

Annual Report 2022/23



Solihull
METROPOLITAN
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Front Cover Images

Top Left to Right:

Cllr Qais with the bard launching Festival 36 - a two-week Shakespeare-themed festival celebrating the 400th anniversary of his First Folio; A local veteran at the launch of Poppy Path a colourful transformation of tunnel leading into Hillfield Park - home of the Armed Forces Community Garden - which celebrates and supports the UK's Armed Forces.

Bottom Left to Right:

The packed Apprenticeship show held in February 2023, Council Leader Cllr Ian Courts at Kingshurst Brook following a Wildlife Ways Small Habitats project - Newts and Shoots which aimed to restore the ponds and feeder stream creating new habitats for newts and other wildlife.

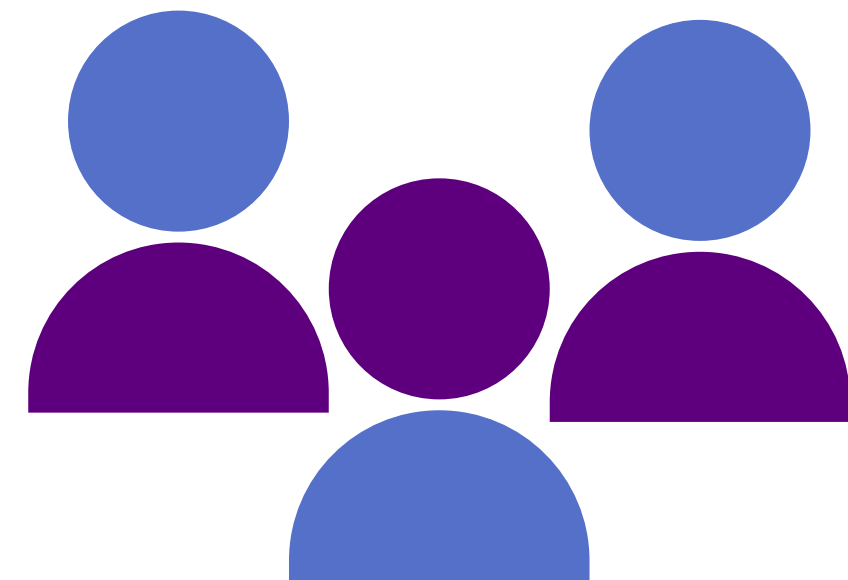
Purpose, audience and current context

The purpose of our Annual Report is to reflect on our achievements and highlights during the period from April 2022 to March 2023.

Our Council Plan sets the direction we want to go in as a Council and describes the major steps we need to take to achieve our ambitions for 2025 and beyond. It reflects our belief that economic development, environmental sustainability, and health and wellbeing go hand in hand.

This report showcases case studies from across the borough and key figures that demonstrate our progress in implementing our Council Plan priorities. It isn't a definitive list of everything we have done but it's intended to give an insight into what we've been working on across the past year.

The audience for our Annual Report is our residents, employees, elected members, and all those who work with and alongside us.



Welcome and Introduction

From Cllr Ian Courts, Leader of the Council, and Paul Johnson, Chief Executive.

In this Annual Report we set out our achievements in 2022/23 and how we are addressing key challenges facing us.

Our borough is changing. The 2021 census results show that the borough is increasingly ethnically and religiously diverse, with minority ethnic groups now 18% of the population, up from 11% in 2011. Diversity is highest among young people with 28% of the school population from an ethnic minority group.

In addition, those aged 65 and over were the fastest growing section of the Solihull population from 2011 to 2021, growing by 15% (+6,000 individuals) and this trend is set to continue. We need to take the changing nature of the borough into consideration when planning what we need and how we do it.

In 2022/23, international conflict, especially the Russian invasion of Ukraine, 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 response, the Council has worked in collaboration with other public and voluntary organisations to support residents to manage income, reduce costs and access financial support and the Here2Help pages of the Council website provide information for getting help with food, fuel and financial advice.

