



# ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT 2021/22

Democratic Services

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# INTRODUCTION

## The 2021-2022 Municipal Year

It is my pleasure to introduce the Council's Annual Scrutiny Report for the 2021-2022 municipal year. You will find highlights from the Council's Scrutiny Boards arising from their annual work programmes for 2021/22. The breadth and nature of the scrutiny work undertaken in the 2021/22 municipal year by the Council's Scrutiny Boards has been far ranging, addressing matters as diverse as service delivery and performance, fiscal management, project delivery, policy development, partnership arrangements and public engagement. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow Scrutiny Chairmen and all those Council Members who are serving on the Council's Scrutiny Boards.

***"We cannot be mere consumers of good governance, we must be participants; we must be co-creators". Rohini Nilekani***

## Looking Ahead

I am confident that the Council's Scrutiny Boards will continue to make a difference and positive impact as to how the Council serves its residents, businesses, voluntary and community sector and works with and supports its significant partners and stakeholders.

**Councillor Mark Parker**  
*Chairman, Resources & Delivering Value  
Scrutiny Board.*



# SCRUTINY IN SOLIHULL

## The role of Scrutiny

The roles of overview and scrutiny are:

- holding the cabinet to account, particularly in meeting corporate priorities
- policy review and development
- external scrutiny of other local organisations
- performance management and review
- examining matters of particular concern either within the council or within the community

Overview and scrutiny can 'call-in' a decision which has been made but not yet implemented. Subject to certain safeguards, this allows a separate group of councillors to consider whether a decision has been made properly and that the decision maker has considered all relevant factors.

## Key Statistics



As of the end of September there has been approximately 14 hours of Scrutiny meetings held in public.



As of the end of September there have been 13 Scrutiny meetings held. There are another 20 planned in the municipal year.



As of the end of September Scrutiny Boards will have dealt with 111 items of business.

## Work Planning

Every May Scrutiny Board Members begin planning their work programmes for the forthcoming municipal year. Matters for scrutiny will represent a wide range of issues, including scrutinising current and proposed policy, performance review and public consultation and engagement for both the Council directly and its significant partners such as the NHS, Police and community and voluntary sector. The annual scrutiny work programmes are reported to the meeting of Council held in July. For more information about Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council's Scrutiny Boards including each Board's purpose and work plans please visit: <https://www.solihull.gov.uk/About-theCouncil/Councillors-committees/decisionmaking/overviewscrutiny>

# RESOURCES & DELIVERING VALUE SCRUTINY BOARD

## Chairman & Clerk

Cllr Mark Parker

Paul Rogers - Senior Democratic Services Officer



## Key Statistics (May 2022 – September 2022)



14 Hours Held



10 Meetings Held



18 Items Dealt With

## Key Work

To consider the final annual budget proposals across all portfolio areas, to have overview and scrutiny of the Council Plan (annual performance refresh), digital transformation, migration of the Social Care systems, migration of Oracle E-Business Suite and Office 365, the employee journey, adoption of a corporate approach to delivering an asset master plan and ensuring that Council assets are fit for purpose to deliver Council priorities.

DESCRIPTION	WHEN?
Update on the Council's Digital Strategy	Tuesday, 7 <sup>th</sup> September 2021
Smarter Ways of Working	Thursday, 7 <sup>th</sup> October 2021
Update on Corporate Approach to Delivering an Asset Master Plan	
Building Safety - Follow Up Report	Thursday, 2 <sup>nd</sup> December 2021



## **Key Work 2021/22**

### **Update on the Council's Digital Strategy**

The Scrutiny Board was updated on progress with the Council's Digital Strategy and the impact of COVID-19 upon the implementation of the Strategy. Members were asked to review the progress made far in delivering the Digital Strategy and their views were sought on the current 2021-22 Digital priorities for implementation. The Scrutiny Board raised and discussed the issues of 'software as a service' (SaaS), questioned whether the Council had an established Lifecycle Plan in place, including Sunset Clause, the related procurement process, data migration, hybrid working practices and software licensing arrangements. The Scrutiny Board supported the 2021/22 digital priorities identified for implementation.

### **Smarter Ways of Working**

The purpose of this report was to update Members on progress with the Council's key programme, Smarter Ways of Working (SWoW). The Scrutiny Board was requested to review the progress made with the programme and to determine whether the progress with implementation was satisfactory. In so doing, the Scrutiny Board raised and discussed the findings of the Pulse employee survey, hybrid working arrangements, employee well-being practice and workforce sickness levels. Members of the Scrutiny Board were satisfied with the progress made in the SWoW programme and agreed to receive a further SWoW update report in the new municipal year.

