillors D R W White (Chair), F Doran (Vice-Chair), M Boylan, N A Dugmore, R Sahota, P Thomas, J Suckling (Co-Optee) and J Urey.

Also Present: Councillors K Middleton (Cabinet Member for Public Health and Healthier Communities) and Cllr P Watling (Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health).

In Attendance: M Bennett (Better Care Fund Commissioning Lead), S Hardwick (Lead Lawyer: Litigation & Regulatory), G McIver (Deputy Director of Operations, Shropshire Community Health NHS Trust), F Mercer (Executive Director: Adult Social Care, Customer Services & Commercial), L Mills (Head of Health Improvement & Prevention), H Onions (Director: Health & Wellbeing) S Qureshi (Head of Admission Avoidance, Hospital Discharge and Enablement) and P Starkey (Lead Democracy Officer).

Apologies: Councillors C Chikandamina, H Knight (Co-Optee), G Luter and D Saunder (Co-Optee).

HAC-19 Declarations of Interest

None.

HAC-20 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 11 December 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

HAC-21 Update from the JHOSC

The Co-Chair provided an update on the recent meeting of the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC).

Members heard that a significant proportion of the presentation from Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust had focussed on the Hospitals



Transformation Programme and hospital buildings, rather than the future delivery of services. It was noted that Members had not had the opportunity to explore areas of particular interest in sufficient detail and it was suggested that future presentations should be reviewed in advance to ensure they addressed the Committee's requirements.

The Co-Chair referred to the announcement that the Trust had been removed from special measures for the first time in seven years.

Whilst acknowledging that challenges remained, particularly in relation to performance and financial sustainability, Members welcomed the progress made and asked that the Committee's congratulations and thanks be conveyed to Trust staff for their work and commitment.

Members noted the update.

HAC-22 Update from the Health & Wellbeing Board

The Committee received an update from the Director: Public Health on matters due to be considered at the forthcoming meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board on 19 March 2026.

Members were advised that the agenda would include a strategic progress report, an update on the Telford and Wrekin Integrated Place Partnership (TWIPP) Prevention Projects, presentations from Integrated Care Board colleagues on the Cardiovascular, Renal and Metabolic Strategy and the Clinical Strategy, consideration of the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment following completion of the consultation process, an update on the Best Start in Life Delivery Plan, together with updates from Healthwatch and the Safeguarding Partnership.

Members noted the update.

HAC-23 TWIPP Prevention Projects

The Director: Public Health introduced the report, which outlined the progress of the Prevention Projects funded through the Telford and Wrekin Integrated Place Partnership (TWIPP). Members were advised that the programme consisted of seven pilot projects aimed at improving health outcomes, reducing inequalities and supporting residents to access preventative services within their local communities.

The presentation highlighted a number of positive outcomes achieved to date including strong partnership working across organisations, successful engagement with local communities and the development of innovative approaches to supporting residents' health and wellbeing. The Committee



heard about the impact of projects including Healthy Hearts, Living Well and Community Connectors and the role they played in identifying health risks earlier, supporting behaviour change and connecting residents with appropriate services.

Members welcomed the progress made and discussed the benefits of delivering services within communities and in locations that residents already accessed and trusted. They expressed an interest in the Healthy Hearts project and the extent to which it had successfully reached residents who may not otherwise have engaged with health services. The Head of Service: Health Improvement & Prevention explained that taking services directly into community settings had proved effective in engaging groups that were traditionally harder to reach and had enabled earlier identification of health needs.

During discussion, Members sought clarification regarding the uptake of individual projects, how participants were being referred into services and the extent to which residents remained engaged following their initial contact. Members also questioned how project activity was helping to address health inequalities within communities and whether successful approaches could be replicated more widely across the borough. The Head of Service: Health Improvement & Prevention advised that the projects had been designed to target identified areas of need and that strong links had been developed with community organisations and local partners to maximise engagement and reach residents who may otherwise be less likely to access support.

Members sought assurance regarding how the success of the projects was being measured and whether outcomes could be demonstrated beyond participation numbers. The Director: Public Health advised that a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures was being utilised, including participation rates, health outcomes, feedback from residents and evidence gathered from partner organisations. Members were advised that this information would be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the projects and inform future service development and commissioning decisions.

The Committee also explored the sustainability of the projects and expressed concern regarding the challenges associated with delivering preventative services through short-term funding arrangements. Members highlighted the risk that successful initiatives could be lost if funding was not available beyond the current programme period and sought clarification regarding future funding opportunities. In response, the Director: Public Health acknowledged these concerns and advised that discussions were continuing with partners regarding future funding arrangements, together with opportunities to incorporate successful approaches into mainstream service delivery where possible.



Members further discussed the role of prevention in reducing future demand on health and care services and supporting residents to remain healthy and independent for longer. They recognised the significant contribution being made by local voluntary and community organisations in delivering preventative interventions and supporting engagement across the borough and welcomed the positive outcomes achieved through partnership working.