Children are central to all of our work as a Council and Children's Services is our top priority for improvement. An Ofsted inspection of our children's services, carried out in November 2022, judged our Children's Services to be 'inadequate'. Sir Alan Wood, the Commissioner appointed by the Secretary of State for Education, has worked closely with the Council and partners to assess, and analyse challenges and help steer improvement.

Developing a comprehensive early help offer for children, young people and families to address issues when they first occur is 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.

We continue to work closely with our partners to meet our collective responsibilities for safeguarding children and the needs of those with Special Education Needs and Disabilities.

We are seeking to develop and promote the borough's economy, revitalise our town and local centres, and maximise the opportunities of UK Central and HS2.

We have developed a new Economic Strategy for the 10 years to 2032, which seeks to deliver further and better economic growth, whilst ensuring that all our communities can participate and benefit.

We are committed to action to tackle climate change that benefits communities and businesses; 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.

In late 2021 we published our Net Zero Action Plan (NZAP), a key element in planning the borough's response to the Climate Emergency, and our first annual progress report was published in Spring 2023.

The direct and indirect impacts of the Covid pandemic on the economy and health are starting to be better understood. Excess mortality remains above pre-pandemic levels, both nationally and internationally, and the NHS is battling large backlogs. Through our responsibilities for public health, and as a key partner in the Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care System, we are part of addressing these challenges.

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.

The Solihull Place Committee, chaired by the Council's Chief Executive, is a key part of the Integrated Care System, taking responsibility for delegated functions and budgets, including commissioning of community health services and decision making around the Fairer Futures Fund.

We continue to be a strong and active member of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and have worked closely with them on the trailblazer devolution deal and with them and Birmingham City Council to shape the East Birmingham and North Solihull (EBNS) levelling up zone.

We are preparing for an increase in inspection and regulation, including for our adult social care and housing responsibilities, and of our Local Area Partnership to meet the needs of children, young people and young adults with Special Education Needs and Disabilities.

Our enablers are the foundations on which we build our services and which enable us to achieve our priorities. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) provides the financial framework within which the Council Plan priorities will be delivered.

We have also developed our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Workforce Strategy for 2023-26, which 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.

By working together we will continue to achieve our priorities and deliver for people who live, work, study in and visit Solihull.

