

BOROUGH OF TELFORD & WREKIN

Minutes of a meeting of the Borough of Telford & Wrekin held on Thursday, 5 March 2009 at 6.30 pm, at the Civic Offices, Telford.

PRESENT:

Councillors I.T.W. Fletcher (Speaker), D.G. Allen, G. Ashcroft, D.W.D. Ashley (Deputy Speaker), R.K. Austin, R. Aveley, S. Bentley, K.T. Blundell, S.P. Burrell, E.J. Carter, R.G. Chaplin, E.A. Clare, G.J.L. Davies, J.A. Dixon, N.A. Dugmore, A.J. Eade (Leader), V.A. Fletcher, J.A. Francis, G.M. Green, E.J. Greenaway, R.E. Groom (Mayor), Y.C. Hicks, P.A.E. Homer, T.J. Hope, M.B. Hosken, G.P. Hossell, S.M. Kelly, R.T. Kiernan, A. Lawrence, L. Lomax, A.A. Mackenzie, A.D. McClements, J.C. Minor, C.P.R. Mollett, R.A. Overton, F.R. Picken, H. Rhodes, K.S. Sahota, U.E. Sambrook, J.M. Seymour, C.F. Smith, A.J. Stanton, E.M. Swift, M.J. Smith, K.L. Tomlinson, W.L. Tomlinson, V. Tonks, D.R.W. White, A.G.P. Williams, H.J. Williams and D.G. Wright

72. PRAYERS

Councillor V.A. Fletcher said prayers.

73. MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Borough Council held on 29 January, 2009 be confirmed and signed by the Speaker.

74. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors C.N. Mason, A.A. Meredith and R.M. Tyler.

75. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

76. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayoral Engagements

The Mayor, Councillor R.E. Groom, presented the Mayoral Engagements report and Members noted those undertaken between 27th January 2009 and 1st March 2009. He particularly highlighted his visit in February to Enterprise HQ Business Centre at Coalport, paying tribute to the excellent facilities. Members noted the engagements undertaken by the Mayor or the Deputy Mayor between 27th January 2009 and 1st March 2009.

77. REPORTS OF LEADER AND CABINET

(a) Report of Leader

Councillor A.J. Eade informed Members of the Council's recent decision to relinquish membership of the Birmingham, Coventry and Black Country City Region. He told Members that he welcomed sub-regional working and supported any partnership work that helped the Borough. The Council would look to work together with existing partners and neighbours without retaining formal membership of the City Region.

(b) Report of Cabinet

The report of the Cabinet, setting out the matters determined on the 26th January, 2009, 9th February, 2009 and the 23rd February, 2009 was received.

Councillor S.P. Burrell, Cabinet Member: Children & Young People highlighted the achievements of the Joint Youth Offending Service following Cabinet's recent endorsement of the Annual Youth Justice Plan. The Youth Justice Board had given a top rating to the plan during its assessment.

RESOLVED – that the Cabinet report be noted.

78. POLITICAL BALANCE

The Leader, Councillor A.J. Eade, presented the report of the Head of Audit & Democracy. The report informed Members of changes in the Council's political balance and the resulting changes to the allocation of seats on the Scrutiny Leadership Board and the Audit Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the change to the Council's political balance be noted;**
- (b) That the change in the allocation of seats on the Scrutiny Leadership Board and the Audit Committee be agreed.**

79. COUNCIL BUDGET 2009/10

(A) Service & Financial Planning 2009/10 – 2011/12

Councillor A. Lawrence, Cabinet Member: Resources presented the joint report (Appendix E1) of the Chief Executive and the Corporate Director: Resources which sought approval of a Service & Financial Planning strategy for the period 2009/10-2011/12 including specific budget proposals for 2009/10, as recommended by Cabinet at its meeting on 23rd February, 2009. The report, together with those covering the Capital Programme, the Treasury Management Strategy, and the Prudential Indicators formed the overall Medium Term Service & Financial Planning framework for the Council and Council 050309Minutes

proposed the service priorities and budget for 2009/10. It also outlined the wide range of challenges facing the area, particularly from the deepening recession, where the Council and its partners must look to take the lead on behalf of the people and businesses of the area.

The report informed Members that, given the unprecedented financial and economic situation still unfolding, the Council had been reviewing its budget assumptions in the last few weeks to ensure that the budget and medium term strategy up to March 2012 were based on the most up to date information. The Council's investment income and borrowing projections had been updated to take account of changing interest rates and restructuring opportunities. The changes to regulations around capital accounting arrangements had provided an opportunity to review this area. Adjustments had been made to both base budget and the savings package to take account of the pressure on revenue income. At the same time additional prudential borrowing together with the new capital accounting arrangements and borrowing restructures, had given flexibility to accommodate delays on capital receipts and allow key schemes such as the Borough Towns Initiative to continue, giving a boost to the local economy. The base budget had been compiled in the autumn when inflation trends were peaking; assumptions had now been revisited to take account of falling inflation. A range of initiatives to help local people had been developed. These included a one stop advice centre and the piloting of changes to the availability of concessionary fares. The Leegomery Centre redevelopment scheme had been approved by Cabinet, it had not been in the original proposals in December. After all these changes, the net 3 year financial projection was only marginally different to that in the 8th December strategy papers. However, the need to drive down council tax increases even further had now led the Administration to propose an additional £1m saving (£0.8m part year) in senior management costs to support a Council Tax increase of only 2.5%.

Members had considered the responses to their consultation process as well as using updated budget assumptions and looking at what initiatives the Council could lead to help local people and businesses.

In summary, the final proposals for the 2009-10 budget and a strategy for the three year period up to March 2012 were as follows:

- Confirmation of the second year of the 3 year Investment Programme which invests a further £16m in infrastructure projects and £1.7m in services including Adult and Children's social services and Credit Crunch initiatives.
- A general savings package of £3.8m for 2009/10 plus a further £0.35m in Education services ,and target of at least £6.4m for the 2010/11 to 2011/12 period
- Use of £0.95m balances to support the ongoing net budget in 2009/10
- An additional £1m contingency for 2009/10 funded by virement from the surplus generated by Treasury Management operations in the 2008/09 budget

- A council tax increase of 2.5% for 2009/10 and subsequent years in this planning period, subject to the impact of the new 3 year grant settlement due for 2011/12.

The summary below shows the 2009/10 proposals, 3 year savings targets and investment programme.

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
	£m	£m	£m
Shortfall b/f	1.23	6.08	10.33
Annual funding requirement including 3 year investment package -2008/09 to 2010/11	4.85	4.25	4.90
Cumulative funding requirement prior to tax rise and savings decisions	6.08	10.33	15.23
Funded by:			
Savings	(3.80)	(7.00)	(10.20)
Council tax increase of 2.5%pa	(1.33)	(2.69)	(4.08)
Use of Balances	(0.95)	(0.64)	(0.95)
Funding Package	(6.08)	(10.33)	(15.23)

The Cabinet Member: Resources presented the joint report of the Corporate Director: Resources, the Head of Finance, the Head of Asset & Property Management, and the Head of Policy, Performance & Partnership, the 2009-10- 2010-11 Capital Strategy and Capital Programme, including the proposed Asset Management Plan and related Building Maintenance Programme, for approval (Appendix E2).

The Cabinet Member: Resources presented the joint report of the Corporate Director: Resources and the Head of Finance which provided an update on the 2008-09 Treasury Management activities and sought approval for the Treasury Management and Annual Investment Strategies for 2009-10 (Appendix E3).

The Cabinet Member: Resources also presented the report of the Corporate Director: Resources and the Head of Finance which requested approval of the Prudential Indicators for 2009-10 to 2011-2012, as required under the Prudential Code of Capital Finance in Local Authorities (Appendix E4)

In moving the recommendations, Councillor A. Lawrence thanked officers and Cabinet Assistants for their hard work in preparing the budget proposals. Council Tax was being kept down to help local residents and businesses. This administration believed in keeping Council Tax levels low. Telford & Wrekin had the lowest Council Tax in Shropshire and one of the lowest in the West Midlands. The protection and improvement of front line services was a key priority. He told Members that this budget would make a difference. He pointed out that this budget had been consultative and reflected the needs

and views of local people. He particularly highlighted the £3.8m in savings, the Concessionary Travel pilot scheme, the advice centre in Telford Library, the prudent use of balances and the Council's initiative to make quicker payments to suppliers in order to help cash flow for small businesses. He pointed to the significant Capital investments planned for the coming years. The Borough Towns Initiative, the regeneration of the South Telford estates and the Building Schools for the Future project were amongst the projects recommended to Members. Councillor J.A. Dixon seconded the recommendations.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 14.6(b) Councillor A.J. Eade, Leader of the Council, moved, seconded by Councillor R.K. Austin, Labour Group Leader, the following amendment to report E2. Details of the amendment were tabled in the form of an amended Capital Programme report (Appendix E2 and Annex II (a)).

"That the recommendation of Appendix E2 – Capital programme be approved subject to the revised figures shown in the tabled copy of the report and Annex II (a) whereby £3,000,000 is transferred from Environment & Regeneration (Growth Areas and Growth Points) to Housing (Social Housing) over the two year period of 2009-10/2010-11."

In moving the amendment, the Leader referred to the administration's policy of consulting with both residents and Members. He stressed the importance of offering help to local people, the housing market and the hard pressed construction industry by stimulating house building in the area. He pointed out that the community expected the Council to work together to face difficulties. This was why, when Councillor Austin had raised this initiative with him, he had been happy to move the amendment to the budget's capital programme.

Councillor R.K. Austin, seconding the amendment, told Members that he felt that the original budget proposals should have reflected the acute lack of social housing in the area. Investment in social housing would stimulate the local economy. He told Members that his group would support the proposed budget with the amendment to the capital programme. He reserved the right to bring an emergency budget during the coming financial year.

A number of Members supported the amendment. A number of Members supported the idea of partnership working to provide social and low cost housing.

The proposed amendment was put to the vote and carried unanimously. The amendment having been carried, Members then debated the recommendations of reports E1, E2, E3 and E4. Following a robust debate, the recommendations were voted upon and it was:

RESOLVED –

Service & Financial Planning 2009/10 – 2011/12 – Overview & Revenue Budget

- (a) That the Base Budget, summarised in Appendix 1 of report E1, be approved;
- (b) That the Investment Programme, outlined in Appendix 3 of report E1, be approved
- (c) That the 2009/10 Savings Package of £3.8m in Appendix 4 plus £0.35m in Education services with an outline target of at least £6.4m additional savings over the 2010/11 and 2011/12 period be approved;
- (d) That the Education budget strategy in paragraph 5.7 be approved;
- (e) That £0.95m balances be used to support the ongoing revenue budget plus the associated policy for Reserves and Balances in appendix 5;
- (f) The creation of an additional £1m one off contingency funded from a £1m virement of Treasury Management savings within the 2008/09 budget as proposed in paragraph 5.5.2 be approved;
- (g) The Statement of the Chief Finance Officer in paragraph 5.8 (supported by appendix 5 outlining the Robustness of Budget Estimates and Adequacy of Reserves) be approved;
- (h) The policy framework for Reserves outlined in appendix 5C be approved;
- (i) A Council Tax increase of 2.5%-a rise of just under 40p per week on the average bill for this Council's services be approved. Future increases will also be held at this level for the 3 year planning period, subject to the impact of the next 3 year grant settlement starting in 2011/12.

Service & Financial Planning 2009/10 – 2011/12 – Capital Programme

- (j) That the report (Appendix E2) and associated capital estimates which incorporates the Capital Strategy, the Capital Programme (Annex II), the Planned Building Maintenance Programme (Annex III), Capital Virements and Approvals (Annex IV) and Asset Management Plan (Annex V) be approved subject to the revised figures shown in the tabled copy of the report and Annex II (a) whereby £3,000,000 is transferred from Environment & Regeneration (Growth Areas and Growth Points) to Housing (Social Housing) over the two year period of 2009-10/2010-11.

Treasury Management Strategy and Update

- (k) That the Treasury Management, Minimum Revenue Provision and Investment Strategies for 2009/10 as outlined in report E3 be approved;
- (l) That approval be granted for West Mercia Supplies to be able to use a US dollar account;

Prudential Indicators

- (m) That the Prudential Indicators outlined in report E4 and recommended by Cabinet on 23rd February 2009, be approved as part of the setting of the budget for 2009/10.

(B) Council Tax – Formal Resolution for 2009/10

The Council Tax base had been determined at the Council Meeting held on 29th January 2009 and, following approval of the Council’s General and Special Fund budgets for 2009/10 the Cabinet Member: Resources moved approval of the appropriate resolutions (Appendix E5) to formally set Council Tax levels throughout the area for the spending requirements of Telford & Wrekin Council, the West Mercia Police Authority, Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority, and the Parish and Town Councils.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That it be noted that at its meeting on 29th January 2009 the Council calculated the following amounts for the year 2009/10 in accordance with Regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992 made under Section 33(5) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (The Act):-

- (i) 50,245 being the amount calculated by the Council, in accordance with Regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992 (The Regulations), as its Council Tax base for the year (The Council Tax Base).

(ii) **Part of the Council’s AreaTax Base**

The Parish of:-

Chetwynd	241.50
Chetwynd Aston & Woodcote	162.60
Church Aston	488.80
Dawley Hamlets	2,014.20
Edgmond	530.30

Ercall Magna	612.80
The Gorge	1,102.40
Great Dawley	3,163.50
Hadley & Leegomery	4,048.10
Hollinswood & Randlay	1,568.70
Ketley	1,109.90
Kynnersley	76.70
Lawley & Overdale	1,932.50
Lilleshall & Donnington	4,321.70
Little Wenlock	236.90
Madeley	4,858.10
Newport	3,680.40
Oakengates	2,487.50
Preston	91.70
Rodington	342.30
St. Georges & Priorslee	3,826.40
Stirchley & Brookside	2,734.50
Tibberton & Cherrington	272.10
Waters Upton	392.80
Wellington	6,853.60
Wrockwardine	1,458.50
Wrockwardine Wood & Trench	1,599.80
	50,208.3

being the amounts calculated by the Council in accordance with Regulation 6 of The Regulations, as the amounts of its Council Tax Base for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate.

- b) That the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2009/10 in accordance with Sections 32 to 36 of The Act:-
- (a) £403,874,153 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 32(2) (a) to (e) of the Act.
 - (b) £279,297,880 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 32(3) (a) to (c) of the Act.
 - (c) £124,576,273 being the amount by which the aggregate at 3.2(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 3.2(b) above,

calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 32(4) of the Act, as its budget requirement for the year.

- (d) £67,515,485 being the aggregate of the sums which the Council estimates will be payable for the year into its general fund in respect of redistributed non-domestic rates and revenue support grant, increased by the amount of the sums which the Council estimates will be transferred in the year from its collection fund to its general fund in accordance with Section 97(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (Council Tax Surplus) and increased by the amount of any sum which the Council estimates will be transferred from its collection fund to its general fund pursuant to the Collection Fund (Community Charges) directions made under Section 98(4) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 made on 7 February 1994 (Community Charge Surplus), the Collection Fund (Adjustment for Previous Years) (England) Directions 2000 and the Local Authorities (Alteration of Requisite Calculations) (England) Regulations 2009.
- (e) £1,135.65 being the amount at 3.2(c) above less the amount at 3.2(d) above, all divided by the Council Tax base, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year.
- (f) £3,704,193 being the aggregate amount of all special items referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act.
- (g) £1,061.92 being the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no special item relates (calculated by deducting from the amount at 3.2(e) above, the quotient of the amount at 3.2(f) above divided by the Council Tax Base). The only area that this relates to is the Parish of Eyton.

(h) <u>Part of the Council's Area</u>	£
The Parish of:	
Chetwynd	1,070.20
Chetwynd Aston & Woodcote	1,072.99
Church Aston	1,090.56
Dawley Hamlets	1,094.20
Edgmond	1,085.22
Ercall Magna	1,109.02
The Gorge	1,135.47
Great Dawley	1,168.74

Hadley & Leegomery	1,122.69
Hollinswood & Randlay	1,184.72
Ketley	1,133.99
Kynnersley	1,074.89
Lawley & Overdale	1,133.76
Lilleshall & Donnington	1,105.19
Little Wenlock	1,107.12
Madeley	1,160.67
Newport	1,173.31
Oakengates	1,151.23
Preston	1,063.01
Rodington	1,089.06
St. Georges & Priorslee	1,100.49
Stirchley & Brookside	1,192.22
Tibberton & Cherrington	1,072.02
Waters Upton	1,093.99
Wellington	1,136.60
Wrockwardine	1,091.40
Wrockwardine Wood & Trench	1,130.16

being the amounts given by adding to the amount at 3.2(g) above the amounts of the special item or items relating to dwellings in those parts of the Council's area mentioned above divided in each case by the amount at 3.1(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act, as the basic amounts of its council tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate.

- (i) The amounts in Appendix 1 being the amounts given by multiplying the amounts at 3.2(g) and 3.2(h) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands.

- c) The West Mercia Police Authority's precept for 2009/10 was set at its meeting on 17th February 2009. The following amounts were

stated in precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:-

<u>Valuation</u> <u>Band</u>	<u>Amount</u> <u>£</u>
A	115.75
B	135.04
C	154.33
D	173.62
E	212.20
F	250.78
G	289.37
H	347.24

- d) The Shropshire & Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority's precept for 2009/10 was set at its meeting on 11th February 2009. The following amounts were stated in precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:-

<u>Valuation</u> <u>Band</u>	<u>Amount</u> <u>£</u>
A	54.30
B	63.35
C	72.40
D	81.45
E	99.55
F	117.65
G	135.75
H	162.90

- e) That, having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 3.2(i) and 4 and 5 above, the Council, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act, 1992, hereby sets the amounts in Appendix 2 as the amounts of council tax for the year 2009/10 for each of the categories of dwellings shown.