HAC-24 NHS 10 Year Plan - Virtual Wards and Admission Avoidance

The Committee received a joint presentation from representatives of the NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care Board, Shropshire Community Health NHS Trust and Telford & Wrekin Council on the NHS 10 Year Health Plan, neighbourhood health services, virtual wards and admission avoidance arrangements.

Members heard that, following the review of the Rehabilitation and Recovery Units, funding had been reinvested into a range of community-based services aimed at supporting residents closer to home, reducing unnecessary hospital admissions and supporting timely discharge from hospital. The presentation outlined developments including Urgent Community Response services, virtual wards, improved discharge planning arrangements and integrated neighbourhood working across health and social care services.

Members welcomed the presentation and sought further information regarding the implementation of the neighbourhood health model and how local arrangements aligned with the ambitions of the NHS 10 Year Health Plan. In response, the Deputy Director of Operations, Shropshire Community Health NHS Trust explained that the direction of travel was focused on integrating services around the needs of local communities, improving access to care closer to home and strengthening partnership working across health and care organisations. Members were advised that neighbourhood health would build upon existing integrated working arrangements and seek to improve outcomes through preventative and community-based approaches.

During the discussion, Members sought clarification regarding the reinvestment of funding following the closure of the Rehabilitation and Recovery Units and how alternative services were supporting residents who may previously have accessed those facilities. The Head of Service: Admission Avoidance, Hospital Discharge and Enablement explained that investment had been redirected into a range of services including Urgent Community Response, admission avoidance pathways, enhanced discharge arrangements and community-based support. Members were advised that the intention was to provide more responsive care within community settings and reduce unnecessary admissions to hospital where appropriate.



Members raised a number of questions regarding the operation and effectiveness of virtual wards, including referral processes, patient eligibility, monitoring arrangements and the level of clinical oversight provided. The Deputy Director of Operations, Shropshire Community Health NHS Trust advised that patients remained under the care of healthcare professionals and received regular monitoring and review. It was explained that technology-enabled care was used where appropriate to support patient monitoring and that the model enabled individuals to receive hospital-level care within their own homes when clinically suitable. Members heard that performance information demonstrated positive occupancy levels and outcomes for patients supported through virtual ward provision.

The Committee also explored the impact of community-based services on hospital discharge and admission avoidance. Members sought assurance that arrangements were in place to support residents following discharge from hospital and questioned how the system was working across organisational boundaries. In response, the Head of Service: Admission Avoidance, Hospital Discharge and Enablement outlined the role of integrated discharge arrangements and enablement services in supporting residents to regain independence and return safely home. Members heard that close working between health and social care professionals was helping to improve patient flow and reduce delays.

Questions were also raised regarding the financial sustainability of the model, workforce capacity and the ability of services to meet future demand arising from demographic and population growth. The Better Care Fund Commissioning Lead acknowledged the challenges facing both health and care services and advised that transformation would require continued partnership working and investment across the system. Members were informed that the Better Care Fund continued to play an important role in supporting integrated services and enabling organisations to work collaboratively to achieve shared outcomes.

Members sought clarification regarding the contribution made by Telford & Wrekin Council within neighbourhood health arrangements and how local authority services supported the wider prevention agenda. The Head of Service: Admission Avoidance, Hospital Discharge and Enablement advised that the Council played a significant role through social care, enablement, housing-related support and wider community-based services which helped residents maintain independence and avoid unnecessary hospital admissions. Members were advised that these services formed a key part of the neighbourhood health model and supported the broader objective of delivering more joined-up care closer to home.

In concluding the discussion, Members welcomed the progress reported and recognised the benefits of supporting residents to receive care within their



own homes and communities where appropriate. However, the Committee noted that successful delivery of the ambitions set out within the NHS 10 Year Health Plan would require sustained partnership working, workforce development and continued investment across both NHS and local government services.

HAC-25 Work Programme

The Lead Lawyer: Litigation & Regulatory presented the updated Work Programme.

Members reviewed the Committee's forthcoming programme of work and noted the items scheduled for future meetings. Officers advised that the Work Programme would continue to be updated to reflect the Committee's priorities and any emerging issues requiring scrutiny.

During the discussion, Members considered future meeting arrangements, including the option of holding meetings at alternative times. Officers highlighted the importance of ensuring the availability of partner organisations and key witnesses when scheduling meetings and advised that evening meetings may not always be practicable.

Members noted the update.

HAC-26 Chair's Update

The Chair provided an update on matters arising since the previous meeting.

Members were advised that following the Pharmacy Transformation workshop held on 30 January 2026, the Committee had been invited to submit a formal response as part of the consultation process.

A draft response had been prepared and would be circulated to Members for comment. Members were asked to submit any feedback to the Senior Scrutiny Officer by the agreed deadline to enable the Committee's response to be finalised and submitted.

The Chair also advised that due to the Committee's ongoing interest in Children's and Young People's Mental Health, the committee meeting scheduled for 30 April 2026 would be replaced with a workshop session.

Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee would be invited to attend to support joint consideration of the topic.

The Chair thanked officers and members for their attendance.



Telford & Wrekin
Co-operative Council

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The meeting ended at 3.31 pm

Chairman: _____

Date: Thursday 8 October 2026