

FULL COUNCIL

7 FEBRUARY 2023

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 The Health and Wellbeing Board met on the 10 January 2023 to discuss the following matters:

- Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care System and progress on Solihull Place and a new approach to supporting Primary Care.
- Solihull's response to the cost-of-living pressures
- Local Safeguarding Children Partnership priorities for 2022-23 and the Adult Safeguarding Board
- Children's Services Improvement Plan
- The results of the Solihull Place survey

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 No decision session was held during December.

1.4 Good News and Issues of Interest

BUSINESS INVESTMENT

Tourism Forum

1.4.1 We are continuing to engage with our key visitor economy stakeholders to support development of our activities, including updates at the next Tourism Forum on the 9 February 2023. We will also be attending alongside the West Midlands Growth Company at the British Travel and Tourism Show, 22-23 March at the NEC, connecting with the travel trade and promoting Solihull attractions and hotels.

Visitor Economy

1.4.2 To support the visitor economy and hospitality sector this Christmas, we ran a 'Best of the Borough' campaign with prizes each day from local businesses, to support engagement with our Visit Solihull social media. The campaign reached a total of 8624 users, with 6901 of those new followers – up 71% on the previous 30 days. We will look to continue campaigns across the year to support further engagement with the brand and extend our reach regionally.

SOLIHULL COMMUNITY HOUSING

Sprinklers programme

- 1.4.3 Soon after Christmas the newly installed high-rise sprinklers received their first test when a fire broke out in a kitchen at Woodbrooke House. The sprinklers came on as they should and the fire was successfully extinguished at speed. The tenant was in a very difficult situation and almost certainly the activation of the sprinklers saved her life, and potentially those of others in the block, should the fire have spread further. There are of course lessons to be learned but the team responsible for the sprinkler installation programme were pleased and the project remains on course for completion later in the year.

Darker Nights Winter Warmth

- 1.4.4 SCH teams partnered up with West Midlands Police, the Colebridge Trust and local councillors to support the Darker Nights Winter Warmth scheme. This offers practical support and advice on things such as home safety and the cost-of-living crisis. SCH staff were able to signpost residents to other support agencies where necessary and gave out the Council's very informative 'Here2Help' guides which are packed full of useful information. Police also handed out timer switches, faraday pouches for keyless entry cars and vibration alarms for windows and doors.

CO2 alarms

- 1.4.5 Further to new Government regulations, SCH has started installing CO2 alarms in every single one of its properties. This has been a major undertaking which is set for completion early in the New Year.

Foodbank support

- 1.4.6 SCH contractors, Woodhulls, Berben and RS Millers, kindly donated festive treats to the Hobs Meadow Community Café in Olton and the Around Again social supermarket in Chelmsley Wood. These donations helped to make Christmas a little more enjoyable for local families struggling over the festive season. In addition to this, another SCH contractor, Dodd Group, purchased £1,000 worth of Love To Shop vouchers before Christmas to support the Around Again social supermarket. In addition to this, Dodd Group have obtained 900 LED bulbs and plan to give these to high rise tenants.

HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

Private Rented Sector Pathfinder

- 1.4.7 The Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities has introduced regional 'Private Rented Sector Pathfinder Programmes'. SMBC will be working in partnership with the private sector housing teams in Sandwell, Coventry, Birmingham, Wolverhampton Dudley and Walsall to develop initiatives that promote efficient, effective, and robust regulation.
- 1.4.8 This joint working, and the DLUHC funding, will provide additional capacity and insight as the Council develops its private rented sector policies. It will be a new addition to the Housing Strategy Implementation Plan, which will be reported to Full Cabinet on 9 March 2023.

Homelessness Prevention Grant

- 1.4.9 The Council has been granted new Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG) funding, which is for the next two years until March 2025. As well as receiving an increase in funding, the two-year settlement will provide certainty in the planning and delivery of services to discharge our statutory homelessness duties.

Change into Action

- 1.4.10 The multi-agency partnership awarded new grants in November to support two young people with a history of rough sleeping and homelessness, to help them carpet their new flats after securing their first tenancy.

Rough Sleeper Team

- 1.4.11 The outreach team has now been in place for two months, providing early morning and night-time outreach across the borough. This extra coverage has allowed the Council to respond to StreetLinks and reports of rough sleepers at the right times to ensure we are finding individuals bedded down and rough sleeping. The visibility of the team has allowed us to build new relationships and improve partnerships. We are providing a responsive service to all rough sleepers ensuring welfare checks are being completed and to provide offers of support. Throughout the activation of the severe weather and emergency protocol (SWEP), we have ensured offers of accommodation are continually given even when a person wishes to not engage.
- 1.4.12 As part of the promotion of the new team it participated and hosted three events during December in Solihull Town Centre, promoting Change into Action and the support on offer to support individuals who are, or are at risk of, rough sleeping. This included the Jingle Bell Jog where all funds raised are donated to Change into Action.

Covid and Flu Vaccinations

- 1.4.13 Through joint working with Birmingham and Solihull Health Inequalities team, the rough sleeper team held two events to promote access to and take-up of vaccinations for individuals who are, or are at risk of, rough sleeping. Through these events eight individuals were vaccinated, including a rough sleeper who had not received any prior Covid vaccinations.

ARTS AND CULTURE

- 1.4.14 The Cultural Hatchery, known as Core Creatives, will be launched on 9 February 2023. In November local creatives were invited to help shape the space and in response to their needs we are currently fitting out the space with new furniture and Digital equipment. We have trialled use of the space by a small pilot group of artists and in total two organisations and three individual artists have benefited from using the space to develop their creative offers. Three artists have also been commissioned to create pieces of art for the space and these will be unveiled at the launch alongside showcasing the work of 18 local artists.
- 1.4.15 A new online booking system is also being developed so that in early 2023 members will be able to book agile desk space, rehearsal space and meeting rooms through the council website.

Public Art Campaign

- 1.4.16 Continuing the engagement with our Shirley Ambassador Group, we held a meeting on the 24 January 2023 to develop our successful public art campaign, promote plans for a new heritage week in May to include exhibitions, walking tours and events and additional priorities to support the local business community.

EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS

- 1.4.17 The second Apprenticeship Show will be held on the 8 February 2023 at North Solihull Sports Centre; we are looking forward to welcoming lots of employers and training providers who will be speaking to young people and their parents about the fantastic opportunities that are available through the Apprenticeship route.
- 1.4.18 The Employment and Skills Team are planning a Disability Confident event to be held in March 2023, which will promote the benefits of employing people with disabilities and highlight the support on offer for local employers who want to know more. We expect this will create more employment opportunities for our residents with additional needs, and the employment team will support them to move them into work.

1.5 Future Decisions

- 1.5.1 My future decision-making session will take place on 28 March 2023.