

ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21



Solihull
METROPOLITAN
BOROUGH COUNCIL

CONTENTS

Purpose and audience	3
Welcome	4
The Council Plan on a page	6
Securing inclusive economic growth	8
A series of case studies to illustrate what we've achieved and what we're continuing to work on:	8
• Economy	8
• Environment	9
• People & Communities	11
• Enablers	13
Financial outturn position 2020/21	15
Outside the priorities	16

PURPOSE, AUDIENCE AND CURRENT CONTEXT

The purpose of this document is to reflect on our achievements and highlights during the period from April 2020 to March 2021.

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

This report showcases case studies from around the borough that illustrate our progress in implementing the nine "key things to do" identified in our Council Plan 2020-25.

This has been a year unlike any other and this Annual Report will also demonstrate some of the ways in which we've been working to support residents, communities, schools, businesses and the Solihull economy during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

While this is not a definitive list of everything we've done, it gives an insight into what we've been working on during the last year.

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



WELCOME FROM NICK PAGE AND COUNCILLOR IAN COURTS

This last year has been a period of profound challenge and change as we have navigated our way through the impact of a global pandemic and begun to learn to live with Covid-19.

When we wrote the introduction to last year's Annual Report, towards the end of the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, we wrote with pride of the support given to those most vulnerable to the impacts of Covid-19. We also outlined the recovery plan focusing on the needs of people, business and place, capitalising on opportunities and focusing on major projects such as the HS2 Interchange Station and town and local centres. We also explained that we were taking the opportunity to reset how we work as a Council, using what we've learnt to do things differently and better in the future. These have continued to be key themes as we have navigated the events of the last year.

Supporting our residents through the pandemic, particularly those who are most vulnerable to its impacts, has been central to our work over the last year. Throughout, we have engaged with people, groups and organisations to be able to support our most vulnerable communities. There has been a huge collective effort to minimise Covid-19 transmission and to start to learn to live with Covid-19. We have also developed a local framework to help us and our partners work out the key planning and delivery decisions needed to navigate the uncertainty of living with Covid-19.

At the same time, we have continued to take forward the "key things to do" in our Council Plan and the case studies in this Annual Report demonstrate how we have done that, investing in economy, environment, people and communities.

The Council quickly responded to the Covid-19 pandemic by adapting and advancing our commitment to developing our towns and local centres. Recovery plans are in place for each town and local centre. Through our UK Central programme we have continued to invest in Solihull. We are making good progress in taking the steps needed to bring forward the regeneration of Kingshurst Village Centre. A Masterplan providing a blueprint for Solihull town centre was approved last November and we are already making strong progress in implementing key elements of this. This includes the purchase of the Mell Square Shopping Centre, following a long period of negotiation and thorough due diligence.

Important progress has been made in finalising our Local Plan, a key underpinning of all of our plans. The Draft Submission Version was published last autumn and the Plan is now with the Planning Inspector for examination.

We have set out a clear commitment to become net carbon zero as a Council by 2030 and have committed to working with the West Midlands Combined Authority to achieve a net carbon zero region by 2041. To meet both of these aspirations we have to take everyone with us. The case studies in this report demonstrate how we have engaged residents and businesses in the development of our Net Zero Action Plan, reached our target of planting 25,000 trees and how we are taking forward our Electric Vehicle Strategy and Action Plan.

Covid-19 has amplified the challenges facing people and communities. The case studies in this Annual Report demonstrate how Adult Care and Support, Children's and Public Health Services have responded to Covid-19 and met residents' changing longer term needs. We are also working to address increased demand for education health and care plans and increased numbers of

children looked after; this is a major challenge for our dedicated workforce and also has financial implications for the Council.

Recognising that Covid-19 has widened existing inequalities in the borough, the Solihull Health & Wellbeing Board has sponsored the development of a Health Inequalities Strategy and Action Plan with three main priorities for the Council and partners to work together on – an inclusive early years offer, supporting those furthest from the workplace into employment and supporting carers.

At the start of the pandemic, it was hugely challenging to adapt how we worked, and how the Council delivered services. The case studies demonstrate how we have implemented a new, easier to use Council website and how we have rolled out technology to help us work remotely and to collaborate.

The Council has been an important source of trusted information about Covid-19. We have used data to understand which communities we need to reach and used regular messages from the Leader of the Council, Chief Executive and Director of Public Health, the Council's website, social media, and other methods such as digital information boards to share key messages. We also invited local people to put themselves forward for a new network of Community Champions in order to enhance communication with residents.

