

# CPA Corporate Assessment



Self Assessment

**2008**

# CONTENTS

- SECTION 1    CONTEXT
- SECTION 2    AMBITION FOR THE COMMUNITY
- SECTION 3    PRIORITISATION
- SECTION 4    CAPACITY
- SECTION 5    PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT
- SECTION 6    ACHIEVEMENT
  - 6.1    Sustainable Communities and Transport
  - 6.2    Safer and Stronger Communities
  - 6.3    Healthier Communities
  - 6.4    Older People
  - 6.5    Children and Young People

## Executive Summary

Solihull is a thriving, prosperous Borough for most of its residents. People choose to come and live here for the quality of our environment, for our schools and for our reputation in the region. It is a place that people aspire to.

Success has been sustained by strong leadership from our elected members. Inspired by the ambition to raise expectations and give everyone the chance for the best possible quality of life, our leaders have risen to the challenge. The Council has made bold and brave decisions. We have become entrepreneurial, shaping a Vision for our communities and, given our position as the lowest funded Metropolitan Council, increasing our capacity by creative use of our assets to attract external and private sector investment.

Success, however, brings its own challenges. We know, for example, that not everyone in the Borough enjoys the best health, highest educational achievement or widest opportunities for employment. In fact, we have one of the widest gaps in Britain between our wealthiest and our poorest communities. Closing this gap of inequality, while sustaining the quality of life for everyone in the Borough, is our central task, springing from our Vision and providing the rationale for our focus and priorities across the whole Borough.

Our ambition is driven by our communities who shape our priorities and tell us how we are doing. Local people have told us that we must be open, honest, approachable and keep our promises in all we do, and that they want good quality services, delivered well. To sustain this quality, we have combined services, entered into creative partnerships and set up long term contracts so that we deliver good value services while remaining customer focused for the things that really matter to local people.

Our commitment to improve people's lives and deliver tangible outcomes can be seen in our internal transformation programme. One Council One Vision was supported by seven major projects targeted at improving services, creating capacity and tackling inequality. Affirming the need both for continuity and progression, our new programme, 'Shaping Solihull', builds on our success, extending the approach to include our partners.

So what have we achieved?

Our ambition to close the gap of inequality has led to an innovative regeneration programme. One of the biggest outside of London, it will deliver over a billion pounds of investment in people, opportunities and buildings in the north of the Borough. With limited access to additional funding, we have created a partnership with private sector housing, finance companies and a Registered Social Landlord to enable us to build new homes and new schools and invest in social and economic programmes using the value of the land we have released as a catalyst. This means we are enabling communities who have tremendous pride and loyalty to this part of our Borough to benefit from a more prosperous future with decent homes, more choice, improved educational provision and new employment opportunities.

- ***We had 269 fewer homeless families in 2007 than we did in 2005 – a reduction of 46%***
- ***Over 3,300 families are living in upgraded Council homes***
- ***Half of the new houses built in the north of the Borough have been bought by local people***

When others are closing facilities, we have delivered a viable future for our leisure centres, ensuring all our residents have the chance to be fit and healthy. Entering into a public-private partnership and releasing land for an enabling development, we have secured a state of the art leisure centre for the south of the Borough and upgraded our facility in the north.

- ***Over 1,000 people have improved fitness levels***

We know this is a place where people expect to be well educated – the demands on our schools are great. We produce some of the best results in the country and are closing the gap on attainment between the north of our Borough and the south. But we are not complacent. We want our pupils to experience the best learning environments and have seized the opportunities presented by the Building Schools for the Future, Primary Capital Programme and our Regeneration Partnership to plan new schools for all our children and young people in North Solihull. We have also worked with partners to bring about a new Further Education campus in North Solihull and a collegiate approach to secondary education.

- ***2007's school results were in the top quartile for all key stages, with both KS1 and KS2 in the top seven nationally.***
- ***The gap in attainment across the Borough is closing: in the last five years there has been a 30% or more reduction in English and Science and a 20% or more reduction in Maths across both Key Stages 2 & 3***
- ***There has been a reduction in the rate of young people not engaged in education, employment or training within the Borough from 9.49% in November 2005 to 7.7% in June 2007***

As one of the 'most affected' councils, we are tackling the challenge of our unaccompanied asylum seeking children (USAC) through a rapid multi-agency response that addresses their immediate needs and gives an equal chance for all. For their longer term outcomes we have championed the importance of equity of support, opportunity and achievement for them as we do for all our Looked After Children. Our well embedded culture of active involvement of children and young people underpins policy development, practice and individual care planning to improve their outcomes. We listen to what families tell us about their needs, creating one of the first combined Children's Services Directorates and working with a mature Children and Young People's Trust to ensure that services are truly delivered in partnership.

- ***93% of Children in Care, including UASC, participate in their statutory reviews***
- ***Our NS Fusion scheme in north Solihull has contributed to reducing street crime in Fordbridge in north Solihull by 11%***

Demographic analysis identifies a long term trend of significantly rising numbers of elderly, vulnerable people, making the improvement of their health and the promotion of their well-being and independence a priority. In the spirit of entrepreneurialism, partnership and good value services and to maximise the involvement of local people in shaping future models of service delivery, the Council and the NHS have formed a strong alliance by establishing a Care Trust for Solihull, enabling the development of integrated, modernised health and social care services to our residents.

- ***With our help over 3,500 older people are able to remain in their own home***
- ***35% increase in people receiving direct payments***

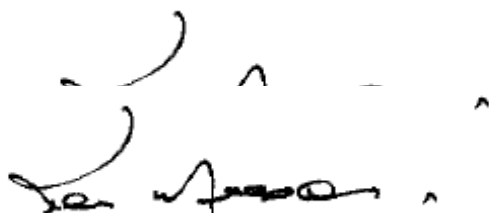
Our Borough is a key driver of the regional economy and we are proud of the national assets such as Birmingham International Airport and the National Exhibition Centre (NEC) that are based here. Solihull is a designated Growth Point and we encourage economic and housing development whilst successfully managing its impact on our urban, suburban and rural landscapes. We are determined to preserve Solihull's beautiful blend of town and country whilst playing our full part in the regeneration and growth of the City Region.

- ***46 new businesses attracted to the Borough last year***
- ***By March 2007 284 workless residents from disadvantaged areas had got jobs***

We have invested in our customer contact services so that, increasingly, we can treat our customers as individuals. This has enhanced our ability to capture a wealth of feedback, service requests, and patterns of service use that means we understand our customers and are able to respond to their needs more effectively than ever before. We have worked with our partners and the community to agree a Vision for Solihull so that our focus is our customers' focus. This helps us overcome the challenge of a persistently low funding base by ensuring our resources are aligned to our priorities. Our residents tell us we are promoting their interests, that we are trustworthy and that we deliver on our promises.

- **We are the second best performing Metropolitan council for people feeling informed about their services**

We have come a long way in recent years, achieving relevant and tangible outcomes as a result of our community leadership, entrepreneurial spirit, our creative and well-founded partnerships, and our shared determination to maintain the quality and reputation of our Borough. Building on what we have learned, we are now starting the next stage of our journey which will see us move from 'One Council' to 'One Borough' as we extend the benefits of working in our strategic partnership to create a Borough where there is an equal chance for all.



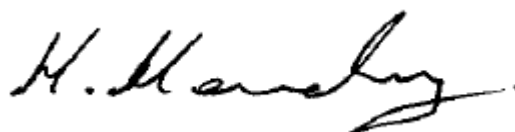
Councillor Ken Meeson  
Leader of the Council



Mark Rogers  
Acting Chief Executive



Councillor Norman Davies  
Leader, Liberal Democrat Group



Councillor Hugh Hendry  
Leader, Labour Group

Our Self Assessed Scores are:

Ambition	4
Prioritisation	4
Capacity	3
Performance Management	3
Achievement	3

## SECTION 1           CONTEXT

- 1.1     **The Place** - Solihull is one of the seven West Midland Metropolitan Boroughs, located between Birmingham and Coventry. An area of 69 square miles with around 70% of the 44,000 acres being greenbelt, it is home to 203,900 people; 80% of our residents live in our residential suburbs.
- 1.2     We are at the heart of the regional and national motorway and rail networks. The key international gateway of Birmingham International Airport ensures that we have good transport links with the region and beyond. Birmingham International Railway Station is also located in the Borough as is the National Exhibition Centre (NEC) and the renowned Touchwood Shopping Centre.
- 1.3     **The People** - Our population is, compared to other areas, ageing. We have forecast that the number of people over 70 will increase by over one third in the next 20 years, and the number of people over 85 by over 70%. Providing quality support and care for these people is a key issue for us, our partners and, of course, our residents.
- 1.4     5.4% of our population is from a minority ethnic background, significantly lower than the 13% average for the West Midlands. However, around 14% of children identify with an ethnic minority background and the daytime student and working population brings many more people into Solihull: approximately 17% of students aged 16-18 at Solihull College and 35% at Solihull Sixth Form College are from a black or minority ethnic background.
- 1.5     Solihull is defined by the Home Office as one of the '*most affected*' Councils in terms of its growing Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) population, which now forms over 40% of the Borough's total number of 'looked after children'. During the last 12 months there has been a 38% increase in the number of UASC. Meeting the fluctuating, unpredictable and increasing demands on social work services and the provision of appropriate placements is a significant challenge but one which we, and our partners, have embraced.
- 1.6     **An Equal Chance for All** - The traditional image of Solihull as a well-off area overlooks the fact that we face a significant amount of deprivation. Four super output areas are in the bottom 10% most deprived nationally. This means a significant number of local people face poorer health, education, housing and employment opportunities.
- 1.7     **The Local Economy** - As well as the NEC and Birmingham International Airport, we are home to Land Rover, Lafarge and Laing O'Rourke and Birmingham and Blythe Valley Business parks. We are stakeholders in both the Airport and Blythe Valley Business Park.
- 1.8     We continue to grow. Over 3,350 jobs have been created at Blythe Valley alone since it opened in 2000. The Touchwood retail complex, which opened in 2001 in Solihull Town Centre, has created approximately 2000 jobs. 46 businesses set up, expanded or moved to the Borough during 2006/07, including six new 'UK first time' investments, creating over 350 new jobs<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.9     **Employment** – We are home to over 7,000 businesses employing around 103,000 people. We have one of the fastest growing economies in the West Midlands, with particularly high levels of economic output (Gross Value Added [GVA] is consistently the highest in the region and well above the national average). We attract significant inward commuting from other parts of the region, ensuring the economy is strongly interrelated with other sub-regional areas.

- 1.10 Overall, there is relatively low unemployment compared to the regional and national averages. However, unemployment in parts of the north of the Borough is typically 6% - almost double the Borough average. We currently lack a sufficient range of businesses in the north to provide suitable jobs and there is a gap between what employers are looking for and the skills of local people. Public transport to the south of the Borough is under-developed and there are lower levels of car ownership in the north, so travelling to jobs outside the immediate area is difficult.
- 1.11 Our challenge is to sustain the economic growth and high quality environment in the south whilst tackling the deprivation in the north.
- 1.12 **Education** - Educational success is very high and places us in the top quartile of all Councils, with the proportion of students gaining five Grade A\*-C GCSEs above similar local authorities and well above the national average. However, there are significant differences between individual schools and areas. Secondary pupils in the north do less well than the rest of the Borough, whilst almost half of our adult residents in north Solihull do not have any qualifications<sup>2</sup>.
- 1.13 **Health** - Residents enjoy better health compared to other parts of the UK and live longer than people elsewhere in the West Midlands. However, there are marked differences between wards in the north and south. People in the south live on average seven years longer than people in some of the wards in the north. But our work on tackling health inequalities extends beyond the north-south divide. We have vulnerable people, people on lower incomes and people in poorer housing in all parts of our Borough and these subsequently face poorer health as well.
- 1.14 **Housing** – We have one of the most severe affordability problems in the West Midlands with a home price to income ratio of 7:1. The affordability ratio is deteriorating as house prices continue to rise more quickly than household income. There is concern about the cumulative effects of small housing developments within existing residential areas because of their impact on the character of localities, the type of housing provided and on infrastructure capacity - physical, social and environmental. Two thirds of our social housing now meets the Decent Homes standard.
- 1.15 **Transport** – Despite our excellent regional, national and international transport links, there are challenges to improve transport integration. Solihull has a high level of car ownership with less than 20% of all journeys within Solihull made using public transport.
- 1.16 **Environment** – We are proud of our high-quality environment. Solihull has a reputation as an attractive urban area with many high quality green open spaces. We have four Green Flag parks<sup>3</sup>, five Sites of Scientific Interest (SSI), 366 listed buildings and 20 conservation areas, hence Solihull continues to live up to its motto of 'Urbs in Rure' ('Town in the Country').
- 1.17 **Crime** – We have a relatively low crime rate compared to other West Midlands Metropolitan Councils and a highly effective Police Service Operational Command Unit. However, tackling crime and anti-social behaviour<sup>4</sup> remain priorities with local trends relating to violent crime<sup>5</sup>, including domestic violence<sup>6</sup> and violence relating to alcohol, gradually increasing compared to the national picture, along with the trend in thefts from vehicles.
- 1.18 **The Council: Decision-making** - Solihull Council has two MPs (1 Conservative; 1 Liberal Democrat) and 51 elected councillors, representing 17 wards. There are 12 Parish and Town Councils and 22 recognised Residents Associations. The Conservative group is the largest in the Council and has formed the administration, although there is no overall political control (24 Conservative, 18 Liberal Democrat, 7 Labour, and two not in a political group). The Leader and executive Cabinet Members are Conservative. The Cabinet portfolios are:

- Leader
- Resources
- Economic Development and Regeneration
- Community Services and Environment
- Transport, Highways and Infrastructure
- Education, Children and Young People
- Health, Social Care and Partnerships
- Quality of Life and Neighbourhoods

- 1.19 The Council has an Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and four Scrutiny Boards, chaired by Members from all three main parties.
- 1.20 The Council delivers its services through five Directorates: Community Services; Customer Services; Education and Children's Services; Resources and Strategic Services. It has commissioned the delivery of its housing and Adult Social Care Services through two major partnerships: the Care Trust and Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) Solihull Community Housing.
- 1.21 The total full time equivalent (fte) for the Council's paid service is approximately 3,500 (excluding schools), equating to 41.43 per 1,000 head of population – amongst the lowest of all ratios in English councils.
- 1.22 **The Council: Finance** - Our net revenue budget for 2007/08 is £130.8M with an additional Direct Schools Grant of £117M. We receive the lowest Government grant per head whilst setting one of the lowest Band D Council Taxes for Metropolitan authorities. Solihull received just £244 per person in central Government grant in 2007/08 compared to an average for Metropolitan councils of £462. We do not receive Neighbourhood Renewal Funding and strongly contend that the Government grant formulae inadequately reflect the social and economic disparity between north and south. Our financial plan shows we plan to spend in the region of £406M on services between 2007/08 and 2009/10, not including schools. Our three year plan incorporates an efficiency target of 15%<sup>7</sup> or £13M.
- 1.23 **Partnerships** – Solihull has a long-standing Local Strategic Partnership, the Solihull Partnership. In response to the twin challenges of a new Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and a second generation Local Area Agreement (LAA), the Partnership has reviewed its executive membership, created a new Governing Board and is in the process of developing and implementing revised governance structures.
- 1.24 The 'One Council: One Vision' (1C1V) programme led to the creation of a range of new partnerships, including the Housing ALMO, Children's Trust, Care Trust, Leisure and Regeneration Partnerships. We are consolidating and developing these new ways of working, and maximising the benefit of their new capacity, through 'Shaping Solihull', a programme of service redesign and shared service opportunities<sup>8</sup>.
- 1.25 At a regional level we are recognised as 'punching above our weight' within the City Region, notably in our contribution to the spatial strategy. We are active in promoting partnerships with our neighbours - for example, the Coventry, Warwickshire and Solihull Partnership, and in the emergent Regional Leaders Forum, established to deliver the requirements of the Sub-National Review (SNR).
- 1.26 **Learning and changing** – our approach over the next few years is one of 'continuity and progression'. Our focus is on exploitation of seven major projects initiated by 1C1V. Our new programme 'Shaping Solihull' will see us become ever more customer-centric, and organised in a way that positions us, first and foremost, as a commissioning-led organisation working in a range of strong local and regional partnerships where we do things *with* our communities, not *to* them.

# What is the council together with its partners trying to achieve?

## SECTION 2 AMBITIONS FOR THE AREA AND OUR COMMUNITY

Ambition
<p>Our Vision is that Solihull should be a place where “well-being, pride and quality of life are enjoyed by all”. It springs from our customers’ needs and expectations and sets us the challenge of closing the gap of inequality in the Borough while maintaining existing high standards and quality.</p>
<p>We have five Customer Outcomes that set out to address the issues outlined in the previous section, and we are equally focused – using our Strategy Map – on the internal outcomes that, as a Council we must excel at if we are to deliver the very best for the people of the Borough. Delivery has been through our transformation programmes: One Council One Vision, and now, Shaping Solihull.</p>
<p>Our ambitions are shared by our partners and by local people. The Borough’s first Community Strategy in 2003 shaped our Council Plan, and key Partnership Strategies. To meet the challenge of reduced resources, our communities’ growing ambitions, and the opportunities afforded by Local Area Agreements, a new Sustainable Communities Strategy is being developed to deliver the ‘added-value’ that will come from increasingly sophisticated resource targeting and strategic commissioning across the Council, as well as through the Solihull Partnership.</p>
<p>We have long recognised that we must look both within and outside the Borough to deliver on our ambitions, understanding that our reputation for quality extends throughout the West Midlands and beyond, and that we can only sustain it by working with other Councils and Partnerships across the Region and nationally.</p>

- 2.1 Solihull Council has a clear Vision for our Borough as: *“A place where well-being, pride and quality of life are enjoyed by all”*.
- 2.2 It is a Vision that is both challenging and ambitious because, although Solihull is, for the most part, a prosperous, attractive and successful community, it is also:
- marked by significant inequality – most notably between north and south Solihull.
  - changing rapidly – long-standing residents still refer to the ‘village’, but Solihull is now one of the engines of regional economic growth, bringing success and jobs, to the Borough along with population change and pressure on green spaces.
- 2.3 Our task is to sustain and improve our prosperity and quality of life in the midst of change - including providing good value services - while prioritising areas of need and deprivation. We face an additional challenge: Solihull is the lowest funded English Metropolitan Borough. The impact of this relative lack of funding has been to create a spirit of discipline, focus, risk-aware entrepreneurialism and innovation amongst both officers and Members.
- 2.4 Our Vision is delivered through our Council Plan, enabled by our Strategy Map and Balanced Scorecard. The Plan identifies five key Customer Outcomes:
- A sustainable improved quality of life
  - Closing the gap of inequality
  - A brighter future for our children and young people
  - To be treated as an individual
  - Good value services

Further focus is brought to these by the ten priorities that our communities have asked us to focus on when addressing the Customer Outcomes.

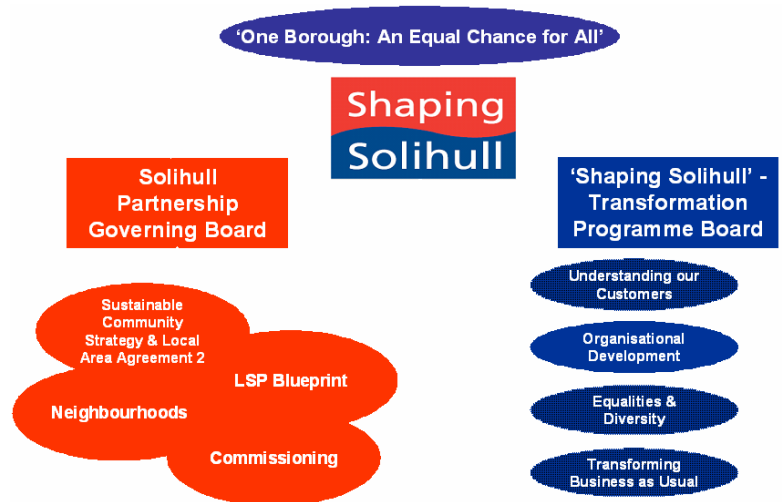
- 2.5 These represent long term challenges that demand our sustained leadership and commitment. We have been working to address them for more than five years and, while much remains to be done we believe we have made excellent progress.
- 2.6 In 2003 the 'One Council One Vision' transformation programme identified the Step Change Improvement Priorities (SCIPs) as the focus for achieving our Customer Outcomes. Building on these, it launched seven major projects. Each of them demonstrates our willingness to listen to our customers, challenge ourselves, be entrepreneurial and provide courageous community leadership.

#### Actions to deliver the ambition – One Council One Vision

- **Regenerating North Solihull** – a billion pound plus programme, delivered through an innovative partnership with the private sector to enable us to close the gap of inequality.
- **Solihull Care Trust** – A new NHS body delivering integrated health and adult social care services – with the task of bringing both together and providing seamless, improved services, to enable us to treat people as individuals and ensure a sustainable improved quality of life.
- **The Children's Trust** – a successful 'virtual' trust founded in a strong public, private and voluntary sector partnership, delivering a Brighter Future for our Children and Young People.
- **Housing: "Financing the Future"** – creating an ALMO to deliver the decent homes standard, a key element of our work to provide a sustainable improved quality of life.
- **Transforming Secondary Education** – Leading local schools in a pioneering BSF programme, together with the development of a collegiate approach to learning - to deliver our outcome of 'A Brighter Future for our Children and Young People'.
- **Leisure Options** – investing Council assets in partnership with the private sector to secure new and improved leisure facilities, delivering our Quality of Life agenda and helping to close the gap of inequalities.
- **One Front Line** – a strategic use of prudential borrowing to transform our customer services, with a focus on treating people as individuals, improve information and deliver good value services.

- 2.7 Through these projects - and the partnerships and new organisations we have created - we have transformed the landscape of Solihull.
- 2.8 We believe our actions, with our partners, are starting to make a difference. Focusing on the North Solihull Regeneration Zone (NSRZ), two key areas - Smith's Wood and Kingshurst - show improvements in the Index of Multiple Deprivation Score between 2004 and 2007 of 2 and 1.37 points respectively. Income is rising across the NSRZ and Educational attainment and environmental factors are improving. We know, however, that much remains to be done. Our Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets employment, health and crime as areas where, Borough-wide, performance still needs to improve. We are only beginning to fully exploit the capacity we have created. The next phase of our transformation journey - Shaping Solihull - will provide the framework. It is a critical shift from a 'One Council' to a 'One Borough' focus to take account of our new relationships. It will also reshape the Council in response to the challenge of aligning resources to outcomes and establishing a new framework for community engagement and neighbourhood working. Critically, it is building new capability and capacity around commissioning across the Council and with our partners.
- 2.9 Shaping Solihull is a shared programme with the Solihull Partnership. Partners and Council officers are contributing to the governance of the whole, under the overall direction of Councillors.

2.10 **Ambitions based on Consultation** - Significantly, local people have told us that we are tackling the issues that matter to them. With our partners we gather the views of as wide a range of people as possible and give people a real say in decision making and in judging our performance. However, although we are an increasingly diverse community, there are, as yet, only a few formal groupings of communities from minority groups. But we and our partners are actively creating more capacity to engage, supporting the formation of voluntary sector focus groups, extending consultation with tenants, and supporting Solihull's Faiths' Forum<sup>9</sup>.



2.11 We consult our Citizens' Panel four times a year about Council services, priorities and budget allocation. For the 2007/08 budget process, Members were able to take into account the views of local people as expressed through the Citizens' Panel and previous consultation exercises. This resulted in additional funding being directed to community care services, services for young people, recycling and tackling anti-social behaviour.

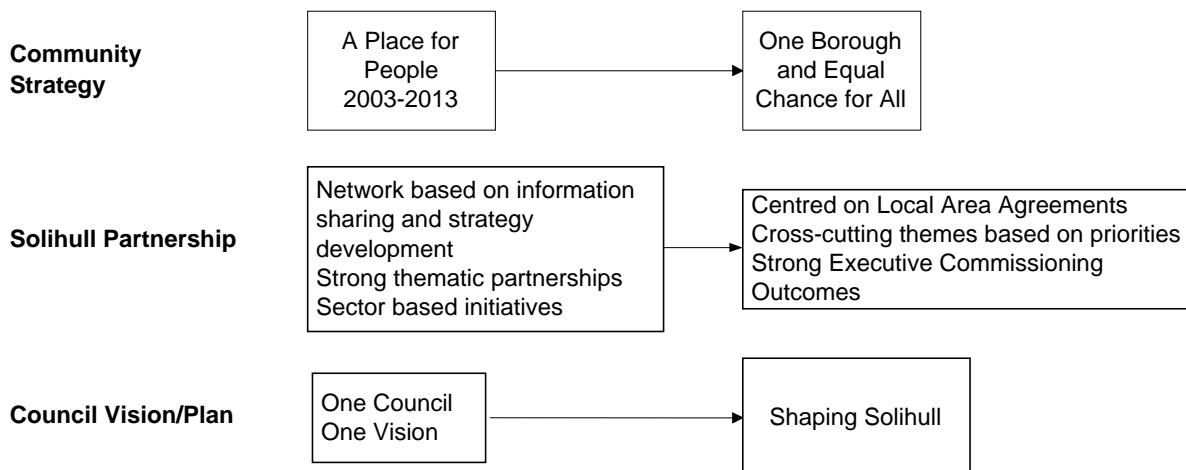
2.12 Our outstanding work with children and young people is also recognised, with a Grade 4 awarded in the most recent Annual Performance Assessment (APA).