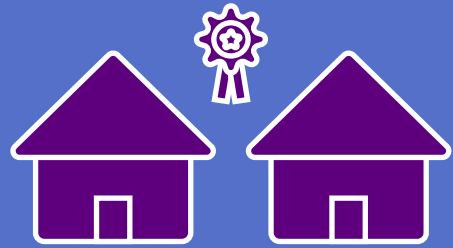


*Leader of the Council
Cllr Ian Courts*

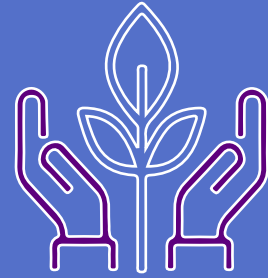


*Chief Executive
Paul Johnson*

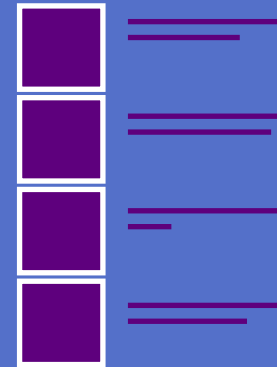
Some Key Milestones in 2022/23



April 2022 – SCH nominated for two housing heroes awards



August 2022 – Council wins national conservation award



October 2022 – Solihull Place Survey 2022 conducted

December 2022 – Here2Help live events



February 2023 – Council agrees budget for 2023/24 and new council tax rate

June 2022 – First 2021 census results released

July 2022 – Commonwealth Games Baton relay visits Solihull and the Games begin

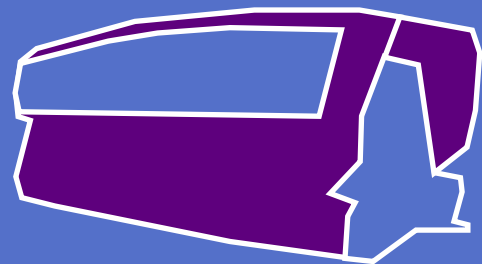
November 2022 – COP 27 podcast launched

March 2023 – Sir Alan Wood's report published by DfE

May 2022 – Solihull's self-driving shuttle receives clean growth award

September 2022 – The Council launches 'So Go!' physical activity campaign

January 2023 – New fund announced to support local voluntary groups with cost of living



People & Communities

Some Key Figures:

- 4,874 children were supported by Children's Social Work teams during 2022/23.
- We have 2,300 Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), of which 92% were completed within 20 weeks (up from 54%).
- In 2022-23, 1,469 safeguarding concerns were responded to by Adult Social Care, with 336 incidents requiring a safeguarding enquiry.
- In 2022-23, Adult Social Care conducted 3,020 Care Act Assessments to understand people's needs and plan with them their support.
- 1,079 individuals received specialist domestic abuse support.
- Through our Medium Term Financial Strategy we have invested over £25m of additional funding in children's social care over the next three years and nearly £15m of additional funding in adult social care budgets.
- Solihull has been awarded £1m of central government funding to create a Family Hub offer by March 2024.
- Ten focus groups, reaching 68 adults and 30 children/young people, were held between February and March 2023 to shape our Family Hub Offer.

Case studies

To illustrate what we've achieved and what we're continuing to work on

Our Children's Services Improvement Journey



HAF (holiday, activities and food programme) provides funded activities and free meals for children eligible for benefits related free school meals and is part of the Council's early help approach to supporting children and families across the borough

Children's Services has been subject to an unprecedented level of scrutiny during this year and an Ofsted inspection in November concluded the service was 'Inadequate'. The Council identified Children's Services as the main priority during this year. Permanent staffing at senior leadership level were appointed and the post Ofsted inspection improvement plan was formed. Members and the wider Council Directorates have ended this year, and begun 2023/24, with a renewed determination and focus on getting Children's Services to a good standard. New oversight arrangements have been established which include the Council Chief Executives/Assistant Chief Constable of the police, CEO of the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and the Leader of the Council, the Police & Crime Commissioner and the Chair of the ICB. This gives the highest level of ownership from the lead safeguarding agencies.

Family Hubs

The Council has secured £1m in national government funding to set up a number of Family Hubs across the borough by March 2024.

The aim is to give children and families the best start in life through a 'one-stop' shop approach. A Hub will offer a range of activities under one roof for families with children and young people up to 19 years old, and up to 25 for young people with additional needs. A key part of the Hub offer will be the digital offer, providing virtual appointments and online group sessions.

Throughout the past year work has been ongoing to develop our Family Hub offer and the services that will be on offer through the Hubs. These include health appointments, such as seeing midwives and health visitors, support for parents, playgroups, and youth groups. Additionally, the hubs will provide help with debt, mental health issues, addiction and adult education.

The first family hub site, located in the Evergreen Space on the Yorkswood Primary School site in Kingshurst, will be piloted in Autumn 2023.



Family Hubs are a key part of the Council's plans to support children and families by delivering an effective early help service across the borough

Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy

In 2022 we approved a new 5 year workforce strategy for Adult Social Care (ASC), called 'Great Care, Great Careers'. The aim of the strategy is to support the ASC market in Solihull with recruiting, developing and retaining a skilled workforce.

We worked with care providers to understand the key challenges they face, and these formed the three themes for the strategy:

- Being Valued
- Recruitment Support
- Transport Solutions

Positive progress has been made across all three key areas of work. To help care staff feel valued, we secured a range of offers and discounts including 'blue light cards' and gave each care worker a £50 voucher at Christmas. Overall, 94 providers received payments for the vouchers, 49 of these were residential providers and 45 community care providers. A minimum of 4,560 staff in total received at least one voucher. Positive feedback was received from providers who took part in the scheme.