The Council's workforce is its key asset. Recognising the impact that Covid-19 has had upon our workforce, we have added Workforce

Wellbeing as a tenth 'key thing to do' in our Council Plan. Our approach to workforce wellbeing is illustrated in a case study.

The way that we work with our partners has developed in 2020-21, setting a pattern that will continue in the coming year. Solihull has continued to be a strong member of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA). We will continue to work actively with WMCA and other regional partners on delivering good jobs, supporting thriving places & communities, embedding our green ambitions, tackling inequality and preventing a lost generation.

Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) are partnerships between the organisations that meet health and care needs across an area. They plan and coordinate services in a way that aims to improve population health and reduce inequalities. The principles of how the Birmingham and Solihull ICS will operate were set in 2020/21 and the ICS arrangements, including Solihull Together as the place based partnership for Solihull, will continue to develop in 2021/22.

The Council has offered strong leadership and support to all our schools throughout the pandemic, and continues to do so, to help them adjust to the many changes they have had to make to teaching and learning.

We are confident that if we can all work together on our shared aims and priorities, as outlined in our Council Plan for 2020-25 and our economic recovery plan, we will continue to achieve our priorities and deliver for people who live, work, study in and visit Solihull.



Nick Page
Chief Executive



Councillor Ian Courts
Leader of the Council

SOLIHULL COUNCIL PLAN 2020-25



Economy

- People, business and the environment benefit from UKC and HS2, including increased access to good work
- More affordable and environmentally sustainable housing built
- Our town and local centres have stable or growing economies
- More visitors to the borough.

Environment

- An enhanced, well connected natural environment
- More people walking, cycling and using public transport
- Air quality has improved by 2025
- The Council is net zero carbon by 2030 and the Borough is net zero carbon by 2041.

People and Communities

- Improvements in early childhood development and school readiness in disadvantaged communities
- Stronger, more connected, resourceful communities finding solutions to local problems
- Children and adults with care and support needs are empowered to build on their strengths and be as independent as possible.

Everything that we do contributes to one or more of the five building blocks of inclusive growth:

- Building a vibrant economy
- Promoting & delivering social value
- Enabling communities to thrive
- Actioning our climate change declaration
- Improving skills and access to good work

Enablers of Council efficiency and value for money:
Engagement | Use of Digital | The Employee Journey | Robust Finance | Use of Our Physical Assets

Ongoing delivery of the Solihull plan for recovery from Covid-19

CASE STUDIES TO ILLUSTRATE WHAT WE'VE ACHIEVED AND WHAT WE'RE CONTINUING TO WORK ON

Economy

Recovery plans in place for each town and local centre

Utilising the High Streets Taskforce recovery framework, a plan was developed for Solihull's Town Centre, with a unique action plan then developed for each individual centre, recognising the different key stakeholders and leads for each locality.

Working with Solihull BID, Visit Knowle, Parish Councils and local shopping centres, the Council was able to quickly identify needs and respond to immediate issues, while still planning for the long term development of its towns and local centres. Practical examples of activities included the distribution of hand sanitiser and face coverings for shoppers, social distancing posters for local businesses and a campaign to support the safe re-opening of the various sectors of the economy. This was supported by a series of online 'on demand' webinars, alongside a new team to engage with high street businesses and respond to their needs for financial assistance and business guidance.

Kingshurst Village Centre Regeneration

The redevelopment of Kingshurst is a once in a generation opportunity to create a high quality, community focussed centre at the heart of this important Solihull neighbourhood.



Artist's impression of Kingshurst Village Centre based on the illustrative Masterplan

Plans to 'recover' and 'transform' are now underway, supporting a new economic plan for Shirley and the development of the Solihull Town Centre Masterplan.



Volunteers in the community

The redeveloped centre will help ensure that Kingshurst becomes a sustainable, well integrated community with enhanced potential to benefit from its close proximity to the economic opportunities at the airport, NEC and the rest of the UK Central Hub.

In September we successfully secured approval for an Outline Planning Application, and illustrative layout, which has set out the principles of the development and key detail regarding access to the site. With the Outline Planning Application now in place we are continuing to work with local residents and stakeholders to progress the full business case and start developing more detailed plans and designs.

Town Centre Masterplan

In November we adopted a bold new Town Centre Masterplan providing a blueprint for future investment and development in Solihull town centre over the next fifteen years. The refreshed Masterplan seeks to provide a framework to maximise opportunities, make best use of existing assets, and set out a clear vision for Solihull in 2036 while still retaining the character which makes the town centre so popular.

