

# SOLIHULL COUNCIL PLAN

2023-24 Update



A borough of opportunities for all

# Contents

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## Section

Introduction from the Leader and Chief Executive	3
The Strategic Context	4
About Solihull	6
People and Communities	8
A Strong Economy	13
Actioning our Climate Change Declaration	17
Our Public Service Design	20
Prevention	20
Enablers	22
Partnership Working	26
How we will Assess Delivery of our Plan	28
Our Plan on a Page	29

**Our Vision:** Where everyone has an equal chance to be healthier, happier, safer and more prosperous through growth that creates opportunities for all

**Our Values:** Ambitious, open, honest and keeping our promises

# Purpose and Audience

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The Council Plan sets out the direction for the Council and the major steps that we need to take to achieve our vision for a borough where everyone has an equal chance to be healthier, happier, safer and more prosperous through growth that creates opportunities for all.

In addition to the priorities set out in this plan, the Council also undertakes activities and provides services to meet its duties and responsibilities set out in law.

Our plan continues to be flexible and respond as the context that we operate in changes.

This Plan sits alongside our Medium Term Financial Strategy which aligns the Council's financial resources to our priorities.

Our latest progress in implementing our Council Plan for 2020-25 will be set out in our annual report for 2022/23.

The main audience for our Plan is elected members, employees, partners and all those who work with and alongside us. It is also used as a basis for engagement with Solihull residents and businesses. We'd love to hear your views on our plans and any suggestions for the future, please email these to [hannah.morris@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:hannah.morris@solihull.gov.uk)

# Introduction

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**From Councillor Ian Courts, Leader of the Council and Paul Johnson, Chief Executive**

We have updated the Council Plan for 2023/24 to reflect key developments over the last year. These include the March 2023 report from the Children's Services Commissioner (Sir Alan Wood) and an increase in inspection and regulation, including for our housing responsibilities, in adult social care and for services relating to Special Education Needs and Disabilities. There have also been updates to reflect the impact of cost of living pressures on residents, local businesses and on the costs of providing our services, changing communities as evidenced through the 2021 Census and the announcement of a Trailblazer Devolution Deal for the West Midlands.

*"Solihull is a borough of opportunities and we want these opportunities to be available for all"*  
Cllr Ian Courts, Leader of Solihull Council

People & communities, economy and environment are the key themes at the heart of this Council Plan, reflecting our belief that health and well-being, economic development and environmental sustainability go hand in hand.

Children are central to all of our work as a Council and Children's Services is our top priority for improvement. We want our borough to be a place where children and young people enjoy living and have an equal chance in life. We are developing family hubs to help give children and families the best start in life and a comprehensive early help offer for children, young people and families to address issues

when they first occur is one part of our ambitious children's services improvement plan.

We are also committed to being good corporate parents to children in care and care experienced young people and will embed this commitment into everything that we do.

In September 2022, we published a three-year strategy to tackle health inequalities that aims to improve the lives of those with the worst health outcomes the fastest. We are working with the NHS, local organisations, community groups and residents to take forward the ambitions in the strategy.

We celebrate that our borough continues to become more diverse and the health inequalities strategy reflects our overall ambition that everyone has an equal chance to be healthier, happier, safer and more prosperous through growth that creates opportunities for all.

We are continuing to work with partners to find opportunities to support residents through significant cost of living pressures.

We have developed an economic strategy which looks to deliver further growth, whilst ensuring that all communities can participate in, and benefit from, this.

We are proud of the care given to our high quality environment. Our environmental work has been recognised both nationally and internationally.

*“Our ambition across the Council is to continue to achieve good to outstanding services for our residents”*

Paul Johnson, Chief Executive

We have also refreshed our Solihull Connected Transport Strategy, taking steps to make the transport network accessible to all and to help the economy to grow. Together, these support our aspirations for communities and businesses to benefit from action to tackle climate change and for thriving places which are centres of our communities and support local people.

We pride ourselves on being a Council that is small enough to care, but big enough to make a difference. We look forward to working with you to achieve our vision of a Solihull with opportunity for all.



**Paul Johnson**  
*Chief Executive*



**Councillor Ian Courts**  
*Leader of the Council*

# The Strategic Context

**Our Council Plan needs to take account of changes in the broader context in which we work and live.**

## The national and international context

International conflict, especially the Russian invasion of Ukraine, has caused instability, leading to inflation and cost of living pressures, as well as a need for a humanitarian response to the needs of those displaced by conflict.

In May 2023, UK nationals were evacuated from Sudan with significant numbers arriving at Birmingham International Airport. Solihull has previously welcomed people from Afghanistan and Ukraine and we are proud of the humanitarian efforts our employees have been involved in.

Cost of living pressures continue to be high on the national agenda. Inflation is expected to ease during 2023 but remain at an elevated level. Accordingly, the Office for Budget Responsibility forecasts living standards to fall by a cumulative 5.7% in the two years to 2023-24, the largest two-year fall since records began in 1956-57.

Strong economic fundamentals meant that Solihull was relatively well placed to weather cost of living pressures but they have still had a significant impact. The local response, under the banner '[Here2Help](#)', is highlighted on page 10.

The direct and indirect impacts of the COVID pandemic on the economy and health are starting to be better understood. Excess mortality remains above normal pre-pandemic levels, in the UK and

in other parts of the world. Nationally and locally, the NHS has been managing very large backlogs, affecting waiting times for services. These are starting to fall in some areas but still having a significant impact. There are also clear impacts on children and young people, including lower school attendance and behavioural, social and developmental impacts on particular age groups. Certain groups of people are still readjusting to life beyond COVID, particularly those with long term health conditions or anxiety who may not yet have returned to pre-pandemic behaviours.

Addressing climate change is a global and local priority. Extreme weather events have severe impacts on our communities and ecosystems. As the climate changes they pose an increasing threat. We are now seeing more frequent extreme weather events, such as flooding and high temperatures.