2.13 **Sharing Information for a Shared Understanding** - Information is at the heart of the new Partnership. We have created "Understanding Solihull", a key data resource providing information about the Borough, including consultations, Census data, deprivation indices and performance indicators, providing information at ward level and below where possible<sup>10</sup>. Intelligence supports targeted action and prioritisation. At a practical level, information shared with our partners is supporting community tasking. At a higher level it enabled us to commission the development of our Step Change Improvement Priorities, which became the focus for delivering our Customer Outcomes.

2.14 There is a tradition of engaging staff in shaping our priorities and participating in major projects. We believe our staff keep us focused on what really matters to local people and we work to ensure that there is wide ownership of our Outcomes and Priorities through magazines, core brief and events and meetings. Our success in engaging staff led to a Gold Award by LGComms for Internal Communications in 2007.

2.15 **Ambitions in Partnership** - Our partners share our ambition to sustain the quality of life and tackle the inequalities in the Borough. We have actively led and promoted the Solihull Partnership, which is chaired by the Leader of the Council and involves a wide range of Members and officers with our partners in its thematic groups.

2.16 It is important to recognise that, as a Council and as a partnership, we are at a point of significant change. In response to our appetite to deepen our partnership working and create new capacity to meet the demands of the new structure for Local Area Agreements, we are preparing a Sustainable Communities Strategy and, at the same time, revising our partnership structures.



2.17 This challenging approach is grounded in a long history of trusted relationships and joint working through existing partnerships such as the Solihull Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and the Children’s and Young People’s Trust.

2.18 **Regional Partnerships** - Solihull - as a place and in its economy - has a leading regional role. Our ambition is to sustain our prosperity while preserving our quality of life and local environment. Cross-boundary partnership working is vital to Solihull’s economic development and regeneration agenda, providing opportunities to secure added value for the Borough through the pursuit of shared interests and priorities, and realising economies of scale. With the increased focus on cities as drivers of economic growth, we have been proactive in promoting the City Region arrangements, with a particular focus on regional spatial and transport planning.

### SECTION 3 PRIORITISATION

Prioritisation
<p>To deliver our Vision we must align our resources - human, financial and physical - to support the achievement of our five Customer Outcomes. We must prioritise!</p> <p>The high level priorities are clearly set out in the Community Strategy (and emergent SCS) and reflected in the specific targets in our LAA and Council Plan. They have been shaped by an evidence base drawn from across the Council and from partners that is customer-driven, but balanced by an analysis of needs and performance data. We have invested considerable time and commitment into developing our business intelligence and are planning, through our LSP, further investment in this area.</p> <p>We have a good track record of aligning our medium term financial strategy to our Customer Outcomes. This is evidenced in our investment in the seven major projects and our ‘step change improvement priorities’. Our approach continues to develop with the introduction of an Investment Board that is being established as part of the Shaping Solihull programme, and the use of Challenge Boards involving Members and Chief Officers to scrutinise the budget proposals drawn up by each Cabinet Portfolio.</p>

3.1 **Prioritising to Deliver** – We have developed a robust and comprehensive approach to service prioritisation. We are clear within and beyond the Council about the key issues that we face and the things that staff need to focus on in their daily work. Our sustained commitment to our Vision and five Customer Outcomes means we can focus on aligning our resources to our Outcomes. This prioritisation led to the development in our first Council Plan of our SCIPs: priorities which became the focus for investment, provided the foundation for our major projects and created organisational capacity in targeted areas such as performance management to

communications. Indeed, as the pressure on our resources has grown, we have further strengthened our ability to prioritise with the introduction in 2006 of a Balanced Scorecard approach. This means that the process of prioritisation can be applied to the financial, process and learning outcomes that support the achievement of our Customer Outcomes. The benefit of the approach is already being felt in the depth and range of challenge staff themselves are bringing to this year's budget process where we need to identify the first 5% of our three year planned 15% budget reduction efficiencies.

- 3.2 The framework for Council planning and prioritisation is provided, at the highest level, by our Community Strategy (which is now transforming into the SCS). Owned by the Solihull Partnership, this was developed through an extensive process of consultation. Its high level priorities form the starting point for key partnership strategies such as the Children and Young People's Plan 2006-09<sup>11</sup>, the Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy 2005-2008<sup>12</sup>, the Strategic Framework for Reducing Health Inequalities in Solihull 2005-2010<sup>13</sup>, and the "The Future is Ours" - A Strategy for Older People 2006-2013<sup>14</sup>. The list is not exhaustive. Critically, these are partnership strategies, led by thematic groups, but also owned within the Council by identified Cabinet Members. They are used as the basis for commissioning projects and services and for the joint monitoring of progress against outcome-focused targets.
- 3.3 The priorities within the Community Strategy also shaped the Borough's Local Area Agreement. Bringing together both local and national priorities in a single contract, it is providing us and our partners with a new, sharper focused framework for measuring achievement of our Priorities.
- 3.4 We are keen to ensure that there is no negative or differential impact on any group at risk of disadvantage and discrimination through our strategies and plans. We carry out an Equality Impact Assessment on new strategies in the course of their development. This approach helps mainstream equalities into our core business.
- 3.5 **Prioritising against our Customer Outcomes** - The Council Plan sets out our Vision and our five Customer Outcomes<sup>15</sup>. At the heart of the Plan is our Strategy Map that visually captures and represents both our customer and Council Outcomes. Our Strategy Map informs our approach to prioritising all our resources – human, financial and physical – so they are aligned to the delivery of our Priorities within the Council Plan and Local Area Agreement. 95% of staff say they have an understanding of our outcomes and priorities and 73% can see how they contribute to them.
- 3.6 We are a confident and ambitious Council, with an impressive track record of achievement. Against our Customer Outcomes (linked to our major projects) we can identify a significant number of achievements:
  - **Customer Outcome: 'A Brighter Future for Our Children and Young People'** - We were one of the first councils to create a single Education and Children's Services Directorate. We successfully retained our 3 (out of 4) rating for Education and Children's Services in our Annual Performance Assessment (APA) in 2006, and again in 2007 (securing a 4 for the 'making a positive contribution' outcome element of it). We have been the driving force in developing a Children and Young People's Trust in the Borough. We have undertaken a major project *Transforming Secondary Education* to provide better school buildings and broader curriculum opportunities so that young people can achieve greater educational success. We were approved to be in the first wave of Government Funding for Building Schools for the Future (BSF) and were awarded PFI Credits of £86.8M and grant at £33.45M. We are delivering six brand new schools in north Solihull: the Solihull Centre for Inclusive Learning was the first BSF School in the country to open.

- **Customer Outcome: 'Improving your Quality of Life'** - We established Solihull Community Housing to deliver the Decent Homes Programme in Solihull, successfully attracting an extra £63.3M of Government funding. We are on target to achieve and exceed the Standard by 2012. A range of strategies, such as our Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy, our Economic Development Strategy and our Local Transport Plan are all designed to deliver an improved quality of life for local people.
- **Leisure Options** - We have attracted a private sector partner to invest up to £14M in leisure facilities in the Borough. North Solihull Sports Centre has been refurbished and Norman Green and Tudor Grange Sports Centres have been replaced with one new Centre which opened in January 2008.

We have invested in our library service, building new libraries to serve the growing communities of Balsall Common and Dickens Heath and refurbishing the Central Library. The Central Library is now the 15<sup>th</sup> busiest in England and public satisfaction stands at 81% - the highest in the West Midlands and second in the country<sup>16 17 18</sup>.

- **Customer Outcome: 'Closing the Gap of Inequality'** - With our partners we have established a programme of long-term initiatives and projects in place to address inequality in the Borough. As well as our focus on housing and education, we would highlight:
  - **Regeneration North Solihull** - Our fifteen year programme to transform the three wards of Chelmsley Wood, Smith's Wood and Fordbridge by improving homes, shops, schools, health and community facilities, transport, the environment, creating jobs and delivering, to date, 63 new homes.
  - We have established a **Care Trust** responsible for reducing health, inequalities and developing an integrated model for health and social care in Solihull.
- **Customer Outcome: 'Treating you as an Individual'** - We aim to give our citizens choice and personalise service around their needs rather than ours. The One Front Line programme created a new contact service and is exploiting new technology to provide our customers with more choice and improved access to service, as well as giving us more information about customer needs.
- We recognise that we need to better understand our changing population so that we can offer people, where possible, choice. We have developed a single Equalities and Diversity Scheme which incorporates our revised Race Equality Scheme. The Scheme is a planning document that sets out the Council's objectives to promote diversity and equality. We also have a Communications Strategy; the Enabled not Disabled Joint Strategy for people with physical and sensory disabilities; and 'The Future is Ours' - Older People Strategy to help us in this outcome.
- **Customer Outcome: 'Good Value Services'** - We have established a new procurement service and are actively promoting value for money approaches across the Council. We focus on income maximisation. Council Tax collection was at 98%, the highest of any Metropolitan authority. Business rate collection is 99.61% (top quartile performance). We have responded positively to the Government's efficiency agenda and surpassed the three year Government target of £10.4M of efficiency savings. Our three year plan incorporates an efficiency target of 5% per year for 2008/09 to 2010/11.

- 3.7 Part of our success is due to our rigorous approach to managing risk and performance, combined with a strongly embedded approach to programme and project management. We can also demonstrate significant re-prioritisation leading to the re-direction of resources in support of our priorities.
- **Integration of Priorities with Budget and Strategies** - our historically low levels of Government funding give us the lowest funding base per head of all Metropolitan councils and means we have less money to spend on services. As a result, we have had to set challenging savings targets each year in order to meet a reducing revenue base and deliver efficiency savings. Through our rigorous approaches we have also successfully released funds for service pressures - over £7M in 2006/07 and £11M in 2007/08. Reinvestment at this level represents savings found and delivered of 5.8% and 8.8% of the Council's net budget. Delivery of these and the anticipated delivery of future savings is a measure of our capacity to deliver and our appetite to prioritise. Our medium term financial plan continues to drive out efficiencies to invest in priorities.
  - **Community Priorities** - Based on our Customer Outcomes and Council Plan, additional monies were invested in our SCIPs (our three year 'step change improvement priorities'): 3.5M in 2004/05, £2.8M in 2005/06 and £0.8M in 2006/07. We also consistently fully passported schools funding long before the creation of the Dedicated Schools Grant. Our 2007 Annual Audit and Inspection letter also noted '*Solihull has continued to improve services in priority areas*'. Priorities are also clarified by our customers through the Citizens' Panel where we involve them in identifying or re-affirming priorities each year. In 2007/08, a further £0.944M of revenue funding was invested in projects including recycling, addressing anti-social behaviour and youth activities, all of which were identified in feedback from local people. Our Budget for 2008/09 identifies substantial savings in order to continue to fund priorities and protect front line services within strict financial constraints.
  - **Capital Focused on Priorities** - The capital programme supports our Customer Outcomes and Major Projects. Each year we make around £1M available for corporate capital projects, allocated through a bidding process which evaluates the projects for cost and revenue implications and contribution to Strategy Map Outcomes.
- 3.8 **De-prioritisation** - Every Council faces hard choices when it supports identified priorities. In Solihull, the clear identification of the Major Projects and SCIPs became the focus for investment choices. We have had to make unpopular and contentious decisions to, for example, cease funding Christmas lights or reduce the subsidy for the Schools Music Service in order to maintain our focus. Currently the Schools Forum is considering proposals to significantly realign funding to give additional weighting to deprivation factors.
- 3.9 The whole Council has shown remarkable unanimity in the face of our reducing budgets. In order to involve as many Members as possible in the difficult decisions we face, we have evolved a process that brings staff, scrutiny and the Cabinet together in a budget setting process that is based on a clear, shared understanding of the financial pressures as well as the Council's priorities. In 2007/08 it led to a budget settlement that was supported by all of the political groups.
- 3.10 In the current year, at the start of a new challenging three year budget cycle, the process has been extended to include a formal challenge process as well as review by Scrutiny and Cabinet. Challenge Boards, consisting of the Cabinet Member, Opposition Spokespersons and Chief Officers, have tested budget proposals against our outcomes to deliver efficiencies and create headroom for further investment in our Customer Outcomes. Staff across the Council have been widely involved, with their suggestions forming part of the budget package that is being developed.