### **Update on Corporate Approach to Delivering an Asset Masterplan (CADAM)**

Members were informed that the CADAM programme had been initiated and developed in recent years, with the last review of the programme having been reviewed by the Scrutiny Board in February 2021. Several outcomes had been identified arising from the programme to date, which included delivery of a Corporate Landlord model, availability of data, from which to base decisions on, developing a corporate business plan for the Council's assets, future planning of the Council's accommodation requirements, communication, and engagement with all Council employees to support future ways of working. Scrutiny Members raised a broad range of issues, including the legal implications arising from the programme, particularly in relation to future use of Council assets, the requirement for appropriate documentation to safeguard Council interests, how the CADAM programme could support the Council's digital and intellectual property programmes, management of data through data warehouse arrangements, building safety, Council duties and related legislation. The Scrutiny Board agreed that progress of the CADAM programme had been satisfactory.

### **Building Safety - Follow Up Report**

The Scrutiny Board had requested an update on current Building Safety legislation and activities undertaken for the Council's Housing Stock and other Council owned buildings, following consideration of building safety at the Scrutiny Board meeting in December 2020. Scrutiny Members were advised of the steps taken by the Council and Solihull Community Housing (SCH) to work towards meeting the demands of the new Building Safety regulatory regime. Matters discussed included the Fire Safety Act (2021) and Building Safety Bill (2021), accountable person arrangements, building safety in higher risk buildings, building materials and legal and financial implications. The Scrutiny Board agreed to note the implications arising from the Fire Safety Act, Building Safety Bill, and associated legislation and that a further report be received as part of the Boards work programme in relation to Building Safety and compliance.

# CHILDREN'S SERVICES, EDUCATION & SKILLS SCRUTINY BOARD

## Chairman & Clerk

Cllr Daniel Gibbin

James Hughes - Democratic Service Officer



## Key Statistics (May 2021 – April 2022)



12.5 Hours Held



6 Meetings Held



15 Items Dealt With

## Key Work

The focus of the Children's services scrutiny board has been supporting the Council on its journey to improve the outcomes for all Children in Solihull. Whilst this work continues the Board will work to ensure all partners are playing their part in the improvement journey so that every child has a great start in life in the borough of Solihull

DESCRIPTION	WHEN?
Placements and Sufficiency Strategy for Children Looked After and Care Experienced Young People 2020-2024	Wednesday 22 <sup>nd</sup> September 2021
Support for Children and Young People with Additional Needs, Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities	Wednesday 3 <sup>rd</sup> November 2021
Careers Advice and Support for NEET young people	Tuesday 11 <sup>th</sup> January 2022
Medium Term Financial Strategy Update Budget Strategy 2022/23-2024/25	Tuesday 11 <sup>th</sup> January 2022
Joint Targeted Area Inspection Update	Wednesday 6 <sup>th</sup> April 2022



## Key Work in 2021/22

**Delivery of the Placements and Sufficiency Strategy for Children Looked After and Care Experienced Young People 2020-2024** - the Board considered an update on the delivery of the Placements and Sufficiency Strategy for children looked after and care experienced young people. Members considered the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic upon the delivery of the Strategy and resulting revised timescales. The Board also reviewed progress on the delivery plan for 2020-21 and the four key priorities of work. Members confirmed that the strategy remains relevant, and four key areas of work identified within the strategy continue to be the priority areas for focused activity. The Scrutiny Board agreed with the updated timescales for delivery of key elements of the strategy.

**Support for Children and Young People (Aged 0-25 years) with Additional Needs, Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities** - the Board reviewed strategic developments and improvements to date across the council's Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND) services. Members provided feedback on the proposed Solihull Additional Needs Strategy 2022-2025 co-authored by Solihull Council, Birmingham & Solihull CCG, Solihull Parent Carer Voice and Our Voice's Heard (the new children and young people's forum).

**Careers Advice and Support for NEET young people** - Members considered the careers advice provided by local education and training providers. This included engagement with local employers, the ongoing impact of COVID-19 upon career and employment opportunities and potential changes stemming from the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill. The Board also reviewed how young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) are identified and supported with suitable education and training provision.