80. MINUTES OF BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

The Council received for noting the minutes of the Plans Board of 14th January, 22nd January and 4th February 2009, the Audit Committee of the 27th January, the Licensing Committee of 16th December 2008 and 22nd January 2009, the Standards Committee of 18th December 2008 and 11th February 2009, and the Scrutiny Leadership Board of 5th January 2009 and 20th of January 2009.

81. QUESTIONS

The following Questions were asked in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10:

(a) Councillor H.J. Williams had submitted the following question:

“Following the recent spate of bad weather, which took the whole country by surprise in its ferocity, what lessons have been learnt by the Highways Department of this Council regarding gritting and the subsequent damage to the roads, and what contingency plans are in place should this happen again?”

Councillor M.B. Hosken, Cabinet Member: Environment, responded:

“Thank you for your question, I will provide a written response”.

The written response was as follows:

“I think that it is important to set the context in order to respond to this question. This winter, to date, has been the worst this country has experienced in 18 years. The problem has been a national problem not just a local problem. Every highway authority in the country has severely suffered as a result of the national salt shortage. A quote in the Surveyor magazine stated that “nationally, more gritting was done in one week than in the whole of last year.” Locally, we have had 70 RED forecasts this year already, meaning sub zero temperatures, compared with 20 for the whole of last year. We have already made 110 salting turnouts this year compared with the average of 70 for the last five years and used over 5300 Tonnes of salt compared with an average of 2860 Tonnes over the past 4 years.

In Telford & Wrekin we have a salt barn with a capacity for storing 1400 Tonnes of salt. The summer restock was carried out in July well before the start of the winter season and the barn was full. Salt deliveries were normal to December and although Salt Union, the company that mines and delivers salt for the majority of the country, experienced a plant failure in December our barn was full at Christmas. In fact the barn was fully stocked on the 28th January,

however since then deliveries have been minimal and on the 5th February the government set up a central coordination unit to prioritise deliveries for Salt Union to highway authorities, this process is still in operation today. In order to supplement the minimal deliveries through Salt Union our officers have secured the delivery of an additional 500 Tonnes of marine salt from an alternative supplier. This has been tested by ourselves and other authorities and acts as a good substitute for traditional rock salt.

I would also like to comment that the decisions to restrict salting to the main A and B roads was taken following extensive consultation with our partners in the emergency services and monitored on a daily basis through the period of prolonged inclement weather. On the 13th February a business continuity exercise took place with partners from the emergency services, commercial sector and public sector to assist in developing contingency plans for the situation if conditions continued to deteriorate. Statistics provided by the services following the event have indicated that there had been no increase in reported traffic accidents or admissions to hospital resulting from weather related incidents compared with the corresponding period last year.

In situations like this it is always good practice to review and reflect on the events that have taken place. Looking at what worked well and where improvements can be made. We will undertake this review prior to the next winter maintenance season and look at issues like the adequacy of our current capacity, grit bin provision (and how we can work with Parishes), gritting routes etc.

The second part of the question refers to the subsequent damage to roads following a hard winter. Again we are not alone in this, all highway authorities experience an increase in the number of potholes and deterioration of roads and pavements following a prolonged winter period. However, I can inform you that in Telford & Wrekin we have doubled the number of our response maintenance teams to four, which includes the 'Pothole Buster' machine in order to help address the problem. It is envisaged that we will continue to operate with these teams for the next four weeks in order to overcome the increase in numbers and backlog. I would also wish to point out that the Council has continued to invest significantly by committing an additional £2.2m in highways maintenance improvements for the next two years."

(b) Councillor U.E. Sambrook had submitted the following question:

"Would the Cabinet Member for Environment please tell me how much in financial terms has bulk collection raised up to date and what is the cost to administer this service?"

Councillor M.B. Hosken, Cabinet Member: Environment, responded:

“The policy of charging for Bulk Collections was introduced on the 2nd June 2008. Since that date there has been a total of 2,432 Bulk Collections, of which 1,513 were chargeable under the policy. To date, these collections have resulted in a total income to the Council of £22,695. The free collection service is provided for disabled or anyone registered on the Council's ‘Pull Out’ service for domestic waste & kerbside collection. These make up roughly 33% of all Bulk Collections.

For the same period, the cost to deliver the Bulk Collection Service through Telford & Wrekin Services Ltd (TWS) was £36,869. There are no additional costs for administration of the service which is delivered by the Environmental Maintenance Customer Service Team. In fact less time is now spent administering bulks than when it was a free service, due to the significant drop in demand.

For information, Members will recall the budget efficiency target for 2009/10 was £95,000. The end of Financial Year forecast identifies that this efficiency target will be achieved by accounting for the predicted drop in demand.”

(c) Councillor U.E. Sambrook had submitted the following question:

“Would the Cabinet for Environment please tell me what has been the cost of fly tipping clearance over the past year?”

Councillor M.B. Hosken, Cabinet Member: Environment, responded:

“In relation to fly tipping - this a performance specification element of the Environmental Maintenance Services Contract delivered by TWS and as a result, it is not possible to identify the actual cost of fly tipping removal alone. It is however estimated that the council spends approximately £155,000 per annum. This compares favourably to the figure of £214,000 if we were to use the calculation suggested by DeFRA for like for like fly tip types and numbers.

Members are also reminded that 99.83% of fly tips are removed within 2 working days of them being reported and this is one of the high performing “Council Promises” to the community.”

(d) Councillor R.K. Austin had submitted the following question:

“Can the Leader of the Council tell us what will happen to the Cabinet Post and that of the Cabinet Assistants for Community Services when the portfolio ceases to exist post the imminent restructure taking place?”

Councillor A.J. Eade, Leader of the Council, responded:

“I will let you and other Members know when the consultation process is completed.”

(e) Councillor C.F. Smith had submitted the following question:

“Can the Cabinet Member for Regeneration give details of the funding streams for the regeneration of Wellington?”

Councillor E.J. Carter, Cabinet Member: Regeneration, responded:

“The funding streams for Wellington are based upon property rationalisation of Council accommodation in Wellington and prudential borrowing to deliver the overall scheme. The regeneration will provide long term efficiencies in the running costs for Council buildings by reducing the number of buildings. The project will also remove the existing maintenance liabilities of the Council buildings involved and improve accessibility for our customers to our services at the existing Wellington Library and Registry office by providing new accommodation.”

He also referred Councillor Smith to Appendix 3 of the Service and Financial Planning 2009/10 – 2011/12 Overview & Revenue Budget Report.

Councillor C.F. Smith, in accordance with Rule 10.3 (e) of the Council Procedure Rules responded:

“Can you assure me that monies properly due to Housing are not being used to regenerate the Civic Quarter of Wellington?”

Councillor E.J. Carter, Cabinet Member: Regeneration, responded:

“Please look at Appendix 3 of the report, you will find the information is there.”

(f) Councillor C.F. Smith had submitted the following question:

“Can the Cabinet Member for Regeneration tell me whether there is matched funding from the private sector for the regeneration of Wellington?”

Councillor E.J. Carter, Cabinet Member: Regeneration, responded:

“The project is based upon the sale of Council buildings through property rationalisation and prudential borrowing as per my previous response. There is not a dependency on the private sector to deliver the project from commencement in 2009/10. The need for the private sector to intervene is planned within the budget strategy as you see before Council, in order to be prudent from a budget planning perspective the release of some of the Council buildings to the market will not commence until 2012/13. Continuous assessment of the market will be carried out to see if it makes financial sense to bring the assets to market earlier than 2012/13.”

(g) Councillor R.A. Overton had submitted the following question:

“We are all supportive of the new advice centre in Telford Central Library which will offer residents help and support through these times of economic uncertainty, but could the Leader please tell me what this Council is doing in terms of specific practical efforts to support Council Tax payers and businesses?”

Councillor A.J. Eade, Leader of the Council, responded:

“I will provide a written answer but would suggest that you look at page 19 of the Budget report.”

Councillor R.A. Overton, in accordance with Rule 10.3 (e) of the Council Procedure Rules responded:

Councillor Overton made reference to the number of Liability Orders obtained by the Council against people in arrears with their Council Tax. It was subsequently moved and seconded, under Rule 20.3 of Council Procedure Rules that Councillor Overton not be heard further. Following a vote, the motion was carried.

(h) Councillor A.G.P Williams had submitted the following question:

“Would the Cabinet Member tell me how much it is costing the Council to use TNT for its postal services?”

Councillor E.J. Carter, Cabinet Member: Regeneration, responded:

“The Council uses Royal Mail for first class postal services and TNT for second class postal services. The Council spends in the region of £200k per annum on postal services with the majority being paid for the TNT service. As part of this Council’s approach to improving

efficiencies there is limited use of first class postal services with second class being the predominant use. To deliver further efficiencies, letters are produced in a machine readable format allowing which delivers increased cost savings. Clearly, the level of post has been reducing and will perhaps continue to do so with the use of e mail as a favoured alternative.”

Councillor A.G.P Williams, in accordance with Rule 10.3 (e) of the Council Procedure Rules responded:

“Why is TNT mail delivered by Royal Mail?”

Councillor E.J. Carter, Cabinet Member: Regeneration, responded:

“I will provide a written response.”

82. MOTIONS

No motions were received.

The meeting ended at 8.40 p.m.

Annual Audit and Inspection Letter

Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Audit 2007/08

March 2009



Contents

Key messages	3
Purpose, responsibilities and scope	5
How is Telford & Wrekin Council performing?	6
The audit of the accounts and value for money	14
Looking ahead	19
Closing remarks	20

Status of our reports

The Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by the Audit Commission explains the respective responsibilities of auditors and of the audited body. Reports prepared by appointed auditors are addressed to non-executive directors/members or officers. They are prepared for the sole use of the audited body. Auditors accept no responsibility to:

- any director/member or officer in their individual capacity; or
 - any third party.
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Key messages

- 1 There has been clear progress in delivering the Council's ambitious plans for the regeneration of the borough, and improvement in most priority services; although the Council's overall CPA rating this year has reduced from 4 stars to 3 stars. This is as a result of the deterioration in the score for children and young people's services this year from a 3 (Good) to a 2 (Adequate); the rules of CPA determine that an excellent rating cannot be given where any of the key service blocks are judged as less than Good.
- 2 We carried out a corporate assessment under the new 'harder test' at the beginning of 2008 and the Council score 4 the highest possible rating. In the Direction of Travel assessment in December 2008 the Council was assessed as 'improving well'. With the exception of children's services where the score reduced to adequate, all other services are now judged to be either good or excellent and overall performance continues to improve albeit at a slower rate than most other councils, as is reflected in the basket of performance indicators selected for national comparison. Analysis shows that the Council's performance against the basket of indicators has been below the average rate of improvement when compared with all other single tier councils in England over the past three years and the council's relative position has worsened further over the past year.
- 3 The Council continues to work well with partners to regenerate the borough and strengthen the local economy. The Council is investing in its long-term 'town building' vision to transform Telford and Wrekin and strengthen the local economy. Successes this year include the launch of the international rail freight terminal and further redevelopment of the most deprived housing estates. The plans to redevelop Telford town centre are ambitious and will make a significant impact. It has established the foundations this year for further improvements in both services and value for money.

Action needed by the Council

- 4 Since the Council's ambitious plans in terms of regeneration, such as the town centre redevelopment, have significant reliance on commercial investment, the Council should keep the scope and timetable of its plans under review to ensure that they reflect the current and ongoing economic situation.
- 5 The Council should ensure that the scope for improving VFM is well understood in each major service area, based on an understanding of what factors influence existing cost and performance. The VFM Scrutiny Group will need to demonstrate that it is effectively monitoring and facilitating improvement with regards to VFM across the Council's priority areas.
- 6 To ensure that performance management systems effectively drive improvements in outcomes, performance reporting should be improved to ensure that across all service areas, councillors and senior managers can compare the Council's own performance with that of the best performing councils in order to identify areas where improvements can be made and learn from others.

- 7 Despite some real and effective improvements in the delivery of the Council's equality and diversity strategies, there is still more that can be done to strengthen performance in this area through a stronger and more sustained strategic focus.

Purpose, responsibilities and scope

- 8 This report provides an overall summary of the Audit Commission's assessment of the Council. It draws on the most recent Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), the findings and conclusions from the audit of the Council for 2007/08 and from any inspections undertaken since the last Annual Audit and Inspection Letter. It also includes the results of the most recent corporate assessment.
- 9 We have addressed this letter to members as it is the responsibility of the Council to ensure that proper arrangements are in place for the conduct of its business and that it safeguards and properly accounts for public money. We have made recommendations to assist the Council in meeting its responsibilities.
- 10 This letter also communicates the significant issues to key external stakeholders, including members of the public. We will publish this letter on the Audit Commission website at www.audit-commission.gov.uk. (In addition the Council is planning to publish it on its website).
- 11 Your appointed auditor, KPMG is responsible for planning and carrying out an audit that meets the requirements of the Audit Commission's Code of Audit Practice (the Code). Under the Code, your appointed auditor reviews and reports on:
 - the Council's accounts;
 - whether the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources (value for money conclusion); and
 - whether the Council's best value performance plan has been prepared and published in line with legislation and statutory guidance.
- 12 This letter includes the latest assessment on the Council's performance under the CPA framework, including our Direction of Travel report and the results of any inspections carried out by the Audit Commission under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999. It summarises the key issues arising from the CPA and any such inspections. Inspection reports are issued in accordance with the Audit Commission's duty under section 13 of the 1999 Act.
- 13 We have listed the reports issued to the Council relating to 2007/08 audit and inspection work at the end of this letter.

How is Telford & Wrekin Council performing?

14 The Audit Commission’s overall judgement is that Telford & Wrekin Council is improving well and we have classified Telford & Wrekin Council as three-star in its current level of performance under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment. These assessments have been completed in all single tier and county councils with the following results.

Figure 1 Overall performance of councils in CPA



Source: Audit Commission (percentage figures may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding)

How is Telford & Wrekin Council performing?

Our overall assessment - the CPA scorecard

Table 1 CPA scorecard

Element	Assessment
Direction of Travel judgement	Improving well
Overall	3 stars
Corporate assessment/capacity to improve	4 out of 4
Previous corporate assessment/capacity to improve, as included in overall CPA judgement in 2007	4 out of 4
Current performance	
Children and young people*	2 out of 4
Social care (adults)*	4 out of 4
Use of resources*	3 out of 4
Housing	4 out of 4
Environment	3 out of 4
Culture	3 out of 4
Benefits	4 out of 4

(Note: * these aspects have a greater influence on the overall CPA score)
(1 = lowest, 4 = highest)

The improvement since last year - our Direction of Travel report

- 15 Telford and Wrekin Borough Council is improving well. The Council continues to work well with partners to regenerate the borough and strengthen the local economy. Successes this year include the launch of the international rail freight terminal and further redevelopment of the most deprived housing estates.
- 16 Overall performance continues to improve but at a slower rate than average. Performance in most priority areas has improved this year, adults' services are now judged to be excellent and there have been improvements in housing and environment services. After a trend of significant reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour, this year has seen a small increase and some schools results show deterioration in exam successes. This year's Ofsted assessment of Children's services judged them to be only adequate overall, although the capacity to improve including management of services was rated as good.

- 17 The Council uses partnerships well to increase its capacity; it provides strong leadership in the Telford and Wrekin Partnership. The plans to redevelop Telford town centre are ambitious and will make a significant impact. The Council is making progress in tackling inequalities and works well with partners to address areas of concern. It has established the foundations this year for further improvements in both services and value for money.

Evidence of the Council improving outcomes

- 18 There has been clear progress in delivering the Council's ambitious plans for the regeneration of the borough, and improvement in most priority services; although the Council's overall CPA rating this year has reduced from 4 stars to 3 stars. This is as a result of the reduced score for children and young people's services this year from a 3 (Good) to a 2 (Adequate); the rules of CPA determine that an excellent rating cannot be given where any of the key service blocks are judged as less than Good. With the exception of children's services all other services are judged to be either good or excellent and overall performance continues to improve albeit at a slower rate than most other councils, as is reflected in the basket of performance indicators selected for national comparison. Analysis shows that the Council's performance against the basket of indicators has been below the average rate of improvement when compared with all other single tier councils in England over the past three years and the council's relative position has worsened further over the past year.

Table 2 Tables showing comparative Performance Indicator position

	Telford and Wrekin Council	Single Tier Council Average
Performance Indicators improving in the past three years	64 %	66 % - 68 %
Performance Indicators improving since last year	53 %	62 % - 64 %
Performance Indicators in Best Quartile	26 %	29 %
Telford & Wrekin Council	2005-2008	2007/08
Overall ranking for % improved (out of 388 authorities where 1 is highest)	143	305

Source: Audit Commission Key Performance Indicator Profiles

How is Telford & Wrekin Council performing?