## SECTION 4 CAPACITY

### Capacity

As a lean organisation, we excel at shifting resources to support our priorities and challenging the way we work to ensure that we 'get it right first time' – the right services to the right people to the highest standards in a timely manner, with the least waste. We are focused on the prioritisation and commissioning processes, taking a strategic approach to procurement to deliver value for money. We are embracing the challenge of continuing to achieve our ambitions in the face of increasingly tight settlements through our 'can do, will do' culture.

We are highly effective at maximising revenues, have been improving well in our Use of Resources judgements and have been cited as an exemplar council in our innovative investment approaches.

We have a Leader and Cabinet model of government which is both well supported and challenged by Scrutiny. The excellent working relationships between Members, officers and partners enable consensus-building approaches. The budget for 2007/08 was agreed unanimously at Full Council, for example.

Partnerships increase our ability to achieve our ambitions. We are investing in our Strategic Partnership, and working with the voluntary and community sectors to increase capacity in the Borough.

We are anticipating the future challenges our workforce will face by investing in our organisational development team and renewing our organisational development strategy to align it fully to our Outcomes.

Our approach to equality and diversity is to influence people's attitude and behaviour, so that they understand the impact that these have on service delivery. We are enhancing our approach to customer feedback and user focus to build on our understanding of the diverse needs of communities in the Borough.

4.1 **The Council** - Our achievements demonstrate that we have the capacity needed to develop effective plans, assess risks, make timely decisions and procure - 'right source' - effectively. Value for money, and the continual challenge to be innovative and find new and more efficient ways of working, is part of our culture. Our strengths are:

- Community Leadership by the Executive, resulting in clear and consistent Customer Outcomes and a willingness to tackle large scale transformation programmes.
- A strong sense of shared purpose, trust and respect between officers and Members.
- Our 'One Council' approach, so that – whether dealing with a customer or supporting a colleague – we take ownership of the issue.
- A drive for 'good value services' that is reflected in a strategic approach to procurement and value for money across the Council.
- A willingness to innovate with our partners where greater value or better customer services can be delivered.

4.2 The Council's decision making structure is effective: Members, whether in Cabinet or Scrutiny, and officers are clear about their roles and responsibilities<sup>19</sup>. Many Members have extensive experience in their role and detailed and long standing knowledge of the Borough. To ensure that this capacity is sustained, there is a focus on continued Member development. The Member Development Group has agreed role descriptions and competencies for all Members and has completed a training needs analysis that prompted the development of a new targeted training and Member development programme. The Leader of the Council has called together an

all party commission with a brief to review best practice and make recommendations to Full Council about further improvements. However we recognise that although foundations have been laid, work remains to be done to fully engage Members in the development programme.

- 4.3 A Scrutiny and Members' support function is in place. The Monitoring Officer, as Solicitor for the Council, has the status to provide advice and support and to co-ordinate training to all Members on the Ethical Framework [Code of Conduct]<sup>20</sup>. We have established both Standards and Audit Committees with independent Chairs. A model protocol and governance toolkit has been agreed as the basis for effective governance of our major partnerships.
- 4.4 **Driving for value** - As a lean organisation we have developed an entrepreneurial and dynamic approach to managing people and resources that enables us to manage risk and achieve outcomes.
- 4.5 Risk management<sup>21</sup> is central, with our approach sustaining in the most recent Use of Resources assessment and gaining a citation for best practice by the Audit Commission<sup>22</sup>. The use of risk registers is embedded within our Performance Planning Frameworks. We have senior officers as 'Risk Champions'<sup>23</sup> and strategic risks are regularly reported to Members who encourage a positive approach to treatment of risk. At a more routine level, risk registers are maintained within Directorates where lower level risks are tracked, monitored and, where necessary, escalated.
- 4.6 Project management is embedded in our approach to managing new initiatives. We have developed a local Prince-based project framework, **Start, Plan, Implementation, Close, Evaluate** (SPICE), and have used it extensively to support the management of both large and small projects. SPICE has given the Council a shared framework for establishing project structures and processes, helping to embed the approach across the Council<sup>24</sup>.
- 4.7 Strong financial management and value for money (VFM) is essential. We give financial training to all budget managers, financial administrators and new Members. Members are actively involved in promoting VFM and best use of Council monies. For example, the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) has reviewed the use of consultants, voluntary sector support and printing costs, leading to the adoption of new guidelines and controls. Most recently, members have developed a potential savings toolkit to further strengthen the published budget setting framework. Our joint VFM capacity building project with Coventry City Council has provided training for managers and members with the opportunity to explore techniques such as 'lean' thinking in greater detail. 60% of local people feel we provide good value for money, making us the third best performing Metropolitan Council.
- 4.8 **A strategic approach to procurement** - To enable a Council-wide and strategic approach we have created a new procurement service. As well as driving for savings - over £1M cashable savings since its formation in 2004 - the service has pioneered new approaches such as e-auctions and supported the development of major contracts such as the Leisure Public-Private Partnership or Strategic Environment contract. We are actively involved in supply chain management, holding conferences with private and community and voluntary sector suppliers to engage them in our priorities and advise them about Council requirements. We are also streamlining procurement processes. Currently, i-procurement is being implemented across the Council.

- 4.9 **Use of Resources (UoR)** - We perform strongly - an overall grade 3 - with positive comments in successive Direction of Travel statements. By the end of 2006/07 - a year early - we had almost met our three year Gershon efficiency target with a cumulative savings figure of £10.274M against a target of £10.4M. Our total after two quarters of 2007/08 is £11.810M. The Council has robust revenue and capital management strategies<sup>25</sup>. We have significantly exceeded our LPSA cost effectiveness reward target. Our rigorous approach means we have been able to identify resources to fund our agreed priorities.
- 4.10 We take a strategic approach to the way in which resources are assembled to support Council priorities:
- We have been a leader in the use of prudential borrowing to support strategic initiatives and are cited as a Best Practice authority in CIPFA's Best Practice Guide for this area<sup>26</sup>.
  - Our Asset Management Plan ensures assets are used responsibly and efficiently, allowing us to exploit them in support of our priorities, encouraging investment from the private sector<sup>27</sup>.
  - Meeting our LPSA targets has led to around £4M in reward grant to invest in our customer outcomes.
  - Our Partnership in north Solihull has attracted £1.1M of Regional Housing Board grant to support housing renewal, and £1.2M of Primary Capital Programme (PCP) Funding from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to support the rebuild of primary schools in the area in 2006/07 (with a further £6M to follow as a PCP pilot).
- 4.11 **Capacity through Partnerships** – we recognise that partnerships increase capacity and, as a Council, we actively promote and participate in them and identify great variety of arrangements, from joint appointments to the establishment of major new organisations, including, for example, Solihull Care Trust, Inpartnership, the regeneration company that is master-planning our billion pound regeneration project, our Leisure PPP and a longstanding Waste to Energy Plant with Coventry City Council<sup>28</sup>. Many of our critical front line services, such as Streetcare and Waste collection, are now delivered by third parties. Our recognition that we are now, effectively, a commissioning organisation is driving our new change programme, Shaping Solihull, which will further increase our capacity by:
- (a) **Extending the Commissioning approach** – In key areas, such as the Children's and Young People's Trust and the Care Trust, commissioning is embedded. The new project will extend our use of business intelligence and introduce the next stage of organisational change to establish a common commissioning process. Crucially, this project is owned by the Solihull Partnership so that the new approach is established from the outset as a shared approach with partners.
  - (b) **Exploiting information and technology** - We have invested in new technology to create new capacity in the Council. Based on our customer contact service we are rolling out Council-wide information systems, such as Oracle CRM, HR and financials and i-procurement. The 'Transforming Business as Usual' project will drive its exploitation to ensure that planned savings, as well as service benefits, are fully realised
  - (c) **Sustaining our customer focus** - We have transferred services with high levels of customer contact to our contact centre, enabling us to better focus professional and back office staff. This promotes 'right first time' delivery.
  - (d) **Organisational Development** - Our employees tell us that they enjoy working here. We have had Investor in People accreditation for the whole Council since 1995. We achieved a Single Status pay agreement in 2001, one of the first in the country to do so.

- 4.12 We have high expectations of our staff and actively manage issues such as attendance<sup>29</sup>. Average employee sickness was 8.06 days/year at the end of 2006/07, well below the West Midlands Metropolitan Council average. Staff surveys show that staff members are set clear targets relative to their performance plan and they receive support from managers to perform their roles<sup>30</sup>. We have good staff relations, working with the Trade Unions in 2006 to establish a new Consultation and Negotiation Framework<sup>31</sup> and Partnership Agreement<sup>32</sup>.
- 4.13 We are transforming our HR service to play a more strategic role, supporting workforce and organisational development, addressing four themes:
- **Underpinning Basics** – including self-service, sharper HR policies, e-learning and management information.
  - **Developing our People** – Improving leadership and management development.
  - **Influencing organisational change** – employee surveys and partnership working.
  - **Employer of Choice** – work-life balance with our flexible working policy and further development of on-line recruitment.
- 4.14 We have invested in organisational development, creating a new, strengthened team. Our Organisational Development (OD) Strategy shows the investment we are making in learning and development interventions<sup>33</sup>. We run Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) Level 5 management courses and are part of a consortium to train managers in delivering high quality coaching.
- 4.15 Our partnerships with the voluntary and community sector are vital. Solihull has over 500 voluntary and community groups but many of these are very small and in need of development. Recognising this, we have created capacity in the Council to provide support and agreed a Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Strategy 2007-2012<sup>34</sup> and Compact 2007-2010<sup>35</sup>. Both documents were led by the Voluntary and Community Sector and facilitated by the Council: over 160 partner organisations contributed to them. One of the outcomes of the additional support we have offered is Solihull's Change Up Consortium (SUSTAIN)<sup>36</sup> which has been able to access approximately £1.2M of external funding to further assist with the VCS Capacity Building and Infrastructure Development programmes.
- 4.16 **Equalities and Diversity** – We have achieved and further consolidated level 2 of the Equality Standard as a measure of achieving our equalities objectives. This has included the widespread deployment of Equality Impact Assessments and a thorough review of future activity and support. The Council is committed to progressing against the Equality Standard and a key measure within the Solihull scorecard is achievement of level 3 by autumn 2008.
- 4.17 We have involved local people in developing our Equality and Diversity scheme<sup>37</sup>, which has now been substantially updated. Its Action Plan is formally championed by an elected Member Diversity Champion (the Deputy Leader) and managed by the Corporate Management Team at its monthly performance meetings, demonstrating a strategic and integrated approach to equalities and human rights issues. We have Equality and Diversity groups and champions in place in Directorates to ensure delivery of agreed actions and cultural change.

## SECTION 5 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

### Performance management

We are performance-focused – both in terms of delivery and accountability. There is a well developed internal operating framework, formalised in our well-established practice of implementing ‘Statements of Required Practice’ (SORPs).

Performance management is seen as both top down and bottom up, stressing the ‘golden thread’ that runs through our approach. The framework we operate within has strong elements of peer, Member and, crucially, customer challenge to it.

With our focus clearly on delivering our five Customer Outcomes, we have invested in bespoke, PRINCE-based project management. The new ‘Shaping Solihull’ programme is underpinned by this and we are strengthening governance arrangements by formally constituting the Transformation and Investment Boards that will oversee the next stages of delivery.

We have an open and honest approach to our performance, publishing and seeking feedback on our results. We have established joint arrangements for performance management with our partners and these are being developed around our new and existing LAAs.

- 5.1 We understand that effective delivery rests on strong performance management. We have invested in performance management, created an effective performance management framework and have continued to develop new structures to match our changing needs and circumstances<sup>38</sup>.
- 5.2 Our performance management is centred on:
- delivering tangible improvements for local people.
  - creating an intelligence-led organisation to support our commissioning intent.
  - monthly performance meetings for our Corporate and Directorate Management Teams.
- 5.3 We have a well established Performance Management Panel (PMP) chaired by the Chief Executive, which carries out detailed reviews and provides peer challenge to action plans, areas of under-performance, the outcome of inspections and the delivery of agreed improvement plans<sup>39</sup>.
- 5.4 PMP is a link in a chain of agreed processes and structures across the Council. Most day to day work is carried out by officers from the Corporate Performance, Policy and Information Division working alongside Performance Lead Officers within Directorates. Systems and procedures have been developed to support them, set out in a number of guidance notes called ‘Statements of Required Practice’ (SORP). Effectively these form the toolkit for our performance management processes.
- 5.5 We have a well established approach to business planning, with all areas producing business plans to the same timeline and format<sup>40</sup>.
- 5.6 Risk and performance management are closely integrated. All performance plans require an updated risk register and performance management reporting also serves to trigger the re-evaluation of existing risk registers. Risk management is an integral part of our approach to project management.
- 5.7 Throughout 2005 we developed and trained staff in our project management methodology ‘SPICE’. Staff are required to ensure that all projects are compliant with the standards within the SPICE framework.

