

# SOLIHULL COUNCIL PLAN

2020 - 2025 *2022-23 update*



## **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*

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## PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE

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The 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 vision for a borough where everyone has an equal chance to be healthier, happier, safer and prosperous through growth that creates opportunities for all.

Our latest progress in implementing our Council Plan for 2020-25 will be set out in our annual report for 2021/22.

When our Council Plan was approved in July 2020, we said that we would review it each year to ensure that our direction of travel is sound; this refreshed plan is the result of that review.

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

Our plan will need to be flexible and respond as the context we operate in changes.

Its main audience is elected members, our 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.

# INTRODUCTION

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## **From Councillor Ian Courts, Leader of the Council, and Nick Page, Chief Executive**

The past year has been a period of significant challenge and change. We are continuing to learn to live with Covid and, through our work, we are addressing its impacts.

This plan sets out our headline analysis of our strengths, challenges and opportunities, both as a Council and as a borough. It outlines the strategic context that we work in, and how we are developing to better meet the needs of residents, businesses and visitors.

The plan is based on our belief that that economic development, environmental sustainability, health and well-being must go hand in hand. This is reflected in the nine priorities at the heart of this plan, which seek to balance and benefit the economy, environment, people and communities.

We are facing an unsettled global situation with potentially significant political and economic impacts. Our Council Plan is informed by analysis of the issues that we are likely to face in the next year but we will also continue to be flexible and respond to developments as they arise.

Children's Services are the Council's top priority for improvement in 2022/23. A multi-agency response is required, and we are working with health, police and others through the Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership. We will also develop our early intervention and prevention offer with the aims of ensuring that children and young people have the best start in life, and that everyone is able to get early help when they need it.

We will also continue to seek to deliver Inclusive Growth that takes advantage of Solihull's economic opportunities, such as HS2 and Arden Cross, based on its unique position and characteristics. Part of this is improving transport and connectivity, to ensure that everyone can benefit from economic opportunities. We will also continue to implement our Net Zero Action Plan as work towards our ambition for the borough to be Net Zero carbon by 2041.

The Birmingham Commonwealth Games takes place this summer, with events being held in Solihull at the National Exhibition Centre. We want to secure a positive legacy from the Games, to build the borough's cultural heritage and future vibrancy.

This plan will only achieve what it needs to through the combined endeavour of our employees, elected members, partners and everyone else across the borough who works alongside us. Over the last two years, 'Team Solihull' has made a strong contribution to taking the borough through the pandemic and other challenges. We look forward to working with you to achieve our vision of a Solihull where there is opportunity for all.



**Nick Page**  
*Chief Executive*



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

# STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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In updating the Council Plan for 2022-23, we have factored in the following strengths, challenges and opportunities for our borough:

## Creating Opportunities for Children and Young People

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

We have some strengths to build upon - Solihull has excellent schools, with 85% of our primary schools and 86% of our secondary schools rated good or outstanding by OFSTED.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had significant impacts on our children and young people. Children faced disruption due to schools closing and learning moving online, which had the greatest impact on those from disadvantaged backgrounds who benefited from being in the school environment and who struggled with accessing online education due to the technology requirements. Therefore, Covid has exacerbated existing inequalities, which we are seeking to address in a variety of ways, including through implementation of our Health Inequalities Strategy.

The recently adopted Joint Additional Needs Strategy sets out the Council and Clinical Commissioning Group's vision for supporting children and young people with vulnerabilities, additional needs and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. This commits the Council

to holding children and young people at the heart of all we do with an aim to improve their ability to integrate into their community and access services.

We are seeing increasing needs of vulnerable young people in the borough. Rates of referrals to Children's Services have increased from 484 per 10,000 population under 18 (March 2021) rising to 506 (January 2022). Additionally, there has been an increase in child protection numbers from 32 per 10,000 in March 2021 to 44 per 10,000 in January 2022.

Children's Services is the Council's top priority for improvement in 2022/23. In January 2022, the Solihull Local Safeguarding Partnership (LSCP) had a Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) to evaluate the multi-agency response to the identification of initial need and risk for children and young people in Solihull. The JTAI report, published in February 2022, highlighted the commitment and knowledge of staff within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and recognised their dedication. The report outlined areas for improvement for all partners to safeguard children in Solihull and provides a clear focus for our work through the LSCP to improve quality of practice and provision.

The Council received a non-statutory improvement notice for its Children's Services in February 2022. The Improving Outcomes for Children in Solihull Plan is committed to delivering sustained improvement of Children's Services and good outcomes for the children and young people of Solihull.

The Council's Improving Outcomes for Children in Solihull Improvement Board is responsible for overseeing our improvement plan and will drive through the necessary changes across all organisations in Solihull. The Board is independently chaired and supported by an advisor for the Department for Education (DfE). It supports, oversees, and challenges partner organisations with responsibility for safeguarding children on their progress in delivering the updated improvement plan.

### **Cost of Living Squeeze**

The Office for Budget Responsibility expects inflation to rise further during 2022, peaking at 8.7% in Q4 2022. This combined with tax rises and changes to welfare payments means that the whole population will experience rising costs in 2022. This will be especially damaging to lower income households, including those not in employment, many lone parents and families with children.

