

# **‘Being the Change’: Two Years On**

***- Together Everyone  
Achieves More***

**June 2018**



**TOGETHER  
EVERYONE  
ACHIEVES  
MORE**



**Telford & Wrekin  
COUNCIL**

# Introduction

Hi

2018 is clearly a milestone year for Telford & Wrekin. It is 50 years since Telford New Town was named. And it is 20 years since the Council became a unitary authority on April 1st 1998.

As you know, 'Being the Change' is our organisational strategy for navigating the challenges we face, which was first launched in December 2015. I updated you on our progress in delivering this strategy in March 2017. Both documents are on the Intranet home page.

The over-riding message of 'Being the Change' remains ever relevant: there are no calm waters ahead for local government – change is the day job.

'Being the Change' is now embedded as our 'way of being', with 4 key elements to the strategy to inform and influence our actions and thinking:

- Being a modern organisation where we always get the basics right;
- Solving problems and promoting social responsibility to reduce demand for services;
- Challenging and changing the way we do things;
- Reducing our dependency on Government grants.

Despite making £110m+ savings since 2010, we have not simply cut services. Rather, we work with passion, enthusiasm, creativity and determination together with our partners and communities to make a real, positive difference for the people of Telford and Wrekin with the resources that we have.

You may well have read recently about the major financial difficulties at Northamptonshire County Council. With every passing year, the financial challenge we and other councils face only gets ever more difficult. We undoubtedly have many significant challenges ahead, not least of which is the ongoing Government cuts to our funding and the ever more difficult decisions we inevitably face to manage this in the future.

However, in this document, I think it's really important that we pause to reflect and take stock of what, despite the many pressures, issues and challenges we face, we have actually achieved as an organisation over the past couple of years. The overview on the following pages is just a brief one, there are many more examples right across the organisation.

Despite this progress, I know that we are not perfect. We will always be a learning organisation and always want to improve to be the best that we can be.

That ethos, after 20 years of Telford & Wrekin Council, remains as strong as ever. As a team that works together, I think we are stronger than we have ever been and that is an essential foundation as we face the future - 'Together Everyone Achieves More'.

Best wishes

Richard Partington  
Managing Director

# Being the Change – Delivering the Change

These are some of our major successes and achievements over the past few years across the four Being the Change themes:

## **1. Being a modern organisation where we always get the basics right**

With all the big challenges we face and are addressing, it is essential that we don't "take our eye off the day job".

### **A Strong Focus on the Basics**

- Corporate parenting and safeguarding children is a fundamental part of our leadership and the 2016 OFSTED Safeguarding inspection recognised that "children and young people are kept safe by the work of the local authority" and that "the director of children's services and his senior team provide strong leadership, both within the local authority and across the partnership of agencies. They have made important improvements to the quality of services and to the outcomes that children achieve...This progress has been helped by effective political backing and the hands-on support of the managing director". The "work with children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation is very strong. The local authority has been a champion for tackling this issue". The Council is now in the process of commissioning an independent inquiry into CSE.
- We have co-located teams to join-up service delivery and to rationalise operational buildings - disposing of 27 offices saving £2m+ annually.
- We have delivered £11.6m savings so far through better procurement and contract re-negotiating.

### **Supporting and Developing our Workforce**

Core to Being the Change is a skilled, committed and motivated workforce. Workforce development goes hand-in-hand with service transformation. We have invested an additional £250k into training and development and created a new training suite at Bishton Court. We are making big strides:

- Our People Policies are under constant review and our flexible family friendly policies are valued by our employees. We have recently signed the Carers Pledge which commits us to being a carer friendly employer;
- Achieved readership rates of 75%+ for our new staff bulletin communicating "the important stuff" – understanding our priorities, well-being and learning & development;
- Delivered 'Future Leaders' - our innovative talent programme that has successfully addressed real service and organisational challenges. It has provided positive personal development for 50 employees who were nominated by their Assistant Directors. Building on this, a new Management & Leadership programme for some 50 managers and team leaders commenced in April 2018.

## **Maximising existing funding streams**

This year, we have collected an additional £3.7m more Council Tax compared to last year. Business rates collection has out turned at 0.1% ahead of last year and sales ledger collection is 1.14% ahead of target.