- 19 Performance in priority areas has remained generally good and the Council is investing to deliver long-term improvement. The Council has six key priorities.
- Transforming Telford and Wrekin.
 - Giving children and young people the best possible start in their lives.
 - Maintaining a high quality, attractive and a sustainable environment.
 - Creating a safe, strong and cohesive community.
 - Promoting healthy communities and improving the quality of life of vulnerable and older people.
 - Strengthening the local economy and the skills of local people.
- Plus a seventh internal priority
- To be an effective and customer-focused council that delivers value for money for the community.
- 20 The Audit Commission carried out a Corporate Assessment of the Council's performance in May 2008 under 'the harder test' and the Council achieved a score of 4, the highest score possible.
- 21 The Council is investing in its long-term 'town building' vision to transform Telford and Wrekin and strengthen the local economy. It has almost completed its £10m Telford Railfreight Terminal, which is designed to encourage inward investment and growth and set up a borough town's initiative with over £23m capital funding over a three-year period from 2008/09 and an ongoing annual grant of £250,000.
- 22 These projects form part of a programme designed to transform the physical infrastructure in the Borough to improve the economic, environmental and social well-being and create a more sustainable community. The Council has faced a major challenge caused by the instability of the gorge at Ironbridge and has invested to protect the natural environment and to improve safety and safeguard the local economy at the World Heritage Site of Ironbridge. It has completed the first phase of the Ironbridge Gorge land stability project and phase two is underway. The Council has also been successful in getting this issue recognised by government nationally.
- 23 The Joint Area Review of children and young people's services carried out at the same time scored the Council as 3 out of 4. However, the Council's children and young people service has been assessed by Ofsted in its Annual Performance Assessment for 2008 as a service that now delivers minimum requirements for users. This represents a deterioration from last years ranking of Good.
- 24 Effective partnership working is resulting in good improvements to family support and preventative services. The level of teenage pregnancy has reduced but is still above similar councils. There has been some progress in improving English and increasing attendance in secondary schools, but the Council recognises that further improvement is needed. Results in Mathematics and Science at key stage 3 and for five A* to C grades at Key Stage 4 have declined and are below the national average. Monitoring of special schools by the Council was insufficient to identify concerns about a school which was recently placed in an Ofsted category of concern.

How is Telford & Wrekin Council performing?

- 25 Joint working has resulted in good progress in achieving opportunities for young people with complex learning difficulties to access leisure facilities. The youth service has expanded in order to reach more young people. Although the numbers of young people who are not in employment, education or training has risen slightly, collaborative work has resulted in innovative improvement strategies.
- 26 Outcomes for children and young people experiencing domestic abuse have improved through better working arrangements between the Council and the police with a reduction in repeat referrals. However the JAR carried out in spring 2008 found that the quality of practice in social care services was variable which means that not all children receive timely and purposeful support. As a result, some children are not being safeguarded sufficiently well. Quality assurance and performance management are not strong in this area. The Council have responded constructively and an action plan is now in place to address areas for improvement; children's services have reviewed their quality assurance strategy and improved the performance management framework for the LSCB.
- 27 Three of the boroughs 13 secondary schools have been identified by the government in 2008 as falling below the minimum required standard of achieving 30 per cent pass rate for five GCSEs at A-C grade. There are inequalities in outcomes for the borough's schools ranging from only 17 per cent of pupils achieving five good GCSEs in one school up to 100 per cent for another school. Although the gap between the national and Telford and Wrekin averages has reduced.
- 28 The Council is, however, investing to achieve improvement. It has opened Shortwood Primary School replacing older facilities as part of the campus Telford and Wrekin programme and according to its own data has improved performance on a number of key performance indicators.
- 29 Progress on promoting healthy communities and improving the quality of life of vulnerable and older people is good. The Council's rating from the Commission for Social Care Inspectorate (CSCI) for adults services this year increased from Good to Excellent. Clear leadership based on a close partnership with the PCT has helped deliver real improvements in local health and partnership working has made tangible improvements to health inequalities. Telford and Wrekin's ageing population is increasing more than the national average. The Council has a clear understanding of changing demographics and is using this information to plan future provision. It has taken a strategic approach to meeting the needs of older people and carers with a focus on encouraging and maintaining independence. There are however some areas for improvement; for example, the proportion of older people helped to live at home, although still above average, is deteriorating.

How is Telford & Wrekin Council performing?

- 30** Improvement in environmental services is good. The Council has invested in awareness campaigns and services to improve its performance in recycling and composting, delivering best quartile performance over the past three years. It has, for example, secured £150k funding for a six-month food waste minimisation campaign, 'Love Food, Hate Waste' and has diverted 107 tonnes of reusable furniture from landfill. Satisfaction with collection of recyclables is in best quartile. It is also delivering best quartile performance on keeping land free of litter, levels of graffiti and fly posting, while cleanliness of public space is above average. However, the volume of waste collected, cost of waste collection and satisfaction with waste collection are all in worst quartile.
- 31** The Council's performance in creating a safe, strong and cohesive community has over the past three years been good, with significant reductions in crime and anti-social behaviour. For the period 2003/04 to 2006/07 it achieved a reduction in burglary of 62 per cent, vehicle crimes 36 per cent and violent crime by 17 per cent. And whilst overall crime remains below average in the borough, there has been an increase in reported crimes in 2007/08; burglaries rose from 6.9 per 1000 population to 12.4, vehicle crime from 9.3 per 1,000 population to 10.8 and violent crime from 19 per 1,000 population to 19.2. The Council has established an additional 39 Neighbourhood Watch schemes, upgraded CCTV in three local centres and secured £1.7m of partnership funding for a joint alcohol misuse and harm reduction strategy.
- 32** The Council is starting to address diversity. It has established the Driving Change through Diversity programme, which incorporates, equality impact assessments, diversity training, networks of employees from under represented groups and positive action support material. The Council has assessed itself at level 3 of the Equalities Standard for Local Government and this has recently been externally verified through an IDEA review commissioned by the Council and carried out in March 2009.
- 33** The Council is performing well in delivering Value for Money. The match between spending and priorities is good. For example, the Council has invested to improve its recycling service and is now delivering best quartile performance. However, as shown above, its overall performance across the Audit Commission's performance indicator profile is below average and deteriorating and the council has fewer top performing services than previously and fewer than the average for all councils. During the year, the Council has placed significant emphasis on improving performance in services which are in worst quartile position, and 80 per cent of these indicators improved in the year. The Council's own benchmarking shows that the proportion of PIs it has in worst quartile is significantly lower than the average for single tier Councils.

Progress against improvement plans

- 34** It is taking action to deliver an effective and customer focused council and has invested £3m capital over three years to deliver this change, although, these plans are at an early stage and not yet fully embedded, it is too early to assess their effectiveness. For example, it is using 'lean'¹ processes to review key business systems and has established a 'lean' team to lead this work. Although the team is not new, it has recently been restructured and will be using a new approach and methodology. The Council has piloted the new approach in the design and printing unit and estimates that it can deliver savings, with an increase in productivity. However, the Council is unlikely to start the full programme of 'make better or buy' service reviews until early in 2009. It has established its contact centre and three services are currently operating from the contact centre. However, two more services have yet to move to the contact centre. Similarly, it has designed an Information Management Framework which sets out a clear process for managing information flows. This includes features such as, Voice over the Internet systems, Electronic Records and Document Management System; it is too early to assess its impact as the framework has yet to be fully implemented.
- 35** The Council's corporate performance management framework and processes are comprehensive and designed to achieve improvement. There is room for improvement in the contribution that the scrutiny function makes to managing performance. There are rigorous arrangements for monitoring performance information and mechanisms for keeping the focus on priority issues. Systems that enable councillors to challenge the information they receive need to be improved. For example, the Council produces reports, outside the corporate framework, on all areas of performance, which are designed to enable councillors to identify areas of underperformance. However there are areas where they could be improved, particularly where national bandings are used rather than comparative quartile information which does not always enable councillors to compare performance with that of the best performing councils.
- 36** The Council has successfully drawn down funding to enable it to finance its long term improvement agenda. For example, the local urban regeneration company, Transforming Telford, has secured over £15 million from Advantage West Midlands on the back of pooled land assets with English Partnerships. The impact of this is already starting to be felt, for example in tackling poorer housing conditions in the private sector. It is working well with the local business community to strengthen employment in key growth sectors, for example Transforming Telford worked with 400 businesses through a visit programme and engaged with 1,600 business people through events. The Council is developing a strong working relationship with the new Homes and Communities Agency, especially related to taking forward housing development and regeneration in Telford and Wrekin.

¹ Councils use lean process reviews to re-examine their systems and identify a more effective way of delivering the service. This could entail improving quality, reducing costs or both.

How is Telford & Wrekin Council performing?

- 37** Partnership working is well established and effective. The Council use partnership working to increase its capacity to deliver plans. It is a key partner in the Telford and Wrekin Partnership, the local strategic partnership (LSP), which the Leader chairs. Partners understand how local challenges and opportunities fit into the wider regional and national context and share ownership of the vision for developing the borough.

Corporate Assessment

- 38** In April 2008 the Audit Commission carried out a corporate assessment of the Council as part of the CPA regime. The purpose of the corporate assessment is to assess how well the Council engages with and leads its communities, delivers community priorities in partnership with others, and ensures continuous improvement across the range of Council activities.
- 39** The inspection judged the Council to be performing strongly, achieving the highest possible score of 4. It found many strengths including, effective leadership and strong partnership working. We found that through working with its partners, the Council has made tangible improvements to the quality of life in Telford and Wrekin in the last three years. Achievements reflect the focus on social and physical regeneration, especially in the borough's most deprived communities.
- 40** The report identified just two areas for improvement. Firstly that the Council needs to strengthen its strategic focus on equalities and diversity and improve the approach to engaging with black and minority ethnic communities. And secondly, that there is scope to improve performance management systems to ensure that councillors can effectively scrutinise and drive improvement in services. The full report is available on the Audit Commission's website.

The audit of the accounts and value for money

41 Your appointed auditor, KPMG, has reported separately to the Audit Committee on the issues arising from its 2007/08 audit and have issued:

- an audit report, providing an unqualified opinion on your accounts [or otherwise] and a conclusion on your vfm arrangements to say that these arrangements are adequate: and
- a report on the Best Value Performance Plan confirming that the Plan has been audited.

Use of Resources

42 The findings of the auditor are an important component of the CPA framework described above. In particular the Use of Resources score is derived from the assessments made by the auditor in the following areas.

- Financial reporting (including the preparation of the accounts of the Council and the way these are presented to the public).
- Financial management (including how the financial management is integrated with strategy to support council priorities).
- Financial standing (including the strength of the Council's financial position).
- Internal control (including how effectively the Council maintains proper stewardship and control of its finances).
- Value for money (including an assessment of how well the Council balances the costs and quality of its services).

Table 3

Element	Assessment
Financial reporting	2 out of 4
Financial management	3 out of 4
Financial standing	3 out of 4
Internal control	4 out of 4
Value for money	3 out of 4
Overall assessment of the Audit Commission	3 out of 4

Note: 1 = lowest, 4 = highest

The audit of the accounts and value for money

- 43 The Council has, once again, achieved a score of 3 in the assessment overall. One notable achievement is that the score on Internal Control has increased to 4. Scores of 3 and 4 have been sustained in other areas despite increases in the scoring requirements.
- 44 The only decrease in score was on the statutory accounts process, within the Financial Reporting element. This year's audit has been a challenging process, but KPMG have agreed a way forward to help minimise the number of adjustments in 2008/09. The Council has strengthened its Corporate Finance team to provide additional capacity for the 2008/09 process.
- 45 The Use of Resources assessment changes substantially in 2009 to support the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) regime. The new methodology places value for money at the heart of the assessment and is expected to be more challenging for most councils.
- 46 In 2007, KPMG recommended that the Council should review how local factors affect the quality and cost of local services. As part of the 2008/09 business planning process, Portfolios have completed their first VFM self assessments as a way to address this. The self assessments were then subject to quality review by the Policy, Performance and Partnerships team, and the Value for Money Scrutiny Group. This identified that, in some cases, further work was needed to achieve a robust assessment. As such, whilst the factors affecting certain services are known (such as the area of open space in the Borough, which increases the cost of environmental maintenance if measured on a per capita, rather than area, basis), the Council is still developing the evidence base needed to articulate fully the reasons for each service's relative cost and performance.
- 47 A related issue is the need to understand the impact on performance where additional investment is made in a service. The Council analyses and reports on the impact of investments made in the previous year on performance and the outcomes for local people. The example of Education is cited above, where the Council has consciously sustained school budgets with the aim of improving educational attainment. However, KPMG have not seen evidence of how the expenditure above the median specifically links to improvement in outcomes. As such, it is difficult to conclude as to whether this additional investment provides good value for money.
- 48 Forming a fuller picture of the factors which affect costs and performance, and how additional funding links directly to improved outcomes, would help in assessing VFM, in that it would indicate the areas where past investment has been most effective and where the greatest VFM improvements could be achieved in the future.
- 49 Overall, the score of 3 reflects the generally good performance of the Council's services, and the cost base which is lower than average for the majority of service areas. The services where VFM is currently less strong include ICT, which is an area of significant ongoing change, and Education, where improving educational attainment continues to be one of the Council's priorities.

The key issues arising from the audit

The Statement of Accounts

- 50** On 26 September 2008, KPMG issued an unqualified opinion and certificate on the Council's 2007/08 accounts. This was KPMG's first year as the Council's auditors. Inevitably in the first year working with new auditors, there will be challenge to accounting areas which may not have been reviewed for some time. Additionally, the Council faced the challenge of the changes set out in the 2007 Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) for local government accounting. Therefore, whilst historically, there have been relatively few issues arising from the audit of the Council's accounts, the level of adjustments has been significantly higher this year.
- 51** In particular, the Council found the new requirement for a Statement of Total Recognised Gains and Losses (STRGL) in 2006/07 a challenge; several large adjustments were needed in 2007/08 to correct it. The audit was supported by generally good-quality working papers prepared by officers.
- 52** KPMG have met with officers to discuss how the accounts production and audit process can be improved in 2009. The Council will need to consider the impact of a range of accounting developments. These include the changes set out in the 2008 and 2009 SORPs and, most notably, International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), which will apply in full in 2010/11.

Data Quality

- 53** KPMG are required annually to assess the Council's arrangements over the quality of its performance and other data, and to test a small number of indicators in detail.
- 54** In 2007, they concluded that the Council had good arrangements in place; these have been further developed since the time of this assessment.
- 55** Four indicators were tested, including two benefits indicators as required, and two other indicators which were selected on a risk basis. The two further indicators selected were the cost per library visit and a homelessness indicator measuring the length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation.
- 56** They identified no issues with the benefits indicators. However, the other two indicators were found to be unsatisfactory and required adjustments although neither was deemed serious enough to qualify. The Council should therefore consider whether there is scope for its corporate arrangements to become better embedded across Portfolios.

The governance framework

- 57** A new development for 2007/08 was the requirement to prepare an Annual Governance Statement (AGS). This superseded the previous requirement to prepare a Statement on Internal Control (SIC).

The audit of the accounts and value for money

- 58 The SIC considered issues of financial control – such as how the financial systems are managed and how the accounts are prepared – and the wider mechanisms which help ensure that the Council achieves its objectives, such as performance management. The requirements over the AGS are broader and specify that the statement also needs to describe and evaluate governance processes – in other words, the role and effectiveness of members in governing the Council.
- 59 In 2006/07, the Council prepared a statement which went beyond the core requirements for a SIC. This has eased the Council's transition to producing an AGS, since systems were already in place to assess the effectiveness of some of the areas which are newly incorporated into the requirements. The Council also has an assurance map in place which summarises the sources of evidence available for each element of the framework. This enabled the Council to produce a clear AGS which complies fully with all SORP requirements.
- 60 The internal audit function is a key component of the Council's governance framework. KPMG avoid duplication by reviewing and relying on the work of the Council's internal audit where possible. In determining whether KPMG are able to rely on internal audit work, it assesses whether the service complies with the CIPFA Code of Practice for Internal Audit. KPMG concluded that the Council's internal audit service complied with the Code and KPMG placed reliance on their work where it was relevant to its responsibilities.

The Council's financial position

Revenue and capital expenditure

- 61 Budgeted use of balances in 2007/08 was £2.36m. The Council's reported revenue outturn was an under spend of £0.3m. As a result, the Council maintained its reserves above the target level which is determined annually on the basis of specific identified risks. KPMG reviewed this risk assessment process as part of its Use of Resources work in 2007 and concluded that the process was soundly based.
- 62 The 2008/09 budget incorporates the use of £1.23m of reserves and balances; if achieved, the Council would continue to meet the target level of balances determined at the budget-setting stage. However, the rapidly-changing economic environment and the resulting potential for tight funding settlements will present a number of risks to the Council. For example:
- collection rates for council tax, business rates and other debtors may fall;
 - there may be less scope to earn income from fees and charges; and
 - a period of lower interest rates may reduce income from the Council's investment portfolio.
- 63 KPMG understand that officers are reviewing the target level of reserves in response to such risks. It will be important to keep this under regular review in the medium term.

- 64 These issues will also affect the capital programme. The capital programme for 2008/09 has increased in size from £54.4m to £78.8m, but some of the major projects, such as the Rail Freight Terminal and the Borough Towns Initiative, and some medium-term ambitions such as the regeneration of the town centre, have some dependence on capital receipts or contributions from commercial developers which may not be realised or may not achieve the planned levels, given the prevailing economic conditions.
- 65 Since the Council's ambitious plans in terms of regeneration, such as the town centre redevelopment, have significant reliance on commercial investment, the Council should keep the scope and timetable of its plans under review to ensure that they reflect the current and ongoing economic situation.

Treasury management

- 66 In the week beginning 6 October 2008, a number of Icelandic banks went into administration. The difficulties experienced by the Icelandic banks are a symptom of the problems experienced in the global financial markets during the latter half of 2008. A large number of local authorities and other public bodies were directly affected by the collapse of the Icelandic institutions, and many more have been affected by market conditions more generally.
- 67 Telford has previously invested with these institutions, though all deposits had been returned prior to their collapse, so the Council did not face any losses. The Council has also responded well to the risk of a recurrence of the issue, strengthening credit checking procedures to include assessing the ability of each nation to support its banking system when determining where funds should be placed.

