

# **“Shaping our Future: Telford & Wrekin’s Journey to 2020”**

**A new community strategy for Telford & Wrekin**

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## 1. Introduction

In Telford & Wrekin, we make improvement, successes and achievement happen together. Partnership working here is very strong and makes a real and positive difference to community life.

We continue to make the significant improvements that are priorities to our community such as crime reduction and improving education attainment levels.

As we move forward on our journey to 2020, our focus is on continuous improvement, addressing the challenges the Borough faces and seizing our opportunities for change. We want to build on the Borough's strengths and opportunities and be clear how we will make a positive difference to the lives of local people. We are sending out a clear signal that Telford & Wrekin is open and ready for business.

***Our objective is build the Borough's reputation as 'the Place of Enterprise, Innovation and Partnership'***

The context of this in 2013 is a weak national and global economy together with significant pressure on public sector resources. However, at the heart of what we do, is a strong focus on what we can achieve rather than what we cannot. There are still many positive outcomes we can deliver despite the difficult financial situation we face. The Borough has unique assets, resources and opportunities which we can use to address these challenges. Our objectives are primarily to ***protect and create jobs*** and ***narrow the gap*** between our most and least deprived communities.

We have identified four themes to shape our journey to 2020 and achieve these :

***Live*** – we want to ensure that the Borough continues to be a place people choose to live and feel they belong whatever their background. We will continue our efforts to raise educational attainment, improve health and address health inequalities, improve housing for all and work to ensure that all of our communities are safe and feel safe.

***Work*** – we will continue to support the creation of jobs by attracting inward investment and supporting existing businesses, and by developing a skilled, work-ready workforce which meets the needs of local employers.

***Visit*** – we want to continue to attract more visitors to the Borough. Our offer is second to none – a rich heritage in the Ironbridge Gorge, our beautiful environment including the Wrekin, and The International Centre – a major national conference location.

***Play*** – we want to encourage positive and active lifestyles and community participation by celebrating our heritage, nurturing our green spaces and developing our leisure and culture offer.

## 2. Telford & Wrekin in 2013

The Borough is rightly described as a place of contrasts - the rural and historic sitting alongside 'new town' housing and modern industrial estates. Telford has grown over the past 45 years around existing Borough towns including Madeley, Wellington, Oakengates Hadley and Dawley. Two thirds of the Borough surrounding Telford is classified as rural. The market town of Newport lies in the north eastern corner of the Borough. To the south is the River Severn flowing through the historic Ironbridge Gorge – a jewel in the Borough's crown and the only World Heritage Site in the West Midlands.

In many ways the Borough is a prosperous and successful place, but as with most large urban areas we have a number of important challenges – but we are lucky, in that we have excellent assets which provide real opportunities too.

Created as a new town in the 1960s, Telford has grown rapidly over the past 40 years and the Borough now has a population of 170,000 people. As it has grown, our population has changed and aged. In the past 10 years the Borough has become more diverse – with the arrival of residents from new EU accession countries 10.5% of the community are from a black or minority ethnic background. By 2020, the number of residents aged 65+ will have increased by 31%.

The Borough is a regional and national focus point for both housing and job growth. Despite challenging conditions faced by the housing market, the Borough has seen year on year growth in housing since 2007 with 800 new homes completed in 2011/12 – more than any other local authority in the West Midlands.

Some 4,500 companies are located in the Borough providing work for some 75,000 people. Manufacturing continues to be an important part of our economy – particularly the automotive sector. Diversification means that industries like Financial & Insurance Activities and Information & Communication are now making a bigger contribution to the local economy than in the past.

With a ready supply of land earmarked for growth, the Borough is an attractive place to invest, with 130 foreign firms from the United States, Japan, Taiwan, Germany and France already having taken the step. The Borough has over 400 acres of ready to go commercial land – more than any of the major employment centres in the West Midlands. There is also a significant supply of quality commercial property extending to 22.9 million sq ft. Telford has some of the best value development land and the lowest rents in the UK.

The impact of the global recession was quickly visible in the Borough – with levels of unemployment rising in 2009 to above both the West Midlands and national rates. However, we bucked the regional trend in 2012, with unemployment falling to 8.0% below the West Midlands rate (8.6%) and close to the national rate of 7.9%. We have also seen in 2011/12 business survival and start up rates return to pre-recession levels. Importantly, in the same period, GVA (a measure of gross domestic product) increased year on year.

Youth unemployment remains a significant challenge. At 26.3% this remains above both the regional (23.2%) and national (21.1%) rates. We have established a partnership task force to address this, working to ensure that our young people have the skills to meet the needs of local employers and are also 'work-ready'.

