

FULL COUNCIL

6 DECEMBER 2022

REPORT OF DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND LEAD MEMBER FOR PARTNERSHIPS AND WELLBEING

1. COUNCIL UPDATE FROM THE DEPUTY LEADER

1.1 Purpose of Report

1.1.1 To advise Members that the Health and Wellbeing Board met on the 8 November 2022 to discuss plans to coordinate and accelerate Solihull's response to the cost-of-living pressures.

1.1.2 The Assistant Director for Communities and Partnerships updated the Board on Solihull's response, outlining the following:

- A multi-agency lead officers' group had been established.
- An action plan had been developed, based around the following key themes:
 - Support people with access to good information and advice.
 - Collaborate with the Public Sector and the Community and Voluntary Sector. Work with business to protect jobs and support their employees.
 - Places – increase energy efficiency.
- The early issues identified so far included the following:
 - SCH rent arrears increases due to the number of returned direct debits.
 - Food donations to the main foodbank was down.
 - Voluntary and community sector organisations were under pressure, including in regard to volume and type of demand.
 - Residents were reporting increased mental health issues and anxiety.

1.1.3 Health and Wellbeing members noted the update and agreed to receive further updates on Solihull's response to the cost of living pressures at future Board meetings.

1.2 Background

1.2.1 This report highlights some of those decisions which have been made, but not all. Members wishing to view all decisions made can find these at <http://eservices.solihull.gov.uk/mgInternet/mgListCommittees.aspx?bcr=1>

1.2.2 Attached to this report is a list of decisions made.

1.3 Decisions

1.3.1 10 November 2022

1.3.2 I was presented with the Portfolio's latest forecast financial position as at the 30 September 2022 against Revenue and Capital budgets and informed of the progress against the latest 3-year savings targets in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

1.4 **Good News and Issues of Interest**

COMMONWEALTH GAMES

- 1.4.1 I attended the Solihull BID Awards on 18 November 2022 and was delighted to see the Council's CWG Delivery Team pick up the Outstanding Team of the Year award.

Tourism Forum

- 1.4.2 Last month we held the latest Tourism Forum, with an update from our hosts Resorts World and a focus on sustainability support from Sustainability West Midlands, case studies from Birmingham Airport and an insight into electric charging for the hospitality industry. I also gave an overview of the success of our Commonwealth Games within Solihull, echoed by local hotels and partners, with particular mention to the Queen's Baton Relay.

Photography Exhibition

- 1.4.3 Our 'Best of the Borough' photography exhibition held around Games time, is now also due to tour the Borough, with a residency at Birmingham Airport and Birmingham Business Park, celebrating the green spaces, town centres and thriving visitor centres within the Borough.

Public Art Trail

- 1.4.4 In October we also officially 'launched' our Shirley utility box public art trail, linking a children's activity sheet to find the 'hidden' minibeasts and storytelling sessions at the local library. We have received some fantastic media coverage and feedback from the local residential and business community and working with our Ambassador group, we will be looking for future projects in the new year.

Small Business Saturday

- 1.4.5 We supported the national 'Small Business Saturday' campaign on 3rd December in the lead up to Christmas shopping, promoting local independent offers and utilising our social media Friday 'shout outs' to promote shopping through our small and independent businesses within our towns and local centres. The team from Small Business Saturday had already visited a range of our successful independents in Knowle on 15th November. There were live streaming interviews with local business owners through their Instagram channel, in partnership with Visit Knowle.

Best of the Borough at Christmas

- 1.4.6 On a Christmas theme, we are also launching our 'Best in the Borough at Christmas' campaign on our Visit Solihull social media channels, offering local prizes from our local retail and hospitality businesses, raising the profile of our local offer and attracting new visitors to explore what Solihull has to offer.