**Medium Term Financial Strategy Update Budget Strategy 2022/23-2024/25** - the Board reviewed the budget proposals identified for 2022/23 to 2024/25 within the Children Services and Skills cabinet portfolio, to go forward to the Resources and Delivering Value Scrutiny Board and the Full Cabinet in February 2022. Members considered how the focus of the budget strategy that year had been on managing the significant financial challenges faced by the authority. The Board considered how cabinet portfolios had once again not been asked to propose savings to meet a corporate target, but instead had identified options for mitigating service pressures, which were considered by the Budget Strategy Group at three meetings in October and November.

**Joint Targeted Area Inspection Update** - Members considered a summary of the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) findings, the priority improvements and actions which must be taken, as well as the initial responses to address the concerns identified. The Board took into account how it was clear from the work undertaken by the Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership (LSCP) organisations (Council, Police and Clinical Commissioning Group) that there were several areas that needed to improve. This was also confirmed more recently with the publication of the JTAI. Members considered how the Director of Children's Services established an Improvement Board and recruited an independent chair to drive forward the necessary changes.

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & MANAGED GROWTH SCRUTINY BOARD

## Chairman & Clerk

Cllr Diane Howell

Paul Rogers - Senior Democratic Service Officer



## Key Statistics (May 2021 – April 2022)



9 Hours Held



5 Meetings Held



8 Items Dealt With

## Key Work

The Key projects areas for review by the Economic Development and Managed Growth Scrutiny Board include developing an inclusive economy, delivering accelerated economic growth and inward investment through the 4 UK Central zones, developing and initial delivery of the Strategic Housing Framework, continued delivery of the Green Prospectus and transport policy and strategy.

DESCRIPTION	WHEN?
Obstructions to New Housing Provision and Securing Land Supply in Solihull	Monday, 7 <sup>th</sup> June 2021
Solihull Connected Transport Strategy	Monday, 13 <sup>th</sup> September 2021
Solihull's Draft Net Zero Action Plan (NZAP)	
Borough Wide Economic Strategy	Monday, 8 <sup>th</sup> November 2021
MTFS Update - Budget Strategy 2022/23	Wednesday, 12 <sup>th</sup> January 2022
Solihull Community Housing: Delivery Plan 2022/23	Tuesday, 8 <sup>th</sup> March 2022
Inclusive Growth Update	

## Key Work in 2021/22

**Obstructions to New Housing Provision and Securing Land Supply in Solihull:** Members of the Scrutiny Board considered Solihull's land supply position, as well as reviewing the Council's investment of Housing Revenue Account finance for both asset maintenance and stock development. The Scrutiny Board made a number of recommendations following consideration of the report, including that any future Council owned development site that becomes available should be investigated with a view to maximising the supply of affordable housing; that when reviewing development proposals for housing sites across the borough the specific housing needs of the local area were fully taken into account as part of the wider development process; and that when considering the delivery of affordable housing, consideration be given to using construction methods or materials leading to a lower build cost.

**Solihull Connected Transport Strategy:** Members considered the issues set out in this report regarding the development of an updated transport strategy for the Borough, which included addressing what role should public transport, and particularly bus, have within the refreshed transport strategy for the borough; the Council's ambitions and future investments in public transport; development of Town / Local Centre Access Strategies and measures to incentivize access by non-car modes. The Scrutiny Board also highlighted that the public required a safe environment on board all modes of public transport and recommended that Hobbs Moat, Dickens Heath, Kingshurst, Castle Bromwich and Smiths Wood for inclusion within the Solihull Connected Transport Strategy.

**Solihull's Draft Net Zero Action Plan (NZAP):** The report to the Scrutiny Board set out the work undertaken to date and highlighted the contents of the plan, the consultation approach and next steps to move towards implementation of the NZAP. The Scrutiny Board raised a range of issues such as public engagement, home working, the local bus network, new build standards and retrofitting, funding and public behaviors. Members recommended that the graph detailing the rates of change required to deliver the NZAP objectives be included and given prominence in the NZAP Executive Summary document, with an accompanying narrative detailing how the Council was seeking to achieve its NZAP objectives, and, recommended that regular NZAP updates and bespoke Communication Strategies were developed to engage with all members of the public, detailing how they could support delivery of the NZAP.

**Borough Wide Economic Strategy:** The Scrutiny Board considered a report which detailed the development of an Economic Strategy to cover the ten years to 2032. The new strategy will build on the strategic direction established by 2013's M42 Gateway Masterplan so that 'growth on a scale of national significance' that positions Solihull as the 'engine room of the West Midlands economy' remains a central objective. The Scrutiny Board Members raised several significant and pertinent issues, including the changing role of town centers, deprivation, climate change, access to skills and training programmes, health inequalities, wages and earnings locally and regionally, and the impact of HS2 on the West Midlands region. The Scrutiny Board concluded that there were many varied and important aspects to be captured and addressed through the refreshed Draft Borough Wide Economic Strategy, which included but were not confined to the use of data and the digital economy, benchmarking, performance review and how to measure success and outcomes arising from the economic strategy, all aspects of the Localism agenda in respect of economic growth and development, community buy-in, engagement and participation in respect of the economic strategy, and the skills agenda, re-training and up-skilling.