The Council and its partners continue to invest in our neighbourhoods which face the greatest social, economic and health challenges. Five of our 33 wards have neighbourhood areas which are in the 10% most deprived nationally – two of these in the 3% most deprived. This means that 22% of households are in poverty. Health inequalities in the Borough are primarily related to cancer and coronary heart disease.

Educational attainment continues to rise and is now above the national average for Key Stage 2 and GCSEs – however, we need to do more to improve attainment of children in receipt of Free School Meals and Pakistani heritage children. Wage levels in the Borough are below the West Midlands and national rates – respectively £467.50, £469.20 and £512.10.

The Ironbridge Gorge is an internationally significant tourism destination which we wish to protect and nurture. As a result of its geology and a long history of mining in the area, work has been carried out to stabilise ground conditions. This has involved significant investment by the Council, supported by a commitment for future Government funding to continue this work.

The rapid development of the new town provided important housing, economic and transport infrastructure for the Borough. Our challenge is to maintain and develop it, and continue to meet the needs of our existing and growing population and economy, including our Borough towns. The £250m investment in Southwater Square is an important step forward in developing and enhancing our infrastructure. It will create a defined heart for the Town, enhancing civic pride for residents and will ensure Telford becomes an even more attractive town for visitors and for business tourists too.

### **3. Our Journey to 2020**

To continue the successful development of the Borough and to respond to the challenges the Borough faces in 2013, we have developed 'our journey to 2020'. This focuses on 4 themes: live, work, visit & play.

#### *Live*

Telford & Wrekin is a place people chose to come and live – a reputation which we want to nurture and enhance.

To actively belong and participate in an increasingly diverse community, people – both young and old – need to feel safe and be safe whatever their background, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation. Targeting hate crime and domestic violence is central to this aim. Through innovative partnership working, to 2020, we will

continue to tackle and reduce crime. Key to achieving this will be a reduction in alcohol and drug related harm, and 'repeat offending'. To help households to be safe, we will continue to work to eradicate accidental house fires.

Our £200 million programme Building Schools for the Future programme will provide us with Community Learning Centres of 7 new or redeveloped secondary schools with a real community focus.

These schools will help continue the progress we have made to raise educational attainment and mean that by 2020 all schools are above national average for Key Stage 2, GCSEs and for 'progression' between these two assessments. We will focus on halving the gap in attainment between pupils in receipt of Free School Meals, Pakistani heritage children and their peers.

We will support families to ensure that they have the right support at the right time. A key focus will be to support families with the greatest challenges to avoid children needing to be taken into care. At the heart of our approach is Family Connect – a single point of contact for families – and the work of our multi-agency Supporting Families task force. When children do come in to care, we will ensure that they are supported to fulfil their potential at school and supported into adult life.

We will support older and vulnerable people in a way which addresses their needs within the available resources and work to ensure that they play a positive role in the wider community, placing greater emphasis on supporting carers whatever their age.

Through our Targeted Intervention Areas initiative we will work to 'narrow the gap' between our most and least prosperous communities which includes Woodside, Cuckoo Oak, Malinslee, Brookside, Donnington and College. This will focus on new co-operative approaches with communities – not simply public and voluntary organisations 'knowing best'- to address unemployment, educational attainment and health inequalities.

We want to see the health and wellbeing of the Borough continue to improve and move closer to the national position, particularly early death because of cancer and heart disease. When people do need to access hospital care, this should be at the Princess Royal Hospital. Changing lifestyles will be an important part of this journey to improve health, and we want the rate of smoking and obesity in the Borough to be closer to the national position. Providing ready access to local leisure facilities through the Telford Loyalty Card will play a core role to improve the health and wellbeing of the Borough.

Residents will play their part in protecting the environment by increasing household recycling which together with the Council's redesigned waste collection service will mean that the Borough has the highest recycling rate in the West Midlands.

## *Work*

The creation of a sustainable, strong and diverse economy is fundamental to the future of the Borough.

Telford is a central driver of growth in the regional economy. With over 400 acres of ready to develop commercial land the Borough has more sites than any of the other major employment centres in the West Midlands. The Council and its partners will work together to maximise the opportunities this provides to attract inward investment and support new and existing businesses in the Borough. For example, automotive component manufacturers in Telford grasping the opportunities provided by the new Jaguar Land Rover engine plant opening 2014 on the I54 development - just a 15 minute drive along the M54. The Borough is also well-placed to develop as a 'defence hub' for the Ministry of Defence. A central element to deliver this programme will be to explore ways to improve the infrastructure of our major industrial estates.

The Council and its partners will need to ensure that they continue to work effectively together to support and encourage investment in the Borough. This means living the principle of 'Making Every Contact Count' so that we meet the needs of new and existing businesses, such as a planning framework which enables growth or helping businesses to be safe and so avoid the devastating impact that fire can have on a business.