Looking ahead

- 68** The public service inspectorates have developed a new performance assessment framework, the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). CAA will provide the first holistic independent assessment of the prospects for local areas and the quality of life for people living there. It will put the experience of citizens, people who use services and local tax payers at the centre of the new local assessment framework, with a particular focus on the needs of those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. It will recognise the importance of effective local partnership working, the enhanced role of Sustainable Communities Strategies and Local Area Agreements and the importance of councils in leading and shaping the communities they serve.
- 69** CAA will result in reduced levels of inspection and better coordination of inspection activity. The key components of CAA will be a joint inspectorate area assessment and reporting performance on the new national indicator set, together with an organisational assessment which will combine the external auditor's assessment of value for money in the use of resources with a joint inspectorate assessment of service performance.
- 70** The first results of our work on CAA will be published in the autumn of 2009. This will include the performance data from 2008/09, the first year of the new National Indicator Set and key aspects of each area's Local Area Agreement.

Closing remarks

- 71 This letter has been discussed and agreed with senior managers. Copies need to be provided to all Council members.
- 72 Further detailed findings, conclusions and recommendations on the areas covered by audit and inspection work are included in the reports issued to the Council during the year.
- 73 The Council has taken a positive and constructive approach to audit and inspection work, and I wish to thank the Council's staff for their support and cooperation during the audit.

Availability of this letter

- 74 This letter will be published on the Audit Commission's website at www.audit-commission.gov.uk, and also on the Council's website.

Dianne Thomas
Comprehensive Area Assessment Lead

March 2009

The Audit Commission

The Audit Commission is an independent watchdog, driving economy, efficiency and effectiveness in local public services to deliver better outcomes for everyone.

Our work across local government, health, housing, community safety and fire and rescue services means that we have a unique perspective. We promote value for money for taxpayers, auditing the £200 billion spent by 11,000 local public bodies.

As a force for improvement, we work in partnership to assess local public services and make practical recommendations for promoting a better quality of life for local people.

Copies of this report

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TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

COUNCIL – 23RD APRIL, 2009

CABINET CHANGES

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF AUDIT & DEMOCRACY

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To ask Council to note the changes made in the allocation of the responsibilities of two Cabinet Members.
- 1.2 To ask Council to note the changes in responsibility of a Cabinet Assistant following the recent reorganisation of Portfolios.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That Councillor Miles Hosken’s allocation as the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Arts & Culture, Libraries and Sport with effect from 1st April, 2009 be noted;**
- 2.2 **That Councillor Stephen Bentley’s allocation as the Cabinet Member for Environment with effect from 1st April, 2009 be noted;**
- 2.3 **That Councillor Tracy Hope’s appointment as the Cabinet Assistant for Environment with specific responsibility for Rights of Way and the Rural Agenda with effect from 1st April 2009 be noted.**

3.0 INFORMATION

- 3.1 The note the amendments made to the responsibilities of two Cabinet Members and one Cabinet Assistant to take account of the reorganisation of the Council into four Portfolios, as from 1st April 2009.
- 3.2 As required by Article 7, paragraph 7.06 of the Council’s Constitution the Leader has notified the Head of Audit & Democracy in writing of his reallocation of responsibilities within his Cabinet to reflect the organisation changes.
- 3.3 Councillor Miles Hosken moved from the position of Cabinet Member: Environment to become the Cabinet Member: Leisure, Arts & Culture, Libraries and Sport within the Adult & Consumer Care Portfolio.

- 3.4 Following the reallocation of the Business Units previously comprising the Community Services Portfolio, Councillor Stephen Bentley became the Cabinet Member: Environment.
- 3.5 In accordance with Article 7, paragraph 7.07 of the Council's Constitution the Leader has appointed Councillor Tracy Hope as Cabinet Assistant: Environment with specific responsibility for Rights of Way and the Rural Agenda.
- 3.6 The positions of Cabinet Member and Cabinet Assistant: Community Services are no longer applicable.

4.0 OTHER INFORMATION

Equality & Diversity	The business of the Council considers equality and diversity in an appropriate manner.
Environmental Impact	None arising directly from this report.
Legal Comment	These changes are in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution..
Links with Corporate Priorities	An effective scrutiny function will assist in promoting an efficient, effective and customer-focused Council and in creating a safe, strong and cohesive community.
Opportunities & Risks	The opportunities and risks associated with these proposals have been identified and assessed. Arrangements will be put in place to manage the risks and maximise the opportunities that have been identified.
Financial Implications	There are no financial impact implications arising from this report.
Ward Implications	Borough wide

Report prepared by Susan Goater, Democratic Services Officer (01952-383214)

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

COUNCIL – 23RD APRIL, 2009

REPORT OF CABINET – FOR INFORMATION ONLY

MATTERS DETERMINED BY THE CABINET

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report provides sets out those matters determined by the Cabinet at its meetings on the 9th & 23rd March and the 6th April, 2009.

CABINET BUSINESS

Matters that have been determined by Cabinet are listed below:

2.1 9th March, 2009

- 2.1.1 High Ercall Conservation Area Management Plan and Proposed Boundary Extension
- 2.1.2 Telford Railfreight Terminal Update (exempt)
- 2.1.3 Interim Waste Treatment & Disposal Contract (exempt)
- 2.1.4 Proposals for a Pooled Budget - Adults with Learning Disabilities Services (including Transfer of Funding) (exempt)
- 2.1.5 Telford Town Centre (exempt). With the agreement of the Chairman of the Scrutiny Leadership Board, and in accordance with paragraph 16 (a) and (b) of Section 5 of Part 4 (Rules of Procedure) of the Constitution, Non-application of Call-In and Urgency, this report was taken as a matter of urgency.

2.2 23rd March, 2009

- 2.2.1 'Efficient, Effective Council' Priority Plan
- 2.2.2 PCT Funding for Telford Sports, Learning & Enterprise Community (TSLEC)
- 2.2.3 Primary Care Trust Capital Funding Contributions to Campus Telford & Wrekin and Malinslee Development
- 2.2.4 PCT Funding for Sustainable Travel Projects
- 2.2.5 Equality and Diversity Scheme 2008-11
- 2.2.6 Local Area Agreement Round 2 (LAA2) – Refresh
- 2.2.7 Designated Public Place Order (DPPO) – Dawley

2.3 6th April, 2009

- 2.3.1 Central Telford Area Action Plan DPD
- 2.3.2 Campus Telford & Wrekin: Additional Post 16 Provision; Trust School Status; BSF Procurement Approval

- 2.3.3 Employment & Skills Multi Area Agreement
- 2.3.4 West Midlands Bio-Diversity Pledge
- 2.3.5 Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards
- 2.3.6 Relocation of Public Toilets and Bus Stop in Stafford Street Car Park, Newport (exempt)

3.0 URGENT DECISIONS OUTSIDE POLICY FRAMEWORK OR BUDGET

On 23rd March 2009 Cabinet resolved to recommend to Council that the necessary approvals be granted in respect of the funding being made available by Telford & Wrekin Primary Care Trust respect of the following schemes:

- Telford Sports, Learning & Enterprise Community
- 3 Sustainable Travel Projects

It had originally been agreed that the Council would hold these funds on trust until the Council meeting on 23rd April. However, on 27th March 2009 the Telford & Wrekin Primary Care Trust informed the Council that the funds could not be paid upon trust and that the legal funding agreement transferring the funds to the Council had to be executed before the end of their financial year.

Therefore, in accordance with Part 4, Section 3, paragraph 4 of the Constitution (Urgent decisions outside policy framework or budget), the necessary approvals were given by the appropriate Corporate Director and/or Cabinet Member. In accordance with the requirements of paragraph 4(ii) the Chairman of the Scrutiny Leadership Board agreed that these decisions needed to be taken as a matter of urgency. Further, in accordance with Part 4, Section 5, paragraph 16 of the Constitution Cllr D.R.W. White, as Chairman of the Scrutiny Leadership Board, agreed that, given the urgency of the matters, these decisions should not be subject to Call-In. Had these urgent decisions not been made, the Council would have been at serious risk of losing a total of £1,101,000 of additional funding.

Full details of these projects are as set out in the reports to Cabinet.

4.0 DELEGATION OF POWERS GRANTED BY THE CABINET

REPORT HEADING	DELEGATION GRANTED TO	DETAIL OF DELEGATION GRANTED
Interim Waste Treatment & Disposal Contract	Corporate Director: Environment & Regeneration and Corporate Director: Resources	To enter into a contract for the service.
Proposals for a Pooled Budget - Adults with Learning	Corporate Director: Adult & Consumer Care following consultation with the Cabinet Member	(a) To approve the proposal to establish a pooled budget arrangement between Telford & Wrekin PCT (PCT)

REPORT HEADING	DELEGATION GRANTED TO	DETAIL OF DELEGATION GRANTED
Disabilities Services (including Transfer of Funding)		<p>and Telford & Wrekin Council (LA) to commission and deliver services for adults with learning disabilities, the terms of the agreement to be approved by the Head of Legal Services and authority to be given for the Council's seal to be affixed to such agreement, as appropriate, under Article 14.06 of the Council's Constitution.</p> <p>(b) To approve the proposed transfer of funding from the PCT to the LA, as required by the Department of Health (DH), and set within the overall context of a Memorandum of Understanding, which will be drafted prior to final approval being sought from the PCT Board and Cabinet before 1 July 2009.</p> <p>(c) To approve the draft Principles, Protocols and Action Plan linked to the Pooled Budget.</p>
Telford Town Centre	<p>(a) Head of Asset & Property Management following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration;</p> <p>(b) Head of A&PM;</p> <p>(c) Head of Legal Services be authorised</p>	<p>(a) to negotiate and enter into a conditional contract with the preferred bidder for the sale of the Civic Offices Site,</p> <p>(b) to negotiate and agree any documents required by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and others as necessary to provide clean title in the sale.</p> <p>(c) to execute all legal documentation necessary to give effect to such agreement(s)</p>
PCT Funding for Telford Sports, Learning & Enterprise Community (TSLEC)	Head of Legal Services	To execute the funding agreements and/or affix the Council seal if necessary.
Primary Care Trust Capital	Corporate Director: Children & Young People subject to the	To enter into a Section 256 National Health Service Act

REPORT HEADING	DELEGATION GRANTED TO	DETAIL OF DELEGATION GRANTED
Funding Contributions to Campus Telford & Wrekin and Malinslee Development	such terms and conditions recommended by the Head of Legal Services	2006 funding transfer agreements between the Primary Care Trust and the Council to support the Campus Telford & Wrekin and Malinslee Development projects
PCT Funding for Sustainable Travel Projects	Head of Legal Services	To affix the Council's seal to such agreements as appropriate in accordance with Article 14.06 of the Constitution
West Midlands Biodiversity Pledge	Head of Planning & Environment	To sign the Biodiversity Pledge on behalf of the Council.
Campus Telford & Wrekin: Additional Post 16 Provision; Trust School Status; BSF Procurement Approval	(a) Head of Asset & Property Management in consultation with the Head of BSF Resources and Social Regeneration (b) Head of Legal Services (c) Chair of the BSF Project Board (the Director of Children's Services)	(a) To negotiate the terms of the transfer of Land and Buildings in each Trust School proposal (b) To execute all necessary agreements and documentation relating thereto. To approve stages within the procurement process as set out in paragraph 5.7 of the report.
Central Telford Area Action Plan DPD	Head of Planning & Environment, after consultation with the Leader of the Council, the Chairman of the Council's Development Plans Steering Group and the Cabinet Members for Environment and for Regeneration	To agree any minor changes to the document prior to submission to the Secretary of State.
Employment & Skills Multi Area Agreement	Corporate Directors for Environment & Regeneration and Children & Young People, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Regeneration and Children & Young People	To sign off an Employment and Skills Multi Area Agreement.
LEGAL COMMENT FINANCIAL COMMENT LINKS WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT EQUALITY & DIVERSITY WARD IMPLICATIONS	As described in each report considered by Cabinet. Copies of all reports have been previously circulated to all Members of the Council	

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

CABINET – 6TH APRIL, 2009
COUNCIL – 23RD APRIL, 2009

CENTRAL TELFORD AREA ACTION PLAN – PUBLICATION AND SUBMISSION TO SECRETARY OF STATE

REPORT OF HEAD OF PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To approve the final draft of the Central Telford Area Action Plan in order that it can be submitted to the Secretary of State and progressed towards adoption as Council policy.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That the Council approve the Central Telford Area Action Plan and supporting documents attached as Appendices 1-3 to this report, in order that the documents can be published, subjected to consultation and, along with representations received, then submitted to the Secretary of State;**
- 2.2 **That authority is delegated to the Head of Planning & Environment, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the Chairman of the Council's Development Plans Steering Group and the Cabinet Members for Environment and for Regeneration, to agree any minor changes to the document prior to submission to the Secretary of State.**

3.0 SUMMARY

- 3.1 The Central Telford Area Action Plan has been prepared in order to provide a planning policy framework against which development proposals in Telford town centre and surrounding areas can be considered.
- 3.2 Prior to formal adoption this document requires Council approval, followed by publication along with the accompanying Sustainability Appraisal and Consultation Statement for a six week final public consultation and then submission to the Secretary of State. Subject to the document being considered "sound" after public examination, it could then be then adopted by the Council.

4.0 PREVIOUS MINUTES

- Cabinet 17 September 2007 - Central Telford Area Action Plan Development Plan Document Preferred Options Report for Consultation
- Council 20 September 2007 - Local Development Framework – Central Telford Area Action Plan

5.0 INFORMATION

5.1 The draft “Publication” Central Telford Area Action Plan is attached at Appendix 1. The document covers the Town Centre plus the adjacent areas of Central Park Old Park, Hollinswood and Malinslee. Its structure contains:

- a spatial development strategy, vision and objectives for the area;
- a detailed “Character Areas” section which brings forward site-specific proposals for each part of the Central Telford area;
- a Policy section which provides overall policies for different types of development and relevant planning considerations;
- a Delivery Section that sets out how the proposals will be implemented and the overall objectives delivered.

5.2 Key guidelines for the scale and location of new development are included:

- 70,000 sq m of new non-food retail development and 7,000sqm of new food retail,
- 2,500 new homes (with 2,000 in the town centre where there is currently no housing at all)
- 110,000 sq m of office floorspace.

5.3 The Area Action Plan seeks to be flexible enough to ensure that development proposals are encouraged to come forward, yet robust enough to ensure that development helps deliver the key elements of the spatial vision for the area.

5.4 Further Appendices containing a Sustainability Appraisal and Statement of Consultation are attached at Appendix 2 and 3. These provide a summary of the sustainability appraisal and the public and stakeholder engagement processes that have been carried out. They form part of the documentation, subject to approval by Council, that will be published for consultation and proposed submission to the Secretary of State.

6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 The Central Telford Area Action Plan is required to pass through a number of preparatory stages involving public engagement. These culminate in an independent examination by a government appointed planning inspector at an Examination in Public.

6.2 The key spatial development issues and options first emerged from a series of workshop events in 2004 involving Councillors, Community Groups, and the

CentralTelfordActionPlan

wider public in 2004. A Central Telford Area Action Plan consultation then took place in 2005. Responses received resulted in a revised Preferred Options Report for the Central Telford Area Action Plan being prepared. This document was published in September 2007 for a 6 week consultation with key stakeholders (such as government agencies, utility providers, neighbouring Councils, Parish and Town Councils) and the wider public. Altogether 579 responses to the 2007 Preferred Options Report were received, 466 objecting to the document and 113 in support.

- 6.3 Responses to the Preferred Options Report were considered by the Development Plans Steering Group (an advisory non-decision-making all party Council Member group) in February 2008.
- 6.4 Throughout 2008, Council officers, advised by Members of the Development Plans Steering Group, have been engaged in the preparation of the Central Telford Area Action Plan. A series of Development Plan Steering Group meetings during 2008 considered elements of detail concluding with a meeting in December, 2008, at which Members considered the overall approach to the Central Telford Area.
- 6.5 The draft "Publication" version of the Central Telford Area Action Plan was then considered by the Development Plans Steering Group on 3 February 2009. Members of the Development Plans Steering Group resolved that, subject to specific amendments, the draft Central Telford Area Action Plan be endorsed for consideration by Cabinet and Council. Members of the Development Plans Steering Group will be considering the revised version at their meeting of 4 March.
- 6.6 In order to give all Members and representatives of Town and Parish Councils a more extensive opportunity to consider the Central Telford Area Action Plan, a seminar took place on 26 February. This allowed Members to address some of the content of the Central Telford Area Action Plan in more detail in an informal workshop in advance of the Council meeting of 5 March.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

- 7.1 The document will have an impact on significant numbers of stakeholders under the various equality strands, but the impacts are generally positive.
- 7.2 Significant positive equalities impacts would arise out of various policy approaches to manage development in the Central Telford Area. These would include policies seeking to secure for example:
 - A greater range of housing types, sizes and tenures including affordable housing and seeking more Lifetime Homes-standard housing;
 - Provision for more convenient, attractive and safer pedestrian circulation and to move away from a car-dominated environment to greater support for non-car modes of travel including better pedestrian and cycle links;

- Development with a mix of uses including housing, enabling more convenient access including to non-car users, and directing key developments such as employment, leisure/culture and retail into accessible central locations;
- Protection and enhancement of the current character of residential neighbourhoods and their open spaces of identified value and creation of new open spaces.

7.3 Negative impacts might occur as a result of a policy approach to affordable housing which allows for flexibility and could therefore result in delivery of less affordable housing than might result from a more prescriptive approach. A viability study is therefore being undertaken to further inform the Council's approach to development proposals and affordable housing.

8.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

8.1 A detailed Sustainability Appraisal of the document has been undertaken as an integral part of its preparation. This uses a Sustainability Appraisal Framework in order to consider the environmental, social, economic and natural resource implications of the Area Action Plan and allows for recommendations to be made that can be addressed through, for example, changes to the Area Action Plan.

