Solihull
METROPOLITAN
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Annual Governance Statement 2025-26

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Annual Governance Statement

2025/26

1 Introduction

Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) is dedicated to creating a borough "where everyone has an equal chance to be healthier, happier, safer, and more prosperous through growth that creates opportunities for all." This vision is underpinned by the Council Plan, which outlines key priorities and provides a framework for addressing challenges and opportunities.

The Council is responsible for conducting its business lawfully and in accordance with proper standards. It ensures public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, and spent economically, efficiently, and effectively. The Council's Code of Corporate Governance articulates its commitment to maintaining strong governance arrangements and adhering to high standards of conduct. To evaluate the effectiveness of these arrangements, the Council publishes an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) each year. The AGS offers a detailed assessment of the Council's governance practices, including an annual review to ensure their continued effectiveness. It provides assurance for the year ending 31 March 2026 and up to the approval of the Statement of Accounts, highlighting actions taken or required to address any areas of concern.

2 The Governance Framework

The Council has embedded good governance within its constitution, policies, and procedures and has adopted a Code of Corporate Governance. The AGS demonstrates compliance with this Code while meeting the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015.

The AGS is subject to rigorous scrutiny and approval processes, beginning with endorsement by the Audit Committee and culminating in final approval by the Governance Committee. Once signed by the Council's Leader and Chief Executive, it is published on the Council's website for transparency.

The governance framework aligns with the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (2016)' and has been consistently applied, particularly during the year ending 31 March 2026. This framework ensures the Council's operations reflect established principles of good governance listed below:

- Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.
- Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.
- Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits.
- Determining interventions necessary to optimize the achievement of intended outcomes.
- Developing the entity's capacity, including the capacity of its leadership and individuals within it.
- Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.
- Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability.

3 Review of Effectiveness

The Council reviews the effectiveness of its governance framework regularly to ensure the arrangements are effective now and remain fit for purpose for the future. This is driven by the Directorate Leadership Teams (DLT), the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT), Internal Audit, External Auditors, and other external review agencies. Proportionate oversight and governance arrangements have been put in place for arm's length bodies.

The Council also undertakes annually a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework, including the system of internal control. The Council has developed a methodology for reviewing its governance framework and producing this AGS which is in line with proper practice. The outcomes of the review are considered by the Chief Executive with support from the relevant Statutory Officers, Audit Committee and Governance Committee (who approve the final Statement). Once approved, the AGS is published alongside the Statement of Accounts.

As well as providing overall assurance about the Council's governance arrangements, the methodology identifies any processes or areas where governance needs to be strengthened, and this is translated into action plans for each directorate.

The section below details some of the assurances received during the 2025/2026 year.

3.1 Assurance from Members and Boards

Information on the agenda, minutes and decisions taken by the Full Council and the Committees detailed below are published on the Council website.

3.1.1 Full Council: The Council consisted of 51 Councillors who are elected by the local community. Full Council approved all key policies and set the strategic direction for the Council.

3.1.2 Cabinet Members: The Cabinet is an executive group responsible for the overall business of the Council. The Cabinet met collectively in public on a monthly basis, to make decisions in line with the Council's overall policies and approved budget.

3.1.3 Scrutiny Boards: The decisions of the Cabinet were subject to scrutiny by a different group of Councillors. Scrutiny Boards met regularly to monitor the work of Cabinet, to provide policy development support and to monitor the Council's performance against its stated objectives.

3.1.4 Audit Committee: The Audit Committee provided independent, effective assurance about the adequacy of the Council's governance environment. The Audit Committee met regularly and received reports on the adequacy of the risk management framework and the internal control environment. They also had oversight of the financial reporting, treasury management and annual governance processes.

3.1.5 Governance Committee: The Governance Committee is responsible for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Councillors, Co-opted Members, Parish and Town Councillors. Compliance with the Code of Conduct for Councillors is monitored by the number of complaints received by the Monitoring Officer. There have been 20 complaints about Members of Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council during 2025/26. These were all dealt with by the Monitoring Officer without referral for formal investigation on the basis that no evidence of a breach of the Code of Conduct was presented and / or an informal resolution was achieved.

3.2 Assurance from the Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer

The statutory functions undertaken by these two officers ensures legality, financial prudence and transparency, providing a key source of assurance that the systems and procedures of internal control are effective, efficient and are complied with. Both officers were involved in the production of this AGS and provided individual assurances that it accurately describes the Council's governance environment. Along with the Deputy S151 Officer and Head of Internal Audit, they also meet Monthly as a Statutory Officers group, and the S151 Officer briefs the Chief Executive as Head of Paid Service on any relevant issues as is needed. The Section 151 officer also provided a clear Section 25 statement to support the budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy approval by Full Council.

3.3 The Role of the Statutory Officers

The Council's statutory officers provide key assurance on the effectiveness of governance arrangements. Through their respective responsibilities, they support lawful and transparent decision-making, maintain sound financial management and stewardship, and ensure that the Council is effectively led and appropriately resourced to deliver its strategic objectives and intended outcomes.

The statutory roles comprise the Monitoring Officer, who provides assurance on governance and legal compliance under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989; the Section 151 Officer, is responsible for financial governance, and the effectiveness of risk management and control framework under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972; and the Head of Paid Service, provides assurance on corporate leadership, organisational capacity, and management governance under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

These responsibilities have been considered in the preparation of this Statement, and it is confirmed that during 2025/26, the Council's governance effectively discharged the responsibilities of the statutory officers. The arrangements are consistent with the principles set out in the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) statement on Delivering Good Governance in Local Government, which recognises the critical role of statutory officers in maintaining effective governance and accountability across local authorities.

3.4 Assurance from Management

Individual Directors, Heads of Service and Managers have provided appropriate assurance that the Council has effective governance arrangements in place but have identified that some operational actions are needed to improve the Council's overall internal control environment. As a result, an action plan has been developed and progress to implement the required improvements will be monitored.

3.5 Other Internal assurance

3.5.1 Opinion of the Head of Internal Audit: The Council's Internal Audit arrangements are reviewed annually and considered to be effective for the period being reported, conforming to the requirements of the Global Internal Audit Standards, and CIPFA's Statement on the role of the Head of Internal Audit.