## **National Policy**

Some key changes in national policy affecting Local Government are summarised below.

The Levelling Up White Paper was published in February 2022. It provides a framework for a decade-long project to level up Britain by addressing drivers of spatial disparity. It has set out four objectives to achieve this: boosting productivity and pay, spreading opportunities and improving public services, restoring a sense of community and belonging, and empowering communities.

The Growth Plan, 2022 makes growth the government's main economic priority. It has set a goal of reaching a 2.5% trend rate. The growth plan aims to create higher wages, greater opportunities, and sustainable funding for public services.

The Plan also sets out steps to reduce energy costs in the short and long terms.

In March 2022, the Government published the Education White Paper. The White Paper sets out a series of proposed reforms to the education system which aim at providing an excellent teacher for every child, delivering high standards of curriculum, behaviour and attendance, targeted support for every child that needs it and a stronger and fairer school system.

The Fair Cost of Care policy is intended to address the widespread concern of councils paying providers fees that do not adequately cover costs. Following an announcement in the government's Autumn Statement 2022, the planned reforms to charging arrangements have been delayed until October 2025.

At the same time as formally establishing Integrated Care Systems (ICSs), the Health and Social Care Act 2022 re-introduced the regulation of Local Authority functions relating to adult social care. This will be via a CQC assurance process from April 2023. Preparing for this continues to be a key focus in Solihull.

## **Regulatory Responsibilities**

As a Council we have hundreds of regulatory responsibilities that we are required to fulfil. Some of the areas where we have regulatory responsibilities include: social care, education, public health, housing, homelessness, waste & recycling, maintaining highways and the public realm, environmental health and trading standards.

Our regulatory responsibilities continue to evolve, reflecting national policy. One notable development that is being reflected in a number of new responsibilities is an increased focus on, and scrutiny of, Local Authority performance. For example:

- A new regulatory framework for social housing, particularly in relation to building safety
- The reintroduction of CQC assurance of the Council adult social care functions
- Ongoing CQC inspections for our regulated adult social care providers, including small homes and reablement services
- Children's Social Care Ofsted inspections and Joint Targeted Area Inspection
- The new Special Education Needs and Disabilities inspection framework, released in January 2023, places significant burdens on Local Authorities and Integrated Care Board for outcomes for children and young people

This increased scrutiny is also demonstrated through the creation of the Office for Local Government (Oflog) which will publish data on local government performance, use this data to monitor and understand value for money and publish its conclusions in an annual report. Through its analysis of data, it aims to increase transparency, foster accountability, and improve the overall performance of local government.

# About Solihull

This section describes some of the key features of Solihull's population and place that influence our future plans. Subsequent sections will describe how we are adapting our plans and services in response to the changing needs of people in our borough.

## A Robust Economy

Solihull has a strongly performing economy and offers a world class, well-connected location to live, work and invest.

On a per capita basis, Solihull has the second largest economy in England outside of London and the Southeast. Growth in Solihull between 2015 and 2021 was the highest in the West Midlands and the 3rd highest out of 206 economic areas in Great Britain. Like the rest of the country the pandemic had a negative impact on the Solihull economy with output falling by -7.5% in 2020, before rebounding +7.3% in 2021.

Solihull has the highest Gross Domestic Product per head in the West Midlands, 44% higher than the England average.

Over the last three years the number of employee jobs in the borough (142,000) has been largely unchanged despite the economic uncertainty of the pandemic. Job density in Solihull remains the highest in the West Midlands, over a third higher than the England average.

Financial & business services are by far the largest sector in Solihull, accounting for 40% of all employee jobs compared to just 24% across England. The manufacturing sector in Solihull is also above the England average.

## **Increasingly diverse communities**

Solihull is increasingly ethnically and religiously diverse, with ethnic minorities now accounting for 18% of the population (similar to the national average of 19% but less than the West Midlands average of 23%). Diversity is highest among young people; 28% of the school population is from an ethnic minority group.

82% of respondents to the 2022 Place Survey indicated that people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area.

Since the 2021 Census, a number of national policy initiatives have impacted on UK immigration. In particular, since 2021, we have welcomed 4,200 adults and children to the borough through the Hong Kong British Nationals (Overseas) Welcome Programme.

## **Inequality**

Solihull is one of the least deprived Local Authorities in the West Midlands but incomes are unequal across the borough as is poverty, unemployment and life expectancy. 16 out of 134 neighbourhoods in Solihull are in the most deprived 10% in England, of which 6 are in the bottom 5%. All of these are in North Solihull (Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2019).

People living in the least deprived areas of Solihull can expect to live 10 years longer than those living in the most deprived areas. This life expectancy gap is due to higher mortality rates from circulatory disease, cancer, COVID-19 and respiratory diseases in the most deprived areas, particularly in men aged 40-79 years.

## **An ageing population**

The 2021 Census shows that 45,600 Solihull residents are aged 65+ (21% of the population vs 18% England), including 6,700 people aged 85+ (3.1% vs 2.4% England).

Those aged 65 and over were the fastest growing section of the Solihull population from 2011 to 2021 (+15%, +6,000 individuals) and this is set to continue. The Solihull population aged 65 and over is expected to increase by 10,600 people (+23%) between 2021 and 2041. In particular, those aged 85+ will increase by 3,500 (+50%) and those aged 75-84 by 4,900 (+30%).

A relatively older and ageing population has demand implications for social care services. For instance: 14,500 Solihull residents aged 65+ have a disability that limits their daily activity; 18,200 are in poor health while 4,600 provide unpaid care to others.