In addition, we joined the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and are actively working through this to maximise future opportunities for the Borough to build on the £3.7m grant already secured from the WMCA. This grant is to kick-start building new homes on stalled brownfield sites in the borough. This brings many benefits – it will see around 540 new homes built as well bringing “derelict” brownfield land back into use and create 240 jobs. Work on these sites has stalled because of high costs to developers to get the land ready for building. The grant is the equivalent to almost 150 years of WMCA membership fees for the Council. When constructed these new homes will generate additional ongoing income for the Council from Council Tax of over £0.5m pa and New Homes Bonus grant of a similar amount for the first 4 years after construction.

## **2. Solving problems and promoting social responsibility to reduce demand for services**

Our focus on delivering the ‘right help’ at the ‘right time’ is to better meet need and reduce demand on services. We are supporting residents to take more responsibility for their own lives whilst building more resilient communities.

### **Tackling Youth Unemployment**

- Following the recession, youth unemployment was stubbornly high. We created ‘Job Box’, a bespoke programme, to support young people into work, training or volunteering. The long-term youth unemployment has halved.
- We launched an annual Apprenticeship Show, which is jointly organised with the Army, for local businesses to showcase their opportunities. 3,000 people attended this event. The Council itself will have over 120 apprentices in place this year.

### **Managing Customer Demand**

- Through a fundamental service redesign, demand in our customer contact centre has been significantly reduced. Our digital transformation has enabled customers to submit documentation online for benefit claims. This has resulted in an 89% reduction in face-to-face visitors in a year for this service.

### **Strengthening Families and Communities**

- Multi-disciplinary social care and health teams work with partners from three locality ‘hubs’. They link directly to GP practices and are working to maximise the use of community assets. Over 500 staff and volunteers have been trained on how to “make every contact count” - to raise lifestyle issues with an individual and to direct them to further support.

- Social prescribing is a key feature of this work. A “Feed the Birds” project has been developed with Shropshire Wildlife Trust to address social isolation through a weekly visit from a bird feeding friend.
- We grasped the opportunity to reimagine our approach to tackling harm caused by substance misuse in the Borough. Through this we have improved outcomes and made savings. We now see our service users and volunteer peer mentors, through their lived experience of substance misuse, as experts and our greatest assets. Our peer-led, community-based recovery organisations, Telford Aftercare Team (TACT), Recharge and A Better Tomorrow (ABT) are growing and evolving rapidly with support from the Council and other public organisations. We have increased the number of people successfully completing treatment for alcohol problems, improving successful completions, from 37% which was worse than the national average, to 46% which is significantly better than the England benchmark.

### **3. Challenging and changing the way we do things**

To tackle the financial, social and environmental challenges we face, our approach is to focus on doing things differently and working with partners to find new and better ways to do things:

#### **Place Shaping – ‘Southwater’**

Telford town centre was originally just a shopping centre. This was changed through our ‘Southwater’ extension delivered through an innovative £250m public/private partnership, pump-primed by the sale of our Civic Offices. This created a ‘new destination’ and established a night time economy:

- 400 jobs in an IMAX Multi-Screen Cineworld, a hotel and bars and restaurants;
- A new public realm connected to Telford Town Park with a new visitor centre;
- ‘Southwater One’ an iconic building home to the Council’s First Point customer centre, library and University Centre Telford.

In summer 2018, the next phase will deliver another hotel and impressive public square.

#### **‘Pride in Our Community’**

We know that most residents feel a strong ‘pride of place’. Our £45m ‘Pride in Our Community’ programme delivers just that. Focused on the big projects but also the little things that make a real difference in communities:

- Continuing to invest in road improvements and sustaining traffic flow around the borough as the economy and population grows. Journey times are 2nd best in the country;
- Investing £1.6m on a 3G pitch – encouraging participation in our most deprived communities;
- Establishing a £1m fund to support ‘Pride in our High Streets’; one of the projects delivered a training programme to help improve the commercial skills of our independent high street businesses;
- A £2k fund for each of our councillors to invest in their wards;
- Telford@50 – organising a range of 50th anniversary celebrations and events including Laser installation at the start of the year, Pantomania, Balloon and Kite Festival and Telford Carnival;

- Reinvigorated our approach to enforcement – we have invested in training for officers and reviewed our policies which has led to high profile prosecutions for fly-tipping and action against private landlords who do not maintain their properties to a suitable standard.

## **Partnerships with Impact**

We have developed new Partnerships Agreements with Parish and Town Councils and voluntary organisations to underpin new models of delivery for libraries, markets and community centres. These have helped the Council to make savings but enable the continuation of important local services. Jointly-funded Parish Environmental Teams have been created to extend the services available to communities to meet local needs and now include 14 apprentice posts.