The Head of Internal Audit works closely with the Audit Committee and the CLT to provide regular updates on work performed, including the Council's counter-fraud initiatives. An annual report of all work undertaken by the Council's Audit Services is presented to the Audit Committee each year.

In conclusion, and considering all available evidence, Internal Audit has independently rated the standard of internal control in operation across the Council as offering moderate assurance. This judgement is based on:

- the governance, risk management and control framework being generally adequate, although improvements have been identified for certain areas.
- external regulators have given Adult Social Care and Children's Services 'good' ratings.
- internal Audit opinions on core financial systems remain at full/substantial assurance levels.
- significant concerns have been identified in audit reviews across the Council with high levels of limited or no assurance reviews being issued.
- fraud levels remain similar to last year.

The 2026/27 Internal Audit Plan will focus on following up outstanding recommendations to improve internal controls and strengthening counter-fraud arrangements.

3.5.2 Risk Management: The Council's approach to risk management is set out in its Risk Management Policy and is supported by robust governance arrangements. The risk management framework includes the Council's approach to risk appetite. Risks are identified, managed, and monitored through structured risk registers, with clear ownership, mitigation actions, and regular reporting to DLT, CLT, and the Audit Committee. Cabinet also receive an annual report which includes a copy of the corporate risk register. High-level risks and the actions being taken to mitigate them are published on the Council's website to ensure transparency. The Council's external auditors, in their 2024/25 Annual Report, acknowledged that effective arrangements are in place for risk management.

Risks are regularly reviewed based on their risk profile and there is an escalation process for the most significant risks, which ensures that senior management and members are aware of those risks that pose the most serious threat to the Council's objectives and how they are being managed. In addition, the Audit Committee request additional information if required to assure themselves that risks are being managed well, for example there has been a specific update from the Director of Resources at each Audit Committee on the prevailing financial risks and work to mitigate this given the sustained level of high risk identified.

There is a visible alignment between key risks to performance objectives in the Council Plan priorities and the Assistant Directors group receives regular updates on these risks. Over the past year, progress has been made to strengthen the Council's approach through improved governance arrangements, including the addition of climate-related and sustainability risks into the Corporate Risk Register to support effective oversight, monitoring, and management.

3.5.3 Performance Management: Performance is managed at all levels of the organisation and the Council's approach to performance management continues to evolve in response to the changing context nationally and locally.

In response to recommendations in the External Auditor's Annual Reports for 2021/22 and 2022/23 that performance reporting should be standardised, a proposal to introduce a 'Top 40' key performance indicators was approved by Cabinet on 17 October 2024. Measures selected for the Top 40 are those where Council activity

should be able to impact on performance. The Top 40 will be a dynamic document, with the ability to add or remove metrics as appropriate. Progress is shared with Cabinet Portfolio Holders on a quarterly basis and scrutinised annually by the Resources and Delivering Value Scrutiny Board.

The Council's ambitions are set out within the Council Plan, which is reviewed annually. Each of the Council Plan milestones has a Senior Responsible Owner and agreed governance to monitor progress in achieving milestones and agree corrective action where required. Progress against delivering Council plan milestones is then reviewed and assessed on a quarterly basis by the Assistant Directors Group and Wider CLT.

The remit and work plan of each of the Scrutiny Boards is aligned to the priorities in the Council Plan. This places the Council Plan at the heart of scrutiny, enabling the Boards to scrutinise delivery in detail and to inform strategy over the whole year. Progress in delivering the Council Plan is then scrutinised by the Resources and Delivering Value Scrutiny Board annually. The Annual Report available on the Council's website reflects on achievements in implementing Council Plan priorities.

A quarterly wider CLT meeting is held to look at a range of performance information. This includes progress in delivering the Council Plan, the Top 40 and the key business scorecard that provides assurance across a whole range of key business process measures plus financial, risk management and audit recommendation monitoring.

Directorate and Senior Leadership Teams monitor service performance monthly, including aspects of compliance and quality. Heads of Service and Team Managers monitor and review team performance metrics. Both Council Plan milestones and key performance metrics are reflected in individual targets and monitored through individual performance and development reviews.

At each level of the performance hierarchy, there is an expectation that appropriate action is identified and taken to improve performance where required. There is also provision to escalate to the next level of the hierarchy, for example, where performance is out of agreed tolerance or there is potential for performance issues to have a wider corporate impact.

Directorate oversight documents are reviewed by the CLT monthly allowing for corporate oversight of key service pressures and forthcoming issues. In January 2025, Wider CLT decided that the Top 40 gives CLT sufficient sight of key performance indicators. Guidance has been issued to Directors and DLTs that, where they judge that there is a performance issue that needs corporate visibility, this should be flagged in the next monthly Directorate Oversight report with a view to it being escalated to the Top 40, if it is not already included.

3.5.4 Information Governance: The Council's approach to Information Governance (IG) is underpinned by policy, guidance and training. This includes a suite of IG policies and online training courses which are mandatory for all employees to complete. There are clear management and accountability structures in place, which are outlined in the Council's Information Governance Framework and underpinned by a Corporate Information Governance Manager, with responsibility for managing IG risks. Employees across the Council have a good understanding of information governance matters in the workplace and where support and training can be obtained from when needed.

The Corporate Information Governance Manager is responsible for maintaining the Council's procedures for managing Data Protection and Information Security incidents and for ensuring that more serious incidents are shared with the Head of Human Resources and the relevant Assistant Director for their review. Each investigation will examine the containment of the incident, the risks posed, who needs to be notified about the incident and an overall evaluation and response to risks or systemic problems identified. A summarised list of any information security incidents is reported weekly to CLT, with an additional formal report provided on a quarterly basis, including a description of actions being taken to manage Data Protection breaches and the associated risks.

3.5.5 Financial Management: The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) approved in February 2026 noted the seriousness of the financial challenge facing the Council and outlined the Council's approach to meeting the forecast budget gap in 2026/27 and beyond.

The financial challenge facing the Council has been clarified and exacerbated by the conclusion of the government's fair funding review and the introduction of a new national funding system for local authorities, alongside a reset of the business rates retention scheme. These changes have reduced the amount of funding available to Solihull, and the funding position worsens through to 2028/29 as the transitional protection built into the system is phased out.