## **Rising Demand for Children's Services**

Solihull's population of children and young people is growing. The number of Solihull residents aged 16 and under increased by over 2,300 (+6%) between 2011 and 2021. This is only part of the story of rising demand for children services. For instance:

- The number of Solihull children aged 15 and under living in a low-income household increased by over 1,200 (+25%) in the 5-years to 2021
- The number of Children in Need in Solihull is 12% higher than in England and increased 22% between 2020 and 2022
- The number of Children Looked After in Solihull has increased each year since 2014
- Nearly 17% of pupils attending a Solihull school have a Special Educational Need, between 2016/17 and 2021/22 this increased by 16% (979 pupils)

## People and Communities

This section sets out our understanding of the needs of people and communities in Solihull and describes how we are working together to give everyone an equal chance to be healthier, happier and safer. At the end, we summarise what we aim to deliver in 2023/4.

### Improving Outcomes for Children and Young People

Young people are key to the future of our borough and we want Solihull to be a place where every child can thrive and reach their potential to become an independent, healthy and happy adult.

We have strengths to build upon. For example, Solihull has excellent schools, with 81% of our primary schools and 87% of our secondary schools rated good or outstanding by Ofsted.

There are also challenges and the number of children and families needing social work, mental health and education support continues to increase.

During 2022, there was considerable internal and external scrutiny of children's services, with an Ofsted inspection in November judging them to be 'inadequate'. The service is now in a period of monitoring by Ofsted, including regular visits from inspectors.

Our Children's Services is the Council's top priority for improvement and a comprehensive improvement plan is being delivered alongside a multi-agency plan to address those issues that need a multi-agency response. Police and health services are partners in this plan and together we are fully committed to making the necessary improvements. We also have a governance structure designed to ensure that the improvements required are made.

Sir Alan Wood, a Commissioner appointed by the Secretary of State, has worked closely with the Council and partners since November 2022 to assess and analyse the challenges, help steer improvement and strengthen services. Visible progress is being made and is expected to become further embedded as the Council formally links with a regional improvement partner, Birmingham Children's Trust, which is already delivering good services to children.

A key development in 2023/4 will be introducing a better resourced Early Help service to ensure that support is available for children and families from the earliest point of need.

We are committed to being good parents to children in care and care experienced young people and will embed this into everything



we do as a Council.

We have developed a Joint Additional Needs Strategy for children and young people with additional needs, listening to the views of children, young people, parents, carers and those who work with these families, so that the strategy is written with them.

Through the strategy, our aim is to work towards a future where our children and young people can say:

- I can see that everyone is working together to help me make my life better
- I can see that Solihull has the services and support I need
- My voice is heard and it makes a difference
- I feel welcome, understood, valued, appreciated and included wherever I go
- In planning for my future, I know what will happen, when it will happen and who I can communicate with about this
- I can get the right support I need at the right time for me

## Adult Social Care

Adult Social Care services support and enable people to stay as independent and well as possible for as long as possible, working closely with partners who include our NHS, voluntary organisations, care providers, community groups and local businesses. We recognise, value and support the vital role of unpaid carers and the huge difference they make to lives and communities.

Our [Adult Social Care 5 Year Plan](#) was published after seeking extensive feedback through public sessions, pop-up sessions in retail areas, engagement with community and faith organisations, sessions with our employees and managers, social media, communications to individuals and carers currently in receipt of support and involvement of key partners such as care providers and NHS organisations. Survey results came in from the public, with over 2,420 visits to the engagement webpage. This extensive feedback helped us to create our Plan which underpins all of our work.



*Adult Social Care officer talking to a service user about the support and help the Council can offer to keep her independent in her own home*

We support people to make use of personal strengths and abilities, support networks and resources in the local community, providing the right information and support to enable people to understand what choices are available. This is so that people can make informed decisions about what support options are best for them.

When people do need long term support, we work to make sure that this is timely, proportionate, responsive and good quality and enables people to continue to live their lives the way they want to. This includes monitoring and reviewing the quality and safety of services that we commission and acting promptly if there are concerns.

With cost-of-living pressures comes an increased risk of financial abuse, reflected in an increase in the proportion of safeguarding adult concerns relating to financial abuse, from 11% of all referrals in the first quarter of 2022-23 to 20% in the third quarter. We will undertake targeted work in 2023-24 to share preventative messages as well as ensuring that the response to financial abuse is effective.

Building on our existing achievements, one of our key deliverables for 2023/24 is to work with health and other partners, using a 'home first' approach to extend the capacity available to provide the right support to avoid unnecessary hospital admissions, enable timely, safe hospital discharges and support people to remain as independent as possible.

## **Tackling Inequalities**

In September 2022, following a public consultation and approval at Health and Wellbeing Board, the Council published a three-year strategy to tackle health inequalities. The aim of the strategy is to improve the lives of those with the worst health outcomes the fastest, to help them live healthier, happier, longer lives.

The strategy is a call to action to residents, community groups and local organisations to partner with the Council and NHS to tackle health inequalities. It focuses on what more can be done locally to close the health gap at different stages in people's lives.

Ambitions are based around four priorities:

- Maternity and early years
- Adulthood and work
- Supporting higher-risk groups
- Healthy places (addressing health inequalities caused by housing, transport and the environment)

We have developed an action plan to take forward the ambitions in the strategy. Recent examples of progress include the establishment of a single point of access for frontline health care staff to contact when they identify service users living in poor housing conditions and access to a range of health and wellbeing initiatives for migrants.

We also work with partners across the region to tackle equalities, for example, working with the West Midlands Combined Authority Race Equality Taskforce that is focused on addressing inequalities and improving opportunities through policy areas such as health, housing, transport and employment.

## **Here To Help**

The Solihull population, like other Local Authority areas, has experienced the effects of high inflation and the consequent squeeze on household incomes. Cost of living pressures are especially damaging to lower income households.

The Council is working in collaboration with other public and voluntary organisations to support residents to manage income, reduce costs and access financial support. The [Here2Help](#) pages of the Council website provide information and contact details for getting help with food, fuel and financial advice.