The Solihull population will be affected by these national pressures, although Solihull is well placed overall to weather expected living cost increases. The Council will continue to seek to help those struggling with living costs. The Here2Help pages of the Council website provide information and contact details for getting help with food, fuel and financial advice while this Plan also contains a number of relevant deliverables including delivering the next stages of the Holiday Activity and Food Programme.

### **The Solihull Economy**

Solihull is home to significant economic assets and transport infrastructure and is well placed to grow as the UK emerges from the economic downturn caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Solihull continues to benefit from a diverse labour market with strengths in automotive, manufacturing and transportation, as well as private sector business services such as computer programming and consulting, financial services and management consultancy.

Solihull has a highly skilled resident labour force, with 37% of the working age population qualified to degree level or above, well above the West Midlands average of 31%. The proportion of degree qualified residents has been increasing strongly throughout the last decade.

Manufacturing exports and imports are important to the West Midlands economy. 22% of West Midlands Gross Value Added comes from the export of goods, compared to just 8% in London.

We have seen some near-term economic impacts in the United Kingdom (UK) associated with the transition to the new trading arrangements creating uncertainty and disruption to trade and supply chains, e.g. in the haulage sector. The longer term economic impact in Solihull will depend on the adaptability of the borough's key economic assets to the new rules and regulations that now apply to UK-EU trade.

### **Recovery and Learning from Covid-19**

The Director of Public Health Annual Report pays tribute to everyone whose lives have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The report paints a picture of the impact of the pandemic up to the end of 2021 and describes, through personal stories from people who were part of the local pandemic response, the less visible and often hidden aspects of the story that unfolded in the national news each day.

Learning and recovery from Covid-19 is a theme that runs through this Council Plan, including:

- › Economic recovery e.g. through plans for our towns and local centres
- › Recovery of preventative public health services
- › Developments in adult care and support
- › Building on the greater mutual understanding developed with the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector.
- › Promote active travel and better connectivity between places

### **Inequalities**

Despite Solihull's overall affluence, incomes, benefit dependency and poverty are unequal across the borough. For instance, average household income is estimated to be more than 30% lower in North Solihull, whilst 24% of working age people in North Solihull claim Universal Credit compared to 8% elsewhere.

On average, men in the 10% most deprived Solihull neighbourhoods are expected to live for 11 years less than those in the least deprived, compared with a gap of 9 years across England. The impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic haven't been felt evenly and have exacerbated existing health inequalities.

In January 2022, the Council sought people's views on 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 (including carers and those they care for)
- › Healthy places (addressing health inequalities caused by housing, transport and the environment).

The extent of inequality within Solihull is a fundamental driver of the need to level-up communities and to regenerate town centres in North Solihull. The impact of investment in housing, services and public realm through regeneration in these neighbourhoods is evident but there is more to do to enable everyone to contribute to, and benefit from, social and economic development so that growth is truly inclusive.

We have been working with our health partners to progress the regeneration of Kingshurst Village Centre. The outline planning application has now been approved. The regeneration will focus not only on the buildings and infrastructure, but the community hub and services that are offered there. There are also developing plans to regenerate Chelmsley Wood town centre.

## A great place to live

People value the quality of the environment in Solihull with 89% of respondents to the Solihull Place Survey 2020 satisfied with their local neighbourhood as a place to live, compared to the England average of 76%. Two thirds of the borough is Green Belt and there are 16 green flag parks. People value the quality of housing and excellent schools and education opportunities. The borough is generally a place where people get on well together, with 84% of respondents to the Solihull Place Survey 2020 agreeing that people from different backgrounds get on well together.

## Safe and vibrant communities

Most residents (56% in the 2020 Place Survey) feel safe after dark, however the majority of residents remain concerned about levels of Anti-Social behaviours (ASB). The 2020 Place Survey identified the most commonly cited ASB problems as being litter (35%), vehicle nuisance (31%), and people using/dealing drugs (29%).

The Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated the energy and dynamism of communities, and the voluntary sector, across the Borough. We have commissioned a strategic assessment to bring together data, intelligence and information to profile the voluntary sector, social enterprise sector and the community sector. The aim is to build on the support that neighbours and communities provided to each other during the pandemic and to also improve collaboration between the Council and the VCSE.

## A growing and ageing population.

Overall, the borough's population will grow by around 20,000 by 2040 with significant growth in rural and semi-rural areas. Challenges will include

how to enable people to work, interact with others and access services whilst also achieving the borough's target to be net zero carbon by 2041.

The 65+ age group is the fastest growing section of the Solihull population and is projected to be so over the next 10 years. People aged 75+ represent more than around 10% of the population and more than 15% of the population in 12 LSOA neighbourhoods.

This has implications for many services, especially rising demand for health and social care services, and for access to transport. At the same time, there are major opportunities to draw on the experience and talents of older people.

## Diverse and inclusive communities

We want the borough to be a tolerant, diverse place that celebrates the increasingly diverse communities we serve.

The Council's Equal Opportunities Policy Statement and Equality Objectives, set 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 that our services are fair and accessible.

Reducing intolerance and hate in communities is an important focus. Through our Inclusive Growth work, we will address discrimination and disparities and pursue our vision for 'Opportunity for All'.



We are seeking to address disparities in outcomes between different groups through our Health Inequalities Strategy.