Overall, the impact on Solihull's finances is a reduction in expected funding of more than £9 million over the next three years. Several factors drive this, including the redistribution of business rates growth, the way the new national formula treats councils with lower-than-average band D council tax levels, and national decisions such as maintaining the "recovery grant", which benefits other areas at the cost of authorities like Solihull.

A major issue for Solihull is the way the new system assumes that all councils can set council tax at the national average level. Because Solihull's council tax is lower than the national average, the amount of "assumed council tax income" that the government deducts from our funding allocation is more than we actually collect. This places Solihull at a disadvantage compared to many other councils.

Because the new funding model effectively rewards councils with higher council tax levels, it creates pressure for low council tax authorities like Solihull to "catch up" towards the national average. This is one of the reasons the Council's Section 151 Officer (Director of Resources) has strongly advised that council tax increases above the usual referendum limits may be needed in 2027/28 and 2028/29 to ensure the

Council's funding keeps pace with Solihull's assessed level of need under the new national funding formula.

To address these challenges, in November 2025 the Chief Executive convened the Corporate Transformation Programme Board – which consists of senior officers to oversee a programme of work to further develop our transformation activity to improve service provision and develop proposals to meet the MTFS funding gap. This programme has 4 key workstreams that evolved from the programmes of work originally being led by the Financial Sustainability Board, with Senior Responsible Officers assigned to each workstream:

- Artificial intelligence (AI) Programme - delivering internal and external efficiencies through AI adoption
- Financial sustainability Programme - optimising key financial processes and support service activity to generate savings
- Asset realisation - maximising value from Council assets
- Demand, insight and prevention - supporting long-term demand planning for future services

Grant Thornton's external audit of the Council's financial statements for 2024/25 concluded that the Council has effective governance arrangements in place, with a robust risk management process, and it works effectively in partnership with a range of regional organisations. The auditors' annual report did however identify a significant weakness in financial sustainability arrangements and recommended that the Council should "urgently identify and implement a credible programme of long-term savings that are deliverable and supported by robust governance. It should also develop a clear strategy for reducing reliance on reserves and one-off measures.

In autumn 2024, the Council commissioned CIPFA to undertake an independent review of the Council's financial position and governance arrangements. The review concluded that:

- No deficiencies were identified in financial or risk management arrangements.
- No governance issues were identified and relations between members and officers are good.
- The Council is generally low cost but with higher-than-expected cost outliers in children's services and highways.
- The Council's arrangements for funding its capital programme are sound.
- The Council is compliant with the CIPFA Prudential Code and the treasury management code.

The CIPFA review did however also identify a significant risk in respect of the Council's financial sustainability, observing that the Council must "place greater emphasis on the need for quantifying and delivering its financial sustainability plan." The review recommended that the Council apply for Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) from the government to manage the forecast overspend for 2024/25 and balance the budget for 2025/26, noting that without EFS the Council was at risk of moving to a financially unsustainable position.

The government's EFS scheme allows local authorities to apply for capitalisation directions (approval to capitalise revenue expenditure) and/or the ability to increase council tax above referendum limits to manage short term financial challenges. In December 2024, the Council formally applied for EFS totalling £48.273 million over

2024/25 and 2025/26, and this application was agreed in principle in February 2025. In August 2025, the Government formally approved the application for 2024/25, and in April 2026, officers wrote to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to formally request the amount agreed in principle for 2025/26.

The Council's application was focused on the additional improvement investment made in children's services and on the in-year pressures on business rates income, which together have affected the Council's sustainability and depleted reserve balances in recent years.

EFS has not provided a permanent solution to the financial position, but it is a mechanism to provide the Council with more time to deliver a transformation programme that will generate sustainable mitigations to our financial pressures. With that in mind, the Council's EFS application has enabled the Council to balance the forecast position for 2024/25 and 2025/26, stabilise reserves as per external audit recommendations, whilst also creating a £10 million fund to initiate the level of transformation required to begin to restore financial sustainability over the medium term.

The Council's latest MTFS for the period 2026/27 – 2028/29 was approved in February 2026. The budget still shows "Savings to be Identified" in both 2027/28 and 2028/29, although 2026/27 was balanced.

The Director of Resources and Section 151 officer asserted in his Section 25 statement that it was his professional opinion that "…the medium-term position remains high-risk and requires urgent action to deliver further recurring savings and the need to secure council tax flexibilities through Exceptional Financial Support from 2027/28 to avoid depletion of reserves and to balance future years' budgets".

The Corporate Delivery Board that was set up in February 2025 to oversee the programme of transformation remains in place. It continues to effectively monitor the deliverability of the existing identified savings through both the Corporate Transformation Programme and Directorate Transformation Programmes. The remit of the Board has also been expanded to identify new opportunities to deliver savings to address the structural deficits that remain in the latest MTFS.

The latest MTFS also includes commentary on how Solihull Council compares in the CIPFA index of financial resilience for English councils, which assesses each authority against several indicators, including levels of reserves, external debt and auditors' judgements, to illustrate each council's financial position relative to that of comparator authorities. The latest version of the index, which uses outturn data for 2024/25, shows the following for the measures considered most relevant by CIPFA:

- Reserves: Solihull falls in the average risk category compared to our nearest neighbours in respect of the overall level of reserves, but higher risk in terms of the change in reserves, particularly in relation to the use of unallocated reserves. This reflects the significant usage of reserves in recent years and supports the view that existing reserve levels should be protected as far as possible from further reductions.
- Social care ratio: the index suggests that spend on adult social care as a proportion of net revenue expenditure remains lower than average compared to our nearest neighbours, while spend on children's social care is the highest in the group (a slight worsening from 2023/24 when Solihull's spend placed it second

highest in its group). The latter reflects the significant increase in funding allocated to support the improvement journey in children's services, but it should be noted that these measures are fairly crude, and much more detailed benchmarking is utilised in the Council to assess relative performance in both adults' and children's services.

- Debt and interest payable: the index suggests that levels of gross external debt remain average for the comparator group but that interest payable as a proportion of net revenue expenditure is above average at 5.6%.