## Safe and Vibrant Communities

Most residents (59% in the 2022 Place Survey) feel safe after dark; however, the majority of residents remain concerned about levels of Anti-Social behaviour (ASB). The 2022 Place Survey identified the most commonly cited ASB problems as being litter (34%), vehicle nuisance (32%), and people using/dealing drugs (28%).

We have commissioned a Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector (VCSE) Strategic Assessment. The aim is to build on the support that neighbours and communities provided to each other during the pandemic and also to improve collaboration between the Council and the VCSE, including Parish Councils. The first phase document was presented to the Stronger Communities and Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Board in March 2023. We are continuing to work with the VCSE to develop our mutual understanding and collaborate further.

## Diverse and Inclusive Communities

We want the borough to be a tolerant, diverse place that respects and celebrates the increasingly diverse communities we serve. The borough is generally a place where people get on well together, with 82% of respondents to the Solihull Place Survey 2022 agreeing that people from different backgrounds get on well together.



*Councillor Ian Courts, Leader of Solihull Council with volunteers from Guru Gobind Singh Gurdwara in Balsall Heath, Birmingham who prepared and served food at a Langar, (Sikh community meal) as part of celebrations to pay tribute to the 1.5 million Sikh volunteers in the Indian Army who fought alongside the British military during the two World Wars and the 83,000 soldiers who gave their lives during the conflicts.*

Reducing intolerance and hate in communities is an important focus. We want the borough to be a place where everyone feels welcome and safe. We have published a Statement of Intent to support this ambition.

We want to hear voices from the diverse communities we serve so that we have a better understanding of different needs, perspectives and aspects that communities have through their lived experiences.

The Council's Equal Opportunities Policy Statement sets out how the Council will work to eliminate discrimination; advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not.

We continuously review, examine and plan our services and policies to ensure they are fair and accessible. We work with partners in the Birmingham & Solihull Integrated Care System and the West Midlands Combined Authority to bring together a stronger focus and resources on actions to remove or reduce inequalities that exist for people from different groups in the borough.

## Priorities and Deliverables

Our priorities for the 'people and communities' theme in 2023/24 and the things that we aim to deliver are set out below.

Priorities	Deliverables
<p>Priority 1: Improving outcomes for children and young people in Solihull</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with our partners to ensure that we meet our collective children's safeguarding responsibilities and that the safeguarding of children is effective</li> <li>• Leadership and governance is sufficiently resourced and appropriately exercised to support the safeguarding of children in line with statutory requirements</li> <li>• The workforce is equipped and supported to provide best practice towards safeguarding children and families</li> <li>• Children and families are supported by analytical, reflective, and clear assessments and plans</li> <li>• Continued implementation of the Joint Additional Needs Strategy to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families so that they can enjoy and have an equal chance in life.</li> <li>• Build a strong, multi-agency prevention offer for children, families and wider communities, as part of the Early Help model, by establishing four Family Hub sites, a digital offer and outreach</li> </ul>
<p>Priority 2: Good quality, responsive, and dignified care and support for Adults in Solihull when they need it</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet the standards and expectations of the new Care Quality Commission Assessment Framework, in readiness for the introduction of local authority adult social care inspections from April 2023</li> <li>• Work together with partners, using a 'home first' approach, to provide the right support to avoid unnecessary hospital admissions, enable timely, safe hospital discharges and support people to remain as independent as possible</li> </ul>
<p>Priority 3: Take action to improve life chances and health outcomes in our most disadvantaged communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accelerate action on the priority areas identified in the Health Inequalities Strategy and embed health inequality considerations across the Council – so that we can improve the lives of people and places who are currently most disadvantaged</li> <li>• Strengthen multi-agency responses to adults and children affected by Domestic Violence</li> </ul>

# A Strong Economy

Health and well-being, economic development and environmental sustainability go hand in hand and this section describes how we continue to seek to develop the economy through growth that creates opportunities for all.

## A Plan for Sustainable Inclusive Growth

Inclusive Growth is about judging an economy by what its activity does to deliver what people need to thrive: good health, purpose, power, connectivity, creativity, and a resilient, regenerative environment. Inclusive growth describes how we make sure that everyone in the borough has a fair and equal opportunity to contribute to and benefit from economic growth.

We will drive inclusive growth as:

- Employer – taking an inclusive approach to recruitment and development
- Procurer – building social value into our activities to drive greater benefits for the community
- Service provider – delivering services that directly support inclusive growth
- System influencer – working with key stakeholders to influence the development and delivery of services to our communities and businesses to support inclusive growth.

In order to deliver inclusive growth, we will adopt a multi-level approach, pitching national and international benefits to secure investment while delivering local benefits through our place-based leadership. We will:

- Develop a pipeline of investment propositions to deliver on the economic strategy and target outcomes for inclusive growth, tackling health inequalities and transition to net zero.
- Continue to advocate for Arden Cross as a catalyst site for Levelling Up nationally and regionally.
- Continue to provide strong place leadership bringing together the public, private and voluntary sectors to address key issues such as access to transport, financial and digital inclusion and social connectedness.



*Cllr Karen Grinsell, Deputy Leader of Solihull Council with West Midlands Mayor Andy Street at Arden Cross, a catalyst site for Levelling Up nationally and regionally.*



*Solihull's leading role in the development and deployment of Connected Autonomous Vehicles (CAVs) took another step forward as the Council's state-of-the-art self-driving shuttle has been put to work ferrying passengers around Birmingham Business Park in the latest round of on-road trials. These aim to test out how they might be safely and seamlessly integrated into the borough's transport network in the future.*

East Birmingham and North Solihull (EBNS) is a major opportunity for the UK and West Midlands, for housing, employment growth and innovation in low carbon energy. Enabling this growth, and ensuring that communities benefit, requires an integrated approach to infrastructure investment, housing and local public services.

As part of the Devolution Deal for the West Midlands announced in the Spring 2023 budget, the West Midlands region will be able to designate 'Levelling Up Zones'. Birmingham City Council, Solihull Council and the West Midlands Combined Authority have worked together to develop a proposed new Levelling Up Zone to manage the strategic delivery and financing of investment in East Birmingham and North Solihull.