8.2 The completed results of the Sustainability Appraisal process are set out in Appendix 3 to this report.

8.3 In summary, the results of the Sustainability Appraisal of the Central Telford Area Action Plan are predominately positive and demonstrate that overall the Area Action Plan performs well in sustainability terms. The Sustainability Appraisal will be published to accompany the Area Action Plan and form part of the documentation to be consulted upon.

9.0 LEGAL COMMENT

9.1 Because the required procedural issues are summarised in this report, there is no further legal comment to add to this aspect of the Area Action Plan.

9.2 It should be noted that in order to implement various elements of the Area Action Plan it may be necessary for the Council to acquire areas of land or property. This may require the use of Compulsory Purchase powers by the Council. In these circumstances the necessary authority to serve and progress Compulsory Purchase Orders will be sought separately.

10.0 LINKS WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

10.1 The Central Telford Area Action Plan will be a major delivery vehicle for the shared Telford and Wrekin Partnership Vision 2026 of a "Modern City". In the Area Action Plan this Vision has been taken further and a range of specific sites

and policies to ensure that development helps deliver the key elements of the spatial vision for the area. It will contribute to the Priority Plan for Maintaining a High Quality and Sustainable Environment.

11.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The preparation of the action plan will be undertaken within existing staffing and budgetary resources.
- 11.2 A provision of £150,000 is included within the 2009/10 budget framework to cover the costs of public consultation and the public inquiry. Actual costs may well exceed this amount as the full scope and focus of the inquiry will not be known until the draft document has been submitted and considered by the planning inspectorate.
- 11.3 Dependant upon the focus of the inquiry, there may be a requirement to seek external specialist technical and legal advice, the cost of which cannot be contained within existing budget provisions. A further report will be brought forward as necessary.
- 11.4 When adopted, the delivery of various infrastructure requirements set by the planning framework will have financial implications for the Authority. These will be the subject of separate reports and approvals as required.
- 11.5 In the event that authority is sought to serve and progress any Compulsory Purchase Orders to acquire land or property on behalf of the Council in order to implement any element of the Area Action Plan, the financial implications of such an order will be subject to a separate report seeking authorisation.

12.0 WARD IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 In providing a framework for development, particularly in the Town Centre, the Central Telford Area Action Plan will have implications for all residents of the Borough.

13.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Central Telford Area Action Plan - Preferred Option Report, September 2007

Report prepared by M. Wedderburn, Development Plans Team Leader, Tel: 01952 384246

PLANS BOARD

Minutes of a meeting of the Plans Board held on Wednesday, 25th February, 2009 at 6.00 p.m. in the Civic Offices, Telford

PRESENT: Councillors I.T.W. Fletcher (Chairman), A.A. Meredith (In the Chair for planning application W2008/1290), R.G. Chaplin, J.A. Francis, G.M. Green, F.R. Picken, H. Rhodes and M.J. Smith

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors A. Stanton for planning application W2008/1359 and Councillor A.A. Mackenzie for planning application W2009/0083

PB-83 ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE HEAD OF PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT

The Head of Planning & Environment informed the Board that, in response to its resolution of 22nd January 2009 in respect of planning application W2007/1648 (Huntingdon Lane, near Lawley, Telford, Little Wenlock and New Works) the Council had submitted its Statement of Case to the Planning Inspectorate and to the Appellant. This "Rule 6 Statement of Case" had been placed in the Members' Room for them to look at and comment upon if they so wished. Officers hoped to be able to bring an up to date report on this appeal to the Board in March to confirm details of the Council's witnesses. It was further hoped that at the meeting of the Board on 8th April 2009 the Council's witnesses and Counsel would set out and explain the evidence to be presented and the approach to be taken at the Inquiry which would start on 28th April, 2009.

PB-84 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Plans Board held on 4th February, 2009 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

PB-85 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

PB-86 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor I.T.W. Fletcher declared a personal interest in planning application W2008/1290 and indicated that he would vacate the Chair and the room during determination thereof.

Councillor G.M. Green declared that she wished to speak on planning application W2008/1290 in her capacity as a Ward Member for Madeley following which she would leave the room during discussion thereof.

(a) W2008/0705 – Land off Frome Way, Donnington, Telford, Shropshire

At its meeting on 4th February 2009 the Board had granted delegated authority to the Head of Planning & Environment to grant outline planning permission subject to the conditions as outlined within the report, including the requirement, if he judged it reasonable, to identify and provide a suitable footpath link from the site to St. George's Road.

Following the meeting the Planning Officer had walked the designated footpath routes from St George's Road, as shown on the plan attached to the report, with the Council's footpath officer. This had shown that none of the designated footpaths would be suitable, nor could easy pedestrian access to St. George's Road be provided given the issues relating to nature and the footpath levels. It was, therefore, considered that none of these footpaths could provide an appropriate link to existing bus routes along St. George's Road and that, even if improved, would only be able to be walked by limited numbers of people. The footpaths were only suitable as recreational routes but a condition could be imposed to ensure that linkages were made to the existing footpath system in accordance with an agreed scheme but these would be unsuitable to be promoted as utility routes.

Members thanked officers for investigating the possibility of making the requested linkages and noted the information provided.

RESOLVED – that with respect to planning application W2008/0705 delegated authority be granted to the Head of Planning & Environment to grant outline planning permission subject to the applicant/owner entering into a Section 106 agreement to provide a financial contribution to improvements to the junction of Wrockwardine Wood Way and St. George's Road, education facilities, commuted sums for maintenance of the play area, landscaped open space and the woodland adjoining the application site, 25% affordable dwellings and provision of pedestrian linkages from the site to the existing designated footpaths adjacent to the site and subject to the conditions, as set out in the report, with an addition condition whereby any application for Reserved Matters should provide for a scheme to link the site to the existing designated footpaths adjacent to the site. The agreed scheme should be implemented in full before the first dwelling was occupied or in accordance with a timetable to be agreed by the Local Planning Authority in writing.

(The Chairman, Councillor I.T.W. Fletcher left the room during the determination of the following application and the meeting was chaired by Councillor A.A. Meredith, Vice-Chairman of the Board)

(b) W2008/1290 – Land at Abraham Darby School, Ironbridge Road, Madeley, Telford, Shropshire

This application by Telford & Wrekin Council was in respect of outline planning permission for the redevelopment of the Abraham Darby Learning Community to create a new senior school and a junior/primary school

incorporating a replacement leisure centre with community facilities. The application also included the demolition of the existing school buildings on the site together with those of the existing Woodlands Primary School on the opposite side of Ironbridge Road. These proposals formed part of the Building Schools for the Future programme which sought to rebuild or remodel every state secondary school in the country over the lifetime of the programme. The new site for the Learning Community would enable the existing school to continue in operation whilst construction works were underway and, once completed, for their demolition, thus ensuring a transfer without significant interruption. The proposal also involved the enhancement and optimisation of the resulting open areas for a greater variety of outdoor sports and recreational facilities.

It was necessary at this stage to consider the proposed layout and scale against Local Plan Policies UD2 and UD3, which were in place to ensure that proposals related positively to their context particularly given the site's position at a gateway location to the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site. The design utilised an efficient multi-use layout, which responded to the challenges of the site's topography and the overall layout and scale of the different uses had been considered in terms of their context in reducing the impact to a satisfactory level and having regard to accessibility and the proximity to the neighbouring residential area. Notwithstanding this, at the detailed design stage (reserved matters) particular attention would need to be paid to the ways in which the scheme would specifically respond to the surrounding uses and features.

The relevant policies when considering this application were CS5 of the Core Strategy on District and Local Centres, a core element of which was the provision of new or improved community facilities to meet the needs of local residents and Policy CS10 relating to proposed development on designated green space. The application site formed part of Telford's Green Network and, as such, should be protected. Although, the proposal was for a slightly larger replacement facility in a different location, it was considered that the integrity of the wider green network would be safeguarded. The proposal would result in a net loss of open space of approximately 10,000 sq.m. (less than a tenth of the open area of the site), but its more intensive, efficient and managed use would be secured as part of the application and, therefore, overall it was considered that the proposal would make a positive contribution to local open space standards in terms of quantity and quality.

The proposed facilities would be broadened to include replacement of the existing facilities with the addition of a range of additional ones, as set out in the report. These would be provided to the latest Sport England and other relevant standards and the layout configured to the demands of the area. Sport England had placed an objection on this proposal due to the loss of playing fields but had confirmed that the emerging Playing Pitch Strategy would assist in determining the suitability of the proposal and whether it justified a valid exception to policy. Members were updated at the meeting that, despite Sport England having been provided with additional information regarding the Council's Playing Pitches Strategy, it had not been able to provide any further comment prior to the meeting. However, it was expected

that this response would be received by 27th February 2009 and, accordingly, a revised recommendation was put before Members to take this into account.

As set out on the tabled update sheet, the Council's Sport & Recreation officers had identified that the proposed sports and leisure facilities had been driven by recommendations from consultation and were in line with the its Sports & Leisure Facilities Framework 2007-2027. These facilities would be made accessible to the community, Abraham Darby Academy pupils, Woodlands Primary pupils and other Telford South feeder Primary Schools.

In accordance with the relevant Local Plan Policies the landscape, open space, and the value of woodland and trees to the area would be enhanced and protected. A bat activity survey and extended phase 1 habitat survey had been submitted with the original planning application and Natural England had asked that internal and external activity surveys be undertaken prior to determination to conform to national guidelines. To date it had not been possible to complete both surveys, as the bats were currently in hibernation and it would not be possible to align the timescale for this survey with the BSF programme timescales. Consequently the application needed to be considered on its current merits but, notwithstanding the objection from Natural England, it was considered that a pragmatic approach should be adopted as internal surveys had provided no evidence of the presence of bats. As the existing buildings were not likely to be demolished for two/three years, the application of appropriate conditions should be able to provide the necessary safeguards/mitigation should bats ever be found there. In the updated information, as tabled, the Council's Ecologist recognised the problems in accessing the roof spaces identified as having bat potential and recommended the inclusion of appropriate conditions. Similar concerns had been raised by Shropshire Wildlife together with comments that, existing trees, hedges, etc should be retained wherever possible and that works should avoid bird nesting areas/times, and the opportunity taken to make enhancements.

Any development of this scale would have a significant impact upon its surroundings but the proposal had been designed to minimise its impact whilst providing a modern, integrated and visually improved facility. The design concept was considered to be acceptable in principle subject to a high quality design being secured in due course. This would include the detailed lighting design proposals but the applicant had already ruled out the use of flood lighting, as the principles of Secured by Design, supporting natural surveillance and security on the site, would be applied.

The responses of the statutory and non-statutory consultees were detailed in the report. Severn-Trent Water Authority and the Environment Agency had no objections but had requested the inclusion of appropriate conditions. Madeley Parish Council had raised a number of concerns relating to accessibility and internal linkages within the site, in particular the proposed closing of the Right of Way No. 36 (Madeley). A petition with 203 signatures objecting to the proposal had been received stating the proposal would have serious negative implications for the local community, as summarised in the report.

On balance, however, it was considered that the site was a longstanding community facility with established links to the wider transport network and, therefore, the principle of a similar type of development within the site was acceptable. The proposed facilities and associated measures would significantly enhance the social and community provision and improve these links. As the layout and design had responded to the surroundings and provided a suitable level of mitigation to offset any negative impacts, the multi-use proposal was, therefore, considered to be a sustainable development and appropriate for the site.

Councillor G.M. Green addressed the Board on behalf of the residents of Madeley in her capacity as a local Ward Member. She said that the majority of residents welcomed the application as a first step in securing external investment to ensure a future of educational and leisure excellence for people in the Madeley area. However, the possibility of retaining the 1930s fascia had been raised as locally there remained much affection for the building. Should the application be approved, Councillor Green asked that a number of broad themes, which she outlined to Members, should be considered by the Planning Authority at the detailed design stage. These included highways and access issues and the net loss of playing fields on the site, together with the impact of the proposal upon residents on the periphery.

Members, having made a site visit, welcomed the proposal as meeting the Council's duty to provide people in Madeley with the very best facilities.

RESOLVED – that with regard to planning application W2008/1290, should the Sport England holding objection not be withdrawn, the application be referred to the Government Office for the West Midlands regarding the development of playing fields and that, should the application not be called in, delegated authority be granted to the Head of Planning & Environment to grant outline planning permission subject to the conditions in the substantive report.

(Councillor I.T.W. Fletcher returned to the meeting and resumed the Chair and Councillor G.M. Green returned to the meeting).

(c) W2008/1324 – Land off Prince Edward Crescent, Malinslee, Telford, Shropshire

This application sought outline planning permission for a maximum of thirteen semi-detached and terraced affordable residential bungalows on a site currently used as a public open space, together with the relocation of an improved local equipped play area (LEAP). Access and layout of the site were to be considered at this stage with all other matters being reserved for later consideration. The proposal was for 100% affordable housing, in association with the requirement for the Malinslee local centre redevelopment, and of a type and size in accordance with the identified need for the local area in accordance with Policy H23 of the Wrekin Local Plan.

The garden lengths of the proposed plots and the separation distances to the adjacent properties, as set out in the report, were considered sufficient to ensure there would be no adverse impact on the amenities of neighbouring

properties given that this would be a single storey development. The garden sizes, whilst small, were considered adequate for the size and type of dwelling but, to ensure that adequate garden space was retained and there was no inappropriate development within the roof space, permitted development rights for extensions to the property, roof alterations or dormer windows and curtilage buildings would be removed.

The land was not designated as Green Network but provided a multifunctional leisure, recreation and amenity area in a very densely developed area. Whilst the current LEAP provided for children aged 3–12 years, provision for those up to the age of 6 years would be more appropriate in this location. As this would result in the loss of play provision for older children of 7–12 years the Council's Sport & Recreation Officer considered that this should be part of an overall scheme for the funding of future play provision in the Malinslee area including the provision of a NEAP and had requested an appropriate condition be applied to any approval.

The proposal would result in the loss of some open space provision, in particular the redundant ball court, but this was considered acceptable as the re-development at the Malinslee Centre would provide a new multi-use games area and skate park. The new LEAP would be located to the south of the development site with the nearest existing residential properties being 20m from the new facility with the new dwellings being at least 20-25m away. Given the age of the residents, it was considered necessary to limit the play provision to a design for the under 7s to ensure that there was sufficient distance separation from neighbouring properties and thus no adverse impact on their amenities in terms of noise and disturbance. In addition the layout of the new housing facing the LEAP would provide an increased level of surveillance, particularly if the proposed landscape bund was kept at a lower level than the existing play facility so as to reduce the potential for anti-social behaviour. In order to ensure that adequate play provision was maintained on the site, a condition would be included to ensure the new facility was constructed prior to the removal of the existing facilities, in accordance with Policy LR4.

The Council's Highways Engineer had raised no objections subject to a condition requiring construction details of the new road, street furniture and access for construction traffic. He had accepted that the most appropriate access point to the site would be from Prince Edward Crescent, currently a cul-de-sac with a relatively narrow carriageway. As the traffic movements arising from this type of development would be considerably less than for more traditional housing, they could be incorporated within the existing network without having a detrimental impact on highway safety. The parking provision was for one allocated space per dwelling and three visitor spaces, which was acceptable given the size of the proposed dwellings and the highly sustainable location with access to a frequent bus service.

The Council's Arboricultural Officer had no objections subject to conditions regarding tree protection and replacement to ensure the retention of the existing boundary tree belt. The Council's Geotechnical Engineers and Land Contamination Officer considered that the applications were acceptable

subject to conditions on the further investigation of shallow mining and land contamination.

Three letters of objection had been received, the contents of which were summarised in the report. Having regard to local objections and planning policy and guidance, officers considered that, on balance, the principle of residential development and new play provision on this site was acceptable subject to appropriate conditions.

RESOLVED – that with regard to planning application W2008/1324 outline planning permission be granted subject to the conditions as set out in the report.

(d) W2008/1359 – Land adjacent to 7 Vauxhall Crescent, Newport, Shropshire

This application had been deferred at the meeting of the Board on 4th February, 2009 in order for Members to make a site visit. The Planning Officer reminded Members that this was an outline planning application with all matters reserved, including siting or appearance. This meant that officers had to assess future likely forms of development and to make assumptions as to the nature of development, i.e. single or two-storey and the likely location of any dwelling within the site. In this particular instance, the variety of positions for a dwelling would be limited, as it would also be necessary to ensure access/driveway and sufficient private garden space. The Council's Highways Officer had objected to the application on the grounds of insufficient visibility splays and inadequate turning space.

Councillor Adam Stanton, the Ward Member, was invited to address the Board in support of the application and provided measurements to refute the views of the Highway's Officer. In addition, he considered that the remaining garden area would be adequate and informed Members that the applicants were willing to reduce the size of the windows looking onto the existing property in order to address any concerns relating to overlooking.

Some Members considered that the site was adequate for the proposed dwelling while others agreed with the officers' view that the site was too cramped and the proposed scheme would not be in keeping with the character of the surrounding properties. On being put to the vote, four Members voted in accordance with the recommendation to refuse and four voted against the recommendation. The Chairman, in exercising his casting vote, supported the recommendation for refusal.