3.5.6 Equalities Framework: The Council monitors and assesses its effectiveness of systems and strategies in place to advance equality and comply with its duties under the Equality Act 2010. As such:

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) is a key part of the Council's core business for improving the quality of life and life chances for everyone. This commitment is set out in our Council Plan where 'Growth creates opportunities for all'.
- The Council has in place an EDI Strategy 2024-2027, which drives the EDI work in the Council. There are also several published EDI documents that can viewed by this link: Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).
- The Council's senior leaders champion EDI.
- There have been no prosecutions or enforcement notices issued against the Council for breach of the Equality Act 2010.
- In line with the statutory deadline of the 30 March of each year, annual equality information which is proportionate and relevant, is published on the Council's internet pages.
- This information includes Gender Pay Gap reporting; examples of how the Council and its' services have met the obligations of the Equality Act and information on the diversity of the Council's workforce.
- The Council works in accordance with the Council's published Equal Opportunities Policy Statement.
- There is regular reporting to Senior Leadership Teams (SLT) in the Council on the progress of equality work across the organisation.
- It is the responsibility for each directorate to ensure that EDI is covered regularly at DLT Meetings.
- A process to assess against 'due regard' under the Act is in place by way of 'Fair Treatment Assessments' (FTAs).
- Equality implications form part of the template for reports to Members on decisions.
- All new employees undertake mandatory equality and diversity training as part of their induction.
- All staff are required to complete mandatory equality and diversity training which must be refreshed every 3 years.
- Briefing session(s) on equality and diversity are included in the training and development offer for new and existing Councillors and the offer is extended to existing Councillors if they wish to attend.
- Equality screening is included as part of the procurement tendering process for organisations providing services to us or on our behalf.

3.5.7 Health and Safety: As part of the Council's Health and Safety Management System, regular performance reporting is made to the Corporate Health and Safety Board, CLT, DLTs and the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Resources. The reporting provides an overview of key performance, including the number of reported work-related accidents/incidents, commentary on key aspects of health and safety including legislative updates and policy development.

The information presented confirms that occupational health and safety arrangements are generally in place and working effectively within Solihull Council, but with some areas of improvement identified with clear action being taken and the impact monitored where required.

The Council has appropriate governance arrangements in place to manage and monitor work-related health and safety matters through its Corporate Health and Safety Board. The Council has nominated a director to be its Corporate Health and Safety Champion.

A corporate level health and safety action plan is in place to help make improvements to the management of health and safety in the organisation, with directorate-level plans under-pinning these at a local level.

3.5.8 Business Continuity and Resilience*:* The CSW Resilience Team comprises Local Authority Emergency Planning Officers working on behalf of Coventry City Council (CCC), Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC), and Warwickshire County Council (WCC). The team operates a 24/7 Duty Officer system, ensuring an effective and coordinated response to incidents occurring across the sub-region.

Under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, local authorities have a statutory duty to maintain robust business continuity management arrangements. This requirement is fulfilled through individual services developing, owning, and maintaining their own response plans and procedures to manage service disruption. Where disruption exceeds service-level capabilities, escalation processes are in place to activate the Council's overarching emergency management and business continuity arrangements.

The Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) receives regular updates on business continuity and resilience planning to ensure preparedness and enable the delivery of an effective response to key risks.

Support for critical services is sustained through targeted engagement with key individuals and service areas, alongside broader collaboration across critical service functions.

3.5.9 Partnerships: The Council has a range of statutory duties that require it to work in partnership. The Council plays a lead role as one of three statutory partners responsible for safeguarding children and adults, ensuring community safety, and convening a Health and Wellbeing Board. More generally, partnership working is essential in working towards the Council's vision, supporting the delivery of sustainable services, and maximising local assets. The Council plays a key role in convening and promoting partnership working across public, private, voluntary and community sectors in Solihull.

A partnership induction pack is in place to provide members of Solihull multi-agency boards and partnerships with the key information they need including: a description of

the common purpose across all our partnerships, the responsibilities of each of the main multi-agency partnerships and an overview of the relationships between them. This pack is updated and circulated to the boards at least twice a year.

Relevant responsibilities for partnership working are included in the job descriptions of Directors, Assistant Directors and other senior Council Officers. Each of the main Partnership Boards has an identified officer whose role is to manage the work of that board and to co-ordinate with other board support officers. An annual item to review partnership arrangements to ensure that they remain fit for purpose is part of the CLT and Assistant Director Group Governance Maps.

A Partnership Co-ordination Plan is in place with the aim of achieving greater co-ordination, communication, and a joined-up strategic approach across the multi-agency boards. This is overseen through a Board Chairs and Support Officers meeting. Actions in 2025/26 included implementation of a co-ordinated approach to communications messages for professionals and the public, ongoing work to ensure appropriate oversight of risk across partnerships and the maintenance of 'plan on a page' summaries for each of the main partnership boards with the aim of clarifying who is doing what and reducing duplication and any gaps.

All members of the main partnership boards are invited to an annual boards / partnerships event. The 2025/26 event concentrated on sharing progress and seeking feedback on work to date, and identified improvement areas for 2026-27, including identifying a new priority to strengthen commitment and approach to addressing all forms of inequality and division, including the development of an anti-racist strategy within this.

3.6 Assurance from Customers

3.6.1 Customer Feedback: Overall, 865 complaints were received in 2025/2026 which is an increase of 124 complaints compared to the previous year, 2024/2025, when 741 were received. There were also an additional 416 complaints that were cancelled with the agreement of the customer and raised as service requests or referred to a different complaints process.

Customer comments and feedback are also shared with service areas for improvement and policy and process design. During 2025/2026, 1022 customer comments were captured across all channels. There were 763 compliments received, which is a decrease from the previous year. All the data will be analysed and full information and learning from complaints is provided in the annual report.

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) have introduced a new Complaint Handling Code. The Council implemented the code from 1 April 2025

and the LGSCO will be reporting on it from April 2026. Any adverse LGSCO outcomes, with the learning and actions needing to be taken are routinely reported to CLT when published.

Full details of the numbers and reasons for complaints and compliments and customer comments are published in the Annual Complaints and Compliments report. The 2025/26 report is expected to be presented to the Resources & Delivering Value Scrutiny Board later in the year.

3.6.2 Ombudsman Complaints: The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) provide a complaint handling service to ensure that local public services

are accountable to the people that use them and that local authorities put things right when they go wrong. Since May 2025, the LGSCO have produced an Annual Review Letter for each Council, in which it publishes statistics relating to enquiries and complaints which have been made about them to the Ombudsman for the previous financial year.