SOLIHULL COMMUNITY HOUSING

Tenant Conference

- 1.4.7 The first SCH tenant conference for a number of years was held recently at Connection Church in Kingshurst. The day was a resounding success, with more than 40 tenants giving up a Saturday to spend time with SCH staff, talking about their tenancies and communities. It was a very productive day, during which tenants were also able to feed into the first draft of the new SCH Delivery Plan. The day was of great benefit not just to tenants, but to staff as well, who took away many positive ideas and contributions from those in attendance. The day also featured a guest speaker from tenant engagement leaders Tpas, who also presented SCH with their Tpas accreditation in recognition of the SCH tenant engagement platforms which are recognised as exemplar good practice.

Money Advice Team

- 1.4.8 SCH received some great news this week when they learnt that the Money Advice Team had successfully retained its accreditation in Money Advice by meeting the Advice Quality Standards. This is a fabulous achievement at a time when demand for their skills and knowledge has seldom been greater. This is tremendous news.

Multi-agency day at Bedford House

- 1.4.9 SCH joined forces with the police and fire service for a pro-active day speaking with tenants at Bedford House. Some recent incidents of antisocial behaviour were addressed along with fire safety with the fire service carrying out free 'Safe and Well' checks for a number of residents. We had some great feedback from tenants after the visit and the multi-agency approach was very well received, enabling for a broad range of subjects to be addressed on the day. This initiative has proven very effective.

Sprinkler Installation

- 1.4.10 We were pleased to welcome Meriden MP Saqib Bhatti to a visit to one of our high rises recently which I attended. The visit showcased the sprinkler installation programme which is now well past the halfway stage. It was also noted that SCH is leading the way nationally with the installation of a sprinkler system to the new British standard. The visit was led by SCH chief executive Fiona Hughes.

DAHA Accreditation

- 1.4.11 SCH has become a member of DAHA – the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance. DAHA operate within the housing sector to support landlords in addressing incidents of domestic abuse, through an established set of standards and an accreditation process. As members of DAHA SCH now has access to an online toolkit and member forums. SCH is now seeking to gain the DAHA accreditation scheme, a process that takes 12-18 months.

Junction Support

- 1.4.12 Junction is a social enterprise venue adjacent to the SCH Asset Management Hub in Chelmsley Wood. It features a social supermarket and SCH has always been supportive of the team who run Junction. Another great example of this was shown very recently when the childminding group based there requested support in accessing the garden. It was not safe to do so due to the adjacent car park. SCH responded, with the support of their partner Jewson, in creating a purpose-built area with the car park now the other side of the fence. As such the childminding group are now able to access a safe outside play area when the weather allows them to do so.

Saxon Court Host Macmillan Fund Raiser

- 1.4.13 The fundraising exploits of tenants and staff at the older people's supported living home, Saxon Court is legendary. The team once again rolled up their sleeves and got baking for a recent Macmillan Coffee Morning. They had a wonderful array of cakes for residents, staff and visitors, raising £300 on the day to go towards cancer research and support.

Apprenticeships

- 1.4.14 SCH is currently putting things in place to recruit its latest cohort of apprentices. Two have already started as carpentry apprentices with the Fire Integrity team. SCH will also support them through their Level 2 qualification at Solihull College. Two more apprentices will be recruited soon to Customer Service and Admin roles.

Christmas Collection

- 1.4.15 The Housing Options team are again supporting a seasonal campaign, in conjunction with the Renewal Centre and the Council, to support families who sadly may need to spend Christmas in temporary accommodation. SCH staff are kindly supporting the campaign with donations of festive treats.

STRONGER COMMUNITIES

Homelessness

- 1.4.16 The Sir Josiah Mason Trust (SJMT) deliver a generic floating support contract for adults 25+. In October 100% of clients had a positive exit from the service which means they were able to maintain their accommodation and are now able to live fully independently.
- 1.4.17 St. Basils continue to see some good outcomes through the youth hub and pathway. In October they prevented homelessness in over 70% of the people they supported. This was against a target of 55%. In the last few months there has been an increase in the number of young people wanting to explore supported lodging placements and there is now a drive to recruit new hosts, especially in the north of the borough.