Solihull Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy 2022 - 2027

Great Care, Great Careers



ECONOMY

SOME KEY FIGURES:

- In Solihull in 2022, visitor numbers rose by more than 200,000, from 5.61m in 2019 to 5.82m in 2022.
- Solihull's visitor economy was worth £1.1bn in 2022, up by £315m compared with the previous year.
- Productivity in Solihull is currently 56% higher than the UK average.
- 400 West Midlands businesses have won work on HS2, worth £1.7bn in contracts.
- £40m is available for community and business groups along Phase 1 of HS2 to improve the local area and support the economy.

Case studies

To illustrate what we've achieved and what we're continuing to work on

ECONOMIC STRATEGY

We have developed our new Solihull Economic Strategy for 2023-32, to achieve our vision to create the UK's best-connected economy – for business, for people, forever.

Throughout 2022 a draft strategy was developed in conjunction with key partners and stakeholders. The Sustainable Growth Team listened to a wide range of views and held workshops with key stakeholders from across all sectors of the economy, including business, government, education, and industry. A 6-week public consultation was also launched on the updated strategy, using our new engagement platform 'Your Voice Solihull'. This gave stakeholders and residents the opportunity to say whether they agreed with our vision and priorities. A delivery plan has also been developed, which sets out the practical steps that will need to be taken to achieve the aims identified.

The strategy has since been published and will look to deliver further and better economic growth within Solihull, whilst ensuring:

- All our communities can participate and benefit.
- We achieve our net-zero aspirations for the borough.
- We create thriving places which become centres of our communities and support local people.



Discussing opportunities at the Apprenticeship show held in February 2023

CHELMSLEY WOOD TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN

In January 2023 we approved our ambitious new concept masterplan focusing on Chelmsley Wood town centre. The plan initially focuses on the Northwest Quarter of the town, which is currently underutilised and cut off from the rest of the centre. We hope this will be the first step in a phased plan of redevelopment which could see the town centre completely transformed over the next 10 years.

The council undertook public consultation with stakeholders and residents to shape the masterplan. The consultation looked at what future investment and development in the town centre might look like, whilst identifying priority areas for improvements. We then worked with stakeholders to draw up a series of deliverable masterplan options.

Following this we refined and developed the options into a Preferred Option Masterplan, which has been approved by Cabinet. Key features include:

- Establishment of a discount food store on the former library site.
- Creation of a new town square and enhanced public space.
- Establishment of a small commercial pavilion next to the discount food store.
- Treatments to the front of the former postal office sorting facility to create a more attractive frontage.

Having a masterplan in place marks the first step towards a series of phased improvements that will secure the future vibrancy of this well used and much-loved town centre. As the process progresses, there will be plenty of other opportunities for those interested to help shape the project.

Environment

Some Key Figures:

- We have planted 75,000 trees as part of Planting Our Future.
- There are 150 miles of public rights of way opening up woodland and open countryside within the borough and neighbouring Warwickshire.
- 63 volunteers spent a total of 85 hours planting trees and hedgerows to support Planting Our Future.
- 341 new registrations for Love Solihull Community Litter Picking Initiative between April 2022 and March 2023.
- 16 Green Flag Parks within the borough.
- An extra 1.25 miles of cycle lane created this year.
- The Council's carbon emissions have reduced by 70% in 2021/22, compared to 2009/10

Case studies

To illustrate what we've achieved and what we're continuing to work on

Environmental Awards for our climate change work



L-R: Chris Barr, head of public realm, the Leader of the Council, Cllr Ian Courts and Shameena Villars, public realm development officer receiving the Green Apple Environment Award

We are committed to tackling climate change and have developed our Net Zero Action plan with 203 actions to reduce carbon emissions.

The Council has been recognised both nationally and internationally for our work on reducing carbon emissions and tackling climate change.