This data is uploaded to an interactive map, which gives people the opportunity to see how their Local Authority is performing at the click of a button. The map collates the annual letters that the Ombudsman has sent to each Local Authority, along with the number (percentage in previous years) of complaints that have been upheld following Ombudsman investigations, how often the local authority has complied with Ombudsman recommendations, and the number (percentage in previous years) of upheld cases where they find that the Local Authority has already produced a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman for the previous financial year. This map can be found at: Your council's performance (lgo.org.uk).

During 2025/26, in terms of overall administration and in line with the Ombudsman's Annual Letter, the number of cases referred to Solihull Council by the LGSCO decreased from 65 in 2024/25 to 58 in 2025/26. Whilst there is a national trend upwards concerning the numbers of complainants contacting the Ombudsman, Solihull has seen a lower risk than the average Council.

Out of the fifty-eight new cases referred, the Ombudsman chose to investigate 12. All of those that required a response were responded to within the timescales agreed with the Ombudsman.

Current data shows that the number of complaint investigations where the Council has been found at fault during 2025/26 is eleven. This is a slight decrease from the 18 investigated complaints in 2024/25, and the 16 upheld complaints investigated and places the Council at a slightly higher rate of upheld complaints per 100,000 population (5) than the national average (4.6). It is noted however that in the previous year it was found that the risk rate of upheld complaints per 100,000 population was 7.3. However, the Council was found to have delivered a satisfactory response in 27% of cases prior to referral to the ombudsman, which is an improvement on the 25% position in 2024/25. In addition, the Council has maintained a 100% compliance rate with Ombudsman recommendations, and this is compared to an average of 79% in similar authorities. All of the individual decisions made by the Ombudsman are published on their website and can be found at lgo.org.uk.

There were eight live ongoing investigations carried forward to 2026/27.

3.7 Assurance from External Inspections

3.7.1 External Audit: Grant Thornton are the Council's external auditors and there is a good working relationship with them. They meet with the S151 Officer, Deputy S151 Officer, monitoring officer and Head of Internal Audit to discuss any matters which the auditors may need to be aware of and vice versa. There is a team of audit staff who work alongside the Financial Operations Team to audit the annual accounts. External Audit provides regular verbal and written reports through Audit and Governance Committees, mainly on the annual accounts but they also report on grant audits that they conduct and the value for money audit work that they carry out in conjunction with the final accounts audit. They also carry out a separate ICT audit, which is reported alongside the accounts. The External Auditor also meets independently with the Audit Committee and Internal Audit, as per best practice.

Previous years' external audit reports include positive statements on both the accounts and the value for money conclusion. During 2025/26, the Council received final reports for 2024/25.

The 2024/25 Value for Money conclusion included three key recommendations. One related to the financial sustainability of the Council as a whole and was about the Council needing to continue and accelerate its current package of activities to address the significant structural budget deficit and reach a sustainable financial position in the medium-term.

The second related to strengthening our oversight of the DSG deficit by ensuring there is quarterly reporting to the Audit Committee. This recommendation was prior to the Government's announcement regarding the SEND reforms and funding plans.

The final one was in relation to Children's Services and improving the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of Children's Services and continuing to progress the improvements required by Ofsted and the Children's Services Commissioner.

All three recommendations were accepted by management and will be followed up on by Grant Thornton as part of the 2025/26 Value for Money work.

3.7.2 Ofsted: Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, it inspects:

- Services that care for children and young people
- Services providing education and skills for learners of all ages
- Local authorities to find out how well they carry out their statutory duties in relation to schools and other providers.

Inspection reports are available on the Ofsted website.

During 2025/26, the external inspection and regulatory position continued to show progress in Solihull Children's Services. Ofsted published a further monitoring visit in April 2025, focused on the Front Door, MASH, EDT, Early Help and LADO arrangements, which formed part of the established programme of monitoring activity following the inadequate judgement in 2022. This was followed by a full Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services in November 2025, published in January 2026, which marked a significant shift in Solihull's inspection position to Good and reflected the sustained improvement made across services.

A further significant milestone just after the end of 2025/26 was the decision by the Department for Education to revoke the statutory direction issued to Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council in relation to children's services. The direction, originally issued in March 2023 following the inadequate Ofsted judgement and the Commissioner's review, was formally revoked with effect from 30 April 2026. This reflected the progress made by the Council and its partners, and marked an important point in Solihull's improvement journey, signalling a move away from formal intervention and towards sustained improvement with strengthened local accountability and oversight.

To support this next phase of improvement, the Council has developed and is now delivering its Pathway to Excellence Plan. The Pathway to Excellence Plan provides the Council's core improvement framework for responding to the findings of the November 2025 Ofsted inspection and for securing sustained progress during 2026/27. The plan is explicitly aligned to the seven areas identified by Ofsted as requiring further attention and translates these into clear workstreams, actions, timescales and intended impact. It addresses the specific recommendations relating to the quality of assessments, the effectiveness of independent reviewing officers, permanence planning, care experienced young people's pathway plans, children's influence on corporate parenting, commissioned advocacy and mental health oversight, and the quality of joint assessments for 16 and 17 year-olds presenting as homeless. Importantly, the plan is not simply a tracking document; it is underpinned by strengthened governance, monthly Ambitious for Children oversight, quality assurance activity and regular performance reporting. This provides a clear line of sight from inspection findings to frontline practice improvement and helps to ensure that change is embedded and sustained over time.

Following The Youth Justice Service inspection in September 2023 with the overall service identified as requiring improvement, there was a further inspection in March 2025 which covered Out of Court Disposals. This was a national thematic review. Positive feedback was identified as well as areas for development from the inspection team.

Residential Children's Homes:

In Spring 2024, Solihull opened its first of three small homes. The first achieved registration on 31st May 2024 (Chapters) which has had several inspections with Ofsted during its registration. The most recent inspection was an Assurance Visit held on the 27th of January 2026 which evidenced significant change and progress within the home, compared to previous full inspections. We are expecting a full inspection during 2026/27.

The second home was registered on 2nd June 2025 (Briars) which had its first full inspection in January 2026, achieving 'Good'. The third home had its registration submitted on 30th December 2025, and we are currently waiting for Ofsted to undertake their registration visit.

Each home has a full staff team and have full time, permanent Registered Managers and Deputy Managers in post. There has been a recent Management of Change undertaken by the Responsible Individual who has implemented a new team structure, and also working arrangements for the service, providing the children and young people with stability in their care arrangements.