# COMMUNITIES & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY BOARD

2021/22 - Scrutiny Annual Report



## Membership

Councillor Mrs Diana Holl-Allen MBE (Chairman)

Councillor Wazma Qais (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors Peter Hogarth MBE, Mark Parker, Mark Wilson, Marcus Brain, Daniel Gibbin, Ben Groom, and Shesh Sheshabhatteer.

## Clerk

Lee Stevenson

Senior Democratic Services Officer

[lstevens@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:lstevens@solihull.gov.uk)

0121 704 6050

## Role and Responsibilities

To provide overview and scrutiny of the responsibilities for the 2021/22 Cabinet Portfolio Holders for Stronger and Safer Communities; Leisure, Tourism and Sport; and Environment and Infrastructure.

To act as the statutory "Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee" as required by the Police & Justice Act 2006, to scrutinise targeted partnership working.

## Useful Web Links

Scrutiny Board - <https://eservices.solihull.gov.uk/mgInternet/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=531>

Safer Solihull Partnership - <https://www.solihull.gov.uk/About-the-Council/Safer-solihull-partnership>

## Key Statistics



20 Hours Held



10 Meetings Held  
(6 Full Board and 4 Task & Finish)



19 Reports Considered

## Key Work in 2021/22

**Parking Displacement Programme Review (Task & Finish Group)** - a small group of Members worked independently of the Board between July and October 2021, to undertake a detailed review of the Programme which had been funded between 2001 and 2008 to aid new residential parking schemes. In 2016, the Programme was formally abandoned (due to the lack of funding) and in 2021, the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Environment & Infrastructure invited the Board to undertake a full review in light of the increasing number of requests to manage residential parking on highway verges and pavements. The Task & Finish Group held several meetings which concluded in recommendations being made to the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Environment & Infrastructure in February 2022, at which he approved the reinstatement of the Programme funded from a ring-fenced budget allocation from the Community Liveability Programme. The Board will review the delivery of the new Programme in 2023/24.

**Safer Solihull Partnership Key Priorities** - a yearly report from the Partnership's Responsible Authority leads (the Council, Solihull Clinical Commissioning Group, the Police and the National Probation Service) to scrutinise performance against their four key priority areas. The Board considered detailed appraisals on progress towards tackling hate crime; violence with injury to under 25's; violence against women and girls; and anti-social behaviour. The Board made recommendations to the Safer Solihull Partnership to seek to strengthen the associated priority delivery plans and will consider further performance updates during 2022/23.

**Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy** - detailed scrutiny of the 2021/22 draft allocations for community funding from the Levy. Recommendations were made to the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Stronger & Safer Communities in support of the funding allocations. In doing so, the Board also recommended that future rounds of funding should specifically take account of how cross-ward boundary bids were awarded and funded, particularly where applications had clear community benefits far beyond the individual ward where they originated from.

**Domestic Violence Act 2021** - the Act implemented a number of new duties and responsibilities for local authorities and their partner agencies in the delivery of their domestic abuse support services. The Board welcomed the Council's long-term commitment to tackling domestic abuse and supported a number of new work-streams that were being implemented to effect the delivery of those new duties. The Board will consider further reports in 2022/23 to scrutinise ongoing progress and service performance.

**Budget Framework and Medium-Term Financial Strategy for 2022/23 to 2024/25** - a yearly report to scrutinise the budget proposals identified for 2022/23 to 2024/25 within the Environment and Infrastructure; Leisure Tourism and Sport; and the Stronger and Safer Communities Cabinet Portfolios. In parallel with other scrutiny boards, the Boards recommendations formed part of a detailed report to Cabinet in February 2022.

**COVID- 19 Service Recovery** - a number of core practical components for service recovery were scrutinised which had been put in place to aid the recovery of the Borough's leisure centres and its cultural service provision following the COVID-19 pandemic. The Board supported a number of work-streams and initiatives and will consider further progress and performance updates in 2022/23.