Our education and training facilities are second to none. We will continue to improve the skill base of our workforce, which will be directly tied to the needs of local employers:

- Telford College of Arts and Technology – construction and engineering skills
- New College Telford – academic and technical qualifications
- Harper Adams University – agriculture and food technology
- University of Wolverhampton – automotive and aero-nautical expertise.

A growing economy, together with excellent training will mean increased opportunities for young people. These opportunities are essential if we are want the Borough to be a place in which young people want to both live and work. Apprenticeships will continue to be central to achieving this and ensuring that employers have the skilled workforce of the future.

Through training and support we will develop our entrepreneurial culture increasing the number of business start-ups in the Borough and improving their survival rate.

We will work to secure a direct rail service to London. Rail links to the West Midlands will have improved following completion of the Birmingham New Street redevelopment in 2015. Telford International Railfreight Park will continue to provide the important link to the national freight network. By 2020, we want funded programmes to be in place to complete the M54/M6/M6 Toll link road and the M54/A442 Greyhound Link.

To build a sustainable economy and community, housing growth will continue. The Shaping Places Local Plan will set out the growth target for the Borough for the period 2016-2031. As a result of this growth, our housing offer will continue to give excellent value for money.

Partners from all sectors will continue to work together to build a sustainable economy. The Borough has companies that are leading the way in this area such as RICOH's approach to 're-manufacturing' and the Council's development of a combined heat and power facility in the Southwater development.

### *Visit*

To 2020, we want to enhance and exploit the Borough's strong offer for both leisure tourists and conference visitors alike and increase the number of visitors to the Borough. There are nearly 6 million people living within a one hour drive of the Borough - each one is a potential visitor who can make a valuable contribution to our economy and supporting existing jobs and the creation of new ones.

We are currently one of the UK's fastest developing conference towns. £325 million of capital development has taken place in the area in the last ten years – improving the visitor experience. A large proportion of it has been directed to target the meeting, incentive, conference and events market (MICE – business tourism). Telford is home to the 6th largest convention centre in the UK – a massive opportunity to further grow this high value market.

Telford currently attracts 300,000 business tourism visitors each year generating £104 million to the local economy. With the Southwater development and the new convention quarter at the International Centre, we will position the Borough as one of the UK's leading convention centres, targeting large capacity event business.

The Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site is the jewel in our crown to attract tourists to the Borough. It celebrates the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution, with award winning museums set in a stunning valley. It currently attracts close to one million visitors a year – which we want to sustain and increase. In 2013, the Ironbridge World Heritage Site was independently rated as the 'most recommended' World Heritage Site in the UK by Trip Advisor.

To further promote the Borough, we are developing the Telford Festival which will take place in the Town Park. By 2020 we want it to be a well-established weekend event in the West Midlands – providing a range of entertainment to visitors and residents alike – promoting the Borough and demonstrating our civic pride and self-confidence as a community. This will be a complement to the existing and well-established Ironbridge World Heritage Festival.

As well as our natural and historic offer – the Borough has a strong offer to those who want to visit to come shopping. Telford Town Centre includes major retailers such as Primark, Debenhams, Marks & Spencer and House of Fraser.

For more sporting visitors the Borough hosts a range of events including the Newport Nocturne cycle race, the Ironbridge Half Marathon and the Ironbridge Rowing Regatta. These will flourish as the Council and partners work with local sports clubs to support and promote these events and develop new ones too: promoting the Borough and civic pride, whilst increasing participation in sport to improve the health and wellbeing of the local population.

### *Play*

The Borough has much to offer its residents – we want to celebrate our environment, heritage and culture to enhance civic pride.

The Borough is an attractive place to live - over 75% of Telford is 'green infrastructure' (the national average is 54%). We are all just a few minutes drive from the countryside or a few minutes walk from the network of green pathways and spaces which connect the different communities of Telford. We will work with our communities to protect and maintain this infrastructure which links the Borough through footways and cycle paths – such as the Silkin Way. By encouraging 'active lifestyles', our environment will play a central role in the improvements we will make to the health and wellbeing of the Borough.

The Wrekin is central to this. This is part of the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and visited frequently; an aspect we want to enhance in partnership with the Wrekin Forest Partnership.

We will continue to enhance the leisure offer within the Borough – through the Council's own investment and by working innovatively with partners – and improve participation through initiatives such as the Telford Loyalty Card. Following redevelopment, Telford Ice Rink, will be a major asset to the town for local people and a major attraction for visitors. It has a deserved reputation as the Borough's largest youth club!

The Southwater Square and the Telford Shopping Centre are a major asset to the town for local people and for attracting visitors too. Southwater square will include Cineworld, Nandos, Pizza Express, Wagamamma and Zizzi - providing Telford with a real heart and a strong night time economy.

The redevelopment of the Town Park funded by the Big Lottery will have been completed in 2013 increasing the number of visitors from the local community and further afield.