This would have the ability to retain business rates income from named sites, enabling us to fund improvements in infrastructure, housing and join up public services at local level, giving added thrust to things such as support in the early years of life, critical to improving outcomes for our children.

### **Solihull's Economic Strategy**

We have developed a new Economic Strategy for the 10 years to 2032. The success of the strategy will be measured not only on economic growth but also on the achievement of inclusive growth and carbon reduction.

The Strategy responds to economic, environmental and social challenges in Solihull and seeks to maximise future opportunities. It looks to deliver further and better economic growth, whilst ensuring that all our communities can participate and benefit.

It also supports our net zero aspirations for the borough and seeks to create thriving places which become centres of our communities and support local people. With its delivery plan, it sits alongside the refreshed Solihull Connected Transport Strategy, the Health Inequalities Strategy, the emerging Solihull Local Plan, the new Housing Strategy and our Net Zero Action Plan.

The strategy is split into four priorities, these are:

- Taking steps to support business investment, innovation and growth
- Create access to good work and training opportunities
- Support business to accelerate a collective transition to net zero
- (Re)generate distinctive and economically vibrant places



#### **Public realm**

*The Council's emerging public realm strategy will help underpin our strategic aim to support continued investment in our town centre and ensure it remains a vibrant, attractive and welcoming place for everyone to live, work and visit.*



#### **Kingshurst regeneration**

*25 new sustainable homes have been given the go ahead to be built on the former Mountfort pub site on Over Green Drive. These homes will be net zero carbon social rented homes managed by Solihull Community Housing (SCH) on behalf of the Council. They include a mixture of 3 and 4 bedroom family homes as well as 1 bedroom maisonettes in response to local housing need.*

## Priorities and Deliverables

Our priorities for the 'strong economy' theme in 2023/24 and the things that we aim to deliver are set out below.

Priorities	Deliverables
Priority 4: Develop and promote the borough's economy, revitalise our town and local centres and maximise the opportunities of UK Central and HS2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Deliver phase 1 of the Kingshurst Development including the next steps in developing a Community Hub</li><li>• Deliver the Economic Strategy that aims to maximise opportunities for Solihull by taking steps to support business investment, innovation and growth; create access to good work and training opportunities; support business to accelerate a collective transition to net zero; and (re)generate distinctive and economically vibrant places</li><li>• Take the next steps in developing and implementing our plans for Solihull, Chelmsley Wood and Shirley Town Centres</li><li>• Unlock the development opportunity at Arden Cross and HS2</li><li>• Bring forward the new Solihull Connected Transport Strategy to improve rapid connectivity between key borough locations</li></ul>
Priority 5: Increase the supply of affordable and social housing that is environmentally sustainable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Progress the draft Solihull Local Plan, taking account of possible changes to the national planning policy framework and guidance</li><li>• Deliver the Solihull Housing Strategy, including the renewal and implementation of a new homelessness strategy; ensuring readiness for new social housing reforms; scaling up capacity to deliver cross-tenure sustainable retrofit programmes; and implementation of new policies to develop the private rented sector</li></ul>



# Actioning our Climate Change Declaration

We are committed to act to tackle climate change that benefits communities and businesses and this section sets out how we are doing this.



## *World apple awards*

*Solihull Council's Highway Infrastructure team, Cllr Ken Hawkins Cabinet Portfolio Holder, Environment & Infrastructure and contractors Balfour Beatty Living Places scooped the Green World Awards 2023 global gold trophy, an international award for carbon reduction.*

People value the quality of the environment in Solihull with 84% of respondents to the Solihull Place Survey 2022 satisfied with their local neighbourhood as a place to live, compared to the England average of 79%. Two thirds of the borough is Green Belt and there are 16 green flag parks.

As a Council our environmental work has been recognised nationally and internationally. For our Wildlife Ways project, we were awarded the Green Apple Green Champion award for carbon reduction. Following this, we then went through to the international round and won the Green World award 2023 for carbon reduction.

So far, the Wildlife Ways project has improved 69km of existing paths and cycle routes and created 23km of new footways. This means that more of our residents and visitors can travel sustainably and safely through the borough by bike or on foot.

We've committed to planting 250,000 trees in the borough over ten years. Planting trees increases biodiversity and enhances the natural environment, helps capture carbon and reduce pollution levels.

Our target is to be a net zero council by 2030 and a net zero borough by 2041. We published our Net Zero Action Plan (NZAP) in late 2021 which sets out 52 goals and 176 short, medium and long term actions to work towards these targets. Our first annual progress report was published in Spring 2023.

The Net Zero Action Plan explores some of the key actions Solihull will need to consider in order to meet our ambitions. We will use this work to help inform the nature and extent of future action and it is a key element in planning the borough's response to the Climate Emergency.

We are developing our Natural Capital Investment strategy which prioritises investment opportunities, funding requirements and routes to delivery for the protection, restoration and enhancement of the borough's natural environment.

To measure progress against achieving our net zero carbon target, the Medium Term Financial Strategy process includes an annual carbon reduction budget. Individual reductions have also been agreed for corporate properties, transport and the leisure contract.

Implementing low carbon technologies will ultimately bring benefits to everyone, for example, through affordable energy, opportunities for clean growth and improvements to air quality and biodiversity.



*Councillor Andy Mackiewicz Cabinet Portfolio Holder, Climate Change & Planning, promoting the Council's Electric Vehicle strategy. The strategy, which is updated every two years, encourages wider adoption of EVs across the borough and tackles some of the current barriers slowing down this transition to zero emissions transport in the borough. The Council has set a target of at least 275 EV charge points per 100,000 populations by end of 2025.*

## Priorities and Deliverables

Our priorities for the 'actioning our climate change declaration' theme in 2023/24 and the things that we aim to deliver are set out below.