The Town Centre Masterplan is underpinned by a strong evidence base which brings together detailed physical analysis of the town centre; a baseline socioeconomic assessment and market review; and feedback from extensive stakeholder

engagement. The evidence base highlights the key features that make the town what it is today, tells us where our strengths lie, and what our opportunities for the future are.

We are already making strong progress with a number of key elements of our Masterplan, with Property Agents recently appointed to help secure lettings for our landmark office development at Westgate and the high-profile acquisition of the Mell Square holding company in April. Our Town Centre Masterplan will allow the Council to continue to play an active role, with partners, in shaping the future of the town centre.

Environment

Development of Solihull's Net Zero Action Plan

In Solihull, our annual Carbon Dioxide (equivalent) emissions are around 1.3 million tonnes, which is similar to driving a diesel car around the world 200,000 times or every Solihull resident taking a return flight to New York around 10 times!

In October 2019 Solihull Council unanimously agreed a climate change statement of intent. This recognised the gravity of the climate emergency and set the ambition to be carbon Net Zero as a Council by 2030 and to support the West Midlands Combined Authority target of Net Zero as a region by 2041. A key part of the Council's response to the climate emergency is to develop Solihull's Net Zero Action Plan (NZAP). The NZAP will set out the key actions that we can take to help us in the transition to being a net zero borough by 2041. We have already consulted on a net zero green paper which identified 'what' needs to be done to get to net zero, and the NZAP will identify 'how' we can act. We will be consulting on a draft of the NZAP in the autumn in the run up to the UK hosting COP 26.

We received a host of responses on the green paper which we are using to shape a draft NZAP. We carried out virtual public consultation events, events with Solihull's business community, other stakeholders and received detailed feedback from the Climate Change Commission. In our move towards net zero Solihull we will need to include everyone and make sure we tailor our approach so it works for Solihull's residents and businesses alike. We also want to make sure that we are ambitious - we recently had an innovation tournament to identify potential low carbon projects, this was attended by Council officers and key stakeholders such as local businesses and other interested organisations. The website <https://netzerosolihull.co.uk/> has been set up as a hub for net zero activity within the borough.

Working together towards

NetZeroSolihull CO₂

Planting 25,000 trees

Throughout 2020 we have reached our target of planting 25,000 trees, in spite of the challenges we have faced. We have achieved this great success through local engagement with our schools, residents, businesses and community groups, with additional support from the Solihull Tree Wardens. This is part of our wider goal to plant 250,000 trees in the next ten years as part of our commitment to tackle climate change. Through our Love Solihull team, we are providing support and guidance on which trees are suitable. Love Solihull are also promoting the numerous benefits trees provide, from increased biodiversity to capturing carbon. This is all part of the wider Planting our Future campaign to encourage residents to engage with tree planting and reaching our 250k target.

A particular achievement is the creation of Hope Coppice - a new public open space created in recognition of the Covid pandemic. It will provide residents with a place to remember and reflect on the pandemic. As part of this is the planting of 50

plum, apple and pear trees to create a community orchard. Additionally, 750 native whips and 19 cherry trees have also been planted as part of the first phase of groundwork. The Council has also agreed a partnership with the Woodland Trust, which saw the Trust provide 11,886 trees in the first year, as a contribution towards the Planting Our Future project.



Hope Coppice

Solihull Electric Vehicle Strategy and Action Plan

Helping to support the transition to electric vehicles for our residents and businesses is a central part of how we will de-carbonise the

borough in future years. The Electric Vehicle Strategy and Action Plan was adopted in June, with actions already being delivered. Fifty-six electric vehicle (EV) charging bays have been switched on across the borough, with the selected locations based on where there is current or expected future demand for EV charging. These will offer residents without access to a private driveway the opportunity to park and charge an EV near to their home.

As part of the roll out, charging points were installed across the borough including in Shirley, Knowle, Olton, Silhill, Blythe, Lyndon, Elmdon, Dorridge and Smiths Wood. The total number of 56 also includes 18 charging bays being switched back on in North Solihull and six recently installed at the Council House, which are available to members of the public on evenings and weekends.

Within the first four weeks the charge points provided electric to power over 4,000 miles of clean motoring to Solihull residents – reducing carbon emissions and improving air quality.



One of the EV charging bays

People and Communities

Winter hospital discharge and step-up capacity set up

During the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council commissioned a new borough-wide Home Care Service. Working closely with Birmingham and Solihull Clinical Commissioning Group (BSol CCG) a new Home Discharge Service (HDS) was commissioned. This was in response to the challenges and system wide pressures presented during the pandemic. The service promotes the ethos of the Home First approach, facilitating same day discharges for people to return home safely and included those who were tested as Covid positive.