- 5.8 We meet the new requirements of the Audit Commission guidance on Data Quality and have established 'Information Quality Standards' which set out the key actions and responsibilities for achieving a consistent and corporate approach<sup>41</sup>.
- 5.9 We have an established Revenue Budget Framework, linking the budget setting process with our performance management and performance planning framework<sup>25</sup>. Headline financial performance measures have always formed part of our strategic set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Each year our Overview and Scrutiny Management Board reviews both performance and budget outcomes.
- 5.10 Our performance structure extends from the Council-wide and strategic in the Council Plan, through Divisional and team plans to individual targets. Staff understand their contribution to the Council Objectives and Priorities; over 95% have a formal appraisal and agreed targets; 86% of staff are clear how these link to their Performance Plan. Over 73% are clear how their individual targets contributed to the Council Objectives and Priorities<sup>42</sup>. We believe this focus leads to high performance. In 2006/07 61% of our BVPIs showed either improved or maintained current level of performance.
- 5.11 There are well established arrangements for quarterly reporting of key strategic performance indicators to Cabinet Members, Cabinet and Scrutiny. Last year we introduced the Balanced Scorecard approach, which involved re-casting the 'Top 40' strategic performance indicator set, including more local indicators and aligning our performance management more closely to the delivery of our agreed Outcomes. Scrutiny and Cabinet also review the performance of our LAA every six months.
- 5.12 We are proactive in gathering views about our performance, particularly from our customers and local residents. Partners, officers and Members share performance information, celebrating achievements and reviewing where we need to improve. We have an accessible and effective Customer Feedback Procedure<sup>43</sup> and regard complaints as a valuable source of performance information to guide service improvement, including them on monthly performance agendas for corporate and directorate management teams and reported to OSMB. A detailed complaints annual report is produced which includes examples of organisational learning<sup>44</sup>.
- 5.13 Our Council Results are published annually, including Best Value Performance Indicators, additional measures within our Scorecard, the national indicators for Adult and Children's Social Care Services, headline summaries of financial management and the results of any external inspections. We plan to continue to publish our Council Results in a more Annual Report style document. The Council Tax booklet also summarises our performance results and is sent to every household and business. Both of these publications have been produced at significant reduced costs in recent years. Other mechanisms include our monthly Core Brief (used to cascade examples of delivery against our priorities); 'Contact' the monthly staff magazine, the Intranet, the quarterly publication 'Your Solihull' (delivered to every household), our work with the media and our website.
- 5.14 Customer feedback and customer satisfaction is crucial. Our results are good:
- 68% of residents feel we are trustworthy; the third best Met in the country.
  - 58% feel we promote the interests of local residents; second best Met.
  - 50% believe we keep them well informed about the services and benefits we provide; second best Met.
  - 40% believe we delivering on our promises; third best Met<sup>45</sup>.
- 5.15 **Continuous Improvement** - In 2007, we introduced a new structure for our planning and performance management using a Strategy Map and Balanced Scorecard because we wanted to better align our resources to our Outcomes. The first benefits are being felt in this current budget round with the Scorecard providing the basis for challenging our progress in securing improved outcomes.

- 5.16 In April 2007 our first LAA went live. This represented a step change for the Executive in managing a major programme of projects and activities. However, our previous experience and successful management of Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) targets, as well as the structures created around the Safer and Stronger mini-LAA, provided us with the basis for the new arrangement. We now have an effective performance management framework for our LAA enabling the partnership to act more effectively<sup>46</sup>.
- 5.17 The performance management arrangements to support the new LAA will be central to the future work of both the Council and the Partnership. We are therefore:
- renewing the governance structure of the Partnership and our Sustainable Community Strategy.
  - enhancing our ability to access good quality information by renewing and extending our 'Understanding Solihull' datasets making it available over the internet to all partners, and
  - using LPSA reward monies to create additional capacity in our performance management team and in our finance team to ensure we can track both funding and performance effectively.

## SECTION 6 ACHIEVEMENT

### WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED?

#### Summary

Through our Community Strategy and Council Plan, we have consistently balanced national and local priorities: for example, in the emphasis we place as a Borough on learning, the focus we have brought to improving health and social care and, above all, in the strong drive and commitment we have brought to addressing issues of inequality, deprivation and exclusion.

Local people have endorsed our priorities and, more importantly, there is evidence that we are trusted, that we deliver on our promises, that there is opportunity to participate and that we offer value for money.

The quality of our working relationships and shared purpose with partners regionally and locally is a strength. As a result of our joint working there is, now, momentum for greater 'value-added' improvement in the Borough. In the Council our focus on local people, our drive for quality, and our willingness to be entrepreneurial have all led to real achievements and sustained improvement that is reflected, in part, in our Direction of Travel statements which have identified us as improving well for the last two years.

### 6.1 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES AND TRANSPORT

- 6.1.1 **Development** – We have led in the development of key partnerships to secure business investment and ensure the sustainability of our towns and communities. We promoted the successful redevelopment of Solihull town centre, resulting in the creation of the regionally important Touchwood shopping centre. This success has been followed by the development of extensive proposals to renew the major centres in Shirley and Chelmsley Wood. We have promoted wider business investment by, for example, the development of the Blythe Valley Business Park. These different projects have already resulted in some £390m of private sector investment in the Borough. We have built up considerable expertise in working with the business sector locally. This rapport has borne fruit in one of the first Corporate Social Responsibility partnerships, 'Footprint', engaging local businesses in environmental activity, employment, education and community initiatives<sup>47</sup>.

- 6.1.2 **Employment** - Our concern is to ensure that local people are able to realise their potential, linking opportunity to local needs. We have already achieved our LPSA target on increasing employment: by the end of March 2007 we had helped 284 workless residents from disadvantaged areas into work. 176 of these were in sustainable jobs. Supporting the City Region 'City Strategy Pathfinder', Solihull Access to Employment Group coordinates and plans local services and support to tackle worklessness in disadvantaged communities. After six months of 2007/08, 194 workless residents had been supported into employment: we are well set to meet our year end LAA target of 200.
- 6.1.3 **Skills** - Our adult and community learning service, which is delivered in partnership with Solihull College was rated as 'good' - the second highest grade possible. The inspectors noted our 'good' capacity to improve and highlighted effective partnerships and strategic leadership, good teaching and learning, highly accessible learning and a wide range of provision as our strengths. Concrete results include year on year 90.4% increase in completed learn direct courses and an 81.2% increase in those completing their first ever qualification in literacy and numeracy through national tests.
- 6.1.4 In early 2007 Solihull was awarded the Matrix Quality Standard for the Learning Services we provide from our libraries and the Learn Direct centres<sup>48</sup>. Highlighted in the assessment were the professionalism, enthusiasm and commitment of staff, partnership working and positive feedback from users.
- 6.1.5 **Business Development** - The Council has led a new local enterprise support initiative to increase the numbers of business starts, particularly in north Solihull. The North Solihull Regeneration programme will see new commercial space being developed in Village Centres, helping to boost enterprise, business investment and employment in the area. The need to protect employment land is recognised in the new Economic Development Strategy<sup>49</sup>.
- 6.1.6 A Procurement Programme "Meet the Buyer" has also been established, focused on engaging businesses and community organisations in Solihull, particularly in the north, with emerging business opportunities from the Regeneration programme<sup>50</sup>. To date 964 local businesses have fully registered on the supply chain database and five local businesses have been awarded contracts within the Regeneration programme.
- 6.1.7 A "Pathways to Work" programme was set up with Solihull College and Solihull Community Housing to help local people take advantage of job opportunities being created as part of the Decent Homes and work is underway to look at expanding this to support wider regeneration and other construction activity<sup>51</sup>.
- 6.1.8 An investment/displacement support package for businesses is being developed, with Land Rover having received coordinated support to help manage its redundancy programme. Investment trends were very positive in 2006/07, with 46 investments identified, creating or safeguarding 1050 jobs. Whilst overall enquiry numbers have been lower in the first half of 2007/08, 40 investments have been identified, creating or safeguarding over 630 jobs. Resources will also be secured from Section 106 agreements to help support Business Investment activity in the future.
- 6.1.9 **Social Inclusion and Community Involvement** - A Social Inclusion Strategy has been agreed by the Solihull Partnership and an action plan will be developed within the context of the new LAA<sup>52</sup>. There is a particular focus on supporting community engagement and empowerment in north Solihull (and on developing closer links with employability activity). One example of the sort of projects that have emerged is "Delivery Partners", local people and schools working together to clear up the woods in Smith's Wood in response to local concerns.

- 6.1.10 We are involved in Police priority meetings. These enable local issues to be raised and prioritised and feedback on previous activity given. Local councillors, partner agencies and members of the local community attend the meetings.
- 6.1.11 **Housing** – We work closely with our ALMO, Solihull Community Housing and the North Solihull Regeneration Partnership to deliver the Decent Homes standard and plan for and manage the Borough's housing provision. At a strategic level, perhaps the most notable achievement has been the remodelling of the housing market in the North Solihull Regeneration area through a net increase in homes and greater diversity of housing type, tenure and value.
- 6.1.12 In November 2007, the North Solihull Regeneration Partnership won the top award at the Housebuilding Innovation Awards for the 'Best partnership between a developer and the public sector'. It represents the best example of how developers and a council work together to bring total regeneration through improving the local environment, tackling social issues like crime and unemployment and helping communities to grow and prosper.
- 6.1.13 Our proactive approach in influencing the market through making good use of our own housing stock and assisting private owners to maintain their homes has resulted in there being no problems of long-term vacancy in private or public sector housing. We also seek to influence the amount and type of 'affordable' housing provided in new developments through our 40% affordable homes target which is included in Supplementary Planning Guidance. Our target for affordable homes in 2004-09 is 550. In 2007 we have achieved 388 affordable homes, a quarter of which were provided without the use of Social Housing Grant from the Housing Corporation.
- 6.1.14 We are committed to working with our partners to promote house ownership by exploring a number of intermediate tenure options such as New Build Homebuy, Open Market Homebuy and the First Time Buyers Initiative. These tenure options are an important part of diversifying the housing market in north Solihull and in helping people onto the housing ladder across the Borough. In the two year period to April 2008 we forecast the following: 111 New Build Homebuy completions; 31 First Time Buyers initiative completions; and 10 Open Market Homebuy completions.
- 6.1.15 We are committed to reducing homelessness by effective preventive strategies designed to provide more options to enable people to stay in their own home<sup>53</sup>. We have reduced the number of households accepted as homeless by 269 - from 583 in 2005/06 to 314 in 2006/07 a reduction of 46%. Our achievement led to the award of Regional Champion status with additional funding in order to share our innovative preventive solutions with other councils. We work effectively with a range of partners to provide the Sanctuary scheme helping victims of domestic violence. We also work with housing and other partners to address the needs of the young homeless.
- 6.1.16 We introduced a new scheme, Solihull Home Options, for the allocation of Council housing based on 'choice based' principles in October 2007. We and our partners believe that this will allow tenants to feel they are being treated as an individual. It will also contribute to improved sustainability of tenancies and local communities.
- 6.1.17 All Council Homes are on track to meet the Decent Homes standard by 2012, with the creation of our ALMO bringing in £63M of investment. We have also attracted new growth points funding of £1.5M which will deliver additional new houses.
- 6.1.18 **Environment** - Solihull starts from a strong base: it is an attractive place with a high quality local environment. We are committed to sustaining and promoting this quality. For example, we are keen to provide quality parks and a target to increase the number of 'green flag' accredited parks within the Borough – with particular emphasis on parks in north Solihull – is a stretch target in our LAA. We now have four Green Flag status parks<sup>55</sup>. Solihull also enjoys continued success within the Britain in Bloom competition winning a gold medal in 2007 and being selected to represent the Midlands region in the national competition in 2008. Satisfaction with

parks and open spaces has improved steadily and is now at 78%, 5% above the national average.