Rough Sleeping

- 1.4.18 We are pleased to report that the new Rough Sleeper Team is having an immediate impact. They have been able to identify everyone who has been reported via Streetlink, including people who move around regularly, through repeated visits to reported locations on early morning outreach. This has been achieved through the persistence of the team. On one occasion the individual found needed to go to hospital for treatment due to their exposure to the elements, so it was really positive to be able to engage and get them the support they needed.
- 1.4.19 Part of the team's success has been the new hoodies they are wearing, making them more visible and driving broader engagement with the public, businesses and others working in areas.

Household Support Fund (HSF3)

- 1.4.20 Funding is being distributed to low income and vulnerable households via several schemes being delivered by the Council, Act on Energy, Age UK Solihull, SCH and members of the foodbank network. During October the foodbank network supported 905 households, which included 1063 adults, 434 pensioners and 580 children. Officers have been working with the foodbank network to revise the delivery model so there is sufficient capacity to respond to the expected demand over the winter. One of the changes that has been introduced is Colebridge Trust extending their opening hours for food parcel collections to Monday evenings, which is also aimed at supporting those who are 'working poor'. The organisations are also being supported by the team to increase the number of food collection points through valued and trusted partner organisations. This will also alleviate the pressure of delivery only to households.
- 1.4.21 Through HSF2, delivered between April and September 2022, a total of £1,169,214.39 was distributed to low income and vulnerable households through food, fuel costs, support for financial bills and other essential items. In total, 24,386 households were supported with around two thirds of those households being families with children. The Council continued to deliver the holiday food vouchers to children in receipt of benefit-related free school meals and anecdotal evidence from food bank sources have suggested that these vouchers had an impact in reducing the number of families needing to access food banks over summer.

Community Development and the cost of living

- 1.4.22 Supporting the community response to the rises in the cost of living has been a core part of the Community Development Team's activities during September, October and November. This has included:
- Collecting and sharing information about low cost and no cost food providers and Warm Welcomes/Warm Hubs which are being set up. This is being shared with schools, community networks and via Here2Help.
 - Warm Welcomes – collecting and sharing information about places around the borough being set up as Warm Welcome and Warm Hub venues. The team has also worked with organisations like Hockley Heath Parish Council, Knowle Parish Church and Churches Together in Berkswell and Balsall Common to help start-up and promote Warm Welcomes in different parts of the borough.
 - Foodbank network – organising the deployment of 25 new food donation stations across the borough. A couple of the new partners include Solihull and St Alphege Rotary Club and St Augustine's School.

- Christmas - Working with SCH and Renewal Church Centre to prepare gift bags for people in temporary accommodation over the Christmas period. The team has also been working with Renewal to promote toy donations.
- Volunteers – the team is acting as the central point of contact for all individuals, business and organisations which are interested in donating their time and items towards the cost of living response, particularly the foodbank. This is a key part of the “How to Help” strand of Here2Help with the team matching expressions of interest with local charities and the foodbank network.

Field of Remembrance

- 1.4.23 As Armed Forces Champion I attended the opening of the Royal British Legion Field of Remembrance service on the 7 November 2022, which took place at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire; it was a very moving experience.

EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS

Apprenticeship Show

- 1.4.24 The Apprenticeship Show was delivered for the first time since 2019, attracting just under 2,000 people with 40+ employers and providers. The next show will be held in North Solihull on 8 February 2023. To meet the Council’s commitment to ensure more people with Learning Disabilities are able to access paid employment, we have now employed an additional six people in roles across the Council and two supported internships started this autumn.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

- 1.4.25 The overall investment plan for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund was submitted by West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to government following agreement at WMCA Board on 28th October 2022. Local plans are in place to fund activities aligned to the community and place priority as soon as funding is confirmed. These local plans to include reviewing the use of community buildings, community capacity building, arts and cultural activities, enhancing the natural environment, supporting high streets and local centres and supporting the economically inactive into employment.

1.5 Future Decisions

- 1.5.1 My future decision-making session will take place on the 30 January 2023.