Two teams were awarded prestigious Green Apple Environment Awards, which recognise, reward and promote environmental best practice around the world.

The Planting Our Future was awarded an International Green Apple Environment Award in recognition of its tree planting successes and community engagement, education and environmental awareness work. At the time of the award the team had planted 51,000 trees with the support of over 400 volunteers. The team have now successfully planted 75,000 trees over the past three years and have met their target of planting 25,000 trees this year.

The Council's Highway Infrastructure team and partners Balfour Beatty Living Places (BBLP) were also presented with the Green Champion Award for Carbon Reduction in recognition of their work on improving and creating walking and cycling routes throughout the borough. During the Council's £16.8 million Wildlife Ways project the team improved 69km of existing paths and cycle routes and created 23km of new footways.

Commitment to the environment and to meeting our carbon net zero target is at the heart of our work at the Council and the awards recognise the work of the teams and local volunteers who have supported this work.



L-R: Ian Jackson – Balfour Beatty UKCS, Lydia Hamilton-Smith – Balfour Beatty Living Places, Cllr Ken Hawkins, Mark O'Connell and Paresh Shingadia from Solihull Council's Highway and Infrastructure team with the Green Champion Award for Carbon Reduction

COP27 Podcast Launched

In November 2022 Leader of the Council, Cllr Ian Courts, launched his successful two-part special COP27 podcast. The podcast built on his successful podcast series 'Courts on Climate Change'. For the podcast, Cllr Courts was joined by Nick Booth, a former BBC political reporter and television and radio documentary maker. Also, Ann-Marie Attfield, group manager climate change and sustainability, joined the discussion and shared her technical expertise.

The podcast covered COP27 and the challenges facing society. Since adopting our Net Zero Action Plan there has been a large amount of climate action taking place across the borough. The podcast highlights some of the achievements and milestones that have been reached. It also covered some of the challenges that we're facing, for example, unprecedented heatwaves and increased risk of flooding.

The podcast also covered the Council's achievement of being ranked as one of the top local authorities when it comes to having a robust climate action plan in place and the extent to which emissions have been reduced across the borough. It highlighted some of our key projects, such as tree planting, autonomous vehicle trials and engaging with young people.



Recording the COP27 podcast, L-R Leader of the Council Cllr Ian Courts, Nick Booth, former BBC producer and Ann-Marie Attfield, group manager climate change and sustainability

Enablers

Some Key Figures:

- During 2022, Council worked with 41 different providers across Solihull to deliver our Holiday Activity and Food Programme (HAFP).
- 5,883 children attended HAFP events across the 2022 school holidays (Easter, Summer and Christmas).
- Throughout 2022, the number of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) attending HAFP events has steadily increased from 23% of the total attending in Easter to 32% in Christmas.
- 933 desk set ups have been installed and paid for by Smarter Ways of Working across all buildings.
- 24 meeting rooms have had new hybrid equipment installed.
- As part of our Winter Wellbeing Event 2023, 53 wellbeing sessions were delivered between 12 presenters.
- The Winter Wellbeing Event 2023 attracted 719 attendees, increasing from 476 in 2022.
- 5 TB of Council data has been moved to Sharepoint.

Case studies

To illustrate what we've achieved and what we're continuing to work on

Oracle

A key success over the past year has been to migrate the Council's financial, human resources and procurement systems to Oracle Cloud. The purpose of the migration is to ensure that the Council can continue to operate efficiently, effectively and create a system that we can use to transform finance, HR, procurement and payroll services. Digital empowerment is one of the key enablers in the Council Plan and this service transformation will directly contribute to delivering outcomes of increasing digital access to systems and using new efficient processes.

The key benefits of the Programme are:

- A more efficient system workflow, increased consistency of processes, improved audit functionality, and greater service resilience and availability.
- Provide better and broader self-service for Council employees including:
 - Improvements in service experience.
 - Improvements in service design and delivery.
- The future proofing of vital operational systems.
- Enhancing the security of our data.