Nationwide Care Services, one of the lead providers of Home Care services operating in the borough, provided the service with a dedicated skilled staff team in place. The service runs from 8am-8pm seven days a week. It can provide support for up to six weeks, enabling the Council to refer people to the reablement team or put

longer term services in place if needed. Since November, when the service was commissioned, it has facilitated the safe discharge out of hospital of over 600 people.

Additionally, to enable safe discharge from hospital, the Council worked with BSol CCG and the care provider to repurpose the beds commissioned by the Council on behalf of the local system for intermediate care at St Giles Care Home. They were repurposed to become a 'designated setting'. This meant that they would only take Covid positive discharges from hospitals and would keep the person there until they were safe to move on. Furthermore, Birmingham Community Healthcare provided additional capacity as a designated setting that could be used for Solihull residents during the times of highest demand. These were vital to support safe discharge from hospital.

Collaboration with parent carers of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Following the absence of a formal parent carer forum in Solihull for too long, we were delighted that Solihull Parent Carer Voice stepped in during the pandemic to fulfil the hugely important strategic role of providing the voice of parent carers to shape the offer for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

Despite the challenges faced during the Covid-19 pandemic, we have already seen the success of working collaboratively with the forum this year and have made a positive impact for families in the borough. We have been able to build on this by jointly publishing the first Partnership Agreement between the Council, BSol CCG and Solihull Parent Carer Voice in March 2021. This is a significant step forward in our SEND journey and shows our commitment to all working together, as equals, to improve outcomes for children and young people with additional needs in the borough. The Partnership Agreement is available on the Local Offer website [here](#).

We have supported the forum to increase their membership (with a current reach of over 57,000 on Facebook) to become more representative of all families and other support groups within the borough, to ensure all have their voices heard and use their experiences to shape the future of the work in Solihull. This work will be pivotal in co-producing our upcoming strategy for children with additional needs and SEND, and our SEND improvement journey in the coming year.

Shielding and the Here 2 Help Programme

In 2020, around 2.2 million people across England were identified as being most at risk from Covid-19. The Government produced guidance called 'shielding' and 13,756 people in Solihull were identified as part of this cohort. They were advised to stay at home and avoid any face-to-face contact. This meant that these Solihull residents were unable to shop for groceries and faced difficulties when trying to obtain online shopping delivery slots.

The Solihull Council Shielding Team were on hand. The team delivered food parcels to shielding residents across the borough, as well as making weekly telephone calls to offer help and advice to residents. The team packed and delivered 6,826 food parcels and made 59,430 wellbeing calls.

To support residents who were vulnerable and required support but were not part of the shielded group, we set up the 'Here 2 Help' pages on the Council website. These pages provide information on how to access support if needed. This ranges from financial advice to needing help with food and fuel. The pages provide information on where residents can access support and provides links to the corresponding sites. For example, it provides contact details for local food banks and what to do if you need support from a food bank. It has been a useful tool for all residents who may require some support and want to know where they can access it. This is one of the tools that the Council has created during the pandemic to provide information and advice for our residents.

Solihull Local Outbreak Management Plan and Covid Community Champions

Solihull's Local Outbreak Management Plan aims to tackle the differential impact of Covid-19 on our communities, by identifying communities where targeted activities would be beneficial. As part of this work, contact tracing and testing support have been put in place and a huge amount of work has taken place with schools and colleges, care homes, care providers and businesses across the borough to support them in operating in a Covid safe way.

"Excellent management of the Community Champions network with very useful weekly email updates."

"The COVID champions system has been a good place to get reliable local info, to ask questions, and to give me confidence to pass it to those that I work with."

In order to enhance communication with residents, the Council invited local people to put themselves forward for a new network of Community Champions. Over 150 people volunteered from across Solihull, and we have worked with this group both to disseminate key messages but also to better understand the Covid issues in different communities. They have been a vital source of communication with our communities throughout the pandemic and will continue to be so as we move to recovery.

The Community Champions are provided with the latest, accurate information on Covid, which they can then share with their community in whichever format they choose. There are also weekly webinars on a range of issues including testing, self-isolation, preventing the spread of Covid, Covid vaccination, mental health and wellbeing, and domestic violence. Community champions have told us that they found this very useful:



Volunteers in the community

Enablers

Upgraded website with additional features to meet user needs

The Council's new website became fully operational in December 2020 and has received positive feedback from its users. It's easier to navigate, less cluttered, and has much better accessibility options for everyone, so it's much easier to use than before. This will be the Council's

platform to access all of the online services we already offer, as well as making more services available as part of our digital transformation work. We always welcome feedback, so if you haven't used our new website yet, why not take a look at solihull.gov.uk and let us know your thoughts.