There are ongoing areas of development, which are being managed accordingly in line with the individual service plans, and the Responsible Individual's plan to develop the service wider.

3.7.3 Care Quality Commission (CQC): Following the publication of the assessment in March 2026, Solihull Adult Social Care was rated 'Good' overall (84%), with three areas rated 'Outstanding' and six rated 'Good' and no areas requiring improvement.

This outcome reflects strong, consistent delivery across services, with particular strengths in partnership working, prevention, and support to unpaid carers, alongside positive feedback from people who use services on being treated with respect, listened to, and supported to maintain independence.

The inspection provides assurance that the Council has effective leadership, a confident and knowledgeable workforce, and a strong focus on achieving positive outcomes, supported by established governance, quality assurance, and continuous improvement arrangements.

We will continue to build on this position through ongoing self-assessment, performance monitoring, and delivery of targeted improvement plans aligned to learning from the inspection.

3.7.4 Peer Challenges: In March, Solihull and Walsall participated in a peer review. For Solihull, the focus was on children we care for, specifically participation, permanency and reunification. The peer challenge showed strong ambition and multiple aligned improvement initiatives in Solihull. Strengths included partnership working, strategic ownership, and development of permanency and participation systems. Areas for improvement related to consistency, embedding practice, and integrating initiatives. There was strong mutual learning between Solihull and Walsall, particularly in relation to anti-racist practice, workforce development, and participation. The session reinforced the importance of quality over compliance and ensuring children's voices drive strategy and practice. Reflections also identified opportunities for ongoing collaboration between Solihull and Walsall, with Solihull offering regional learning on permanency tracking and children's voice. It was agreed that continued shared work would support coherence, improvement, and sustainability.

3.8 Group Activities

Our group activities are as defined in our Annual Accounting Statement. For the 2025/26 year our 'Group' relationships were as follows:

Solihull Community Housing (SCH), a 'not for profit' company set up and owned by the Council to manage its housing services.

Urban Growth Company (UGC), a special purpose vehicle created to realise the full economic potential of the HS2 Interchange Station and related infrastructure.

Mell Square Ltd, which holds the ground lease interests and freeholds of a number of key commercial town centre properties to enable the Council to continue to play an active role, with partners, in shaping the future of the town centre.

Solihull Energy Ltd, which is a newly formed company which will aim to create sustainable energy solutions for the borough when it becomes operational.

The Financial Operations division provided financial support services to all these subsidiary companies for the 2025/26 financial year.

There are also Joint Venture Relationships with the Coventry and Solihull Waste Disposal Company Ltd and Sherbourne Recycling Ltd.

4 Updates on Governance Concerns Identified in Previous Year's AGS (2024/2025)

Concerns Identified	Responsible Officer	Progress Update
The Corporate Delivery Board needs to continue to drive the Transformation Programme to assure delivery of the budget savings agreed, and to identify further savings to address future years gaps in the MTFS in order to rebuild the Council's financial sustainability. This will also require on-going management action to continue to control in year spending.	Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer	The CDB ensured that the majority of savings in the 2025/26 budget were delivered and overall, the Council delivered a £7.2m underspend due to the strong application of in year spending and recruitment controls. The CDB also ensured that sufficient future savings were identified to help balance the 2026/27 budget. However, due to a poor national funding settlement for Solihull following the fair funding review and business rates reset, the council is still faced with material gaps in the two future years in the current MTFS of £18m and £22m respectively for 2027/28 and 2028/29. The Section 151 Officer's Section 25 statement at the Full Council budget setting in February 2026 clearly set out the future challenges and stated that in his opinion, Members would need to seriously consider above threshold Council Tax increases in both future years alongside further savings. The CDB continues to own the work on further savings and budget mitigation options and continued to drive this work forward following the approval of the 2026/27 budget. There is already an emerging list of options being developed through the board's work, some of which are aligned with the Corporate Transformation Programme.
The Internal Audit team has issued a number of limited or no assurance reports across SMBC, SCH and maintained schools for 2024-25 which will be followed up during 2025-26. There are also outstanding 2023/24 reviews which have yet to be followed up due to timing or resourcing issues: • Children's Homes – Level 5 • SCH Contract Management – Level 4 • Children's Financial Team Compliance – Level 4 • Financial Assessments – Level 4	Various directorates as applicable	We have undertaken follow ups of 2024/25 reviews which resulted in limited or no assurance reports being issued: • Children's Homes was followed up and regraded to Level 3. • SCH Staff Appointments was followed up and was regraded to Level 3. SCH Spandrel panels was followed up as part of the SCH Contract Management follow up. These areas have been regraded to Level 3.

Concerns Identified	Responsible Officer	Progress Update
• ICT Assets – Level 5 (draft) • Peterbrook School – Level 4 • Reynalds Cross School – Level 4		• Children's Services Cash Usage was followed up alongside the Children's Finance Team Compliance follow up. This has now been regraded to Level 3. • Direct Payments was followed up. Children's Direct Payments was regraded to Level 2, although Adults remained Level 4 and will require further follow up. • ICT Assets will be followed up in 26/27 once the technical solution has been implemented • Peterbrook School – this school became an academy, so it ceased to be maintained and wasn't followed up • Reynalds Cross School – this was followed up in 25/26 and regraded to Level 2

5 Significant Governance Issues Identified During 2025/26

Using the Council's established risk management approach, "significant" governance issues are those that could potentially lead to one or more of the following impacts:

- Avoidable death
- Financial implications of more than £1 million
- Legal action or intervention from a statutory body, partner, or enforcement agency
- National media attention, potential Public Interest Report or Judicial Review

In addition, the Council will record details of any service areas where the level of internal control fell below the standards that the Council expects to achieve.

Following completion of the annual review of the Council's Governance Framework, the following issues have been assessed as significant and detailed actions plans developed to address the same.