The Place at Oakengates, Telford's excellent community theatre, will continue to provide first class entertainment, with an array of national stars frequently appearing there.

## 4. Delivering the Strategy

This strategy is one shared between the Council and its partners to **protect and create jobs** and **narrow the gap** between our most and least deprived communities. It can only be delivered through effective and mature partnership working – focusing on new and innovative approaches to seize our opportunities and address our challenges.

The Telford & Wrekin Local Strategic Partnership will take an overview role delivering the vision, understanding the progress being made to deliver it and working to remove obstacles to delivery.

The Council's Shaping Places Local Plan 2016 - 2031 will set the level of housing growth to be achieved in the Borough, and linked to the Economic Strategy the number of jobs we will seek to create. Underpinning both of these will be the Council's priority focus on being a 'Business Supporting, Business Winning Council'. Our new approach to destination management, 'Destination Telford', will shape our approach to increasing visitor numbers to the Borough and enhancing community pride in the Borough.

'Narrowing the gap' between our least and most deprived communities is a cross-cutting objective of partner organisations – our core services are focussed on supporting and protecting the most vulnerable and deprived. To specifically drive this objective we have established the following partnerships:

- **Strengthening Families Task force** – working with families to meet their specific needs so that they can play a full and positive role in the community.
- **Target Intervention Areas** – this will be a fundamental part of our approach to 'narrowing the gap' between our most and least deprived communities. These areas include Woodside, Brookside, Sutton Hill, Donnington, College & Malinslee.
- **Employment & Skills Task Force** – working to ensure that the Borough's workforce meets the needs and requirements of local employers.
- **Supporting 16 to 24 year olds** – in 2013, our young people are facing significant challenges through the narrowing of employment opportunities and pressures as a result of benefit changes. We want to ensure that our services are tuned into and addressing these challenges.

Our approach to partnership working is underpinned by our Co-operative values developed by the Co-operative Commission made up of partners from across the Borough:

### • Ownership

**We will – be accountable for our own actions and empower people with the skills to help themselves**

**We would like everyone to – take action and responsibility for themselves and their community to the best of their abilities**

### • Openness & Honesty

**We will – be open and honest in the way we work and make decisions and communicate in a clear, simple and timely way**  
**We would like everyone to – be open and honest about what they want to improve in their community**

**• Involvement**

**We will – work together with the community, involve people in decisions that affect their lives and be prepared to listen and take on new ideas**  
**We would like everyone to – work with and support others, get involved and share their views to help us develop the way we do things**

**• Fairness & Respect**

**We will – respond to people’s needs in a fair and consistent way**  
**We will and would like everyone to – respect and care for themselves and others, value the different ideas and skills that people bring and treat each other as equals**

The final underpinning piece in our partnership jigsaw is the principle of ‘Making Every Contact Count’. We want residents and businesses to have as seamless an interaction with partner services as possible. Contact or interaction with one partner organisation should provide ready access to the services provided by other organisations. This relies upon effective communication between partners. Making Every Contact Count is not a new concept – for example when Fire Officers visit homes to fit smoke alarms if they have serious concerns about the vulnerability of an older resident they will contact social services. Our challenge is to effectively and appropriately roll-out this principle across the partnership.

## Appendix One: Outcome Measures to Deliver by 2020

- Improve Education and Skills
  - o All schools to be above national rates for attainment and progression measures.
  - o Halve the gap in attainment between pupils in receipt of free school meals, Pakistani pupils and their peers
  - o Increase adult skill levels to the national rate
  
- Safe Community
  - o Reduced the anti-social behaviour to below the national rate
  - o Ensure crime rates remain below the national rate
  - o Reduce business crime rates to below the national rate
  - o Reduce the number of accidental fire related deaths in the home
  
- Support Job Creation
  - o **Measures to be established through the Council's new Economic Strategy to include new jobs, apprenticeships**
  
- Deliver Housing growth
  - o **Measures to be established by the Council's Shaping Places Local Plan which will identify the numbers of new homes to be completed annually to 2031.**
  
- Increase the Number of People in Work
  - o Reduce unemployment to the national rate
  - o Reduce youth unemployment to the national rate
  - o Reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training to the national rate
  - o Halve the gap in unemployment between Targeted Intervention Areas and the Borough rate (Job Seekers Allowance claimants)
  
- Address Health Inequalities and Improve Health
  - o Halve the gap to UK rate for male life expectancy
  - o Reduced early deaths from cancer and heart disease to the national rate
  - o Reduced child obesity to the national rate
  - o Reduced smoking rates to the national rate
  
- Increase Recycling
  - o Achieve the highest recycling rate in the West Midlands
  
- Attract more Visitors to the Borough
  - o **Measures for leisure tourists and conference visitors to be established by the Telford Tourism Partnership Destination Management Plan**