# HEALTH & ADULT SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY BOARD



## Chairman & Clerk

Cllr Martin McCarthy

Joseph Bright - Democratic Service Officer

## Key Statistics (May 2021 – April 2022)



15 Hours Held



7 Meetings Held



18 Items Deal With

## Key Work

To provide overview and scrutiny of the responsibilities for the 2021/22 Cabinet Portfolio Holders for Adult Social Care and Health, as well as for Partnerships and Wellbeing. The Scrutiny Board may review and scrutinise any matter relating to the planning, provision and operation of the health services in its area, in accordance with the Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013.

DESCRIPTION	WHEN?
Adult Social Care External Workforce Strategy Update	Tuesday 14 <sup>th</sup> September 2021
Counting the Cost of COVID: Scrutiny update on the Director of Public Health Annual Report	Tuesday 9 <sup>th</sup> November 2021
Tackling health inequalities: a blueprint for Solihull 2021-2024	Tuesday 9 <sup>th</sup> November 2021
Digital and Technology in Healthcare	Wednesday 23 <sup>rd</sup> February 2022
Suicide Prevention Strategy and Action Plan Update	Monday 14 <sup>th</sup> March 2022



## Key Work in 2021/22

**Adult Social Care External Workforce Strategy Update** - Members considered the development of a Workforce Strategy for the external Adult Social Care sector in Solihull. The aim of the strategy was about how to bring more people into the adult social care sector, to improve the working experience of those in the sector and to build a more sustainable workforce. Members considered how a number of initiatives had been undertaken, including direct recruitment support, priority vaccination access and a contribution to the Care Workers Charity to support local care workers who may have experienced hardship.

**Counting the Cost of COVID: Scrutiny update on the Director of Public Health Annual Report** - Members considered how there was an aim to create a document to detail individuals' experiences of COVID-19 within the Borough through stories, images and pictures. They also considered how there would be work undertaken to understand which communities were hardest hit by the pandemic. This would cover both the immediate health impacts and the wider health and wellbeing impacts. There was consideration of the key themes arising from COVID-19, including how well did local agencies work together to respond to the pandemic, as well as what would we want to build on in the future.

**Tackling health inequalities: a blueprint for Solihull 2021-2024** - Members were invited to review the proposed Strategy and consider whether the priorities and enablers selected in the Strategy were the right ones in terms of alignment with our Health and Well-being Strategy 2021-23 (update) and emerging Integrated Care System Health Inequalities Programme. A public consultation on the Strategy was planned. Members were also invited to consider the best way to engage the public and our communities to help maximize the impact of this Strategy, accelerating the priority areas it identified.

**Digital and Technology in Healthcare** - Members were invited to consider the digital and technology solutions being utilised to improve care for patients. Members took into account how technology had helped to provide more informed care, better joined up care and care more effectively delivered. With Artificial Intelligence (AI) care, this had helped to increase capacity within the system. For digital projects, Members considered how there were appropriate governance measures in place, and steps were taken to ensure no-one would be excluded by the shift to digital. It was recognised that it was important to support digital inclusivity.

**Suicide Prevention Strategy and Action Plan Update** - Members considered how the Strategy and Action Plan were led by the Suicide Prevention Steering Group; a multiagency group with representation from SMBC, NHS commissioning and provider organisations, the voluntary sector, emergency services including the police, UK Health Security Agency and West Midlands transport. Members reviewed the actions identified by the Steering Group for 2022/23, which included Development of a Safer Suicide Community, Better Support and Care for Those at the Highest Risk of Dying by Suicide, Working Together to Prevent Suicide, Learning from Those Who Have Died by Suicide, Real time surveillance, Postvention Support and Communications.

# HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

## Attend a scrutiny committee meeting

Come along to a scrutiny committee meeting and listen to the debate. All meetings are open to the public, except when a confidential item is discussed. Meetings usually take place in the Civic Suite at the Council House.

To find out when meetings take place see our committee pages.

## Suggest a topic for scrutiny

Is there an issue that you feel scrutiny should be looking at? To put forward an idea to be considered by the relevant scrutiny committee please contact us.

## Provide evidence to a committee or review board

Scrutiny members are always keen to take evidence from people who are affected by a particular service or issue they are investigating.

## Take part in consultation

Many of our scrutiny reviews involve public consultation. Find out more about consultation in Solihull via the Council's website.

## Watch a scrutiny committee webcast

Scrutiny Committees are webcast live you can watch meetings via the Council's website.

## Contact Us

*Online:*

<https://eservices.solihull.gov.uk/SMBCWebForms/?Form=Scrutiny>

*Call Us:*

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