



Telford & Wrekin
Co-operative Council

Protect, care and invest
to create a better borough

HOW

Telford & Wrekin Council

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IS

EFFICIENCY
DRIVING

AND
CONTINUOUS
**IMPROVE-
MENT**

Telford & Wrekin Council productivity plan

July 2024

A productive Telford & Wrekin Council

Telford & Wrekin Council has a vision for the organisation to “**protect, care and invest to create a better borough**” together with a series of commitments to deliver that vision.

We have an excellent track-record in **driving productivity and efficiency** through financial management and innovation with spend being **within budget for the past 16 years**, despite unprecedented cuts to the grant that we receive from Government. We continually deliver investment making the borough a better place to live:

- the **first Council in the West Midlands** to be **judged outstanding in successive inspections** by **OFSTED** for Children’s Services and top performing SEND services;
- **judged outstanding** for our adult social care **shared lives service**;
- **MJ Council of the Year 2022** and **Co-operative Council of the Year 2022**;
- **Reduced carbon emissions** from our operations **by 60%**;
- **92% of employees** understand how their **job contributes to the Council’s priorities**;
- One of the **first local authorities** to **invest in a solar farm**;
- Delivered **1530 new homes** and **2250 new jobs** through the **Telford Land Deal**;
- Built **500 new homes** through our **wholly-owned company Nu-Place** with **411 under development**;

- Absolute focus on **strengthening communities** with some **2,600 volunteers** supporting Council services; and
- **92% residents are satisfied** with our recycling and waste collection services.

We are proud of our:

- **Focus on clarity of purpose**
our vision to protect, care and invest in our residents is at the heart of everything we do;
- **Robust budget management**
delivered £157m savings whilst protecting and investing in priority services; and
- **Investment in people**
development programmes for members and officers to achieve their very best.

This plan has been developed in response to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities requirement to produce a Productivity Plan as part of our Local Government Finance Settlement.

Telford & Wrekin Council serves a population of 185,600 people which is forecast to grow to around 198,800 by 2031. The borough has one of the fastest growing populations outside of the South East. Our population grew by 19,000 people between the 2011 and 2021 censuses.

As our population grows, it is ageing and becoming more diverse. The number of residents aged over 65 increased between the censuses by 35.7% - the greatest change of any upper tier local authority.

The borough is a key growth hub in the West Midlands in terms of both housing and the local economy and jobs. We have a strong track record at attracting inward investment from both the private and public sector.

We are truly on the side of our residents with this plan setting out our productive and effective approach to deliver our aspirations.

We are evidence led and community focused and this shapes and influences what we do and how we do it.

Together we will continue to create a better borough.



Councillor Lee Carter
Leader,
Telford & Wrekin Council



David Sidaway
Chief Executive,
Telford & Wrekin Council

Our productivity plan

Telford & Wrekin Council is a high performing, productive, co-operative council providing good quality services for the lowest council tax in the Midlands region:

- The first council in the West Midlands to be judged outstanding in successive inspections by OFSTED for Children's Services and top performing SEND services judged outstanding for our adult social care shared lives service;
- Judged outstanding for our adult social care shared lives service;
- reduced carbon emissions from our operations by 60%;
- delivered 1530 new homes and 2250 new jobs through Telford Land Deal;
- built 500 new homes through our wholly-owned company Nuplace with 411 under development;
- delivered £157m savings and our Council Tax is the lowest in the West Midlands region; and
- Invested £29m in On Your Side programme, including improving parks, leisure centres, play areas etc.
- 92% residents are satisfied with our recycling and waste collection services

As a cooperative council, our approach will always be informed by the views and voices of our residents, communities and partners. We are an evidence led and community focused because this is what shapes and influences what we do and how we do it.

We continue to drive forward delivery of the Council's vision to **'protect, care and invest to create a better borough'** and our 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 has a leading role in addressing the climate emergency; and
- a community-focussed, innovative council providing efficient, effective and quality services.