- 6.1.19 With the introduction of the Streetcare concept we provide an integrated and holistic approach to the delivery of grounds maintenance and street cleansing. The work now includes the grounds maintenance of parks and open spaces, highway land, car parks and housing amenity and curtilage areas, cemetery land, playgrounds, allotment areas and cleaning of public conveniences. 70% of households in Solihull are satisfied with keeping land clear of litter and waste in their area, 7% above the national average.
- 6.1.20 We work with local people to sustain their pride in their communities. We have promoted Park Action Groups and involve them in planning for proposed development and improvement. An example of this is the contribution local people and the parks action groups have made to the planned improvements at Tudor Grange Park. Our 'Environmental Champions' initiative launched in March 2007<sup>57</sup> supports local volunteers as the eyes and ears of the Council in reporting environmental issues in their area such as graffiti, fly posting and litter. Work carried out by the current 95 volunteers has included painting out graffiti on street furniture, removing fly posters, litter picking and putting up dog fouling signs. To date 150 cable boxes have had graffiti removed from them.
- 6.1.21 In recognition of local views, waste and recycling is a high priority, receiving additional funding through the budget process. In 2006/2007 we achieved 23.48% for recycling household waste and, in addition, met our LPSA 1 Stretch Target. We are currently servicing over 53,000 green wheelie bins. The final roll out is scheduled for March 2008. A significant proportion of our household waste is directed to the waste to energy plant that we managed jointly with Coventry Council. Heat, power and other energy sources are generated with a result of 57.97% against a 40% government target.
- 6.1.22 Kerbside paper collection is the Council's second recyclable. At present this service is delivered to 64,000 of our 86,000 households. 39 schools have firmly expressed an interest in us collecting their paper for recycling. In addition, there are currently 32 recycling 'bring' sites throughout the Borough, and in 2007, we introduced plastic and Tetra Pak containers to four sites which proved so popular with residents that larger containers were required after six weeks.
- 6.1.23 Within the Council we are actively promoting better energy use. We have appointed an Energy Officer and led an awareness campaign with building managers, school bursars and headteachers. We signed the Nottingham Declaration in 2007 and have recognised in our LAA that developing both a local Vision and specific targets for sustainability in the Borough is an area for development. The new Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) will set out our aspirations in this area and specific targets are planned for inclusion in the new LAA.
- 6.1.24 **Planning** - Planning is key to effective Place Shaping in the Borough. Achieving the best outcomes involves both regional action and local delivery. We are a leading player in the review of the Regional Spatial Strategy, ensuring that Solihull's needs and aspirations are recognised in policy development.
- 6.1.25 We have an up to date development plan - our Unitary Development Plan (UDP) was adopted in February 2006 - to guide the enhancement and further development of the Borough. We have also developed more detailed policies to ensure the delivery of affordable housing and to ensure that new developments respect the special qualities of the Borough. Our New Housing in Context Supplementary Planning Guidance broke new ground in establishing a contextual framework for planning decisions and has won an award from Royal Town Planning Institute.

- 6.1.26 We have an efficient and effective development control service, which is now delivering good performance following service improvements. Our service improvement strategy is used as a case study by the Planning Advisory Service.
- 6.1.27 Our notable practice includes a design code to ensure high quality and sustainable new development in north Solihull, building control ensures safe, sound and accessible new development, and planning services delivered in a coordinated way from concept to completion.
- 6.1.28 **Transport** - Our Transport Strategy is an integral part of the West Midlands Local Transport Plan. It is vital to economic development and social inclusion within the Borough. Transport is not seen as an end in itself but the means by which access to business, education, social and leisure activities is achieved and enjoyed by all.
- 6.1.29 We have been prepared to adopt radical solutions to improve public and private transport in the Borough. Following extensive consultation and negotiation with residents, business and other stakeholders, Solihull introduced the first Red Route scheme outside London, and has now delivered 80% of the proposed network for the Borough. The first scheme included improved pedestrian facilities, improved and relocated bus stops, revised parking and loading arrangements and more disabled parking bays<sup>58</sup>. Independent monitoring of the results show:
- Journey time savings of 7.2% and reliability improvement of 6% for all traffic.
  - Bus delays reduced by 10% and journey time reliability up by 7%.
  - Casualty reduction of 16.2%.
  - 62% drop in illegal parking.
  - No loss of trade for shopping centres.
- 6.1.30 Car ownership tends to be high over most of the urban and rural areas, but much lower in the NSRZ. Therefore, good public transport is a vital element of connecting jobs with the communities in Solihull in most need of employment. The Council has led the development of new bus routes, investing some of its own resources and by lobbying the bus company for its commitment and support and gaining financial support from key local employers. As a result of these efforts we have created the 966 and 166 bus routes to connect the north with Solihull town centre and Blythe Valley Business Park. We have also had schemes to issue bus passes to those seeking employment to attend interviews and work in the initial weeks. 59% are satisfied with local bus services, an improvement of 1%. 60% of our residents are satisfied with local transport information, up by 6% since 2003 and 6% above national average.
- 6.1.31 Solihull operates a Borough-wide community transport service using minibuses with wheel chair lifts and easily accessible steps. The service is available to all voluntary, charitable and not for profit organisations across the Borough. Community Transport Solihull also provides Minibus Driver Awareness Training and Passenger Assistance Training and various volunteering opportunities and work experience.
- 6.1.32 Throughout Solihull the emphasis is on promoting sustainable development and travel. Our parking policies, developed with town centre partners, support this approach and are explicitly linked to the economic benefits of development, reductions in congestion and improvements in accessibility and air quality. In town centres we seek to balance the economic benefits that attracting high numbers of car users can bring against the environmental, planning, congestion, severance and exclusion problems that can result from trying to accommodate too many cars. When the Touchwood development was planned, it was linked to a major review of car and public transport provision with the Council and key local partners agreeing to co-operate in reducing the number of allocated staff parking spaces.
- 6.1.33 We have a history of good performance in reducing road accidents. We are well on target to achieving the Government's 2010 40% reduction target.

## 6.2 SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES

- 6.2.1 **Crime** - Solihull's Crime and Disorder Partnership was launched in March 2004, following the merger of the former Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and the Drug Action Team. The partnership is well supported by statutory bodies and the voluntary and community sector, combining forces to co-ordinate work to tackle crime and disorder and address drug misuse.
- 6.2.2 Solihull's Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy 2005-2008 prioritises domestic burglary, vehicle crime, robbery, violence, domestic violence, racist and other hate crime, criminal damage, anti-social behaviour and substance misuse. We and our partners are proactive in pooling data and resources to make sure that the strategy is delivered. Our work is influenced by regular feedback from residents through surveys and neighbourhood forums.
- 6.2.3 With the Police we have appointed a Joint Head of Crime and Disorder Reduction with responsibility for the Drug Action and Youth Offending teams, anti-social behaviour and community safety and crime prevention. This role has recently been expanded as Joint Head of Public Protection to include Trading Standards, Licensing and Public Health. The post holder is a member of the Senior Management Team of both the Council and the Police ensuring a joined up approach to crime reduction at both a strategic and operational level.
- 6.2.4 Joint work and planning is resulting in an effective joint response across a wide range of crime prevention and anti-social behaviour initiatives with multi-agency action plans tackling criminal damage<sup>59</sup>; robbery<sup>60</sup>; violent crime<sup>61</sup>, vehicle crime<sup>62</sup> and Council led initiatives in respect of distraction burglary and 'Door Step' crime<sup>63</sup>.
- 6.2.5 We are on course to meet our LAA target to reduce overall crime: after the second quarter of 2007/08, we were inside our target for recorded incidents. Between 2004-2007, we achieved two LPSA targets to reduce domestic burglary and vehicle crime, resulting in 500 fewer vehicle thefts and over 200 fewer burglaries in the last year of the agreement.
- 6.2.6 Our Trading Standards service has been chosen to lead a Scambuster pilot involving 13 other authorities across central England to stamp out 'rip-offs' such as doorstep cons, large scale counterfeiting and high pressure sales tactics<sup>64</sup>.
- 6.2.7 Action to Tackle Underage Alcohol Sales (TUSAC)<sup>65</sup> includes the proactive engagement with licensees to encourage due diligence and training and audit of licensees<sup>66</sup>. There are also target hardening schemes such as Home Check<sup>67</sup> and the Sanctuary Scheme to reduce repeat victimisation and awareness training for Police contact staff, Housing and other Council staff<sup>68</sup>. We have established 'Online' connection with the DVLA for the control of abandoned and untaxed vehicles and have engaged in several multi-agency initiatives to tackle vehicle crime such as 'Operation Radent'<sup>69</sup>.
- 6.2.8 **Neighbourhoods** - The introduction of Neighbourhood Policing in 2006 was supported by a Multi-Agency Community Tasking Group chaired by the Joint Head of Crime and Disorder Reduction to ensure a joined up approach to delivering front line services. This group brings together Neighbourhood Police inspectors and from the Council, Neighbourhood Managers, the Youth Offending Team, Trading Standards, Youth Services and Environmental Services. Using up to date crime data, the group shares intelligence jointly, problem solves and allocates resources to tackle chronic or emergent hot spots. At a neighbourhood level, front line workers from across the Police and Council meet regularly with residents via street surgeries and residents' meetings and elected Members receive regular updates on activity in their area<sup>70</sup>.

- 6.2.9 To widen participation and as a means of demonstrating our joint working relationships Joint Police Authority/CDRP consultation events have recently taken place in each of our defined neighbourhoods. These have been well received by the public.
- 6.2.10 **Young people** - The Children and Young People's Trust Board commissions the Solihull Youth Justice Plan<sup>71</sup>. In this way, targets for young offenders are set within the framework of the overarching Children and Young People's Plan. At the end of March 2007 a level 3 rating was achieved, only 0.6% short of level 4 (1 Low - 5 High).
- 6.2.11 Practice within the Youth Offending Service continues to evolve. Notable developments include Restorative Justice, which includes direct and indirect reparation to victims and communities, the launch of a mentoring scheme to offer young people additional support and guidance and the introduction of the Triage Assessment, providing service users with speedy access to a range of health care professionals based within the team<sup>72</sup>. Additional monies from the Youth Justice Board have supported a preventative programme of intervention for young people aged 14–17, which builds upon and compliments the existing provision of the Youth Inclusion Support Panel for those aged 8–13.
- 6.2.12 **Domestic violence** - Solihull has appointed a full time co-ordinator post for Domestic Violence and has published its Domestic Violence Strategy (refreshed in 2006)<sup>73</sup>. A multi-agency seminar held in 2006 launched a DVD produced by the partnership as an aid to victims of Domestic Violence going through the court. We also play a proactive role in the Make a Better Life for Everyone Charitable Trust, opening a refuge with a regional benefit in 2006. The Domestic Violence Court is making trials more effective and has recently been awarded specialist status. Officers from within the Community Safety Team play a full part in local multi-agency risk assessment procedures for victims and perpetrators of Domestic Violence (MARAC). We are recruiting an independent Domestic Violence advocate and will lead on the Sanctuary Scheme which assists victims of domestic violence to remain safely within their own homes.
- 6.2.13 **External funding** – External funding and sponsorship are used innovatively to address crime and disorder issues, such as purchase of mobile CCTV cameras and mobile police vans to aid policing in hot spots and rural areas. Funding for Police Community Safety Officers and funding of multi agency activity support the delivery of agreed action plans.
- 6.2.14 **Anti-social behaviour (ASB)** - Anti-Social Behaviour is a key issue for local people. We play a key role in the delivery of the Solihull multi-agency ASB strategy and have established within Solihull Community Housing an integrated ASB team to investigate and address issues across the whole Borough. We are beginning to see the impact of this work with a reduction in reported criminal damage and ASB of 18% and 21% respectively, over a twelve month period.
- 6.2.15 **Drugs** - Over the last two years one of our priorities has been to address the needs of drug users in the criminal justice system<sup>74 75</sup>. We are working to prevent young people from becoming drug mis-users, reduce the demand for illegal drugs, increase the number of users accessing effective treatment and reduce drug related crime. Our Drug Action Support Team commissions and has been successful in:
- Implementing a new day care programme.
  - Establishing a Reach Out service to access hard to reach clients and bring them into treatment<sup>76</sup>.
  - Establishing a specialist young person's substance misuse service – Str8 Up including a screening referral protocol and tool used across children's services<sup>77</sup>.
  - New Drug Intervention Programme through care and aftercare service.
  - Establishment of a Primary Care drug treatment service.