Priorities	Deliverables
Priority 6: Enhance our natural environment, improve air quality and reduce net carbon emissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Refresh and take the next steps to deliver the Solihull Climate Change Prospectus that articulates Solihull's low carbon vision and ensures we are at the forefront of the UK's transition to a low carbon economy. Includes delivery of the Natural Capital Investment Strategy and the planting of at least 25,000 additional trees by 31/03/24</li><li>• Implement the Solihull Net Zero Action Plan (NZAP) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and transition to net zero, including Council carbon emissions</li></ul>

# Our Public Service Design

Our Council operating model divides our services into three categories: Universal, Specialist and Targeted.

**Universal Services** are those offered to all of our residents and provide the foundation upon which successful, sustainable communities are built

**Targeted Services** are there to help these residents to get things back on track, and try to ensure temporary difficulties do not escalate to become long term issues

**Specialist Services** are received by residents who need specialised support, such as adults with long term health issues and children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities or those needing support and intervention from social workers.

Throughout this plan are examples of how we continue to develop our universal, targeted and specialist services to better meet the needs of residents, businesses and visitors.

We are focusing, in particular on further developing our cross Council approaches to prevention (stopping issues from arising) and early help (providing help at the start of an issue to stop it getting worse), as detailed in the next section.

# Prevention

Getting prevention right is crucial to meeting residents' needs in an affordable way. We have developed a 5 year strategy which challenges us to think prevention at every stage of life and work together across our partnerships.

Demographic pressures and rising demands mean that we need to think differently, acting as early as possible, working together better to maximise public value and enable individuals and local communities to be resilient and take control.

We already invest significant resource in prevention. We will continue to develop a robust approach to investment, building a strong business case to demonstrate how this will improve outcomes and reduce demand. We will continue to monitor the impact of our investment.

We need to embrace the role of new technologies in prevention, recognising that technology is just one part of the solution. We need to maximise the assets we have in our buildings, staff and built environment looking at how we can better coordinate what we do.

Our three stage model, below, can be applied at different stages of life and for different services, organisations or partnerships. Put simply, we seek to give the right help in the right place at the right time, whatever their age or personal circumstances.

**Universal prevention** services that are accessible to all within the borough and the foundation for sustainable communities. It is about stopping issues from arising through the provision of accessible information, advice and services that promote physical and mental wellbeing. Everyone that works, lives and learns in Solihull has a role to play in this.

Children and families will benefit from a new, single-branded, multi-agency family support offer of help by Spring 2024. This will comprise of four 'one-stop shop' family hub sites with outreach services and a digital offer for families from pregnancy to 25 years old. Social care, health care professionals, youth services, parenting support and voluntary sector services will work together to best meet need.

**Secondary prevention** is there to reduce risk and stop an escalation of issues. Support is usually time limited and targeted to tackle temporary difficulties or emerging issues with the aim of preventing these from becoming long term, complex issues.

A key development in 2023/4 will be introducing a better resourced Early Help service to ensure that support is available for children and families from the earliest point of need.

**Tertiary prevention** is formal intervention and support which aims to reduce the impact of serious issues or long-lasting conditions and to improve quality of life. This includes support for people with long-term physical and mental health conditions and interventions aimed at safeguarding children and young people and vulnerable adults.

Every time we interact with people, we will consider what we need to do at that point to stop issues from arising or their needs from escalating.

We take a life course approach to prevention which recognises that a person's physical health and mental wellbeing are influenced throughout life by the conditions in which they are born, grow, work, live, and age. Some of the things that the Council does to improve these conditions are:

- Providing support for children to get the 'right start' in life, giving them the best possible chance of success as adults.
- Bringing business, organisations and individuals together to make Solihull a Child Friendly Community.
- Investing in local physical assets, boosting voluntary, community and social enterprise capacity and enabling local organisations to grow community-led activity so that there are 'Places to go, things to do and people to talk and listen to'.
- Promoting health and wellbeing, allowing people to maximise their independence, choice, control, and live healthier lives to help them to live and age well.
- Influencing the wider determinants of health and wellbeing. For example, through quality education, housing and physical environments and supporting residents to access good work and adequate income.

# Enablers

This section sets out some of the foundations on which we build our services and which enable us to achieve our priorities.

## Digital

The Council's Digital Programme has progressed steadily during 2022/3. The implementation of the Oracle Cloud system has been a key success along with development of a new SharePoint Intranet and the successful roll out of Microsoft Teams across the Council.

We have created a Digital Roadmap which provides clear direction for the next 18 months, focusing on operational efficiency and increasing our workforce's digital skills and competence.

## Promoting wellbeing, equality, diversity and inclusion

Our aim is to provide an engaging and inclusive work environment where valuing employee wellbeing, equality, diversity and inclusion is part of who we are and how we do things every day.

Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Workforce Strategy for 2023-2026 sets out our commitment and approach to developing a diverse, inclusive and stable workforce where difference is valued and no one group feels left out or behind.

This is a long-term journey that will continually evolve for us as we listen to what colleagues are telling us and we adapt our approach

in the pursuit of a workplace culture that demonstrates that both what we do and the way that we do things matters.

## Finance and Management of Assets

The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) provides the financial framework within which the Council Plan priorities will be delivered.

This year the MTFS has been developed against the backdrop of unprecedented cost increases for major corporate contracts, energy supplies, transport and general supplies and services. In addition, the pay award agreed nationally for 2022/23 exceeded original forecasts, with ongoing pressures on pay budgets for future years. In response to these factors, we have invested through the MTFS to ensure that existing services across the Council can continue to operate within the challenging financial and economic climate.

The following are the key areas of investment which have been included within the MTFS 2023/24 – 2025/26 in support of the seven priorities outlined in the Council Plan:

**Children's Services:** Members approved the allocation of additional ongoing funding of £8.9 million from 2023/24 to support our improvement journey, in addition to increases in funding of £6million per annum by 2024/25 which were approved as part of the 2022/23 budget process.