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

As a borough we welcomed Afghan refugees. Over a week and a half from 16th August 2021, we received 39 flights and around 8,100 people. Birmingham Airport handled 53% of flights carrying refugees fleeing the Taliban takeover. Initially there was demand for baby milk, nappies, coats and shoes so the Coventry-Solihull-Warwickshire (CSW) Resilience Team stepped up, with support from Age UK and Citizens Advice Solihull Bureaux.

By 22nd August the airport declared a major incident, which triggered a regional response from the council, health, police, Red Cross and ambulance service. By 31st August we were processing flights within 12 hours of landing, a full support offer was in place and supplies were a day ahead of demand.

Over the last year, we have also welcomed 1800 adults and children to the Borough from Hong Kong.

While the details are still being worked out at the time of writing, we also expect to host refugees from the Ukraine as part of the 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme. This will have implications for a whole range of public services, including healthcare, education and welfare assistance and will also draw on the voluntary sector to develop support networks for refugees and their hosts.

## Recruitment, retention & development of our Skilled Workforce

The number of job vacancies in the UK rose to a record high of 1,247,000 between October and December 2021. This high level of vacancies combined with low unemployment is creating the tightest job market in 50 years.

Solihull Council's current turnover rate is 14.26%, compared to a typical turnover rate of 15%. However, almost a third of our workforce are aged over 55. National reports show that a high level of workers over the age of 50 have left the workplace in the last two years.

There are further challenges facing Councils in recruiting such as:

- › Recognised national occupational shortages e.g. social workers, social care, town planners etc.
- › Difficulties in recruiting where there also a private sector market e.g. ICT, Human Resources, Procurement etc.
- › There is a buoyant market for agency staff with pay rates far exceeding permanent rates e.g. Social Workers, ICT.

We are developing a recruitment strategy which will include a focus on retention, development rather than reward and are exploring alternative ways of sourcing candidates to include talent pools and pipelines and improving the candidate experience.

There are a number of ways in which the Council develops its workforce to fill future vacancies / skill shortages i.e. apprenticeships, newly qualified Social Worker programme etc. Currently, we employ in the region of 150 apprentices across a variety of roles and professions, ranging from Level 2 to Level 7 (the equivalent of a Masters Degree). This number includes existing staff who are using their apprenticeship to upskill in their current role.

Historically, there have been challenges in social care recruitment. In 2020, around a quarter of care staff nationally were employed on a zero-hour contract, where work isn't guaranteed. The Covid-19 pandemic has put additional pressures on the sector.

We are developing a five-year Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy to address these challenges. It will focus on three priority areas, which have been developed in partnership with the sector. These are Value, Transport and Recruitment Support.

# THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT

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

## **The national and international context:**

We continue to learn to live with Covid. Vaccines have enabled the gradual removal of restrictions on everyday life and remain at the centre of the government's plans to live with covid going forward. Currently in Solihull 83% of people aged 16 and above have now had two doses of the vaccine and 85% of people who are eligible for a booster have now also had one.

On 21st February 2022 national government published the Living with Covid Strategy, which sets out a series of changes so that we can learn to live safely with the virus. The strategy removes the remaining domestic restrictions in England.

Addressing climate change is a global and local priority. The recent COP26 conference kept the target of achieving 1.5 c warming in sight through the Glasgow Climate Pact.

As a council, we are committed to a net zero-carbon future. 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.

Progress is being made on Council led schemes that will contribute to delivery of the 2041 target - Solihull Town Centre Low Carbon Energy

Network, the UK Central Hub Low Carbon Heat Network & Energy Innovation Zone, and Low Carbon Future Mobility.

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

The pace of change around technology continues. This offers major potential to change how we provide services, linked to the roll-out of 5G mobile connectivity, and to digitally empower our population.

## **National Policy Updates**

There have been significant national policy developments in areas of importance to local authorities which are likely to impact us during the period of the Council Plan. These include:

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, encapsulated in six capitals: physical, human, intangible, financial, social and institutional. These capitals act together to create the conditions where areas, and the people who live in them, can prosper. The white paper could have significant opportunities for Solihull.

The Adult Social Care Reform White Paper was published in December 2021. It sets out a 10-year vision for adult social care and provides information on funded proposals that will be implemented over the next

3 years. This includes new investments in housing and home adaptations, technology and digitisation, workforce training and wellbeing support, support for unpaid carers, and innovation and improvement.

The Integration and Innovation White Paper was published in February 2021 and resulted in the planned process of replacing Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) with Integrated Care Systems (ICSs). It will be the biggest reform of the health and social care system since the Health and Social Care Act of 2012.

The Health and Care Bill and the Adult Social Care White Paper (People at the Heart of Care) propose a duty for the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to assess local authority performance in delivering their adult social care duties under the Care Act 2014. The CQC's approach will be structured around an individual's journey through the adult social care system and will look at quality of practice and how well communication, co-production and engagement with people who use care services is established.

We are expecting an Education White Paper in the next year which will look at giving Ofsted greater powers and the acceleration of the academisation programme. This could have significant impacts on Solihull.

### **Local Government Funding Reform**

As part of the 2022/23 Local Government finance settlement the government committed to work with the sector to update the assessment of needs and resources used to calculate funding allocations. It is possible that changes could be in place from April 2023. A reset of business rate baselines from this date would also be in line with the timetable for national business rates revaluation.