Improvement(s) Required:	Responsible Officer:	Target Date:
The Corporate Delivery Board and Corporate Transformation Programme Board need to continue to drive change to assure delivery of the budget savings agreed in the MTFS, and to identify further savings to address future years gaps in the MTFS that still remain, in order to continue to rebuild the Council's financial sustainability. This will also require on-going management action to continue to control in year spending.	Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer	February 2027
The Internal Audit team carried out a series of audits across SMBC, SCH and Council Maintained schools during 2025/26. The following audits resulted in limited, or no assurance reports being issued: ICT Assets – Level 5 Financial Assessments – Level 4 SCH Biomass – Level 4 Education Business Support – Level 4 Education Financial Compliance – Level 4 Payment Card Industry Standards – Level 4 Commercial Income Asset Management – Level 4	Various directorates as applicable	March 2027

Building Control – Level 4 Adults Direct Payments Follow Up – Level 4 Top Ups - Memo		

6 Conclusion and Evaluation

As Leader and Chief Executive, we have been advised on the results of the review of the effectiveness of the Council's Governance Framework. Our overall assessment is that this AGS is a balanced reflection of the governance environment, and the arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the Council's Governance Framework.

We are also satisfied that over the coming year, the Council will continue to take appropriate steps to address the identified governance issues, and we will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our next annual review. In addition, we can confirm that the improvement recommendations made by External audit reports for 2024/25 were considered and are being acted upon.

Paul Johnson
Chief Executive

Councillor Karen Grinsell
Leader of the Council

Appendix A - Review of Compliance

Solihull Council is committed to robust governance and transparency, and our governance arrangements are aimed to support the Council to deliver value for money and manage risk effectively across all our activity and at all levels of accountability. The AGS provides assurances that these processes are working in practice in line with our priorities.
We have set out below, for each governance principle, our self-assessment of compliance in the year 2024/25.

Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.
Compliance overview
The key policies, procedures and practices set out in the Code of Corporate Governance remained in place and were applied throughout the year. Council policy documents (for example Financial Regulations and Member/Officer Delegations and The Managers Handbook) are updated annually to reflect any changes to rules and regulations, delegations, and processes.
Examples
• The CIPFA financial management code is a requirement to ensure that there is more visibility of Councils financial management arrangements to ensure that financial controls are effective as well as ensuring financial sustainability. The Council benchmarked itself against these requirements in recent years and reports compliance to the Audit Committee. • Following 'Brexit' and the UK's subsequent withdrawal from the European Union (EU), the Government prioritised a fundamental review of public sector procurement regulations and processes and introduced the Procurement Act 2023 which came into force on 24th February 2025. The Council's procurement service led on preparation for and implementation of the act. Officers managed the Council's preparedness plan and risk register to support our transition. The actions within the preparedness plan sought to mitigate identified risks such as publication of contract performance, increased process flexibility, etc. and how they are likely to impact the Council. • The Council's Corporate Procurement Strategy 2024–2029 demonstrates a clear commitment to integrity, ethical standards, and compliance with the rule of law. Procurement activity is undertaken in line with the Procurement Act 2023 and supported by established governance arrangements, promoting transparency, fairness, and accountability. • The Council reviewed the Council's vision and values which is informed by the responses received through the Employee Engagement Survey 2024 as well as stakeholder feedback received through consultation on the council plan for 2025-30. • A new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy sets out the Council's commitments and plans to improve the quality of life and life chances for everyone who lives, works, studies in, or visits the borough.

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.
Compliance overview
The key policies, procedures and practices set out in the Code of Corporate Governance remained in place and were applied throughout the year.
Examples
• Council and Committee meetings are available as webcasts at Home - Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council Webcasts and decisions are recorded and published. Our

meetings allow for public attendance, and we have a petitions scheme to promote participation. Significant decisions involve public consultations where required.

- The council continues to use a range of solutions to maximise openness and stakeholder engagement. These include:
  - A 'Stay Connected' email alert service to keep customers connected to and informed about council services.
  - The Solihull Place Survey gathers the opinions of residents every two years and provides a cross-cutting overview of our local communities. This, and historic information, are used to inform decision making.
  - 'Your Voice Solihull' (the Council's digital platform for engagement activity) has generated a range of insights that are used by services for planning.
  - Regular messages from the Leader of the Council that are published on the Council website and social media.
  - Multi Agency Partnership Boards have been set up to ensure all key stakeholders work together to achieve the best outcomes for the client groups.
- Fair Treatment Assessments (FTAs) help us to assess the impact of the Council's work and decision-making on diverse groups. The FTA guidance has been updated to include the Council's role as a corporate parent and clarify arrangements for FTA ownership, accountability, and record-keeping. The review has resulted in the FTA form including more helpful hints.
- Lunch & Learn webinars take place virtually once a month for all staff to learn more about projects and activities across the Council.

Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits.
Compliance overview
The Solihull Council Plan is where we set out the overall strategic direction for the Council. In particular, it sets our strategy and our contribution to the delivery of Our Vision - Solihull: a great place to live, work, invest and enjoy.
Details

- The plan establishes a refreshed strategic framework for 2025 to 2030 built on four values: ambitious, adaptable, respectful and trustworthy. It set out clearly defined ambitions to guide decision-making and service delivery.
- Seven ambitions framed the outcomes the Council aims to achieve to reflect on the interdependence of economic growth, health and wellbeing, environmental sustainability, supporting vulnerable residents, improving opportunities and maintaining an attractive borough.
- The Council recognises the importance of engaging with residents, councillors, employees and local organisations to try and build common understanding about the vision and the role of the Council in achieving it.
- The plan, which is set for a period of 5 years, sits alongside our Medium-Term Financial Strategy which reflects how the Council is focused on working with partners to reduce inequalities in order to build sustainable and healthier futures for the people who live, work and learn in the borough.
- The Council Plan is further supported by a Corporate Capital Strategy (2024/25 – 2033/34) that sets out the Council's approach to the allocation of its capital resources and how this links to its strategic priorities and objectives at a corporate and service level and the revenue budget strategy. The ongoing implications for the revenue budget strategy are fully considered before any capital funding decisions are confirmed.
- Details of how the Council performed against the Council Plan can be found in the annual report published on the council website.