**Adult Social Care:** The MTFS assumes additional spending on adult social care of £11 million over three years, funded from a combination of new and repurposed government grants and increases in the social care precept. This investment will support ASC to manage challenges presented by increases in demand, complexity of care, market capacity and stability and wage inflation.

Public Health: The MTFS includes revenue funding to support the investment in Family Hubs across the borough. This is being led by Public Health, bringing together a range of early help services from across the Council and our partner/voluntary organisations.

Economy and Infrastructure: These services support the Council Plan's economic ambitions and this year have also had to respond, through a mixture of government grants and our own resources, to increased demand from our communities as a result of the cost-of-living crisis. The MTFS recognises pressures such as the impact of post-covid changes to commuter behaviour on car parking income, additional requirements for ensuring building safety, particularly for our 37 high rise residential buildings, and the impact of housing growth on our waste collection services. Support for homelessness services continues through specific grants for the next two years.

The Council also delivers economic growth through capital investment, both directly and by maximising external funding from government and through our local and regional partnerships. Our activity in this space ranges from regionally significant projects such as the development plans for Arden Cross to local schemes such as the redevelopment of the village centre in Kingshurst.

## **Analysis and Insight**

We aim to ensure that all of our decisions are intelligent, based on the latest analysis and insight. We have made some progress with this over the last few years but we still have further to go.

The upgrading of some of our major IT systems has improved our ability to extract, report and connect data to generate insight. We are now exploring how we can use Microsoft 365 applications to further automate how we capture data and use it to provide insight.

We have redesigned our approach to the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment to provide an accessible and up to date evidence base about the health and wellbeing of the Solihull population on the Council's website. The high level evidence summary, the Story of Solihull, will be updated annually. Topic based needs assessments, population profiles and Director of Public Health annual reports are also available, offering more detailed information.

## **Engaging our Citizens**

Residents and communities are central to the Council's thinking and planning.

A key part of our approach is investment in asset based community development and a Community Development Team working across the borough's neighbourhoods. This model is evolving to work alongside Children's Services, Adult Social Care, schools and local health services to better connect services with local communities and promote community participation as a key form of prevention and early intervention.

We established our Adult Social Care 'Get Involved' approach in early 2022. This is one way that local residents can get involved and help shape our future services. We will continue to strengthen these co-production arrangements throughout 2023/24.

We carry out a Place Survey every other year to find out what residents think of their local place and track how this is changing over time. We also carry out regular surveys to find out what those who use them think of key services and consult on proposed service changes, plans and projects. One of the ways in which we will do going forward is through our digital engagement platform,

Your Voice Solihull.

We will continue to build on existing strong relationships with community groups and organisations, engage more people to understand the Council's ambitions for the borough and enable them to shape the future of their local places.

### **Recruitment, Retention & Development of our Workforce**

We have a skilled, dedicated and experienced workforce. This is our most important asset and the foundation of many good services for



Local singing sensation Ruby Turner, taking part in the Queen's Baton Relay in Shirley as part of the run up to the Birmingham Commonwealth Games 2022 which saw the Baton visit many parts of the borough.

residents including, for example, our regulated small homes which are rated 'good' by the Care Quality Commission.

Like many Local Authorities, we face a number of challenges in recruiting and retaining a skilled workforce, including:

- Areas where there are recognised national occupational shortages e.g. social workers, town planners etc.
- Difficulties in recruiting where there is also a private sector market e.g. in ICT, finance, procurement etc.
- A buoyant market for agency staff with rates of pay far exceeding permanent rates.

We continue to respond positively to these challenges. We are developing our workforce to fill future vacancies and address skill shortages, for example, through apprenticeships and newly qualified Social Worker programmes. Currently, we employ in the region of 150 apprentices across a variety of roles and professions. This includes existing staff who are using their apprenticeship to improve their skills in their current role.

We are exploring alternative ways to find suitable candidates for roles within the Council, including careers fairs, through our social media activity and talent pools.

We have developed an Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy to address challenges in the Adult Social Care sector locally. This focuses on three priority areas, which have been developed in partnership with the sector: Being Valued, Transport and Recruitment Support.



A Workforce Strategy has also been developed to address workforce challenges in Children's Services. This aims to secure a strong and stable workforce, which has the right skills and tools to deliver high quality services to the children and families of Solihull.

The strategy has 5 priorities, these are:

- Recruitment, retention and reward
- Leadership and talent management
- Equality and diversity
- Staff development
- Mental health and wellbeing

The strategy and plan will be implemented over a 3 year period and will be reviewed regularly.

## Deliverables

- Enable a workplace culture that values equality, diversity and inclusivity
- Development of our Solihull Council People Strategy 2023 – 2026 and workforce planning approach
- Develop a sustainable financial position for 2024/25 to 2026/27 which provides funding for Children's and Adult Social Care services that matches forecast demand
- Delivery of a corporate landlord model for managing our buildings
- Prepare and deliver the Digital Roadmap to maximise benefits from technology, to include agreeing our approach to analytics, migration of files to Sharepoint and procurement of a telephony solution

# Partnership Working

The Council plays a key role in promoting partnership working across public, private, voluntary and community sectors in Solihull.

The Council's relationship with voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (VCSE) organisations was especially important throughout the Covid pandemic and continues to be so during the cost of living crisis. Local groups are essential to the delivery of household support programmes and ensuring there is a help point for different communities and needs.

We have worked with our partners across the VCSE to support key projects, such as the Warm Welcome network. We have also used our relationships with key partners to support foodbanks and the development of Holiday Activity and Food Programme activity.

The Council's role has evolved during this time with recognition for when it needs to convene and facilitate opportunities for local groups and organisations, as well as when it needs to "get out of the way". It is now a more equal relationship, with recognition of each other's strengths and skills and how to best utilise these.