RESOLVED – that with respect to planning application W2008/1359 planning permission be refused for the following reasons:

1. **The Local Planning Authority considered that the proposal would lead to overdevelopment and a cramped form of development of the garden plot of No.7 Vauxhall Crescent, in an area characterised by established spacious gardens, to the detriment of the character, appearance and pattern of the area, in particular the form of the properties in Vauxhall Crescent. Accordingly the**

development was contrary to Policy CS15 of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy, Policies UD2 and H6 of the Wrekin Local Plan 1995 – 2006 and national guidance contained in PPS1 and PPS3;

2. The Local Planning Authority considered the proposal was unacceptable and would have an adverse impact on the residential amenity of adjoining properties, leading to overlooking and loss of privacy of the proposed and existing properties, and would result in an inadequate amount of private amenity space for both the proposed dwelling and No.7 Vauxhall Crescent. The development was therefore contrary to Policies UD2 and H6 of the Wrekin Local Plan 1995 – 2006;
3. The Local Planning Authority considered that insufficient visibility splays could be provided on to Longford Road within the application site. Furthermore, there would be inadequate space within the site to provide sufficient turning for vehicles manoeuvring from the access, leading to potential highways danger. Accordingly the proposal is contrary to Policy CS15 of the Local Development Framework, and Policies UD2 and H6 of the Wrekin Local Plan 1995 – 2006.

- (e) W2009/0035 – Open Space Adjacent to B5061, Ketley Brook, Telford, Shropshire

This application by Telford & Wrekin Council sought approval for the construction of a bicycle track or 'Pump Trail' throughout an area of public open space which was mostly covered by a young plantation of trees and shrubs. The area was currently used as a short footpath link from the nearby residential area to the Wrekin Retail Park.

The site was located in the Green Network and Policy OL4 permitted development in such an area if the criteria, as described in the report, had been met. Development of the site would meet the both the requirements of Policy LR4 of the Wrekin Local Plan, which sought to achieve National Playing Fields Association minimum targets for outdoor recreational open, and the requirements of the Council's Outdoor Recreation Strategy.

While the facility would be open for all children of an appropriate age it had been designed for older children who were able to use bikes and, therefore, no supervision would be provided. The Council's Leisure Services considered that the equipment to be provided was of a very high quality, built to withstand the rigours of use by young children. A management regime for the site was proposed, including regular visits at least twice per week to carry out litter picking and safety inspections every six weeks, which was above the national standard for play facilities. Similar facilities elsewhere in the Borough had led to a reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour and for this reason had been supported by West Mercia Police. This facility had been sited further away from dwellings than was normally the case whilst still being visible.

The proposed development would involve the movements of earth to construct the jumps of the trail but, due to the retention of the trees, the exact route could not be agreed until the undergrowth had been cleared and any potential hazards identified. Therefore, it would be difficult for a landscaping plan to be approved before the development was implemented but the trail would be agreed onsite with the Leisure Services Engineer and the Council's Woodlands Officer to ensure it was adequate and had a minimal impact on the landscape.

Objections had been received from Wellington Town Council together with three letters of objection and two petitions signed by local residents, as set out in the report. Updated information tabled at the meeting included a summary of a further three letters of objection received and made reference to the assessment of need identified through consultation by the Council's Leisure and Recreation department. As the children would be local to the area, there should be little need for facilities such as toilets and there should be little increase in traffic except for bicycles. The Council's Highways Team had raised no objection to the proposal and the Council's Woodlands Officer was involved with the scheme to mitigate any detrimental impact. It was considered that the proposal would have no detrimental impact on the visual or residential amenities of the area and no adverse impact on the natural environment.

Councillor A.D. McClements, the Ward Member, had requested that her comments be tabled at the meeting. This stated that while she was, in principle, supportive of the need for a recreational facility, she wished to draw Members' attention to the concerns of the residents of Highway View and Manor Rise regarding the possibility of anti-social behaviour. She, therefore, requested that, should the application be approved, assurances be given that there would be close monitoring of the site by the police and the Council.

The majority of Members welcomed the application as providing much needed facilities but concerns were raised regarding the proximity of the site to Whitchurch Drive. In response the Head of Planning & Environment recommended that the application be approved but undertook to pass Members' comments on to the appropriate Leisure & Recreation Officers and to stress the importance that they attached to the maximisation of the safety of children using the site.

RESOLVED – that with respect to planning application W2009/0035 planning permission be granted subject to the conditions as set out in the report.

(f) W2009/0053- Boring Mill Cottage, 24 Dale Road, Coalbrookdale, Telford, Shropshire

This application by an officer of Telford & Wrekin Council sought permission to install a replacement window and door into a two storey garage/outbuilding, the replacement of railings around a parking area, and the laying of a patio in conjunction with additional railings. It also included two locations for the installation of a satellite dish on the property, one on the north-east corner and one on the western edge of the garage building depending on the best

reception point. The property, which was listed as a building of local interest, was located on a large slope, with the rear of the property being stepped to a much higher level than that at the front. Within the rear garden a two storey building incorporated a garage at first floor level, accessed from the road to the rear.

The window and the door would replace the existing timber windows and doors, which were not of a traditional character and appearance. Their replacements would be of a timber construction sympathetic to the property and to the World Heritage Site. The installation of black metal railings around the raised parking area and in the garden area, together with the laying of a patio between the dwelling and the two storey outbuilding, were of a design and appearance sympathetic to the dwelling and to the World Heritage Site. The proposed railings would not encroach on to the highway and, therefore, would not be detrimental to the amenities of highway users.

Members were informed at the meeting that, following the concerns expressed by the Council's Conservation Officer, amended plans had been received whereby the location for the satellite dish on the garage building had been moved to the corner where it would not be as prominent being screened by the garage building and the surrounding woodland. An appropriate additional condition to ensure the development was in accordance with the amended plans was recommended for approval.

RESOLVED – that with respect to planning application W2009/0053 planning permission be granted subject to the amendment of the second satellite and to the conditions as set out in the report, with the addition of condition C120 – Development in accordance with amended plans.

(g) W2009/0077 – Tan Bank Car Park, Wellington, Telford, Shropshire

This application by Telford & Wrekin Council sought permission for the removal of five trees on the site, a minor crown lift to one other tree, and the killing of ivy on other trees in order to improve the surveillance of the area. The area in question was a slightly raised shrubbery on the edge of the Tan Bank Car Park, which separated the area from the Church to the east. It was also sited to the rear of the 'Pussycats' Night Club, which acted as a drop-off and pick-up point for its customers.

It was considered that the trees and foliage at the edge of the Car Park provided little amenity value and hampered surveillance of an area of night time activity. Therefore, the proposed works would not be detrimental to the character of the Conservation Area and would also increase surveillance and security of the area.

Members were informed at the meeting that Wellington Town Council had confirmed that it had no objections to the proposal.

RESOLVED – that with respect to planning application W2009/0077 consent for tree works in a Conservation Area be granted with the following informative:

It was advised that the works to the trees hereby approved were carried out to a reasonable standard in accordance with the relevant recommendations of British Standard 3998: 1989, to ensure that the proposals hereby approved complied with current best practice for carrying out tree works

(h) W2009/0083 – Land at Sutton Way, Sutton Hill, Telford, Shropshire

This application was for a fifty-six day determination under Part 24 of the Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Amendment)(England) Order 2001 for the erection of a 12.5m. monopole with associated equipment cabinets and ancillary development. As a telecommunications determination application the decision whether to grant or refuse prior approval could be based upon the siting and appearance of the installation. Councillor A.A. Mackenzie, Ward Member, had requested that the application be determined by the Plans Board rather than under delegated authority.

The installation would be sited within a row of 10m. high lighting columns on the grass highway verge running along Sutton Way to the west of Great Hay Drive. To the rear of the grass verge was a well established row of trees and the other side of the road was a grassed and tree planted area of informal open space with a play area beyond. The surrounding residential areas consisted mostly of medium/high density dwellings to the north of the site and low density to the south.

The proposed monopole would be situated on the same line as the existing lighting columns and would be of a slim, uncluttered design, the antenna being enclosed in a plastic shroud. Although it would differ in appearance from the existing angled street light columns, it would be in effect an additional item of street furniture and, as such, would not be significantly visually intrusive. As requested by the Council's Highways Office, the associated ground equipment cabinet had been relocated back from the carriageway edge to ensure that the visibility splay when leaving Great Hay Drive was not obstructed. There was no fenced compound proposed, and it was normal to find various types of electrical equipment cabinets and relay boxes alongside urban roads.

The properties diagonally opposite did not directly face the site as their rear elevations faced Sutton Way. On balance the proposal was considered acceptable in an urban residential area, where the appearance of a slimline street works monopole would not significantly detract from the character of the area or appear as visual clutter. Proximity to dwellings was not a planning issue provided that, as in this case, the application included an ICNIRP Declaration regarding emissions and that the installation satisfied planning considerations regarding the siting and appearance of development.

The site was located within the Green Network to which development proposals were expected to contribute or provide community and environmental benefits. Whilst it was acknowledged that the proposal would not contribute to the aims and objectives of the Green Network, due to the small footprint of the proposal there would be no adverse impact upon wildlife

or enjoyment of the informal open space. It could also be argued that the proposal would have a community benefit by way of improved coverage. It should be noted that many of the grass highway verges within Telford & Wrekin had been defined as Green Network in the adopted Wrekin Local Plan.

Updated information tabled at the meeting set out the objections made to the proposal by Madeley Parish Council. In addition a petition containing 336 signatures objecting to the proposal had been received together with 205 copies of a duplicate letter, the contents of which were summarised in the tabled sheet. In total 43 letters of objection had been received raising the same issues as cited in the Plans Board report and comments received relating to concerns about the safety of masts near to schools. An additional statement on behalf of SHAM (Sutton Hill Against Masts) had been received, the points raised being summarised on the update sheet. Guidance contained within PPG8 advised that operators should discuss proposals with the relevant body if the installation was to be placed on or near to a school. However, in this instance the mast was neither on nor near a school or its playing fields.

PPG8 also encouraged Local Planning Authorities to respond positively to telecommunications proposals while protecting the environment from visual intrusion. The applicants had included an 'ICNIRP Declaration' which confirmed that the site was designed to be in full compliance with the requirements of the radio frequency (RF) guidelines of the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection.

Objectors had put forward alternative sites on the Great Hay Golf Course but the applicant's agent had confirmed that these were not suitable from a radio coverage perspective as they were too remote from the urban target area the radio planner needed to cover and were hindered by the topography.

Councillor A.A. Mackenzie, the Ward Member, was invited to speak to the Board. He said that the main issue was the proposed location of this corner site and its function as part of the local woodland environment. The site was a 'gateway' into Telford and, as such, would be adversely affected by this installation on the brow of a hill. In conclusion he said that the monopole would be visually intrusive and detrimental in terms of environmental amenity terms. However, he stressed that the local residents were not opposed to the installation in principle but just in this particular location and he asked that the offer from the Great Hay Golf Club for a site to be identified on its land be followed up.

Members, having made a site visit to the proposed location, spoke in support of Councillor Mackenzie and his request that alternative sites be investigated. In response to a suggestion that the application be deferred to allow for this, the Head of Planning & Environment advised Members that the regulations concerning such applications meant that they could only be either approved or refused. He further advised that, as the proposed monopole would be very similar to others previously approved, the application should not be refused on the basis of exceptional appearance but Members could ask officers to pursue negotiations with the applicant and the Great Hay Golf Course with a view to

identifying an alternative site. However, he advised that, if the applicant considered that the application fulfilled all the necessary requirements and that this was their preferred site, then an appeal against refusal to the Secretary of State was likely to be successful.

RESOLVED – that with respect to planning application W2009/0083 be refused and the Head of Planning & Environment be granted delegated authority to re-open negotiations with the applicant to identify an alternative site.

Reason for Refusal: The Local Planning Authority considered that the site proposed by the applicant was inappropriate.

PB-88 **SITE VISITS**

None.

PB-89 **PLANNING APPLICATIONS DEALT WITH UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY**

The Board received for information details of planning applications that had been determined under delegated powers.

The meeting ended at 7.40 p.m.

Chairman:

Date:

PLANS BOARD

Minutes of a meeting of the Plans Board held on Wednesday, 18th March, 2009 at 6.00 p.m. in the Civic Offices, Telford

PRESENT: Councillors I.T.W. Fletcher (Chairman), A.A. Meredith (Vice-Chairman), R.G. Chaplin, J.A. Francis, G.M. Green, F.R. Picken, H. Rhodes and M.J. Smith.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors J.M. Seymour and R. Aveley for planning application W2008/1343, Councillor C.P.R. Mollett for planning application W2009/0117 and Councillor R.A. Overton for planning application W2009/0126.

PB-90 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Plans Board held on 25th February, 2009 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

PB-91 ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE HEAD OF LEGAL SERVICES

The Head of Legal Services informed the Board that, further to the resolution of 22nd January 2009 in respect of planning application W2007/1648 (Huntington Lane, near Lawley, Telford, Little Wenlock and New Works) the Council had completed its Statement of Case which would be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate and to the Appellant. Members were informed that this statement would be presented to the Plans Board at the meeting that had been arranged to be held on Monday 30th March 2009. The Board would also receive in private session the Council's witnesses and Counsel's explanation of the evidence to be presented and the approach to be taken at the Inquiry which would start on 28th April, 2009. Following discussion at this Board meeting the final proof would be submitted to the Board meeting to be held on the 8th April 2009 for final approval and in due course to the Planning Enquiry that would commence on 28th April 2009.

PB-92 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

PB-93 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

PB-94 PLANNING APPLICATIONS FOR DETERMINATION

- (a) W2008/0626 – Land at Newport Business Park, Audley Road, Newport, Shropshire

This application sought outline planning permission for a residential development to be located on land at the former Newport Business Park, Audley Road, Newport. Members were reminded that consideration of the application had been deferred at previous meetings of the Board that were

held on 24th September 2008 – to allow for a financial viability assessment to be undertaken and the 10th December 2008 – to allow for the consideration of additional information to be submitted by the developer following initial consideration of the assessment.

Members were referred to the contents of the report that detailed the additional information that had been supplied by the applicants. The Board were reminded that in accordance with the adopted Core Strategy there was a requirement that ordinarily such a planning application would also contain provision for 35% affordable housing to be provided together with an additional amount in relation to this application of the sum of £30,000 towards drainage improvements at Shukers Field. Following further negotiation between officers and the applicants and as a result of the current economic situation and following assessment of the financial viability assessment that had been submitted that a reduction in the proportion of affordable housing would be recommended to a level of 25%, together with the reduction of the monies to £15,000 for the drainage improvements to Shukers Field that would be secured by way of the Section 106 Agreement. Members were also referred to the additional information contained within the additional update sheet that was tabled at the meeting.

The Board agreed to the proposed revision on this application for this site only given the particular identified economic situation that existed and on the strict basis that no precedent would be created in the future for any subsequent planning applications of a similar nature.

Following, a discussion it was accordingly,

RESOLVED – that in relation to planning application W2008/0626 that delegated authority be granted to the Head of Planning & Environment to grant planning permission subject to the completion of a Section 106 Agreement that would secure 25% affordable housing, the sum of £45,000 for provision of the new off-site LEAP; the sum of £15,000 for the improvements to drainage of the Shukers Fields Playing area; the sum of £25,000 towards physical works for Safe Routes to Schools and a Primary School Education commuted sum should the surplus capacity fall below 5% at the time of making the first reserved matters application and subject further to the other conditions as outlined within the report.

(b) W2008/1343 – Wharf Cottage, Longdon-On-Tern, Shropshire

Members were referred to an earlier application for outline planning permission for siting and access which had been approved by the Planning Inspector on behalf of the Secretary of State on 28th September 2007. This was the subsequent reserved matters application planning permission which sought permission for siting, scale, appearance and landscaping. The site was accessed via a private drive between Ulvik and Willow Vale off the B5063, being the main road through Longdon-on-Tern. The plot was within the curtilage of Wharf Cottage and located to the rear of Ulvik. The site accommodated an old warehouse structure with lean to garage which had been demolished.

Members were referred to the planning history, consultation responses, planning context and relevant planning considerations that had been applied to the application.

The local ward member, Councillor J.M. Seymour was invited to address the Board who had been requested by Rodington Parish Council to reinforce the objections that they had raised during the consultation period. However the Parish Council wished to advise that in principle they had no overall objection to the principle of development. They wished to mention that the Planning Inspector had noted the importance of the canal but that in their view that the present application did not reflect this position. She also raised the increased possibility that the canal would eventually be restored in some measure and that this proposed development might potentially put the restoration at risk.

Councillor R. Aveley was invited to address the Board as he had been requested by the applicant to speak on his behalf. He produced a copy of an old edition of a map of the immediate area and pointed out that at this point the canal was indicated to be double the width and contended that any development would be able to proceed without adversely affecting any possible future restoration of the canal. He also referred members to the position of the former warehouse and the existing foundations which it was proposed to utilise within the proposed development.

Amended plans had also been received which indicated that the site boundary of this application was the same as the previously approved outline planning permission. Whilst the Parish Council's comments and the Canal Trust's recommendations to relocate the dwelling were noted, as stated earlier the principle of residential development on the site, including the siting of the dwelling, had already been approved by the Secretary of State. If Members were minded to refuse this application, their decision would be contrary to the Secretary of State's decision, and as such any subsequent appeal could lead to significant costs awarded against the Council. The Board were reminded that the principle of development on this site had already been established under planning application W2006/1429 which included siting and access.

Members were also advised that there were discrepancies with the accuracy of the Ordnance Survey data accompanying the application, however, the case officer had surveyed the site and confirmed that the architect drawn site layout was correct and accurately reflected the position of buildings and features on site. The Board were reminded that the wharf building superstructure had already been demolished and Policy UD2 required development to respect and respond positively to its context, both visually and functionally, and enhance the quality of the local environment through high quality design. Policy CS15 also expected development to positively influence the appearance and use of the local environment.