- 6.2.16 The Health Care Commission improvement review scores have evidenced the success of the adult treatment action plan. In 2005/06 Solihull achieved a score of 3 (good) for community prescribing services and care co-ordination and care planning. In 2006/07 the score was 4 (excellent) for commissioning and harm reduction.
- 6.2.17 A Member Task and Finish Group is developing a strategy to tackle the harm caused by problematic alcohol misuse<sup>78</sup>. Trading Standards and Licensing officers work proactively with the Police in tackling alcohol related disorder within the town centre and underage drinking<sup>79</sup>.
- 6.2.18 **Accidents** – We have a number of projects aimed at reducing accidents. These include Kerbcraft child pedestrian training project<sup>80</sup>; Safer Routes to School Scheme completed in north Solihull in 2004/05 and extended to the south<sup>81</sup>; our electric blanket testing project<sup>82</sup>; and the work around our reducing traffic accident LPSA target, which in turn has led to our innovative “Speed Aware Initiative” now a pilot for the West Midlands<sup>83</sup>. We have a rolling programme to fit and update fire and smoke detection equipment to all Council-owned premises and have a fire reduction reward target within our LAA.
- 6.2.19 **Emergency Planning** - We recognise that the presence of an airport, the NEC and a significant stretch of motorway place a particular responsibility on us to ensure that there is an effective local framework for sharing intelligence and effective co-operation supported by robust plans.
- 6.2.20 Our response is founded in effective partnership working. We have established a joint Council and Care Trust resilience team and an integrated emergency plan<sup>84</sup>. We participate in Local Resilience Subgroups and have an established Solihull Resilience Forum that is well supported by local Category One responders and other key local agencies, including the NEC and airport. Our participation in the Risk and Response sub group ensures that an up to date risk assessment is maintained for the local area. These emergency arrangements have been successfully tested during our recent responses to local incidents and through a programme of exercises and testing.
- 6.2.21 We are proactive in identifying risks and acting to increase our knowledge and capacity to deal with incidents. A notable example of this was the national multi-agency event we organised on Air Accidents - the first of its kind in recent years<sup>85</sup>.
- 6.2.22 We actively promote a planned approach to business continuity. A corporate group, chaired by the Assistant Chief Executive, has developed a suite of business continuity plans<sup>86 87</sup>. Business Continuity has also been promoted amongst local businesses. We have also acknowledged the importance of our supply chain by incorporating into the tender and procurement process a method to assess the business continuity arrangements of potential suppliers.
- 6.2.23 **Leadership and Cohesion** - We understand that our Borough and our community are changing and that one of our most important tasks is to provide leadership founded in a firm sense of what our values are. The situation is complex. The tensions and pressures that arise in the Borough are sometimes about the growing number of local people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities who live, work or study here, and sometimes between older and younger or advantaged and disadvantaged parts of our community. We do not yet have a single, overarching strategy to address all of these cohesion issues, but we are actively engaged in monitoring tension locally, building capacity amongst local people and laying the foundation for a partnership based approach to building stronger communities. It will, for example, be at the heart of our new Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and LAA.

- 6.2.24 To manage this developing approach a sub-group of the Solihull Partnership, led by the Care Trust Chief Executive, will oversee the creation of a Cohesion Strategy for the Borough, carry out an impact assessment of the new SCS and LAA and challenge partners to agree targets for improvement. We, with our partners, have an Anti-Harassment Forum to tackle racially motivated crime.
- 6.2.25 Our most substantial effort has been to support the growth of capacity amongst local groups, including the Voluntary and Community sector, to be able to fully engage with us and our partners in proper dialogue and challenge. Examples include the Voluntary Sector Strategy and Compact, Solihull Community Housing's Customer Involvement Agreement<sup>88</sup> and its extensive survey and other consultation work; the Youth Council's youth participation and involvement<sup>89</sup>; the creation of BME focus groups within the voluntary sector and amongst tenants; and the involvement of older people in the development and monitoring of the Older People's Strategy.
- 6.2.26 We initiated the establishment of a Faiths' Forum for Solihull which has already become an important channel for discussion and engagement. We and the Police, for example, found a particular value in this to discuss local pressures and tensions this summer at the height of the terrorist threat alert. We have, for a number of years, actively promoted Black History Month as an opportunity to celebrate diversity locally. Although this always features a number of arts events across the Borough, we have also been successful in attracting funding for an innovative programme of learning linked to family history research.

### 6.3 HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES

- 6.3.1 **The Local Picture** - the health of the people of Solihull is improving, demonstrated by increasing life expectancy and falling rates of premature death, for example, from heart disease and cancer. However, this overall favourable picture hides inequalities in health, evidenced by an eight-year gap in life expectancy between the least and most deprived wards in our Borough. Information about health status and monitoring of health trends is undertaken in collaboration with local partners, particularly the Solihull Care Trust. Examples of the outcome of this collaboration can be seen in the Solihull Director of Public Health's Annual Report (2006/07)<sup>90</sup> and on the 'Understanding Solihull' website. A Joint Strategic Needs Assessment is currently being undertaken.
- 6.3.2 With our partners we have developed a strategy to improve health and reduce inequalities. Key elements of the action plan and its targets are embedded within the LAA, and the Council's Balanced Scorecard. The strategy focuses action on tackling the underlying determinants of ill health (e.g. decent homes standard, affordable warmth) as well as improving healthy lifestyles (e.g. reducing smoking, improving diet, increasing physical activity). Progress with implementing the health inequalities action plan is performance managed directly by the Health Inequalities Thematic Group of the Solihull Partnership; through the LAA/Solihull Partnership and also through our internal performance management system.
- 6.3.3 **Stopping Smoking** – We have worked with the Care Trust to ensure successful implementation of smoke free legislation', and a revised Council 'No-Smoking Policy'. The policy goes further than legislation requires setting an example to other public sector organisations. Smoking cessation support has been provided to Council staff and other major employers in Solihull (e.g. Land Rover). Smoking cessation targets are being achieved with 1608 "quitters" projected for 2007/08. The prevalence of smoking is amongst the lowest in the West Midlands.
- 6.3.4 **Energy and Warmth** – We have a Home Energy and Affordable Warmth Strategy with two clear objectives: improving the energy efficiency of domestic dwellings and reducing fuel poverty throughout the Borough<sup>91</sup>. The Strategy and progress against the action plan are presented in an Annual Report to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Regeneration<sup>92</sup>. The Strategy provides details of significant achievements to date which include:

- The Energy Action Grants Agency insulating, repairing or renewing 271 heating systems in 2006/07.
- Over 80 residents and over 600 staff from the Council, Care Trust, Solihull Community Housing and Age Concern received training, enabling key workers to recognise households that may be fuel poor and refer residents to advice and assistance. During 2006/07, 5435 Solihull residents benefited from independent energy advice, a 68% increase on 2005/06.
- Recently completed focus area scheme in the wards of Lyndon, Elmdon and Olton (LEO) bringing significant improvement in energy efficiency and affordable warmth to over 1,200 homes with over £0.865M utilised.

6.3.5 **Leisure** - We work in partnership with the Care Trust and the private sector to deliver health related physical activity programmes. The 'DocSpot' programme has improved fitness levels in over 1000 people with a range of health conditions such as heart and chest disease<sup>93</sup>. We achieved our LPSA target to increase the health of patients referred to the GP referral scheme by increasing adherence rates with 380 patients still participating in a level of physical activity greater than the baseline level, six months after their initial assessment, against a target of 378. In total, 333 patients could demonstrate positive changes to their health having completed a 12 week programme against a target of 270. 'Striders and Strollers' has provided a supervised walking programme, benefiting, in particular, young mothers and older people<sup>94</sup>.

6.3.6 **Young people** - We engage with children and young people through the 'Young People's Parliament' and active involvement with the Children and Young People's Trust. We have taken action to reduce the level of teenage conceptions. In 2005, the under 18-conception rate had reduced by 10.9% on the 1998 baseline. In the previous year the rate was 7.2% higher than the 1998 baseline and in response to this we and our partners implemented an action plan under six identified issues/themes with performance indicators and lead responsibilities. The plan was based on the Teenage Pregnancy Unit's findings and supported by the indicators available locally including qualitative consultation with young people and the front line workforce.

6.3.7 Solihull has since responded to the Education and Health "Teenage Pregnancy Next Steps" document implementing, as far as resources allow, the findings locally. We also ensure, together with our partners, that support services are available for teenage parents, all of which contribute to enabling young parents to continue full time education.

6.3.8 The Being Healthy section of the Annual Performance Assessment (APA) progress report outlines in detail a number of actions to address a range of health issues. Some highlights include:

- Delivery of our LPSA Stretch Target in the introduction of the Healthy Schools Standard to 56% of schools.
- In relation to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), between April and December 2006, 88.2% of all non acute assessments were started within timescale.
- A number of programmes of parent support, such as Mellow Parenting and Parents Matters, are detailed as well as progress in the roll out of the Comprehensive Assessment Framework (CAF).

6.3.9 **Disabilities** – We encourage people with disabilities to apply for jobs here. We promote the national WORKSTEP scheme and link with employment officers from Scope to provide support for the recruitment of people with disabilities. We have a policy of short listing all candidates with disabilities who meet the essential short list criteria.

## 6.4 OLDER PEOPLE

- 6.4.1 Solihull's Care Trust provides an opportunity to promote people's independence and healthy living across the boundaries between health and social care.
- 6.4.2 We have a Solihull Partnership endorsed Older People's Strategy, 'The Future is Ours' which takes a long term view through to 2013<sup>14</sup>. The Strategy was developed following a detailed demographic and other service data analysis and extensive consultation with older people. It has eight themes, underpinned by a cross-agency action plan and progress is reported quarterly to the Cabinet Member for Health, Social Care and Partnerships who is the identified Older People's Champion. Work on developing and delivering the agreed actions continues. We anticipate that work will form part of an even wider Older People's Partnership as part of the local Health and Well-being Partnership.
- 6.4.3 An active dialogue is maintained with older people through such mechanisms as the Older People's Forum and Older People's Advisory Group<sup>95</sup>. As part of our wider inequalities work we have completed a range of equality impact assessments covering all our main policies. Through the Faiths Forum we are engaging in dialogue with a wide range of community and faith groups to better understand the needs of minority ethnic elders.
- 6.4.4 **Independence** - One of our top ten priorities is to provide services and support to older people to promote their independence and sustain their quality of life. We were one of the initial Better Government for Older People pilot authorities and have continued to develop our strategic approach working closely with partners and stakeholders to develop a range of services designed to promote the independence and well being of older people.
- 6.4.5 We set out to improve the provision of low level preventive services from a very low base back in 2004/05 and selected this as a stretch target in our first LPSA which resulted in 3,525 people being helped to live at home (an additional 802 people from the position at the start of the LPSA). We have increased the take up of direct payments to 143 by the end of 2006/07 of which 73 were people aged 65 or older. We have identified the increased take up of direct payments for all client groups as a stretch target within our current LAA.
- 6.4.6 A joint equipment store ensures a wider range of aids and adaptations can be supplied. The Safe and Sound Scheme developed jointly with our ALMO enjoys a 96% satisfaction rating. Initially developed to support older people it now employs 21 staff and has been extended to provide a support to people with physical or mental health difficulties and their families. It utilises a range of Telecare initiatives, such as the pendant alarm scheme, ensuring the benefits of technology are harnessed to promote independence. This includes the development of a Telecare show-home where clients can test out the suitability of a wide variety of appliances. The Shipshape Scheme is designed to provide information on a range of reliable local traders so homeowners can maintain their homes with confidence<sup>96</sup>.
- 6.4.7 Tackling poverty in older age is also addressed via partnership work with agencies such as the Citizens Advice Bureau but also welfare benefits awareness campaigns and the establishment of a credit union.
- 6.4.8 Fear of crime is a big concern for many older people. Homecheck is a project designed to 'target harden' properties in a cost effective manner providing additional security and reassurance. In 2006/07 we helped 839 vulnerable householders improve the security of their homes through fitting better door and window locks, using key safes or by giving them security advice. Solihull Community Housing has a range of initiatives to address anti-social behaviour, graffiti and other crime.