Our **Council Plan** sets out what we will focus on delivering against each priority. Our robust performance framework enables us to understand the impact and difference we are having and identify where we need to do things differently. This framework shapes the focus of all of our services and we review our Council Plan each year to ensure that our effort is improving outcomes and creating a better borough.

We have a proven track record of delivering savings and efficiencies. Between 2009/10 and 2024/25 this includes:

- significant reductions in head count during the period of the Government's austerity programme;
- reduced the office accommodation by half, saving the Council £2.4m pa.;
- cut back-office costs by over 50% since 2009, saving £15m a year;
- delivered £16m procurement savings over the past 15 years by renegotiating and retendering contracts for the provision of services;
- secured savings of £30m over the lifetime of the waste collection and disposal contract;
- with a relentless focus on business winning we have generated additional income through growth in business rates and council tax. Rateable property numbers have increased by 830, an increase of 18.2% and in relation to council tax there has been total growth of over 13,000 band D equivalent properties, averaging 1,200 per annum. In total this has led to around £17m additional income being generated in council tax and business rates income since 2013;
- increased income from more commercial approaches across our services over the past two years, including increasing income from schools outside of Telford & Wrekin and being one of the first local authorities to invest in a solar farm which has generated £4.4m net income to date since its completion in 2014;
- received nearly £56million in New Homes Bonus funding since the scheme started in 2011/12;
- investing over £40m into extending and improving local schools, increasing school places in 21st century ready learning centres with brand new educational facilities across our secondary sector and ever increasing modernisation of our primary and early years provision. Delivery of a brand new Digital Skills Hub to progress our ambitions for a future fit workforce ready for the revolutionary technology economy;
- delivery of Warmer homes funding energy efficient measures in residents homes via the governments, Local Authority Delivery Scheme (LAD), Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) and further direct investment by the council of £470k from the Climate Change Fund so that a larger number of residents and private landlords benefit; and

- launching our Safer, Stronger Programme targeting 12 intervention areas across the borough with a key focus on enhancing community cohesion and building more resilient communities.

Productivity in our organisation

Changes that have been made to improve our productivity include:

- innovative transformation of our school travel assistance programme saving 3.2 million over the last three years;
- introduction of a tool called 'Valuing Care', to better understand the needs and strengths of Telford's children and young people and deliver a needs-led approach to care, support and commissioning with potential identified savings of £4.4m over three years;
- the introduction of Family Hubs, one stop centres, where families can get free information, guidance and support around a variety of services, has resulted in the reduction in referrals into safeguarding and statutory services with more families accessing the right help at an earlier time. Including the launch of the new innovative perinatal mental health social prescribing service and expanded peer support which has improved breastfeeding rates;
- our Healthy Lifestyle Service have supported 1,700 residents to lose weight, become more active, or quit smoking;
- launched a Community Blood Pressure Project, with 1,000 people benefiting in 1st year;
- wide reaching Green Spaces Are Go campaign encouraging over 3500 residents to participate in outdoor activity programmes;
- delivery of one of the best alcohol treatment rates in the country and further improved access to alcohol and drugs treatment across the criminal justice system;
- increased investment in health visiting and school nursing teams;
- launched the new integrated Domestic Abuse Service – comprehensively improving support for children, young people, victims and perpetrators;
- co-producing the development and implementation of our strategies to improve outcomes for residents, for example, our Ageing Well Strategy informed by over 2,000 residents and co-produced with experts with lived experience. The strategy outlines a comprehensive approach to improving people's outcomes as they age;
- through partnership working across health and care we are increasing our efficiencies around procurement, for example the Community Equipment contract jointly commissioned by Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin NHS, Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council;
- through our place-based health and care board (Telford & Wrekin Integrated Place Partnership) we are working with all stakeholders to develop integrated neighbourhood teams across the borough that will support the delivery of improved outcomes (including reducing admissions to acute services, reducing demand on community services and improving a person's wellbeing);
- creation of the Telford Land Deal, a special agreement with Homes England, to bring brownfield and underutilised land back into use for development. Taking effect from April 2015 this unique model has enabled the disposal of public land through upfront investment into site preparation and marketing, underpinned by the Council's 'Invest Telford' business support offer. This has delivered an acceleration in commercial and residential sites sold, subsequently raising land values.
- key achievements:
 - 200,000sqm of employment floor space;
 - 1583 new homes;
 - £60m of accelerated public land receipts;
 - enabled the expansion of local companies and attracted circa £496 million of inward and foreign investment into the borough.
- development of a £10m Housing Intervention Fund providing opportunity to target investment to unlock opportunities to deliver specialist accommodation where the current market does not address local need. This is targeted at Children's and Adults services to reduce dependency on high cost residential care and to enable growth in foster care provision delivering better long-term outcomes for clients and revenue savings. We have used this in a range of ways including refurbishment of Council owned buildings, acquisition of stock bespoke to need and adaptation. As an example following investment into refurbishment Octavia Court has delivered 11 units of self contained accommodation with 24/7 on site support for 16/17 care leavers. This will allow step down from residential care, some returning from out of area, providing a key step in young people's transition to independent living improving long term outcomes. The scheme is set to deliver a saving in excess of £600k pa;
- launched a new online self-service services including digital assistant 'Ask-Tom' which is available 24/7 to respond to the most frequently asked customer queries. In the first year over 10,000 enquires were resolved by the assistant with a 99% customer satisfaction rate. 'Ask Tom' won the Association of Public Service Excellence's 'Transformation and Efficiency Initiative of the Year' 2023.