With this in mind, the proposed dwelling which was to be built off the original foundations of the original wharf building had been designed to respect the neighbouring properties with matching facing materials, roof tiles and windows and as such respects the character and appearance of the locality. In addition, whilst the proposed conservatory was not on the original outline planning application, this too was deemed acceptable in terms of scale, design and

materials and a 'normal' addition to a dwelling house. Furthermore, once the main house was built the conservatory could be erected as permitted development, without the need for planning permission.

The proposal also included a raised terrace wrapping around the north and east elevation of the property and the conservatory. It was acknowledged that this encroached on the line of the former canal; however, this too could be built under permitted development once the main house was built, and as such it was considered acceptable. Moreover, due to the layout and existing boundary treatment there would be no over-looking or loss of residential amenity.

The detached double garage was also considered an acceptable addition to the residential property; the size and design was deemed appropriate and as such the building would not appear out of character or unduly prominent in this location. The site was adequate to provide sufficient on-plot turning facilities. The imposition of a condition would prevent it from being used as separate residential accommodation.

It had been concluded that this Reserved Matters application would not have an adverse effect on surrounding residential amenities nor the character of the surrounding area. In addition the proposal respected the original siting of the wharf building and would have no further impact on the canal heritage than that previously approved under the Outline application.

Accordingly, the proposed development was considered to be acceptable as it complied with the adopted Wrekin Local Plan and the Core Strategy and was therefore recommended for approval with conditions.

RESOLVED – that in relation to planning application W2008/1343 that planning permission be granted subject to the conditions as outlined within the report.

(c) W2009/0058 – Forge Roundabout, Rampart Way, Telford Town Centre, Telford, Shropshire

This Council application sought consent for the erection of 5no. freestanding non-illuminated advertising boards 1200mm x 500mm raised by 400mm on twin poles, on the Forge Roundabout. The signage would advertise The Space Place based on Stafford Park. There were currently advertisements on the site which this proposal replaces. The roundabout was situated on the junctions of the M54, Rampart Way, Hall Park Way and Forgegate, being one of the main routes through the area and to Telford Town Centre.

Members were advised of the consultation responses that had been received which stated that whilst the Highway's Engineer had raised no objection to the proposal subject to the placing of 3 standard conditions relating to the sizes and positioning of the sign. The Parish Council had objected to the proposal on the grounds that the advertisements would lead to a proliferation of signage and road safety.

The Board were also informed of the relevant planning history and planning context as detailed within the report.

Members were informed that various signs to promote local businesses had been installed at several roundabouts in Telford and Wrekin as part of the Telford and Wrekin Community Sponsorship scheme. The signs were considered generally acceptable where they would not result in visual clutter or a distraction to highway users. In this regard, the Highways Engineer had raised no objections to the advertisements. Furthermore, providing the existing signs were removed, it was considered that the proposed adverts would not be harmful to the visual amenities of the area. A condition was therefore recommended to secure the removal of the existing signs.

RESOLVED – that in relation to planning application W2009/0058 that advertisement consent be granted subject to the conditions as outlined within the report.

(d) W2009/0073 – Old Park Roundabout, West Centre Way, Old Park, Telford, Shropshire

Members considered this council application which sought consent for the erection of five non-illuminated advertisement signs on the central island of the roundabout situated at Old Park Roundabout, West Centre Way, Old Park, Telford. The roundabout was located in the urban area of Telford at a busy highway intersection on West Centre Way outside Telford town centre. This large roundabout was characterised by its attractively landscaped central island with a verdant area of mature planting.

The Board were advised of the relevant planning policy context and relevant consultation responses that had been received. It was reported that the Council's Highways Officer had no objections to the proposed signs subject to the dimensions of the signs and their position in relation to the highway conforming to previously agreed details. The Council's Engineer had also reported that there were three mineshafts on or near the roundabout and the signs should not be erected within 20 metres of the shafts. Lawley & Overdale Parish Council were concerned that too much signage may cause a distraction to drivers, with highway safety implications.

The proposed signs would be 1200mm across with a total height of 900mm, and this size had been agreed with the Council's Highways Officer as an acceptable size which would not detract from highway safety. It was noted that similar sized signs were already a feature on many roundabouts in the Telford area, and the signs were intended to promote local businesses as part of the Telford & Wrekin Community Sponsorship scheme.

The proposed signs would be acceptable in this location and would not detract from the character and appearance of the roundabout. The signs would not result in an unacceptable amount of visual clutter and would not detract from the general amenities of the surrounding area.

RESOLVED – that in relation to planning application W2009/0073 that advertisement consent be granted subject to the conditions as outlined within the report.

- (e) W2009/0074 – Horsehay Roundabout, Junction of, Wellington Road/Bridge Road, Horsehay, Telford, Shropshire

The Board received this council application which sought permission for the erection of 4no. freestanding non-illuminated advertising boards on the Horsehay Roundabout. The signage would advertise 'The Smile Works' dentists in Dawley, and that these proposed signs would replace the current adverts. The roundabout was situated on the A5223 half way between the junction with the M54 and the Ironbridge by-pass. The roundabout was near the edge of the urban district of Telford but had some residential development close by, but not fronting the island.

Members were advised of the consultation responses that had been received, planning history and the relevant planning policy context applicable to the application.

The Board was advised that the proposed signs were 1200mm in width and 900mm above ground at its highest point; this being the same size as the previously approved adverts which were to advertise Meadowvale. Various signs to promote local businesses had been installed at several roundabouts in Telford and Wrekin as part of the Telford and Wrekin Community Sponsorship scheme. The signs were considered generally acceptable where they would not result in visual clutter or a distraction to highways users. In this regard, the Highways Engineer had raised no objections to the advertisements. Furthermore, providing the existing signs were removed, the proposed adverts would not be harmful to the visual amenities of the area. A condition had been recommended to secure the removal of the current signs.

RESOLVED – that in relation to planning application W2009/0074 that advertisement consent be granted subject to the conditions as outlined within the report.

- (f) W2009/0076 – Donnington Wood Roundabout, Junction of, Celandine Way, Donnington, Telford, Shropshire

The Board considered this proposal which sought permission for the display of four non-illuminated signs on the central island of the roundabout situated at and known as the Donnington Wood Roundabout at the junction with Celandine Way and Marshbrook Way.

Members were informed of the relevant planning policy context and the consultation responses that had been received. It was reported that Lilleshall & Donnington Parish Council had objected to the proposed signs on the grounds that the signs would add to street clutter and would distract driver's attention, leading to traffic safety issues. Members were further advised that the Council's Highways Officer had no objections to the proposed signs subject to the dimensions of the signs and their position in relation to the highway conforming to previously agreed details.

The proposed signs would be 1200mm across, and this size had been agreed with the Council's Highways Officer as an acceptable size which would not detract from highway safety. There were no existing signs on this roundabout, however, similar-sized signs, which were intended to promote local businesses, were already a feature on many roundabouts in Telford as part of the Telford & Wrekin Community Sponsorship scheme.

Officers had concluded that the proposed signs were therefore considered satisfactory, would not result in an unacceptable amount of visual clutter and would not detract from the amenity and character of the surrounding area.

Accordingly. It was;

RESOLVED – that in relation to planning application W2009/0076 that advertisement consent be granted subject to the conditions as outlined within the report.

(g) W2009/0084 – Hollinsgate Roundabout, Junction of, Hollinsgate & Lawn Central, Telford, Shropshire

Members received this application which sought consent to display four non-illuminated advertisement signs on the central island of the roundabout situated close to Telford town centre on the town centre 'ring road' at the junction of Lawn Central with Hollinsgate.

Members were informed of the relevant planning policy context and the consultation responses that had been received. It was reported that the Council's Highways Officer had no objections to the proposed signs subject to the dimensions of the signs and their position in relation to the highway conforming to previously agreed details for these advertisements. It was further noted that whilst Hollinswood & Randlay Parish Council had no objections to the proposed signs, Lawley & Overdale Parish Council were concerned that too much signage may cause a distraction to motorists.

The proposed signs would be 1200mm across with a total height of 900mm, and that this size had been agreed with the Council's Highways Officer as an acceptable size which would not detract from highway safety. Similar sized signs, which were intended to promote local businesses, were already a feature on many roundabouts in Telford as part of the Telford & Wrekin Community Sponsorship scheme. The signs would replace the existing signs on the roundabout and would not result in an unacceptable amount of visual clutter. Therefore the proposed advert signs were considered satisfactory in this urban location and would not detract from the amenity and character of the surrounding area.

Accordingly, it was;

RESOLVED – that in relation to planning application W2009/0084 that advertisement consent be granted subject to the conditions as outlined within the report.

(h) W2009/0109 – St Lawrence Primary School, Preston Upon The Weald Moors, Shropshire

This Council application was considered by the Board and sought approval to the proposed installation of replacement metal railing fencing and a disability access ramp at the school. The application site was located at St Lawrence Primary School, Preston-Upon-The-Weald-Moors and was situated adjoining a residential area on the north edge of the village. The school site comprised a traditional main school building and a front yard/car-park which was enclosed within an existing 1.5 metre high metal fence along the road frontage.

Members were advised of the relevant planning policy context and the consultation responses that had been received as outlined within the report.

Members were requested to note that the replacement metal fencing on the road frontage would be the same height as the existing fencing and would be of an acceptable appearance. The access ramp would be positioned on the inside of this new fencing, and would not affect the existing footway. The Board were further requested to note that the proposed fencing within the school site would be higher than the existing wooden fencing which it was to replace, but would not be visually intrusive. Officers had concluded that the proposed minor works would not change the character and appearance of the school and would have little impact on the street scene.

Accordingly, it was;

RESOLVED – that in relation to planning application W2009/0109 that planning permission be granted subject to the conditions as outlined within the report.

(i) W2009/0117 – Lilygrace, Farm Lane, Horsehay, Telford, Shropshire

Members considered this retrospective application following enforcement action for the retention of the boundary wall, brick piers and finials. Lilygrace was a large detached dwelling with an attached garage and accessed via a private drive between neighbouring properties known as Stanwell and The Whispers. The Board was informed that Farm Lane was a no through road for vehicles and divided by bollards located near to the adjacent property called Stanwell. The character of Farm Lane to the north of the bollards was typified by large individually designed detached dwellings on generous plots, the majority of which were bounded by high walling and accessed via prominent gateways. The dwellings situated to the south of the bollards were slightly more modest with boundary walls of a more domestic scale.

The local ward member, Councillor C.Mollett had requested that this application should be determined by the Board. He was invited to address the Board and spoke on behalf of the applicant. He wished to bring to the attention of the Board of the differing nature of the properties within the locality and the individual boundary treatments that had been constructed and that in his view the applicant's proposal was not out of keeping nor presented an adverse impact on the locality. He also wished to state that the pillars were

proposed to support some gates and were set back from the road and as such it was difficult to establish that they posed an adverse impact.

The Board was informed that planning permission was granted for the erection of a dwelling and garage with the addition of conditions by Plans Board on 20th March 2002. Inter alia, the conditions included submission of details of external materials, enclosure of the site and landscaping. Details addressing the above issues were submitted and the conditions were duly discharged. However, the wall was not built in accordance with the approved details hence this planning application.

Members were advised of the relevant planning policies that were applicable to the application, together with the consultation responses as outlined within the report. The Board were also referred to the comments of the Council's Highway Engineer and also of the local Parish Council as detailed on the additional information sheet that been prepared since the preparation of the report.

The Board noted that the approved wall and pillars measured 2.0m in height and as such were considered to be the maximum acceptable height without having a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area. This judgement was based on an appraisal of the character of the neighbouring dwellings and the existing streetscene. The unauthorised walling as built was between 1.43m and 2.0m in height and the pillars measure 2.4m in height, two of which had copings, with the other two having 645mm cast stone acorn finials which resulted in a total height of 2.9m.

Taking this into account whilst it was considered that the proposed walling was acceptable, as are the two piers closest to the highway; these were similar in height and design to others in this part of Farm Lane, and as such respected the character and appearance of the locality and reinforce the existing boundary treatments. However, the two piers located further along the drive were considered inappropriate. Their excessive height at total of 2.9m (coupled with the coping and the ornate 645mm high acorn finial detail on top) resulted in a feature which appears as an incongruous, strident and unduly prominent development to the detriment of the locality. Furthermore, the development was judged to be unacceptable as it resulted in an adverse impact upon the character and appearance of the area.

Therefore, as it was not possible to make a split decision on planning applications, the proposal was considered unacceptable as it failed to comply with the Wrekin Local Plan, the Core Strategy and national guidance contained in PPS1.

RESOLVED – that in relation to planning application W2009/0117 that planning permission be refused on the grounds that the Local Planning Authority considered that the proposed boundary treatment was unacceptable by virtue of its scale and design, which resulted in an incongruous, strident and unduly prominent development, having a detrimental impact on the character and visual amenities of the surrounding area. Consequently the proposal was contrary to the

'saved' policy UD2 of the Wrekin Local Plan 1995-2006 and CS15 of the adopted Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2007.

- (j) W2009/0126 – Land adjacent, 91 Walker Crescent, St Georges, Telford, Shropshire

This application sought outline planning permission to erect a detached dwelling on land currently used as garden and parking/garaging to No.91 Walker Crescent, St Georges. The application includes siting of the dwelling and means of access, with all other matters reserved. The application site comprised of an existing modern detached red brick property with single storey side extension and large detached sectional double garage. Hardstanding/driveway and dropped kerb extends across the frontage of the site.

The local ward member, Councillor R.A. Overton was invited to address the Board. He spoke on behalf of the applicants and stated that he considered that the planning application should be considered on the basis of an assessment of the residual amount of private amenity value should the application proceed. He stated that in his view the amount of the private amenity land that would be left would be comparable to the amount that was available for other similar properties within the immediate locality. Accordingly he felt that the development could proceed as contained within the application.

Members were informed of the consultation responses that had been received, together with the relevant planning history, planning context and relevant planning considerations as outlined within the report.

The Board were advised that the current application was a resubmission of a previous scheme for a detached dwelling that was refused and includes siting and means of access, with plans showing driveway to the side of the dwelling located in line with No.91 Walker Crescent, in a central position in the plot. All other matters – scale, appearance and landscaping were reserved for future application. Parking for No.91 would be located in front of the existing dwelling, which was already an area of hardstanding.

The previous outline application (W2008/0361) was refused as the site was considered too small, would be overdevelopment providing insufficient private amenity space to the new dwelling. The shape of the site narrowed to the rear, as it was bounded and constrained by the adjacent footpath which curved around the boundary, and this restricts the plot size. The Applicant had continued discussions with the Local Planning Authority but the last draft scheme was still considered unacceptable.

Officers had concluded that whilst the amended plans demonstrated that a driveway and parking space could be accommodated at the property, the narrowing nature of the site, its shape and configuration was still a constraint, and the proposed garden area would be significantly smaller than adjoining more uniform shaped plots, due to the location of the footpath to the side and rear. It was considered that the site remained insufficient in size to accommodate a property, and that it would provide inadequate amenity space

to the detriment of the character and appearance of the area, appearing cramped and overdeveloped. The previous reason for refusal had not been overcome by the amendments to the plans, and the proposal was therefore considered to be contrary to national and local planning policy.

Accordingly, it was;

RESOLVED – that in relation to planning application W2009/0126 that outline planning permission be refused on the grounds that the Local Planning Authority considered that the proposal would result in a cramped and overdeveloped form of development, with insufficient private amenity space. The site was considered inadequate in size to satisfactorily accommodate the development, having regard to the prevailing plot sizes in the locality. Accordingly the proposal was contrary to Policies UD2 and H6 of the Wrekin Local Plan 1995 – 2006 and guidance in national Policies PPS1 and PPS3.

(k) W2009/0191 – Spout Farm House, Town Park, Malinslee, Telford, Shropshire

This Council application sought approval for the installation of roller shutter doors to front and rear elevations and security grills to ground floor windows, fire exit door and to 2 velux rooflights to Spout Farm House in the Town Park.

The Board was reminded that Spout Farm House was a two storey detached building located in the centre of Telford in the Town Park, used as an information centre. The building was situated adjacent to ‘Southwater’, a man-made lake. Spout Farm House fronted onto an area of hard standing, including a play area and part-covered seating area. The building benefited from natural surveillance during the day, as the park was open every day and both commuters and users of the park passed the building on a regular basis. However, after the early evening the Town Park did not have many visitors and, therefore, the opportunity for anti-social behaviour was increased at certain times of the day.

The Board was referred to the planning history and relevant planning policy context and the reported consultation responses that had been received as detailed within the additional update sheet provided to the Board.

Members were advised that this application had arisen following negotiation over the types of grill and security schemes which would best suit the building keeping it secure yet not compromising its distinguished character and appearance. The proposed security resolution was to comprise of security grills on all ground floor windows. These were to be installed externally, however these were designed to be of a fine gauze grill and therefore would not be overly imposing on the building and not overly detract from the character and appearance of the building. It was also proposed that the grills would be painted green in an attempt to compliment the current green detailing of the building.

It was also proposed that there would be a large roller shutter over the entrance of the building. Although it was accepted that whilst this was a large

development which did alter the character of the building, it would only be used during the evenings before the building was open. This shutter would also be coated in green in order to help it blend in with the surroundings.

On the roof there are two rooflights which will also be protected by external steel security grilles. These are not seen as prominently in the area due to the angle of the roof pitches these will not be overly visible within the area, however to stay in keeping with the scheme these will still be coated green.

Members were reminded that the proposal was sited within the Green Network, however it was considered that this proposal did not detract from the main aims of the Green Network and was an exceptional circumstance to protect a community building. Therefore the proposed developments would not be contrary to policy OL3 and OL4 of the Wrekin Local Plan.

In conclusion it was considered that the proposed security grilles and shutter doors would mitigate any security issues and the proposed development would not be detrimental to the character and appearance of the building or the surrounding area. The proposed development would respect the character and appearance of the building and not be of detriment to the visual amenities of the surrounding area nor in detriment to the aims of the green network.