At this stage, the scope of reform is unclear but earlier consultation papers suggest the government is exploring a simpler funding formula focused on key universal cost drivers such as population and relative deprivation, as well as taking account of an authority's ability to raise its own resources, such as council tax. It is expected that transitional funding will be available to support the move to new funding arrangements and Solihull's budget strategy reserve also provides some resilience in this regard. Future announcements will be kept under close review.

# A PLAN FOR SUSTAINABLE INCLUSIVE GROWTH

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Inclusive growth is about judging an economy not just by its activity, but by what that activity does to deliver what people need to thrive: good health, purpose, power, connectivity, creativity, and a resilient, regenerative environment. Locally, our working definition is that 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 through our roles 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 anchor organisations to influence the development and delivery of services to our communities and businesses to support inclusive growth.

Our approach to inclusive growth directly aligns with the government's levelling up agenda which presents an opportunity for us to do more, through the additional investment that will be made available for local communities and the opportunity to secure investment in major infrastructure projects in Solihull that will act as a catalyst for economic growth to level up the whole region.

In order to secure the benefits of levelling up and 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:

- › Continue to advocate for Arden Cross as a catalyst site for Levelling Up nationally and regionally, supported by the new economic strategy for the Borough which will provide a robust, evidence-based demonstration of how investment in Solihull will support Levelling Up (including education, skills and health outcomes)
- › Develop a pipeline of investible propositions to deliver on the economic strategy and target outcomes for inclusive growth, tackling health inequalities and transition to net zero
- › Continue to provide strong place leadership bringing together public, private and voluntary sector to address key issues such as access to transport, financial and digital inclusion and social connectedness.

We have developed an Inclusive Growth Outcomes Framework for Solihull which will allow us to track progress against our ambitions. This identifies the outcomes for individuals, communities and businesses that we will support through delivery of the Council Plan and the wider work of the Council. These outcomes are:

### People and Communities

- › My children have the best start in life
- › My family and I feel safe
- › I am active and healthy and look forward to many years in good health
- › I have control over my life and know where to seek help
- › I have a good quality of life
- › I am able to influence local decisions about the things that matter to me
- › I feel connected to my local community

### Economy

- › I have a good secure job and can afford what I need to thrive
- › I am able to learn new skills that are connected to local opportunities
- › I have career aspirations
- › I can access transport to work, retail and leisure activities
- › Business have access to a skilled and healthy workforce
- › The local economy is more resilient to economic shocks

### Environment

- › I live in a healthy environment resilient to the impacts of a changing climate
- › I do not have to worry about pollution
- › I am able to contribute to improving the environment in my day to day life
- › I can access clean energy
- › I like where I live
- › Businesses are aware of and addressing their environmental impact

Headline metrics have been identified for most of these outcomes. While these allow us to track progress and highlight areas of concern, there are challenges in terms of the timeliness and level of detail of the available data. Further work will be undertaken to identify and create alternative data sources where possible and to build intelligence around the impact of our actions to deliver inclusive growth and level up the borough.

## SOLIHULL'S ECONOMIC STRATEGY

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Solihull has a number of unique features that can enable us to be a driver of the West Midlands economy.

We are developing an Economic Strategy to cover the ten 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 will aim to develop an inclusive, net zero carbon economy that reflects the ambitions of the Council and its local and regional partners and to:

- › Establish a refreshed and compelling vision and 'place' narrative for the Borough
- › Focus on opportunity and have an emphasis on action
- › Take an inclusive approach to growth, including maximising the impact of the social economy
- › Shape the council's approach to marketing the borough's appeal to investors
- › Align with and contribute to the council's Climate Change Prospectus and Net Zero Action Plan.

## OUR PUBLIC SERVICE DESIGN

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In our 2018-20 Council Plan, we outlined a new strategic and operating model for the Council to 2025, making best use of data to identify who is accessing our services, how and why. In designing our offer for the future we divided our services into three categories:

**Universal Services** are those offered to all 217,500 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.

The Adult Care and Support Directorate's work with the social care market was driven in 2021 by the need to ensure reliable support for local people during the pandemic and to enable the effective running of local hospitals operating under pressure. Two new services were created: Home Discharge Service (HDS), delivered by Nationwide Care Services, to support people to return home from hospital after an essential stay, and the Early Response Service (ERS), by Universal Care, delivering an early response to people at home for immediate extra support during the pandemic. Social care workers have shown exceptional dedication to maintaining essential care services for those relying upon them and have adapted to the continued challenges of providing good quality care while keeping people safe from infection.

In the next two years, we will continue to develop our universal, targeted and specialist services based on the following principles:

#### **Universal:**

- Enquiries & transactions through digital channels
- Support for those unable to access services digitally.
- Residents playing a greater role through personal responsibility and community organisation.

#### **Targeted:**

- Evidence-led targeting, identification & delivery.
- Locality working & coordinated neighbourhood action.
- Community-based support for vulnerable people

#### **Specialist:**

- A coordinated, personalised support package for every person who needs specialist support.
- Clarity with partners around accountability & resources.
- Multi-agency hubs and collaboration.
- Integrated data systems.

The redesign and implementation of an improved prevention and early help approach and offer in Solihull for children, young people and families has been identified as a key programme of work for improvement within the Improving Outcomes for Children in Solihull Improvement Plan.

The Council's current prevention offer spans Public Health, Communities & Partnerships, Children's Services and Adult Services. Work planned over the next 12 months will create a cohesive and defined prevention offer with shared goals and a clear, common way of describing what we are trying to achieve.