- 6.4.9 **Leisure** - We promote a range of opportunities for exercise and leisure, such as cycling for older people and the walking for health Striders and Stroller club. Projects within library services, such as older people providing reading support to young people seek to promote cross generation understanding and tolerance.
- 6.4.10 **Housing** - The housing needs of older people are addressed within the relevant housing, homelessness and supporting people strategies to ensure a range of supported housing options such as the extra care housing scheme at Swallows Meadow. The Home Energy and Affordable Warmth Strategy 2007 seeks to address issues such as adequate insulation and fuel poverty. In June 2007 our Supporting People programme received a 'fair' rating with 'promising' prospects. Compared to other councils within the West Midlands, Solihull is ranked third for Supporting People but has the lowest funding.
- 6.4.11 **Accidents** - A range of activities seek to reduce the risk of accidental injury. The Falls Prevention Co-ordinator, for example, works with transport partners such as CENTRO to help reduce the incidence of fall and other accidents. Trading Standards run annual free safety check on electric blankets and the fire service carry out free fire safety checks and fit smoke alarms.
- 6.4.12 **Performance** - Services to older people as measured by the Performance Assessment Framework indicators is strong at the end of 2006/07. We were rated band four for performance for waiting times for assessments, waiting times for care packages, equipment and adaptations delivered within seven days, preventing delayed transfers of care, and clients receiving a statement of their needs. We were rated band five for the provision of low level preventive service to older people and for the percentage of assessments leading to the provision of a service. Satisfaction with services was also rated highly, 88% satisfied with arrangements made in respect of Direct Payments, 60% satisfied with home care rising to 94% satisfied with the in-house home care service. The 2007 Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) review rated Solihull Adult Social Services as '*serving adults well with promising capacity to improve services*'.

## 6.5 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- 6.5.1 Solihull is a great place for children and young people. 7 out of 10 secondary age pupils report they are satisfied with their life. Indicators of progress are strong and schools in Solihull are highly regarded. We keep children safe and recognise and continue to improve outcomes for children who are disadvantaged.
- 6.5.2 The most recent APA for Children's Services confirmed an overall rating of 'good' with making a positive contribution rated as 'outstanding'. Outcomes for children are generally at least good and improving. A significant focus remains on closing the gaps arising from deprivation and real progress is being made through social and physical regeneration.
- 6.5.3 **Education** - A significant level of investment has been levered into totally transforming learning institutions in the north of the Borough. This includes a £13.6 million new FE campus located on the site of an old primary school; £8 million rebuild of two new special schools, locating both schools in a purpose built environmentally sustainable state of the art building; a £25 million academy to replace an old secondary school; £74 million of Building Schools for the Future (BSF) funding to replace the other secondary schools with work already on site; and a £70 million public private partnership that has just completed the first of 10 new primary schools.
- 6.5.4 Educational standards are good with the latest results for all key stages in the top quartile nationally. Levels of attainment are also improving, in some cases this is above the national rate of progress despite a high starting point and significantly, gaps in attainment are being narrowed between schools (e.g. at Key Stage 2 the gap in English has narrowed by 11% since 2002). The educational achievement of Looked After Children is rated as good, with Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking

Children making a significant contribution to that performance. We have made an increasing effort to monitor, identify and focus on the attainment of BME children. This was recognised as a considerable strength in the most recent APA letter. Analysis of the performance of children with Special Educational Needs shows that they are achieving at significantly above expected levels compared with national data.

- 6.5.5 Young people in Solihull get a good start to life that enables them to progress. After leaving school over 80% of young people progress into further education, employment or training. Both FE colleges in the Borough are rated by Ofsted as good and the work on 14 to 19 diplomas and initiatives such as “the common day” mean that young people can access an increasing range of vocational and academic opportunities.
- 6.5.6 **Healthy and Safe** - Children in Solihull are healthier than in the nation as a whole. Infant mortality is the lowest in the region; obesity is 3% lower than the national rate; an increasing number of children, when surveyed, report they are eating five portions of fruit or vegetables a day and fewer children are smoking; multi-agency arrangements have secured an increase in health checks for looked after children to 85%.
- 6.5.7 Children in Solihull are kept safe. All child protection reviews are carried out within timescales; all children with a child protection plan have an allocated social worker; rates of adoptions are improving; and rates of initial and core assessments have been significantly improved. Secure safeguarding arrangements are in place with the Local Safeguarding Children’s Board providing a strong focus on quality assurance of safeguarding practice across agencies. Revised electronic safeguarding policies and procedures in line with Working Together 2006 are now well-embedded. The Children and Young Person’s Trust monitors the level of bullying reported by children and young people (through the use of the Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire) and whilst this indicates a pattern either in line or better than national indicators, this is still a key issue for children and young people and as such has been included in the Children and Young People’s Plan.
- 6.5.8 **Contribution** - Children and Young People make a positive contribution. The number of young people entering the youth justice system is declining. There has been a 33% improvement in the rates of NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training) from November 2005 to 2007 with the current rate of 6.41% (577 individuals). Attendance at school is good, with primary school attendance 95.3% one of the lowest rates nationally. Participation in activities such as youth councils and UK Youth Parliament is strong. Children and Young people routinely and increasingly have direct contact with elected Members, addressing meetings and full Council. At least two of the priorities in the Children and Young People’s Plan can be directly attributed to children and young people’s views. Young people make their own decisions on the allocation of Youth Opportunity funding and Members have supported this process by “topping up” national funding. The importance of play is recognised within the Borough with ‘play rangers’ being appointed to work in the parks. Last summer there was a 75% increase in open play opportunities for children, including for the first time inclusive play opportunities.

1 Solihull MBC Press Release 14 May 2007 – *Business Booming in Borough* -  
2 [http://www.solihull.gov.uk/news/press\\_may23.htm](http://www.solihull.gov.uk/news/press_may23.htm)  
3 [North Solihull Strategic Framework \(adopted February 2005\), page 13](#)  
4 [Case Study – Green Flag Parks](#)  
5 [Case Study – Anti-Social Behaviour](#)  
6 [Understanding Solihull, Common Assault: Ref: 2-01-CAS](#)  
7 [Case Study – Reducing Repeat Victimization](#)  
8 [The Budget Book 2007/2008 – Document Request list reference: CA15](#)  
9 [Shaping Solihull Staff Presentation, December 2007](#)  
10 [Faiths' Forum Constitution](#)  
11 [Understanding Solihull](#)  
12 [Children and Young People's Plan 2006-09](#)  
13 [Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy 2005-2008 - Document Request list reference: CA41](#)  
14 [Reducing Health Inequalities in Solihull 2005-2010 - Document Request list reference: CA48](#)  
15 ["The Future is Ours" - A Strategy for Older People 2006-2013 - Document Request list](#)  
16 [reference: CA50](#)  
17 [Council Plan 2007-2010, pages 7-14 - Document Request list reference: CA04](#)  
18 [Case Study - 24 hour Virtual Library](#)  
19 [Case Study – Learning Shop and Skills for Life Outreach](#)  
20 [Case Study – S Factor](#)  
21 [Cabinet and Cabinet Portfolios, Roles and Responsibilities and Terms of Reference for Scrutiny](#)  
22 [Boards, Members Information Booklet, pages 37-49](#)  
23 [Members Code of Conduct, First Adopted 2002, Adopted by Full Council on 10 July 2007](#)  
24 [SORP 6 Risk Management, August 2007 - Document Request list reference: CA20](#)  
25 [Learning from CPA 2005/06, Findings from Assessments, page 38 \[Audit Commission\]](#)  
26 [Terms of Reference for Risk Champions](#)  
27 [SORP 8 Project Management, April 2006](#)  
28 [SORP 9 Budget Framework 2007/08](#)  
29 [Case Study – Prudential Borrowing](#)  
30 [Corporate Asset Management Plan, 2007/08 update - Document Request list reference: CA18](#)  
31 [Case Study – Coventry Waste to Energy Partnership](#)  
32 [Management of Sick Absence and Ill Health Policy, Summary Version \[Full policy available on](#)  
33 [request\]](#)  
34 [Extract from Staff Survey Results 2006](#)  
35 [Corporate Negotiation & Consultation Framework SMBC & Trade Unions "Partnership Working",](#)  
36 [February 2006](#)  
37 [Partnership Working – A Foundation for Partnership at Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council,](#)  
38 [February 2006](#)  
39 [Organisational Development Strategy Summary Report - Document Request list reference: CA](#)  
40 [Working Together, Strengthening Communities - The Voluntary and Community Sector](#)  
41 [Development Strategy 2007-2012 - Document Request list reference: CA26](#)  
42 [The Compact for Solihull 2007-2012 - Document Request list reference: CA26](#)  
43 [Case Study – SUSTAIN](#)  
44 [Equality and Diversity Scheme 2007-2009 -](#)  
45 <http://www.solihull.gov.uk/community/equalitydiversity.htm> - Document Request list reference:  
46 [CA23](#)  
47 [SORP 2 Performance Management Framework, November 2007 - Document Request list](#)  
48 [reference: CA27](#)  
49 [SORP 4 Performance Management Panel, November 2007](#)  
50 [SORP 3 Performance Planning, December 2006](#)  
51 [SORP 12 The Council's Information Quality Standards, October 2007](#)  
52 [Summary of Staff Survey results over the last three years in relation to performance planning,](#)  
53 [Employee Survey Results 2006, Brahm](#)  
54 [Complaints Procedure - http://www.solihull.gov.uk/democracy/councilservice.htm](#)  
55 [Complaints Annual Report 2006/07](#)  
56 [2006/07 User Survey data and quartiles from the General Survey, Audit Commission -](#)  
57 <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/performance/dataprovision.asp>  
58 [Local Area Agreement Performance Management Framework](#)  
59 [Case Study - Footprint](#)  
60 [Case Study – The Matrix Quality Standard for the Learning Services](#)  
61 [Economic Development Strategy, 2008-2011 - Document Request list reference: CA31](#)

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50 [Case Study – Meet the Buyer](#)  
51 [Case Study – Pathways to Work](#)  
52 [Social Inclusion Strategy, February 2007](#)  
53 [Homelessness Strategy 2006-2008 -](#)  
<http://www.solihull.gov.uk/policies/homelessnessstrategy.htm>  
55 [Case Study - Britain in Bloom](#)  
57 [Case study - Environmental Champions Scheme](#)  
58 [Case Study - Red Route Scheme](#)  
59 [Multi-agency action plan - Anti-Social Behaviour and Criminal Damage 2005-2008](#)  
60 [Multi-agency action plan – Robbery 2005-2008](#)  
61 [Multi-agency action plan - Violent Crime 2005-2008](#)  
62 [Multi-agency action plan - Vehicle Crime 2005-2008](#)  
63 [Case Study - ‘Door Step’ Crime](#)  
64 [Case Study - Scambusters](#)  
65 [Case Study - Tackling Underage Sales of Alcohol Campaign \[TUSAC\]](#)  
66 [Case Study - Pub Watch](#)  
67 [Case Study - Home Check](#)  
68 [Case Study - Sanctuary Scheme](#)  
69 [Case Study - Operation Radent](#)  
70 [Sample Member Ward Update Bulletins, November/December 2007](#)  
71 [Youth Justice Plan 2007/08 - http://www.solihull.gov.uk/policies/youthjusticeplan.htm](#)  
72 [Case Study – Restorative Justice](#)  
73 [Domestic Violence Strategy 2006-2008 - http://www.solihull.gov.uk/benefits/domesticviolence.htm](#)  
74 [Adult Treatment Plan 2007/08 - Document Request list reference: CA45](#)  
75 [Substance Misuse Plan 2007/08 - Document Request list reference: CA45](#)  
76 [Case Study - Reach Out Service](#)  
77 [Case Study - Str8 Up](#)  
78 [Alcohol Task and Finish Group Terms of Reference and Minutes of a Meeting held on 6](#)  
[November 2007](#)  
79 [Case Study - Taxi Rank Marshals](#)  
80 [Case Study - Kerbcraft Child Pedestrian Training](#)  
81 [Case Study – Safer Routes to School](#)  
82 [Case Study - Electric Blanket Safety Testing for Older People](#)  
83 [Case Study – Speed Aware](#)  
84 [Solihull Emergency Plan, August 2007 - Document Request list reference: CA46](#)  
85 [Case Study – Air Accidents Seminar](#)  
86 [Business Continuity Plan Template](#)  
87 [Sample Completed Business Continuity Plan](#)  
88 [Solihull’s Community Housing Customer Involvement Agreement](#)  
<http://www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk/Default.aspx?SID=1073&IID=0>  
89 [Summary of Youth Council](#)  
90 [Director of Public Health Annual Report 2006/07](#)  
91 [Home Energy and Affordable Warmth Strategy, July 2007](#)  
92 [Home Energy Conservation Act 1995, Eleventh Progress Report \(2007\), for the Period 1 April](#)  
[2006 To 31 March 2007](#)  
93 [Case Study - DocSpot](#)  
94 [Case Study – Striders and Strollers](#)  
95 [Older People’s Advisory Group Aims and Structure](#)  
96 [Case Study – A Community Protected from Rogue Traders \[Solihull Shipshape Scheme\]](#)