Principle D: Determining interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of intended outcomes.
Compliance overview
We are pragmatic and utilise a variety of ways to provide services, based on what will deliver best value for our residents. The key arrangements for managing performance and delivery, to inform interventions, continued to operate throughout the year.
Examples
• The Council is under increasing financial pressure leading it to review services in the face of the funding available alongside reviewing the Council Plan. In this context, delivery of the Council Plan requires resourcefulness, and we are responding in a variety of ways through our procurement practice. Our response includes strategies designed to maximise value for money – including 'social value' achieved from the Council's spend and continued exploration of new opportunities the public sector procurement reform (Procurement Act 2023) presents now it is implemented. We have also planned strategic supplier discussions with key suppliers to explore what further opportunities we can mutually identify that could deliver additional value for money around our existing contracts. • The Council's How we will deliver document sets out our approach to the effectiveness of service delivery and the achievement of intended outcomes, including what we plan to do next, the challenges we face, and how these will be addressed. • Cabinet approved the establishment of a seed funding pot initially from the budget strategy reserve to both accelerate existing transformation projects and explore the potential for further initiatives that could yield savings for the Council's MTFS, given the current difficult financial position for the Council. • The cabinet endorsed in respect of the Customer Services Transformation Programme, the approach of providing value for money through the Right Service, Right Place, Right Time principles and model. • In April 2021, the Council completed the acquisition of Mell Square Limited with the intention of bringing forward a phased redevelopment of the centre. During 2024/25 the Council has partnered with Muse Places Ltd, a leading national developer to regenerate Mell square as a part of the Council's Town Centre masterplan. In February 2026, the Council approved Muse's plans to transform Mell Square with up to 1,600 homes, retail, and new public spaces. The wider scheme has now been branded as Holbeche Place. • The Council continues to progress its ambitious plan for redevelopment of the Kingshurst Village with a vision to make Kingshurst 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. • Solihull Energy Ltd is a limited company set up and owned by Solihull Council. This independent energy services company (ESCo) will be responsible for managing individual contracts and customer agreements associated with the Town Centre Energy Network. The Solihull Energy Ltd Business Plan 2025-28 was approved and adopted in April 2025. • Our Public Health team work with a range of services, agencies, and partners to support people to live longer and healthier lives by improving and protecting health and wellbeing and reducing inequalities. The details of services provided can be found on our council website. Our Living Well in Solihull (LWiS) strategy 2023-28 is supported by a delivery and action plan and completed year 1 delivery of objectives.

Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and individuals within it.
Compliance overview:
The Council needs appropriate structures and leadership, as well as people with the right skills, appropriate qualifications, and mindset to operate efficiently and effectively and achieve intended outcomes within the specified periods. The key policies, procedures and practices set out in the Code of Corporate Governance, focused on developing our capacity and capability, remained in place and were applied throughout the year.
Examples
• Listening to employees is important but acting on their feedback is even more important. During the period 2024/25 development of the Council's People Strategy 2024 – 2029 has been completed. The Council's People Strategy 2024-2029 has been informed through engagement with the Council's employees and has been designed to continue to build a workforce with the personal and collective resilience to drive us forward as an organisation and increase our ability to meet Solihull's resident's needs. A detailed plan has been developed for the delivery of the Council's People Strategy 2024 – 2029. Interventions have been considered to ensure they meet organisational need and where possible can be implemented within a 'low cost/ no cost' approach, with maximum impact for employees. To ensure a more streamlined approach for people focused work, previously identified actions in the EDI Workforce Plan have been incorporated into the Council's People Strategy 2024-2029. • Aligned to the aspirations set out in the Council's People Strategy 2024 – 2029 'Develop, Empower and Engage' Theme, an Organisational Action Plan for the SMBC Employee Engagement Survey 2025, has also been produced. • The Council continues to explore opportunities to increase its capacity by working with the community. One such initiative progressed during the year is the Match my Project website that provides a meeting point for the business and community sector, where community organisations can get help for their projects from businesses working with Solihull.

Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.
Compliance overview
The Council recognises the need to ensure that the organisation's governance structures that it oversees have implemented, and can sustain, an effective performance management system that facilitates effective and efficient delivery of planned services. The key policies, procedures and practices set out in the Code of Corporate Governance for managing risks to outcomes through strong internal control remained in place and were applied throughout the year.
Details
The Council's risk, performance and financial management arrangements have been detailed earlier in this document. The links below with take you to these sections. Risk Management Financial Management Performance Management

Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability.
Compliance overview:
Accountability ensures that those making decisions and delivering services are responsible for them. All activities should be carried out in a transparent manner. The policies, procedures and practices set out in the Code of Corporate Governance to promote transparency and accountability remained in place and were applied throughout the year.
Examples
• The Council continues to have an effective Audit Committee that provides a source of assurance and complies with guidance. The committee works to a planned work programme to receive reports on themes including financial operations, audit and risk, external audit and assurance on specific initiatives being progressed. • The Council demonstrates its commitment to openness by producing a suite of reports including an annual report covering the performance of the Council, value for money and stewardship of resources. • The Council published agendas, minutes, and decisions as well as reports detailing the criteria, rationale and considerations on which decisions are based. These can be found here. • Grant Thornton conducts an annual Value for Money review as part of the main audit of the Council's accounts. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) review confirmed that the Council's governance arrangements were sound, with clear decision-making processes and delegations. • Following the publication of the CQC assessment in March 2026, Solihull's Adult Social Care was rated 'Good' overall (84%), with three areas rated 'Outstanding' and six rated 'Good', and no areas requiring improvement. This reflects strong, consistent service delivery, with notable strengths in partnership working, prevention, and support to unpaid carers. Feedback from people who use services highlighted that they feel respected, listened to, and supported to maintain independence. The inspection provided assurance of effective leadership, a skilled and confident workforce, and a clear focus on delivering positive outcomes, underpinned by robust governance, quality assurance, and continuous improvement arrangements. We will build on this through ongoing self-assessment, performance monitoring, and targeted improvement plans aligned to inspection learning. Performance is measured in several ways, including against the Department of Health & Social Care Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework (ASCOF), with targets informed by annual national benchmarking. Continuous Improvement Plans are in place to drive progress towards top quartile performance; in 2025/26, Solihull achieved 11 top quartile positions against the ASCOF framework. Adult Social Care is also preparing for the introduction of the Local Government Outcomes Framework and the transition to monthly Client Level Data (CLD) submissions to NHS England. • Details of the Council's performance against the Solihull Local Outcomes Framework is published on our website. • The Ageing Well in Solihull: The Director of Public Health Annual Report 2025-2026 focusses on what we can do to allow more people in Solihull to reap the benefits of a healthy, productive, and satisfying older age.