## 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 to support our placement sufficiency.

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

We play an important role in the leadership of the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP). The future of the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP is being discussed following the Levelling Up White Paper announcements that LEPs are to be integrated into Mayoral Combined Authorities, with arrangements to be designed locally on a case-by-case basis.

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.

The hosting of the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham in 2022 is a major landmark for the region and we continue to work with the organising committee, WMCA, other local authorities, the National Exhibition Centre and our local partners to ensure a successful Games. We are also working together to secure a positive legacy from the games by helping the region to grow and succeed, putting us on the global stage, improving health and wellbeing through being more active and bringing people together.

## Health and Care Partnerships

The Birmingham and Solihull Clinical Commissioning Group is transitioning towards the Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care System (ICS) and will formally take place in July 2022. ICSs are a partnership of health and care organisations that come together to plan and deliver joined up services in a specific geographic area. They focus on places and local populations as the driving forces for improvement. These arrangements have enabled key partners to come together to plan how to run our services in a coordinated way, with a focus on place-based working.

The Health and Wellbeing Board sets strategic direction for place and contributes to ICS system priorities, alongside developing Solihull's Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The Solihull Together Board then brings together partners to deliver the priorities in Solihull's Health & Wellbeing Strategy and facilitates the development of local (place-based) partnership working.

### Local 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 organisations has evolved over the last two years as a result of the response to the pandemic and events such as the Afghan refugee evacuation. Local groups have been essential to the delivery of household support programmes and ensuring there is a help point for different communities and needs.

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 better recognition of combined strengths and weaknesses.

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 10,000 residents living in council properties.

Significant progress has been made over the last year to reduce the risk of exploitation of adults. This work was led by the Exploitation Reduction Board, chaired by the Director of Adult Care and Support (ACS), and the Exploitation Reduction Delivery Group, chaired by the ACS Exploitation Reduction Lead and Solihull Police.

An All Age Screening Tool has been developed to support staff across Solihull to identify and then provide support for individuals at risk of exploitation. Staff procedures and training have also been developed and launched.

We reviewed our community safety partnership (Safer Solihull) arrangements in 2021 to ensure that they work efficiently and effectively for the people of Solihull. Priorities have been set around hate crime, anti-social behaviour, violence (under 25s) and violence against women and girls.

The Thriving Communities Delivery Group oversees the operational delivery of community-based partnership working and ensures that it links to the strategic priorities of Solihull Together, Safer Solihull and Safeguarding boards.

# EFFICIENCY AND VALUE FOR MONEY

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We are proud of our track record of being forward thinking and pragmatic, using a wide variety of means to create the financial and people capacity to deliver on our priorities. Below are the things that enable us to deliver our plan:

## Engaging our Citizens

We carry out a biennial Place Survey 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. We consult effectively with residents on proposed service changes, plans and projects.

Hearing the voice of children and young people is key and we do this in a variety of ways including the biennial Health Related Behaviours Questionnaire, an App to capture the views of children and young people receiving social care services and OVOS, our Children In Care Council.

Adult Care and Support are developing their strength-based approach to working. Taking a strengths-based approach should put people at the centre of care, drawing on what they can do and connecting them with community resources. It's about how people want things done, not just providing a set model of care. A practice framework is being finalised on strength-based working for all Adult Social Care staff.

Productive two-way relationships (with, for example, Parish Councils, faith groups, community organisations and businesses) are key to effective engagement. Some of these relationships (e.g. with faith communities

and voluntary & community sector groups) have developed significantly over the past two years, as we worked together to meet community needs during the Covid Pandemic. Action to address the differential impact of Covid-19 on our communities has included work with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups; engagement with faith leaders, young people and the refugee / migrant community.

Through our Thriving Communities work, we will continue to build on existing strong relationships, engage more people to understand the Council's ambitions for the borough and enable them to shape the future of their local places.

## Digital

The Digital Programme has progressed steadily during 2021/22. The key successes have been the implementation of the new Council Website, ongoing rollout of Microsoft Teams and the delivery of the Smarter Ways of Working Equipment.

The new Council Website has been built and over 800 pages migrated to the new website. This has been favourably received and will be expanded further in 2022/23 through the newly formed Digital Web Team. Microsoft Teams has been provided to over 2800 staff including appropriate training, guidance, and support. The organisation has seen a refresh of its operating technology with a move from fixed desk location working to flexible Smarter Ways of Working. Blended meeting equipment has been installed at the Council House and based upon this success, it will be extended to all sites.

The Digital Programme also continues to support other major council programmes including the Strategic Environment Contract, digital transformation of Regulatory Services and Income and Awards where work continues to develop more digital solutions such as the Omicron Business Discretionary Grant Form.

## **Employee Wellbeing**

Our commitment to employee wellbeing continues to be a key Council priority; our people are our most important asset.

We will continue to develop as a hybrid organisation, enabling our employees to adopt Smarter Ways of Working in support of their performance, wellbeing, and customer outcomes.

As a bronze accredited West Midlands Combined Authority Thrive At Work employer, during 2021/22 we have made great strides in embedding wellbeing throughout the organisation and we will progress to Thrive Silver level.

Our new organisational approach to wellbeing will continue, ensuring that managers, teams, and individuals have the awareness, knowledge, skills, and resources to proactively manage and support their wellbeing at work.