## **Channel Shift**

Our new digital strategy – ‘Telford Online’ - has seen significant changes to the way people are accessing Council channels:

- In a year, we have increased the number of people signed up to receive an e-bill by some 3,000 and now have almost 8,000 people signed up;
- 38% of requests for services now come via digital channels;
- Our website is the new front door – there has been a 14% increase of users in the last 12 months, with the use of web forms for service requests increasing by 31% over the last year.
- We now have 27,320 people who have registered for a ‘My Telford’ account.

## **4. Reducing our dependency on Government grants**

We have significantly reduced our dependency by seeking opportunities to create new income to protect services and deliver our priorities.

### **A Business Supporting, Business Winning Council**

Through our business-focussed joined-up approach we have built a reputation as a place to do business - this then has translated into new business rates, New Homes Bonus and Council Tax:

- We have successfully negotiated and secured our very own ‘Devolution Deal’ with the Government - the unique Telford Land Deal where we bring their land to market for new homes and business, acting as agents for Homes England. This will see £44.5m invested into local infrastructure and site preparation over the next 10 years to accelerate growth. Land sales in 2016/17 delivered an initial profit share of over £2m. In 18 months this deal has secured £236m investment and will create 988 new jobs;
- Established a £50m Growth Fund to invest in the development of business premises:
  - Investing £21million into industrial and retail investments, generating over £1million pa gross return;
  - Completed two design and build ‘turn-key’ units to support an expanding local business and currently delivering a hotel for Travelodge;
  - Delivered 1000 new jobs, also safeguarding 300 jobs;

- Secured a multi-million investment from Magna International – a supplier of aluminium castings to Jaguar Land Rover creating 300 jobs and is the biggest new foreign direct investment in the UK in ten years.

## Creating Real Homes

Our one-stop-shop for Planning advice has helped enable housing growth – delivering annual net 1000+ homes for the last 5 years. We are ranked first by the Centre for Cities 2018 report for housing growth.

To improve the quality of the private rent market - both condition and security of tenure - and to establish an income stream, we created “NuPlace” - a housing company wholly owned by the Council to provide 400 new homes for market rent and setting a standard for private landlords. The first 298 homes built on brownfield sites are fully let.

## A Commercial Council

Our Commercial Services team brings together a wide-range of income-generating services. A new website, a single integrated contract and successful marketing grew income generated by services for schools (such as ICT, Catering, Cleaning, Finance, Payroll, Facilities Management and HR) by £1m last year.

We developed our own solar farm which delivers c. £200k net annual income. Our new Energy Support Service, through our Council-branded energy price comparison website offers the best deals available irrespective of whether the Council gets a commission or not to help reduce costs for residents. So far we have enabled almost 600 switches of gas and electricity providers since its launch last year, with an average saving for our customers of over £200 a year.

## Moving Forward

Our approach is, always underpinned by **our Co-operative Council ethos and values**. This means that we are working together, with the community and partners, to collectively deliver the best we can for the Borough with the combined resources we have. And our values must be at the heart of all that we say and do as an organisation:

- **Openness and Honesty** - be open and honest in the way we work and make decisions and communicate in a clear, simple and timely way;
- **Ownership** - be accountable for our own actions and empower others with the skills to help themselves;
- **Fairness and Respect** - respond to people's needs in a fair and consistent way;
- **Involvement** - work together with our communities, involving people in decisions that affect their lives and be prepared to listen and take on new ideas.

Based on this ethos, the 4 themes of Being the Change will continue to be our organisational strategy to take the Council forward to help us to develop and shape our services, deliver the budget savings we must make and ensure the Council overall remains on a firm sustainable footing. In summary, key strands of work in each of the 4 elements are:

## **Being a modern organisation where we always get the basics right – Target for additional savings of £1.843m in 2018/19**

**Developing our organisation** - we must continue to move towards a more flexible, more pragmatic and less bureaucratic approach to decision making. This means:

- Increased autonomy for managers and staff to take decisions;
- Greater focus on development through workforce development programmes;
- Greater flexibility including wider more flexible working and job descriptions for staff;
- Encourage creative thinking and challenge;
- A continued focus on efficiency and reducing bureaucracy;
- Increased staff engagement.