Productivity moving forwards

We will continue to focus on four themes to continue to deliver savings and drive productivity and transformation:

- challenging and changing, reviewing and reimagining the way we do things;
- focusing on solving problems, early help at the right time, promoting social responsibility, action and independence to manage and reduce demand for services and keeping people and families out of high cost systems;
- developing ourselves as a commercial enterprise thus further reducing our dependency on Government grants; and
- being a modern organisation with modern practices and where we always get the basics right.

We continue to evaluate the organisation to understand what is working effectively and efficiently and what needs to be changed. Through this we are able to create and seize opportunities.

- **redesigning services and business process reengineering** to ensure that they are delivered in the most efficient and effective manner;
- **redesigning and managing our front door** to enable users to get the right service at the right time;
- **working with the private sector** to drive economic growth in order to generate jobs, increase prosperity for our residents and generate additional income for the Council. Examples include work with the Telford Business Board and major local employers, the management of the Telford Town Centre shopping centre, house-builders and our universities partners.

We have already taken significant steps to reduce our dependency on Government grants and we will continue to drive them forward:

- **'increasing income through trading our existing services'** – there are many Council services that already 'trade' outside the organisation and secure income. For example Finance and HR and Catering;
- **'new commercial development/projects'** – we have developed a track record on taking on new ventures to deliver income to the Council and protect front-line services:
 - a solar farm providing £0.9m net income per year;
 - established 'Nuplace', a housing company that will provide over 850 new homes for private and affordable rent, with the first homes now occupied; and
 - established a Growth Fund to invest in development of premises for businesses to encourage job creation and retention.

We will continue to research and develop new opportunities that can bring in an income stream to the Council. Our approach will always be business focused:

- **'maximising existing funding streams'** – there are three main areas which we are already progressing and will continue to drive:
 - **business supporting, business winning** – continuing to work to attract new investment and work to support the retention and growth of existing businesses. As well as being the right thing to develop jobs and growth in the borough, the Council currently receives 49% of all new **business rates**;
 - **growth through good planning** – a whole Council approach by which all services work to support and enable business investment in the Borough. We have been ranked first by the 2021 Centre for Cities report for local authority for housing growth. Through this the Council will see **new Council Tax** and Business Rate receipts, as well as receiving the Government's **'New Homes Bonus'** for new homes;
 - **property investment portfolio** – a property investment portfolio delivering over £10m income per annum from rental income.
- **'securing external funding'** – again we have successfully driven this agenda, including £18.79m capital funding through the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership Local Growth Fund, £20m Levelling Up Funding to deliver our Broadening Aspirations through Education and Culture Programme, £22.3m Town's Fund, £9.8m Capital Regeneration fund and £1.37m decarbonising fund.