Local Wellbeing Leads and Resolution Contacts will continue to be an invaluable asset in supporting wellbeing and working relationships at a local level. At the same time, our partnership with external wellbeing experts will help us to embed approaches that enable us all to have a 'Good Day At Work'.

We have much more to do next year, but our approach to wellbeing demonstrates we are an employer of choice; a caring, enabling employer, where the way we do things around here matters.

## **More effective people through coaching**

In support of making the best use of our people and physical assets the Coaching Strategy underpins the way we aspire to do things throughout the Organisation, having impactful and solution-focused conversations from the point of onboarding, through people development and in all our performance conversations. Ensuring our managers are both skilled and encouraged to adopt a coaching style of leadership, and all employees incorporate coaching conversations into our daily practice, will increase our ability to problem solve, encourage ownership and have a positive impact for the people of Solihull.

## **Finance and Management of Assets**

Covid-19 has continued to have a significant impact on the Council's financial position, with a large number of new funding streams being distributed across Council services, residents and local businesses.

Since the start of the pandemic, the Council had accounted for £185 million of Covid funding. As part of this, business grants totalling £59 million had been paid out to businesses across the borough to help them deal with the impact of Covid-19.

Despite the challenges of administering all of these additional funding streams, the Council still achieved the statutory deadline of 30th September 2021 for the audit of its accounts (with an unqualified audit report being issued), one of only 9% of local authorities in the country that achieved this deadline.

As part of the management of assets, in April 2021, the Council made a significant acquisition, through the purchase of the Mell Square shopping centre in Solihull Town Centre and in early 2022, the process to look at how the shopping centre might be redeveloped in the future commenced.

The plans to move to a corporate landlord model for the management of all council property moved forward throughout 2021/22, with a regular review of progress taking place through the Resources & Delivering Value Scrutiny Board.

### **Smarter Ways of Working**

To facilitate our new Smarter Ways of Working Strategy and assist the organisation to move to a new hybrid model, IT, Facilities and HR have been working to enable the cultural shift. The main Council House has been transformed to provide desk spaces at a 40% occupancy rate, supported by collaborative working spaces. A new cloud based desk and room booking system has been implemented alongside the roll out of a new IT standard offering of a laptop to all staff, with new monitors that act as docking stations on all desks. The procurement process has also commenced for hybrid meeting rooms.

### **Analysis and Insight**

Our aim is 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 use of data and information to inform our Covid response is one example of our increasing data maturity. At the start of the pandemic, we bought together information about our population from different sources into a data warehouse to help understand who in our population was most vulnerable to the impact of Covid.

We used a Geographical Information System to map the prevalence of Covid by area, age group, gender and ethnicity. By understanding where Covid case rates were highest, we were able to design an appropriate offer of support. We also developed information solutions to support testing, contact tracing and work with care homes.

Our digital programme is a key enabler for more effective analysis and insight. The upgrading of some of our major IT systems will improve our ability to extract, report and connect data to generate insight. We are also exploring the potential to utilise the Microsoft 365 family of applications to further automate how we capture data and utilise it to provide analysis and insight.

# COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITIES, DELIVERABLES AND OUTCOMES, 2022/3

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At the heart of our plan are the nine priorities. These encompass the economy, environment, people and communities – recognising that all of these need to thrive for the borough to thrive in the future and achieve the Council’s vision. We will keep what we plan to do under review and adjust as necessary to reflect our changing context, new challenges and opportunities.

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## People and Communities

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### Priority: Improving outcomes for children and young people in Solihull

The council is committed to holding children and young people at the heart of all we do, with the aim of improving their ability to integrate into their community and access services. As a council, it is imperative that we promote these aims and demonstrate our achievements in improving outcomes.

#### Deliverables in 2022/23:

The Improving Outcomes for Children in Solihull Improvement Plan, sets out to transform, improve and embed developments in children’s social care and across the children’s safeguarding partnership. The Improving Outcomes for Children in Solihull Plan has six objectives:

1. Children’s records are well maintained, easy to navigate and clearly identify children’s needs.
2. The workforce is equipped and supported to provide best practice towards safeguarding children and families.
3. Senior leaders are confident that children and family’s needs are safeguarded and supported in line with statutory requirements.
4. Children and families are supported by analytical, reflective and clear assessments and plans.
5. Leadership and governance is appropriately exercised to support the safeguarding of children.
6. To ensure that partners contribution to the safeguarding of children is effective.

A vital way of improving outcomes for children and families in Solihull is the establishment of a multi-agency family hub model, incorporating a universal digital offer, a network of hub buildings and outreach services for families with identified support needs. This would be for children and young people across the life course – from pre-conception to age 25.

### **Deliverables in 2022/23**

1. Establish the digital offer
2. Secure hub sites
3. Co-produce the service offer with parents, carers and partner agencies

### **Outcomes by 2025 and beyond:**

- Children and their families are safer and better supported by statutory and early help services.