Whilst driving change and reshaping the relationship between the Council and its staff, we will continue to focus on getting the basics right, including:

- **Safeguarding our most vulnerable children and adults** - we all have a role to play both within our jobs and more widely in the community to be our eyes and ears and to take responsibility and report any concerns we see. This is our top priority as a Council;
- **Maximising existing funding streams** - through Council Tax and Business rates alone, we collect over £150m. It is a simple fact that the less money we collect, the less we have to invest in our services. With the continuing reductions in direct Government grants to the Council, it is vital that we have the most efficient and effective collection processes to collect this money but also able to work supportively with our most vulnerable customers;
- **Procurement and purchasing** - ensuring that we maximise value from the services which we procure – this may be direct benefit or a wider benefit to the community for example, social benefit from capital projects including the employment of local people in new build schemes. It is not enough to be led by what the market will provide. We work to influence and shape the market to ensure that tax payers receive maximum value for money. We will improve further our robust contract management to ensure providers and suppliers meet their contractual obligations, review existing contracts to ensure they are fit for purpose and achieving value for money, widely advertise all contract requirements over £5k to achieve optimum market prices, make greater use of framework agreements and get added social value from procurement.

## **Solving problems and promoting social responsibility to reduce demand for services – Target for additional savings is £0.533m**

**Prevention** - avoid problems which place demand on public services by encouraging people to help themselves to prevent needs developing in the first place. This is relevant to the majority of our population and has a lifelong all age focus.

**Early Help & the Right Help** - when individuals and families do need help and support, we want to identify them quickly and identify the right, effective support first time to avoid issues escalating and requiring more intensive and expensive intervention but also to avoid long-term dependency on our

services. Through a whole Council approach, we will improve the customer journey to provide a better seamless service for clients.

**Think Family – Strengthening Families** - to target our resources at those families most in need of support by taking a holistic approach through a key worker model to “turning around” these families. This has been underpinned by new tools such as Family Circles that enable workers to track the progress families are making.

**Working in Communities** - to reduce demand by targeting our resources at areas and people in the greatest need of support and working more effectively with the resources which are already in place in our communities. Strong communities place the least demand on public services.

**Building Community Capacity** - the need to harness the resources of the community, voluntary and community groups and Town and Parish Councils, in helping to develop solutions to improve outcomes for our residents. This is core to our Co-operative approach, the Council doesn't have a monopoly on the resources or solutions to resolving challenges in our communities. This approach will be strengthened by our £744,000 Partnership Capacity Fund which is held by the Community Participation Team:

- **Community self-help** – building people's social support networks by making best use of the resources and assets which are available in a local area – this helps people remain in and be an active part of their local community;
- **Effective co-production** – supporting the development of service provision by communities and moving away from a narrow focus of meeting needs through practitioner provided services.

## **Challenging and changing the way we do things – Target for additional savings of £5.255m**

We continue to review the organisation to understand what is working effectively and efficiently and what needs to be changed. Through this we are able to create and seize opportunities. Examples of what we have done and will continue to deliver include:

**Redesigning services and business process re-engineering** to ensure that they are delivered in the most efficient and effective manner.

**Redesigning and managing our “front-door”** to enable users to get the right service at the right time. Examples include “First Point for Business” and “Family Connect” which now acts for both children and adult services.

**Channel Shift** by providing services and information in the most efficient way. For example, providing clear information on the Council's website will mean that residents can “self-serve” and not need to contact the Council in other less efficient, more expensive ways such as by telephone or face to face. Other examples include the use of smart phone “apps” such as our Everyday Telford App which allows people to report neighbourhood issues directly to the Council.

**Supporting our Communities to be more resilient and self-supporting** - we are launching the Telford & Wrekin Community Lottery, 'Twinkl', that will provide a regular funding stream for those voluntary and community organisations who sign up to the scheme as local 'good causes'.

**Improving Business Intelligence** – we are a data rich organisation, but all services need to be better at turning this data into intelligence to understand who is using our services and the outcomes they receive. As we continue to change the organisation we need to understand the impact of these changes both in terms of efficiency but also in terms of impact on budget and the community too. We are investing in new software to drive this including a new Liquid Logic system across Children and Adults Services.

**Challenging Policies** e.g. for calculation of Minimum Revenue Provision (changing debt repayment from equal instalments of principal to an annuity basis with cumulative revenue benefits of over £40m by 2019/20). Also from projects led through our Future Leaders programme, we have introduced a new 1-2-1 framework and adopted new policies to support foster carers.