Productivity through technology, data and intelligence

All of what we deliver is informed by and illustrated by our intelligent use of information and data management. We are forward thinking in our approach to data and work with our partners to share data for preventative causes, such as sharing data with the fire service to help them target their safe and well visits and fitting of free smoke detectors in vulnerable households. These are just some of the things that we are doing as an authority to continually deliver for our residents.

We have a strong culture of evidence-based decision-making and view data as a significant asset to the organisation in the delivery of our priorities. A focus by SMT on evidence-based decision-making, alongside an organisational culture of using data to inform operational and strategic decisions ensures services are understood and underpin plans for service improvement.

There are some major ways that we will change as an organisation:

- **'channel shift'** by providing services and information in the most efficient way. For example, providing clear and robust information on the Council's website will mean that

residents can 'self-serve' and not need to contact the Council in other less efficient, more expensive ways;

- **'improving business intelligence'** – we are a data rich organisation, but all services need to be better at turning this data into intelligence to understand who is using our services and the outcomes they receive; and
- **'developing new ways of delivering services'** – we will need to be working in an ever more integrated way with our partners including Telford & Wrekin Integrated Care System (ICS), Town and Parish Councils and the Voluntary and Community Sector.

As part of our commitment to progress, we will continue to embrace innovative IT solutions and explore how AI can contribute. We are just starting our AI journey; we have setup an AI Governance Board whose purpose is to provide strategic oversight, assurance, guidance and approval for the deployment and management of AI technologies within Telford & Wrekin Council.

Productivity through People

Through our workforce strategy we continually support our employees to ensure that they have the right skills, knowledge and behaviours to deliver services and ultimately our priorities. We invest in our people and have delivered development programmes for Cabinet, Members and officers for them to be the best they can.

We strive to be an 'employer of choice' so that:

- people from all sections of the community want to work for us because of our success, our values and our reputation as an employer;
- current employees are proud to work for the Council because of the Council's achievements, reputation and organisational values and they encourage others to apply for jobs.

Over 80% of staff would recommend the council as a place to work and over 90% feel the Council respects and treats them fairly regardless of their background.

Trusted and effective working relationship between members and officers through a cycle of monthly meetings to ensure input and oversight of policy and strategy reinforced through activities such as Cabinet, SMT joint development day.

Productivity through strong governance

Financial Regulations are part of the Council's control environment providing a framework for managing the authority's financial affairs and contributing to good corporate governance, internal control and the management of risks.

The Financial Regulations apply to all officers and members of the Council and anyone acting on behalf of the Council. They also apply to any partnerships or bodies that the Council is a member of, and for which the Council is the accountable body. Where the Council is not the accountable body then the lead Council officer is responsible for ensuring propriety and proper processes are followed so that the Council's reputation is not at risk.

It is the responsibility of Directors to ensure that all staff in their service areas are aware of their responsibilities according to the Financial Regulations and comply with them.

Section 151 of the Local Government Act (LGA) 1972 places a duty on the Council to make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs, including the appointment of a Chief Finance Officer.

Scrutiny provide a critical leadership role in the organisation and we actively engage in opportunities for peer challenge including our recent corporate peer and digital reviews.

Barriers to productivity

The Government have again, for the sixth consecutive year, only provided a one-year local government finance settlement. Combined with the uncertainty around what changes may be made to the local government finance system, it is very unlikely that the Council will have any real clarity on its funding for 2025/26 and later years until we receive our settlement in December 2024. This will be less than four months before the start of the financial year, which has now been the case for six years, which clearly makes medium term financial planning exceptionally difficult.