## **Priority: Good quality, responsive, and dignified care and support for Adults in Solihull when they need it**

To ensure that adults with care and support needs get the support that they require, are empowered to build on their strengths and can be as independent as possible

### **Deliverables in 2022/23:**

1. Home First: Further develop 'home first' support, working together with partners to enable timely hospital discharge and support hospital admissions avoidance where appropriate, and use the Newton Europe diagnostic outcomes to inform further development of services
2. Carers: Refresh our Carers Strategy and deliver the associated plans to identify more carers in Solihull and provide suitable support, including early help to support the wellbeing of the carer as well as the person cared for
3. Workforce: Delivery of year 1 of the 5-year Workforce Strategy to address the recruitment and retention issues being faced by our providers and promote the many varied roles in the care sector as fulfilling and secure employment opportunities
4. Exploitation Reduction: Continue to deliver and embed the Exploitation Reduction Strategy by raising awareness of the indicators of exploitation, as well as providing early intervention, support and safeguarding adults from abuse

### **Outcomes by 2025 and beyond**

- Sustainable, quality, affordable provision for adults & children with complex needs.

## Priority: Take action to improve life chances and health outcomes in our most disadvantaged communities

We recognise that there is more to do to enable everyone to contribute to and benefit from social and economic development. Additionally, we are committed to improving health outcomes through addressing health inequalities.

### Deliverables in 2022/23:

- Accelerate the recovery of Public Health services which have been impacted by the pandemic so that activity is back to pre-pandemic levels. This needs to be informed by an understanding of which groups have been disproportionately affected.
- 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
- First 1001 Days: take a system wide approach through Solihull Together to health pregnancy and healthy brain development for 0-2 year olds, supporting parental and infant mental health and vulnerable families
- Launch a year of 'being on the move' – a campaign and celebration of movement inspired by the Commonwealth Games

### Outcomes by 2025 and beyond

Improvements in early childhood development and school readiness, particularly in disadvantaged communities.

Improvements in skills and access to good work.

## Priority: Enable communities to thrive

We will work differently with local people and communities to: create a strong network of 'places to go, things to do and people to talk to', develop more locally responsive and community led solutions to local issues and enable people who use our services to take up opportunities in their area to improve their health and well-being, build strong social connections and take pride in the place they live in.

### Deliverables in 2022/23:

1. Continue to grow and strengthen our localities and ensure this is built into the development of the Integrated Care System
2. Take the next steps in developing a Community Hub as part of the village centre in Kingshurst, in line with our strategy to build the asset-based approach to prevention through better use of community assets and Council buildings
3. Develop and deliver the next stages of the Holiday Activity and Food Programme, including the Summer and Winter 2022 offers

### Outcomes by 2025 and beyond:

- Stronger, more connected, resourceful communities finding solutions to local problems (no change)
- People feel connected to their local community (new – from the Inclusive Growth Framework)
- I have control over my life and know where to seek help (new – from the Inclusive Growth Framework)



## Priority: Develop and promote the borough's economy, with a focus on revitalising our town and local centres

Vibrant town and local centres are an essential component of sustainable communities and the borough's economy.

### Deliverables in 2022/23:

1. Bring forward a refreshed Economic Strategy that maximises opportunities for Solihull
2. Ensure that the legacy of the Commonwealth Games drives tourism and economic growth by delivering our Tourism Action Plan
3. Continue to deliver the Solihull Town Centre Masterplan, including progress on Mell Square and plans for a new Police Station
4. Deliver the first phase of Solihull Town Centre Public Realm improvements

One of the Council's core activities is maintenance of the public realm. This makes an important contribution to a number of the Council's priorities by enabling people to get around and be active.

5. Continue the Kingshurst redevelopment (linked to Priority 8)
6. Bring forward a new masterplan for Chelmsley Wood Town Centre
7. Continue to implement the Shirley Economic Plan and support our other local centres
8. Deliver the March to September 2022 Cultural Festival Programme and develop the Culture and Arts Strategy
9. Develop a new approach to harnessing the adult education budget to increase the number of local people that complete pre-employment training and bootcamps linked to local job opportunities and to increase the number of local people who secure employment as a result.

### Outcomes by 2025 and beyond:

- Our town and local centres have stable or growing economies (no change)
- More visitors to the borough (no change)
- Improvements in skills and access to good work (no change)
- The local economy is more resilient to economic shocks (new – from Inclusive Growth Framework)

## Priority: Maximising the opportunities of UK Central and HS2

We want to focus on unlocking and spreading the local, regional and national benefits arising from HS2 through our plans for the UKC Hub.

### Deliverables in 2022/23:

1. Unlock the development opportunity at Arden Cross and HS2
2. Bring forward the new Solihull Connected Transport Strategy to improve rapid connectivity between key borough locations
3. Continue to implement active travel schemes to increase walking and cycling (including between Dickens Heath - Solihull town centre and Knowle - Solihull Town Centre)
4. Extend the Connected Autonomous Vehicle trials in the borough

### Outcomes by 2025 and beyond:

- People, businesses and the environment benefit from UKC and HS2, including increased access to good work (no change)
- People can access transport to work, retail and leisure activities (new – taken from the Inclusive Growth Framework)

## Priority: Increase the supply of affordable and social housing that is environmentally sustainable.

Population and household growth means that more housing is needed. It is important that housing of the right type is delivered in suitable locations to meet the needs of Solihull residents.

### Deliverables in 2022/23:

1. Adopt the new Solihull Local Plan
2. Consult on and approve the 10 year Housing Strategy
3. Produce the 1st 3 year implementation plan for the Housing Strategy
4. Implement approved green homes retrofit programme

We will also promote pathways to affordable home ownership to help local people onto the housing ladder. We will do this through shared ownership, a pilot Do It Yourself Shared Ownership (DIYSO) scheme for key public sector workers and implementation of a local First Homes Policy. We will work with the West Midlands Combined Authority to assess the benefit of 'Help to Own' in meeting local needs and promoting affordable homeownership.