Preventing youth homelessness

Young people are increasingly facing a number of barriers in terms of finding suitable and affordable housing solutions. The Council is proactive in this space and have a dedicated youth hub and pathway, with tailored support and accommodation to meet young people's needs. This is delivered by St Basils who are a youth homelessness charity. In 2022/23, St Basils prevented or relieved homelessness for 76% of all approaches. The offer includes a crash pad, ensuring that young people are not at risk of rough sleeping.

The main reason that young people are at risk of homelessness is due to no longer being able to stay with family or friends. Where it is safe for the young person, St Basils will work with all parties to explore whether a compromise can be reached, ensuring the young person can remain in their home. The Council has invested in mediation training for St Basils staff to support them to mediate in these cases. This focus on prevention has reduced the number of young people who are homeless. We are continuing this work and have launched an early intervention pilot to upstream our interventions, raising awareness around homelessness and housing options with young people in schools and colleges.



Example of the poster designs used to promote the rough sleeper outreach team

Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion

The Council is committed to operating in a way that is respectful and inclusive so that no one is left out or disadvantaged. Over the last year we have developed a series of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion documents for employees including a Statement of Intent setting out the Council's position and a Roadmap setting out the key stages in the journey that we are undertaking. We have also developed, in consultation with employees, a Workforce Strategy, focused on what Equality, Diversity and Inclusion means in areas such as appreciating the values of a diverse workforce, equality of opportunity, fairness and respect, recruitment and retention and career progression. We are now developing a Council wide, external facing Corporate EDI Strategy and Action Plan to deliver the high level commitments in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Roadmap.



Helen Flinter, HR business manager picking up the Employer of the Year 2022 on behalf of the Council at the Carer Friendly Awards ceremony held by Carers Trust Solihull

Financial outturn position for 2022/23

The below breakdown shows our financial outturn position for April 2022 to March 2023 (£).

Adult Social Care and Health	66,697,000
Children, Education and Skills	49,869,000
Climate Change, Planning and Housing	2,388,000
Environment and Infrastructure	22,733,000
Partnership and Wellbeing	3,044,000
Resources	18,858,000
Communities and Leisure	6,504,000
Total Core Council	170,093,000
Levies	8,749,000
Working Balances and Contingencies	-14,875,000

£

Total

163,967,000

Our Core Business


While we have priorities to deliver and outcomes to achieve, we are aware that a huge amount of other work takes place across teams each and every day. Here are some highlights from the last year (up to March 2023) which all contribute to serving the needs of our Solihull residents, visitors, businesses and stakeholders.


We prevented or relieved homelessness for

76%

of young people (without dependants).



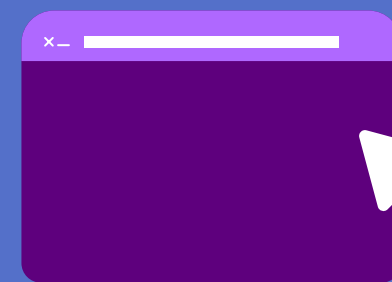
 **278,817** calls answered by our contact centre

5,338 applications processed for secondary schools. 

During 2022-23, **4,874** adults received support from Solihull Adult Care and Support.

 **97.4%** Council Tax collected

 **97.5%** Business Rates collected

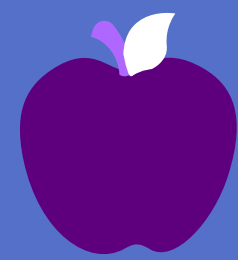


We received

4,499,086 web visitors



11,829,172 waste and recycling collections

3,810 applications processed for primary school places 

Drug & Alcohol services supported

1,341 individuals in Solihull including adult, young person's treatment service and family & friends service.



916

Freedom of Information requests were received that collectively sought over 10,330 pieces of information.

560km

of roads were gritted **28 times** during winter 2022/23