**Working with the private sector** including the Telford Business Board and major local employers, the management of the Telford Town Centre shopping centre, house-builders and our Universities to drive economic growth in order to generate jobs and increase prosperity for the residents of the Borough and to generate additional income for the Council from business rates and New Homes Bonus and Council Tax on new homes built in the Borough.

**Developing new ways of delivering services** – we will need to be working in an ever more integrated way with our partners including:

- **Telford & Wrekin NHS Clinical Commissioning Group** – continue to explore how we can work better together in neighbourhoods to provide and/or commission more effective preventive services in communities and so take pressure off health and social care systems;
- **Town & Parish Councils** – building on strong working relationships such as Parish Environmental Teams to improve local neighbourhoods and new arrangements for library services in some areas.

## **Reducing our dependency on Government grants – Target for additional savings of £5.135m**

We have already taken significant steps to reduce our dependency on Government Grants and we will continue to drive these forward as grant continues to be rapidly withdrawn by the Government:

**Increasing income through trading our existing services** – there are many Council services that already “trade” outside the organisation and secure income. Primarily ICT, Finance and H.R. Services, Facilities Management and Cleaning, Property Management, Catering and Information Governance. A key purchaser of these services are schools – both those in the Borough and in the past 12 months an increasing number of schools from outside the Borough.

**New commercial development/projects** – we have developed a track record on taking on new ventures to deliver income to the Council and protect front-line services:

- A solar farm providing £4.4m profit over 25 years;
- Established “NuPlace”, a housing company which will provide around 400 new homes for private and affordable rent, with the first homes now occupied;
- Established a Growth Fund to invest in development of premises for businesses to encourage job creation and retention as well as generating additional rental income and business rates income.

And we are currently developing a number of new commercial ideas to bring new income streams to the Council.

**Increasing existing income streams** - our approach will always be business case-based.

- **Business Supporting, Business Winning** – continuing to work to attract new investment and work to support the retention and growth of existing businesses. As well as being the right thing to develop jobs and growth in the Borough, the Council receives 49% of all new **business rates** rising to 75% from 2020/21 and potentially to 100% (including 2% for the Fire Authority) at some future date.
- **Our Property Investment Portfolio** – we own an extensive range of offices, shops, workshops, commercial and industrial buildings that we rent out, delivering £7m income per annum.
- **Established a £50m Growth Fund** where the Council will invest in existing property or in new design/build/ properties to rent to commercial tenants to increase our property Investment Portfolio and the income streams within it.
- **Growth Through Good Planning** - this is a whole Council approach by which all services work to support and enable business investment in the Borough. Through this the Council will see **new Council Tax** and Business Rate receipts, as well as receiving the Government’s **New Homes Bonus** for new homes – until any major changes to the local government finance system.

**Securing external funding** – we must continue to be pro-active and effective in identifying funding opportunities as they arise and be effective in securing additional investment for our priorities in Telford & Wrekin.

## Final Thoughts

We can only rise to the challenges that we face as an organisation if we continue to work evermore closely together.

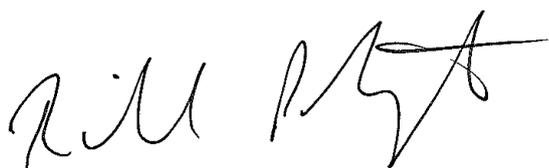
We have proved time and time again that when we work well together, we are an incredibly resilient, creative and resourceful organisation. Actually, more than that, we are a highly effective team who make a real and positive difference day-in day-out right across our Borough.

We should not take for granted our successes and achievements and the effective way we have managed our budget over the years. None of these things have happened due to good fortune. All of us, together, have worked really hard to make these things happen. And equally, we cannot now become complacent as there is a lot of hard work ahead. I know we won’t be. That’s not who we are.

The quote 'the best way to predict the future is to invent it' remains ever true and relevant to us. We must continue to challenge what we do and how we do it to keep moving forward.

Thank you for all you do, for **Being the Change**, for making a difference to the people we serve and for helping us to be a team that I'm very proud to be a part of.

Here's to the next successful 20 years of Telford & Wrekin Council.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gill Mehta".A logo consisting of the words "TOGETHER", "EVERYONE", "ACHIEVES", and "MORE" stacked vertically. The word "TOGETHER" is in green, "EVERYONE" is in pink, "ACHIEVES" is in teal, and "MORE" is in blue. All words are in a bold, sans-serif font.