### Outcomes by 2025 and beyond: (no change)

- More affordable and environmentally sustainable housing built
- All new housing to be net zero carbon by 2025

## Priority: Enhance our natural environment, improve air quality and reduce net carbon emissions

The council is committed to achieving our target of being net zero carbon by 2041 as a borough and by 2030 as a council and, to securing the benefits of this for everyone. Our net zero action plan sets out the steps we are taking.

### Deliverables in 2022/23:

1. Produce and start to implement the Solihull Net Zero Action Delivery Plan (due later in 2022)
2. Produce and implement the 2022/23 Environmental Plan for the Strategic Environment Contract
3. Continuation of the tree planting programme - plant an additional 25k trees by 31/3/23 and plan for subsequent years.
4. Produce and consult on the Natural Capital Investment Strategy and delivery programme
5. Publish, consult on and take forward for approval the Climate Change Supplementary Planning Document
6. Deliver the Heat Network next stages
7. Bring forward plans to support sustainable energy generation and management in the UK Central Hub area
8. Start the climate behaviour change programme
9. Limit carbon emission to a maximum of 7,599 tonnes in 2022/23, in line with the Council's carbon budget

### Outcomes by 2025 and beyond:

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

### From the Inclusive Growth Framework:

- People are able to learn new skills that are connected to local opportunities
- Businesses are aware of and addressing their environmental impact
- People can contribute to improving the environment in their day to day life
- People live in a healthy environment resilient to the impacts of a changing climate
- People can access clean energy

# Strong Foundations

## Priority: Promote employee wellbeing

### Deliverables in 2022/23:

1. Develop our wellbeing offer as an inclusive employer of choice.
2. Develop our managers to confidently support team wellbeing
3. Enable employees to self-manage their wellbeing
4. Enable an environment and culture that supports smarter ways of working

## Other Deliverables in 2022/23

### Strong regional & local partnerships

1. Influence to ensure strong place arrangements for Solihull's health and care provision, part of the Integrated Care System (ICS) for Birmingham and Solihull
2. Work with West Midlands Combined Authority to secure influence over the content of the next devolution deal and the local shape of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund

### Continue to Develop Smarter Ways of Working:

- Work with Service Areas and Directorates to develop the most suitable offer for each of our main administrative sites.
- Implement Hybrid Meeting Room technology in council buildings.
- Redesign The Core and Moat Lane Depot to Smarter Ways of Working standards.
- Implement Smarter Ways of Working at 142 Lode Lane, the Bluebell Centre, Chelmunds Place and Elmwood Place.
- Continue with the review of all human resource policies to reflect our new way of working.

### **Sound Finance and Management of Assets**

1. Develop a sustainable financial position for 2023/24 to 2025/26 which provides funding for adults and children's services that matches forecast demand.
2. Work closely with health organisations to ensure that the new Integrated Care System (ICS) does not destabilise the council's financial position through changes to the proportion of council funding received via health organisations.
3. Ensure the Council's full involvement in the reform of the Local Government Finance System during 2022/23.
4. Delivery of a corporate landlord model for managing our buildings.

### **Digital Empowerment**

1. Refresh the Council's Digital Strategy to accommodate the latest corporate and directorate priorities.
2. Complete the migration to Oracle Cloud of the finance, procurement and Human Resources systems underpinning council operations. (This is perhaps the biggest and most complex digital challenge facing the council).
3. Ongoing implementation of Microsoft 365 to support Smarter Ways of Working.
4. Undertake trials and prepare for the replacement of the Council's telephone system during 2023.

# MOVING FORWARD

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## How we work together to deliver

A Senior Officer from each of our Directorates is responsible for developing a plan for delivering each priority, including milestones and success measures. They will work with the support services in our Resources Directorate to agree what support they need and we then work together for successful delivery.

## How will we know our progress?

We are bringing together our Council Plan outcomes with the outcomes in the Solihull Inclusive Growth Framework, into a single framework, with metrics to allow us to track progress against our ambitions.

The work programme for the Council's Scrutiny Boards is based on the Council Plan and 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.

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

- › Quarterly review of the delivery plan through the Council's wider Corporate Leadership Team.
- › A report to the Resources & Delivering Value Scrutiny Board each March summarising delivery over the previous year.
- › An Annual Report setting out progress and challenges in delivering our Council Plan.



Intended Outcomes



Key things to do

# Solihull Council Plan 2020-25

Updated March 2022



### 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

### Actioning our Climate Change Declaration

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

### People and Communities

- Children and their families are safer and better supported by statutory and early help services
- Sustainable, quality, affordable provision for adults & children with complex needs
- Improvements in skills and access to good work
- Improvements in early childhood development and school readiness, particularly in disadvantaged communities
- Connected, resourceful communities where people find solutions to local issues

Learning and recovery from Covid-19 (Health, Economic, Educational and Social)

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

### Strong Foundations:

Connected and engaged communities and a vibrant VCS | Strong effective regional and local partnerships  
Sound finance and management of assets | Smarter Ways of Working | Digital Empowerment | Analysis and Insight