The new Council website

Microsoft Teams

To respond to the Covid-19 pandemic and the rapid move to home working we sped up the roll out of Microsoft Teams, which offers new features to help us work remotely and connect with partners regionally and nationally. From September 2020, we gave access and training on Teams to over 2,600 staff which has allowed them to video-conference, chat, and share files far more easily than before. Meetings can now be recorded for later review, conversation in meeting chats means that fewer emails need to be sent, and it's easier to attend meetings as staff just have to click a button.

The roll out was completed in four months and take up has been extremely positive with most meetings in the Council now hosted on Teams. Since September 2020, staff have used Teams to send 224,000 chat messages, organised 28,000 meetings, had 27,000 one to one calls, and shared their screens for 713,000 minutes to collaborate with colleagues and work remotely. We're currently looking at the next features to add to Teams to improve the experience further. Teams is part of a wider upgrade to our systems by rolling out Microsoft 365 across the organisation.

Workforce Wellbeing

Employee wellbeing is a key focus for us and is now one of our Council priorities. During 2020/21, we became the first local authority in the West Midlands to achieve the West Midlands Combined Authority 'Thrive' Wellbeing at Work bronze accreditation which recognises our action and commitment to employee wellbeing.

Some of the things that we've done over the past year include:

- > Regular wellbeing pulse surveys of employees followed by focus groups and action to enhance our offer.
- > Created individual and team wellbeing action plans based on an approach used by the mental health charity, MIND.
- > Recruited a diverse group of 13 Local Wellbeing Leads from across all parts of the organisation.
- > Tailored our approach to the Mental Health First Aid Awareness offer for Managers, ensuring that the subject matter was safe for virtual delivery.
- > Ran an evidence based sleep improvement programme for employees who were really struggling, some of them are now experiencing the best sleep that they've had in years!
- > Worked with teams to support their wellbeing needs, for example the development of a bespoke mental and physical health programme for community based libraries staff, preparing them for a return to work as libraries re-opened across the borough.
- > Physical challenges - a 'Couch To 5K' group, an Olympics 'Walk To Tokyo' challenge - and the recruitment of a cohort of 'On The Move' advocates.

2021/22 will be an exciting year for progressing the employee wellbeing offer even further. We'll be exploring what makes a 'Good Day at Work' for our employees, and we look forward to being able to get to the heart of what makes a difference to people in order to inform our wellbeing offer as it develops.


FINANCIAL OUTTURN POSITION FOR 2020/21

The below breakdown shows our financial outturn position for April 2020 to March 2021.

£	
Total	
166,787,000	
Adult Social Care and Health	53,680,000
Children, Education and Skills	38,146,000
Climate Change, Planning and Housing	644,000
Environment and Highways	23,000,000
Growth and Infrastructure Delivery	1,180,000
Leisure, Tourism and Sport	399,000
Resources	29,314,000
Stronger and Safer Communities	4,486,000
Total Core Council	149,657,000
Levies	8,543,000
Working Balances and Contingencies	8,587,000

OUTSIDE THE PRIORITIES

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 2021) which all contribute to serving the needs of our Solihull residents, visitors, businesses and stakeholders.

 **258,346**
calls answered by
our contact centre


Drug & Alcohol services supported **1,548 individuals** in Solihull including adult, young person's treatment service and family & friends service

15,149

food
vouchers



issued to Children and Young People in receipt of Free School Meals across Christmas and February half-term

 **5,105** people supported by Adult Social Care in 2020/21


809

Freedom of Information requests received resulting in **10,956** pieces of information being disclosed

 **97.77%**
Council Tax collected

 **96.67%**
Business Rates collected



Support provided to a Shielding cohort of
13,586 residents

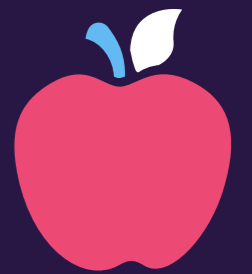


1,1369,180
waste and recycling
collections

100% of streetlink referrals (to support someone sleeping rough with local support services) in Solihull responded to within 24 hours with 89% achieving positive outcomes

4,722

applications processed for primary school places



2,981

children supported by Children's Services during 2020/21



4,829

applications processed for secondary school places



783
calls

to the Public Health Covid Support Line

560km

of roads were gritted

36 times
in 2020/21