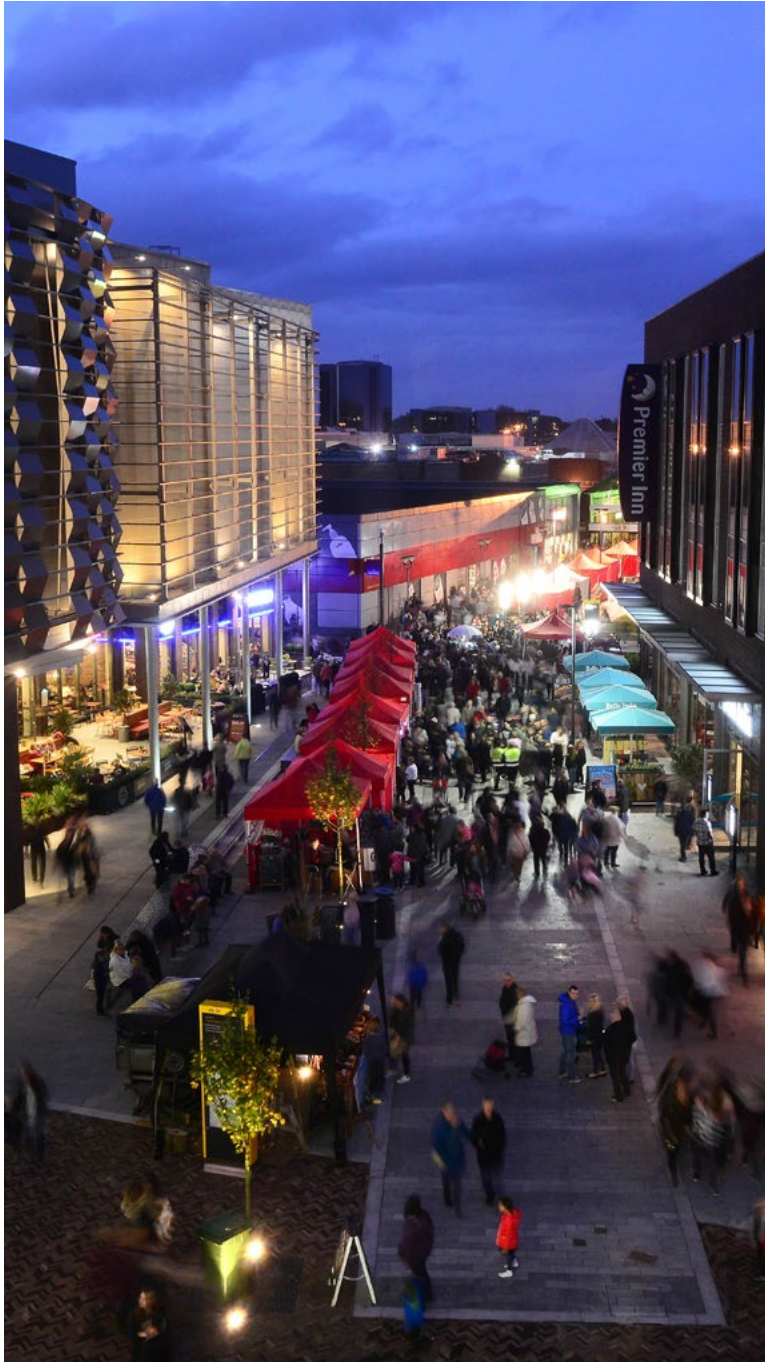
The uncertainty around New Homes Bonus continuing beyond 24/25 and the lack of recognition from government of Adult Social Care funding pressures, in particular, estimated by the Local Government Association to be over £6bn in the next two years, are also barriers to our productivity and what we can deliver. In addition, the streamlining of levelling up funding programmes into a single settlement environment aligned with local strategic objectives and priorities alongside further devolution of investment e.g. for skills, would allow us to leverage better place-based outcomes.

These are barriers that the Government could remove.

Measuring our productivity

We are committed to monitoring our plans and will use the governments OfLog performance measures and our local performance frameworks to ensure continued delivery. For further information see:

<https://oflog.data.gov.uk/?area=TF3+4NT>



TWOC IS EFFICIENCY DRIVING AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Telford & Wrekin Council productivity plan **July 2024**

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