Our council housing stock is managed by Solihull Community Housing (SCH) who work in partnership with us across a range of priorities including housing delivery, supporting those affected by homelessness and locality working. SCH also play a crucial role in our front line services, working with the residents living in 10,000 Council properties.

Significant progress has continued over the last year to reduce the risk of exploitation of adults, via partners working closely together through the Exploitation Reduction Board. This has included increasing the support available, working with local business and community premises on preventative communications and increased awareness and support skills training for staff. The work will continue in 2023/24 as the All-Age Exploitation Strategy and Delivery Plan is refreshed.

The Community Safety Partnership (Safer Solihull) annual assessment for 2022 has informed our priority setting for 2023/24. Priorities have been set around addressing violence, with particular focus on violence against under 25s, domestic abuse and violence against women and girls.



Solihull's councillors in charge of children's and adults services, Cllr Michael Gough and Cllr Tony Diccico, joined the chief executive of Carers Trust Solihull, Brandon Scott-Omenka to promote Carers Week 2023



*Armed forces garden delivered in partnership with Solihull Royal British Legion and representatives from the armed forces*

## Health and Care Partnerships

The Health and Wellbeing Board sets strategic direction for place and contributes to Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Systems (ICS) priorities, alongside developing Solihull's Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Solihull Council has close and effective working relationships with health partners and is a key partner in the Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care System (ICS). There is a clear understanding within the ICS of Solihull as a 'place' and the distinctive local strengths, communities and challenges to be taken into account as services

are developed. The health and social care system continues to make improvements to best meet local needs and improve outcomes taking these considerations into account. Our approach to place-based working has been approved at ICS Board.

The Solihull Place Committee, chaired by the Council's Chief Executive, is the key multi-agency forum and the local delivery vehicle for the ICS, taking responsibility for delegated functions and budgets, including:

- Commissioning powers for community services
- Creating and overseeing a local outcomes framework
- Responsibility for the distribution of the Fairer Futures Fund
- Responsibility for agreeing service changes

The Solihull Place Committee has approved the development of a Solihull Place Commissioning Group to oversee collaborative strategic planning and commissioning arrangements between the Integrated Care Board and the Council.

## Regional Partnership Working:

We work in partnership with colleagues from across the region to identify where joint commissioning approaches can add value and improve outcomes for children and young people. For example, we are part of regional frameworks for children's residential, fostering and supported accommodation placements.

Solihull has continued to be a strong and active member of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), committing political and officer leadership, expertise and resources.

We have played an important role in the leadership of the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership, which will be integrated into the WMCA this year.

In order to secure the benefits of levelling up and deliver inclusive growth, we will continue to work regionally and to advocate for devolution to regional and local levels.



*Councillor Karen Grinsell, Deputy Leader with Olivia and Lauren from Pickle illustration as they transformed one of the utility boxes along the Stratford Road in Shirley.*

## How we will Assess Delivery of our Plan

At the end of the sections on People and Communities, Strong Economy, Actioning Our Climate Change Declaration and Enablers, we have listed our 6 priorities and 24 key deliverables for 2023/4.

For each deliverable, we set a number of milestones – dates by which we expect to achieve key actions. Every quarter, the Council’s Corporate Leadership Team reviews progress in achieving these milestones.

Other arrangements to monitor progress and hold us to account in delivering the plan are:

- The work programme for the Council’s Scrutiny Boards is based on the Council Plan. This is a key mechanism for Councillors to scrutinise the delivery of the plan and hold Cabinet members to account for delivery of the plan.
- A report to the Resources & Delivering Value Scrutiny Board each spring summarising delivery over the previous year.
- An Annual Report setting out progress and challenges in delivering our Council Plan

**The key elements of our plan are summarised in the Plan on a Page.**

# Solihull Council Plan 2020-25

Updated June 2023



## Children are central to our work as a Council

### A Strong Economy

- People, business and the environment benefit from UKC and HS2, including increased access to good work
- More environmentally sustainable affordable and social housing is built
- Safe, welcoming town and local centres where businesses can thrive
- More visitors to the borough
- The local economy is more resilient to economic shocks
- Improve transport across the borough

### Actioning our Climate Change Declaration

- Community, environment and business benefiting from actions on climate change and more resilient to its impacts
- The council is net zero carbon by 2030
- The borough is net zero carbon by 2041
- An enhanced, well connected natural environment
- More people using public transport, walking and cycling
- Air quality has improved by 2025

### People and Communities

- Improvements in early childhood development and school readiness, particularly in disadvantaged communities
- Effective early help prevents issues from escalating
- Children and vulnerable adults are safeguarded
- The Council is a good corporate parent to children in care and care experienced young people
- Improvements in skills and access to good work
- Connected, resourceful communities where people find solutions to local issues

Supporting residents with cost of living pressures through coordinated and accessible information, advice and help

Driving inclusive growth through the Council's roles as employer, procurer, service provider and system influencer

**Strong Foundations:**  
 Promote employee wellbeing, equality, diversity and inclusion | Enabling communities to thrive | Strong effective regional and local partnerships  
 Sound finance and management of assets | Digital Empowerment | Analysis and Insight

**Produced by the Business Intelligence and Improvement Team.**

**Designed by the Communications Team.**

**This document can be produced in other formats, please email [businessintelligence@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:businessintelligence@solihull.gov.uk)**

## **Cover Captions:**

*Top right: The Solihull Holiday Activities and Food Programme offers a healthy meal and enriching activities for children in receipt of benefits-related free school meals, during the Easter, summer and Christmas school holidays.*

*Bottom right: Six utility boxes in Shirley were turned into pieces of public art to brighten up the high street and support local businesses. - photo Jim Garbett*

*Top left: Entrance to the Green Flag awarded Hillfield park - photo Brandon Harris*

*Bottom left: One of Solihull Council's Adult Social Care Day Opportunities team member helping a service user to shop and keep living independently*