RESOLVED – that in relation to planning application W2009/0191 that delegated authority be granted to the Head of Planning & Environment to consider any further consultation responses that maybe received during the statutory consultation period and subject thereto grant planning permission subject to the conditions as outlined within the report together with any further conditions that may arise following receipt of any further consultation responses.

PB-95 SITE VISTS

None.

PB-96 PLANNING APPLICATIONS DEALT WITH UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY

The Board received for information details of planning applications that had been determined under delegated powers.

The meeting ended at 7.05 p.m.

Chairman:

Date:

LICENSING COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Licensing Committee held on Tuesday, 24th February 2009 at 9.30 am in the Reception Suite, Civic Offices, Telford

PRESENT: V.A.Fletcher (Chairman), E.J.Greenaway (Vice-Chairman), R.G.Chaplin, G.J.L.Davies, J.A.Francis, Y.C.Hicks, T.Kiernan, A.A.Mackenzie, C.N.Mason, H.Rhodes, C.F.Smith and A.G.P.Williams.

LC-47 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 22nd January 2009 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

LC-48 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor T.J.Hope, G.P.Hossell and K.L.Tomlinson.

LC-49 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor G.J.L.Davies declared a personal although non-prejudicial interest in minute number LC-53 and indicated that he would retire from the meeting during the consideration and determination of this particular hearing.

LC-50 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED – that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they may involve the likely disclosure of information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972.

LC-51 PRIVATE HEARING – MR.A.M

After hearing the evidence presented by the Council's Licensing Operations Manager and witnesses and the licence holder and his legal representative in accordance with the hearings procedure and following consideration and discussion by the Committee, it was;

RESOLVED – that taking account of the circumstances and the licensee's explanation in respect of the matters contained within the report the Committee was satisfied that the Private Hire Driver could continue to be licensed as a Private Hire Vehicle Driver by this Council. However a written warning as to future conduct when acting as a Private Hire Vehicle Driver should be issued to the licensee with such warning remaining on his file.

LC-52 PRIVATE HEARING – MR.G.B

At the commencement of the hearing the Committee were advised that the applicant had not attended at the requested time and that this was the second occasion that he had failed to attend for his private hearing. It was further

noted that no communication had been received from the applicant to explain his non-attendance. After receiving the legal advice from the Council's Solicitor and subsequent consideration and discussion by the Committee, it was;

RESOLVED – that as a result of the circumstances and no communication having been received from the applicant it was determined that his application should be refused.

N.B. In accordance with his previously stated declaration of interest Councillor G.J.L.Davies left the meeting prior to the commencement of the next agenda item.

LC-53 PRIVATE HEARING – MR.S.S

At the commencement of the hearing the Committee were advised that a letter seeking an adjournment had been received from the applicant to enable him to undertake the required medical to complete his application. Following the receipt of legal advice from the Council's Solicitor and subsequent consideration and discussion by the Committee, it was;

RESOLVED – that the Private Hearing should be adjourned and reconvene on Tuesday 24th March 2009.

The meeting ended at 2.20 pm

Chairman:

Date:

LICENSING COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Licensing Committee held on Tuesday, 3rd March 2009 at 6.00 pm in the Reception Suite, Civic Offices, Telford

PRESENT: V.A.Fletcher (Chairman), E.J.Greenaway (Vice-Chairman), R.G.Chaplin, G.J.L.Davies, J.A.Francis, Y.C.Hicks, T.Kiernan and A.G.P.Williams.

LC-54 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 24th February 2009 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

LC-55 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors T.J.Hope, G.P.Hossell, A.A.Mackenzie, C.N.Mason, H.Rhodes, C.F.Smith and K.L.Tomlinson.

LC-56 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

LC-57 POLICY FOR DETERMINING THE GRANT, RENEWAL, SUSPENSION OR REVOCATION OF HACKNEY CARRIAGE/PRIVATE HIRE LICENCES WITH RELEVANCE TO CONVICTIONS

The Committee considered the report of the Regulation & Resilience Manager which sought to obtain Members' approval of the Council's revised policy for determining the grant, renewal, suspension or revocation of a Private Hire Operator Licence, a Private Hire, Dual, or Hackney Carriage Driver Licence, or a Private Hire Vehicle, Hackney Carriage Licence where details of relevant criminal convictions had been brought to the attention of the Licensing Service.

The Committee was informed that following a previous review of Council conditions of licence in 2001 the Council had in place a policy for determining Private Hire and Hackney Carriage applications with relevance to convictions. Following the recent consultation, review and implementation on 1st December 2008 of the Council's Hackney Carriage and Private Hire policy and conditions of licence, the Licensing Service had reviewed and updated the policy and Members were referred to the latest updated policy attached at Appendix A to the report.

Members were further advised that under section 51 (1) Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, a council would on receipt of an application from any person for the grant to that person of a licence to drive private hire vehicles, grant to that person a driver's licence provided that the council should not grant a licence (a) unless they were satisfied that the applicant was a fit and proper person to hold a driver's licence.

In addition, under of s.61 (1) of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, a council may suspend or revoke or (on application therefore under section 46 of the Act of 1847 or section 51 of this Act, as the case may be) refuse to renew the licence of a driver of a hackney carriage or a private hire vehicle on any of the grounds stated within the relevant sections of the Act.

Members were reminded that when considering matters under the relevant legislation local authorities needed to have regard to the guidance contained in the Department of Transport Circular 2/92 and Home Office Circular 13/92 for the Disclosure of Criminal Records: Applicants for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Drivers' Licences and to Annex D of that Circular, namely the Guidelines Relating to the Relevance of Convictions. The Committee was informed that the proposed revised policy for determining applications with relevance to convictions was based on the guidelines relating to the relevance of convictions contained within these current publications.

The Council's policy on determining applications with relevance to convictions had been reviewed and updated in light of the recent review of policy/conditions of licence for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licences. Members were also informed that the list of offences included within the proposed policy had also been amended to reflect changes made with regard to named offences.

During the ensuing debate Members generally welcomed the newly revised policy however a member enquired as to whether the Committee was proscribed to accept in full the guidance contained within the policy and as to whether cases could not be determined on their individual merits as indicated within the report and as to whether this would be in contradiction to the Council priority of establishing a community that felt safe and protected. By way of response the Committee was advised that the policy was only guidance which could be departed from on a case by case basis. The main requirement was to determine whether a person was (or remained) a fit and proper person in accordance with the required legislation.

A member also enquired as to whether the Council had examined what other authorities had undertaken with any similar reviews. The Committee was advised that a number of Councils had reviewed their individual policies and that in the majority of cases had adopted a similar model policy. It was also questioned as to how often the policy document would be reviewed. The Licensing Operations Manager confirmed that all documents that were issued by the Licensing Authority were regularly reviewed and suggested that this policy document should be reviewed on an annual basis.

RESOLVED – that the revised policy as outlined in Appendix A to the report (and attached to these minutes) be approved.

The meeting ended at 6.20 pm

Chairman:

Date:

LICENSING COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Licensing Committee held on Tuesday, 24th March 2009 at 9.30 am in the Reception Suite, Civic Offices, Telford

PRESENT: V.A.Fletcher (Chairman), E.J.Greenaway (Vice-Chairman), J.A.Francis, T.Kiernan, C.N.Mason, K.L.Tomlinson and A.G.P.Williams.

LC-58 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 3rd March 2009 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

LC-59 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors R.G.Chaplin, G.J.L.Davies, Y.C.Hicks, T.J.Hope, G.P.Hossell, A.A.Mackenzie, H.Rhodes.and C.F.Smith.

LC-60 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

LC-61 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED – that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they may involve the likely disclosure of information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972.

LC-62 PRIVATE HEARING – MR.A.S

After hearing the evidence presented by the Council's Licensing Operations Manager and the applicant in accordance with the hearings procedure and following consideration and discussion by the Committee, it was;

RESOLVED – that the Committee was not satisfied that the applicant was a fit and proper person to be granted a licence and therefore his application was refused.

LC-63 PRIVATE HEARING – MR.S.S

After hearing the evidence presented by the Council's Licensing Operations Manager and the applicant in accordance with the hearings procedure and following consideration and discussion by the Committee, it was;

RESOLVED – that the Committee was not satisfied that the applicant was a fit and proper person to be granted a licence and therefore his application was refused.

LC-64 PRIVATE HEARING – MR.A.H

After hearing the evidence presented by the Council's Licensing Operations Manager and the applicant in accordance with the hearings procedure and following consideration and discussion by the Committee, it was;

RESOLVED – that the Committee was satisfied that the applicant was a fit and proper person to hold a licence and therefore could be licensed as a Private Hire Vehicle Driver by this Council subject to a satisfactory medical, passing the Driver's Awareness and Street Knowledge Test and the production of a second satisfactory reference.

The meeting ended at 2.50 pm

Chairman:

Date:

SCRUTINY LEADERSHIP BOARD

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Leadership Board held on Monday, 9th March 2009 at Telford Library, Southwater Square, Telford Town Centre

PRESENT: Councillors D.R.W. White (Chairman), R. Aveley, J.A. Francis, A.A. Mackenzie, A.A. Meredith and H. Williams.

Councillor S. Bentley (Cabinet Member: Community Services)

ALSO PRESENT: Angie Astley (Interim Corporate Director: Community Services), Andrew Meredith (Customer Services Manager), Helen Ward (Customer Quality Manager), Sharon Smith (Borough Librarian), Lynn Brayne (Citizens Advice Bureau), Alison Smith (Scrutiny Manager), Stephanie Jones (Scrutiny Officer) and Phil Smith (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

SLB-16 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2009 be approved and signed as a correct record.

SLB-17 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

Councillor G.M. Green (Independent Group Co-optee)

SLB-18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/PARTY WHIP

None.

SLB-19 THE CREDIT CRUNCH ADVICE CENTRE

The Chairman welcomed everyone to Telford Library, which was the location of “First Point Telford” – an Advice Centre that had been set up by the Council (with partner organisations) to provide help to residents and businesses in the Borough to access services that would assist them in the current economic recession. The principle to establish an advice centre in the Town Centre had been made by Cabinet on 12 January 2009 (a copy of that report was attached to the agenda for information). At the last meeting the Board had expressed concern at the proposed costs for locating the advice centre in the shopping centre, and sought a meeting to scrutinise the proposals. Since then, a decision had been made to locate the Centre in the Library, which allayed the previous concerns over likely costs. “First Point” had opened on 23 February 2009, and this meeting therefore allowed Members the opportunity to see how the facility was operating, and the type of assistance that was being provided.

The Interim Corporate Director: Community Services and Customer Quality Manager reported that over 300 people had visited the Centre during its first two weeks of opening. Details of the services provided were circulated, and it was emphasised that the biggest benefit of First Point was in bringing a number of services and agencies together in a “one stop shop” which could provide a co-

ordinated solution for the customer. The services represented at “First Point” included the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), Benefits, Affordable Warmth, Community Training, Family Information Service, and Housing Advice. Examples were given of the type of enquiry that had been received, and how the Advice Centre had been able to assist them. In relation to the CAB, Lynn Brayne reported that 75% of the people seen had been new to the Bureau. 32% of enquiries so far had related to benefits, 29% were debt related and 17% around employment issues. The latter was higher than usual, and perhaps reflected the deteriorating economic situation. The Customer Quality Manager added that work was currently being done to standardise the performance management and information data that was collected by the different agencies operating in “First Point”.

Members then asked a number of questions, including:

- from the enquiries received so far, what evidence was there that the economic downturn and credit crunch were having an impact?

Response – many benefits enquiries were from people who had been made redundant or had been put on short-time working, and who were trying to find out what they were entitled to claim.

- had there been any complaints from customers about having to pay the Town Centre parking charges?

Response – this had not been an issue, and the Library was open for longer hours than other Council buildings.

- what hours was the Advice Centre operating?

Response – it was open 50+ hours a week, Monday to Saturday – including Thursday evening and all day Saturday.

- would the provision of advice on community learning and training duplicate similar work that was going on at local community centres?

Response – “First Point” was supplementing the work undertaken in this area and had led to an increase in residents accessing the service. “First Point” was not seeking to undermine the work taking place at community centres.

- how was the Advice Centre being advertised?

Response – A Communications Plan had been prepared, and copies were circulated. This set out the key messages to be communicated and the strategy that was being followed. The Launch had included adverts on local radio, printed information handed out in the Town Centre and placed in Council buildings, and articles in the Insight magazine and the local press. Radio Shropshire had covered the opening of the Centre, and there was a promotional video on the Shropshire Star website. It was also hoped that the video would be placed on the Council website.

Members made a number of suggestions for publicising/advertising “First Point”, including parish magazines, doctors’ surgeries, children’s centres/nurseries and MPs surgeries. It was also suggested that letters being sent to people in arrears with council tax could include information about the Advice Centre and the help it could provide.

- what were the costs in setting-up the Advice Centre?

Response – the one-off cost for fitting-out the new facility in the Library (including the cost of relocating New College Learning Point) was £38,000. There were revenue costs of £66,000 to operate the Centre for a 12 month period, with an additional cost of £50,000 to open for longer hours.

In considering the information that had been provided, and the responses to questions, Members were impressed by the numbers of people accessing First Point within the first two weeks of it's operation; a total of 300 people. They were further impressed with the wide array of advice services on offer, and noted with approval the co-operation between the organisations participating in the scheme.

The Scrutiny Leadership Board felt that the general ambience of the Library setting presented a far more friendly and welcoming environment than either Civic or Darby offices could, and that this had probably contributed to the numbers of people accessing the service so far. Questions were asked about possible expansion of the role that libraries throughout the Borough could play in providing links to other Council services.

RESOLVED – that Cabinet be recommended to:

- (a) provide continual monitoring of the First Point advice centre to ensure that the appropriate range of services are provided to the public;**
- (b) consider providing a permanent point of contact for council services in the town centre vicinity;**
- (c) consider the use of library buildings to offer a first point of contact for Council services throughout the Borough; especially in areas where the library building is used on a part time basis.**

SLB-20 SCRUTINY REVIEW SUGGESTIONS

Members considered a suggestion that had been submitted by a member of the public relating to the process used by Plans Board when considering planning applications. The resident had attended a recent Plans Board meeting, and was of the view that the current procedures led to a situation that was potentially unjust because there was not an opportunity for all parties to speak or respond to questions.

After some discussion, Members felt that this particular suggestion constituted an individual complaint about the plans process and that it wasn't appropriate for scrutiny to consider it. However, Members did acknowledge that on the general point, many other local authorities allow public representation at Council meetings and that there should be a reconsideration of this policy by the Council. It was reported that a paper looking at wider issues of public involvement in

decision-making was being prepared, and that the Board's views could be incorporated into that document.

RESOLVED - that this issue be referred to the Council Constitution Committee for further consideration.

SLB-21 CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

None

SLB-22 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Board was on 26th March 2009.

The meeting ended at 7.23 p.m.

Chairman:

Date:

PERSONNEL BOARD

Minutes of a meeting of the Personnel Board held on Monday, 16 March 2009 at 5.00 pm in Committee Room 3, Civic Offices, Telford

PRESENT: Councillors J.M. Seymour (Chairman for the meeting in the absence of Cllr A.J. Eade), R.K. Austin, S.P. Burrell (substitute for A. Lawrence), C.F. Smith (substitute for U.E. Sambrook) and V. Tonks

Officers - S. Wellings (Chief Executive), D. Johnson (Head of Human Resources), A. Turner (BETP Project), W. Bridgwater (BETP Project), J. Harris (HR Manager) and P. Smith (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

PEB-11 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Personnel Board held on 12 September 2008 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

PEB-12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors A.J. Eade, A. Lawrence and U.E. Sambrook

PEB-13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor R.K. Austin declared a personal interest in agenda item 5 – Beyond Excellence Through People: Job Evaluation – as a member of the Unite trade union.

PEB-14 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED – that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in paragraph 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

PEB-15 BEYOND EXCELLENCE THROUGH PEOPLE (SINGLE STATUS) – JOB EVALUATION

The Head of Human Resources presented a report which informed Members of the outcome of the independent review of the Council's application of the NJC job evaluation scheme, and outlined a recommendation from Corporate Directors Board to adopt the Hay job evaluation scheme for senior management posts.

The key finding of the independent review was that the Council needed to adjust the treatment of some local conventions in order to bring the job evaluation data closer in line with NJC technical advice and the principles of equality. The recommendations from the review were implemented between October 2008 and January 2009. The revised data had been considered by

the Joint Consistency Panel, and approved by Corporate Directors Board for use in pay modelling.

Running alongside the above work, an in-depth trial of the Hay job evaluation scheme had been undertaken to ascertain whether a mix of schemes provided greater clarity to evaluate the full range of roles within the Council that came under the NJC agreement. The principles of the Hay scheme, and details of the trial, were presented to Members, along with comparisons of the results to the data from the NJC scheme for those posts sampled. There were a number of positive outcomes from the trial to suggest that the Hay scheme would be effective in measuring the demands of senior management posts. The trial provided an indication of criteria for a potential scheme boundary between the NJC and Hay schemes. However, further sampling needed to be carried out to verify this.

Members asked a number of questions relating to the trial of the Hay scheme, and further information was provided on the scheme, the advice that had been received on its operation, and the projected timescale for any implementation.

RESOLVED –

- (a) that the outcome of the independent review and Corporate Directors Board decision to use the adjusted NJC data for pay modelling be noted;**
- (b) that the recommendation from Corporate Directors Board to adopt the Hay job evaluation scheme for senior management posts be approved.**

The meeting concluded at 5.40pm

Chair.....

Date.....