SOLIHULL MBC AND

SOLIHULL COMMUNITY HOUSING

DIGITAL STRATEGY 2022 - 2027

Solihull
METROPOLITAN
BOROUGH COUNCIL
URBS-IN-RURE

Solihull
Community Housing
Shaping our neighbourhoods

Our Digital Vision:

To improve everyone's opportunity to engage in a positive digital
way in all parts of their life

CONTENTS

PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE

Digital technology has become an essential part of life and this trend has only accelerated over the past five years. Increasingly we are reliant on digital tools and skills to undertake work, connect to others, to access information, and to share knowledge.

The pace of change and the expectations of our services are increasing, and our Digital Strategy aims to help our organisations deliver digital services in the best way possible.

Like our Council Plan and Future Vision, its audience is wide ranging and includes our residents, our workforce, our partners, and all those who work with and alongside us. It is also used as a basis for engagement with Solihull residents and businesses.

The last Digital Strategy was set in 2017 with the agreement to review it in 2022 to ensure that it aligns with our wider strategies, and to ensure we are travelling in the right direction. This updated strategy for 2022-27 is the result of that review.

OUR OBJECTIVES

"Digital services should be the first and easiest choice to engage with us"

Our aim is that digital services are the first choice for our citizens and residents to contact us and access our services. This should be because they are the easiest choice and provide the best way of meeting residents' needs. Some of our services will be 'digital by default' with others having different offers to meet the needs of different service users.

Wider objectives:

Our digital strategy supports our overall plans to:

- Help get people into employment

- Promote social inclusion and connectedness and improve financial inclusion

- Bring in business opportunities and contribute to improving the economy

- Help people access the information and support they need online

- Help people to be able to make the shift to digital channels of help and support

Universal service principles:

Our services are built around universal, targeted, and specialist offers which provide value for money. This model makes the best use of data to identify who is accessing our services, how and why.

In designing our offer, we divided our services into three categories:

- universal services offered to all residents;
- targeted services to help residents get things back on track and prevent issues from escalating; and
- specialist services for residents who need specialised support, such as those with long term health issues or social care needs.

Our universal service principles help us to ensure that our services meet the needs of all of our residents. These are:

- Enquiries and transactions should be able to take place through modern digital channels that are the customer's 'channel of choice'.

- We will provide support for those who cannot access SMBC and SCH services digitally.

Digital objectives:

These principles and our strategic approach all aim to help us meet our key digital objectives. These are:

- Support the rollout of superfast Broadband across the Borough

- Provide efficient and effective digital services which are cost effective and enable our workforce to focus on people who need in person support

To meet these objectives, we are using digital technology to transform our services, improve customer choice, and invest in our key organisational systems. We also engage widely with partners around digital services and initiatives to provide the best services to our citizens and residents.

Digital outcomes:

From achieving these wider organisational objectives and digital objectives, the 3 digital outcomes we aim to see are:

1. Digitally empowered citizens and workforce from improved digital skills, better access to digital opportunities, and designed digital services.

2. Maximum value is being delivered for citizens and residents through digital processes in a measurable way

3. Our communities are inclusive and everyone has access to local digital services and amenities

HOW WE WILL DELIVER DIGITAL SERVICES

Our approach to delivering digital services has three key elements: the standards we will use to measure success; the way in which we will move to digital, and the governance we have in place to ensure progress.

Our Digital Standards:

When we design digital processes, we ensure that they meet our standards to ensure that they add value to our services and give the best experience possible to residents and citizens. We have six standards we test our processes against by asking:

1. Have we considered the whole process from the point that a customer makes contact to the completion of the request?

2. Is the process using evidence and feedback, and led by engagement with citizens and our workforce?

3. Does the process use existing best practice/standards from Local Government and partner organisations?

4. Is the process good enough to meet the majority of requirements — and flexible enough to meet the specialist requirements?

5. Is the process able to be accessible any time, any place and via any device; and is the process resilient and reliable?

6. Have we created one process for citizens and our workforce?

In doing this we aim to ensure that digital processes are of the required quality and meet the needs of residents and of our workforce. When we implement a new process, we aim to review it against these standards regularly in order to continually improve the way we work.

We have also signed up to the Local Digital Declaration which outlines five additional principles we follow in addition to our own standards:

1. We will go even further to redesign our services around the needs of the people using them. This means continuing to prioritise citizen and user needs above professional, organisational and technological silos.

2. We will 'fix our plumbing' to break our dependence on inflexible and expensive technology that doesn't join up effectively. This means insisting on modular building blocks

for the IT we rely on, and open standards to give a common structure to the data we create.

3. We will design safe, secure and useful ways of sharing information to build trust among our partners and citizens, to better support the most vulnerable members of our communities, and to target our resources more effectively.

4. We will demonstrate digital leadership, creating the conditions for genuine organisational transformation to happen, and challenging all those we work with to embrace this Local Digital Declaration.

5. We will embed an open culture that values, incentivises and expects digital ways of working from every member of our workforce. This means working in the open wherever we can, sharing our plans and experience, working collaboratively with other organisations, and reusing good practice.

Our Implementation Approach:

As we implement digital products or processes, we have developed guidelines that help us to ensure we develop the new feature with the least disruption and impact on other services, our workforce, and residents, but also ensure that we deliver our outcomes successfully. The list below are principles we seek to follow throughout the digital change that we do:

- Make processes 'Digital by choice' —processes will be designed in a digital way that encourages our workforce and residents to use them

- Roll out products in an incremental and agile way — design a working model then develop it further, rather than seeking perfection first time

- Balance digital investment between buying external products and developing in house solutions to manage our investment in upskilling staff and tailoring systems, and adopting systems to ensure value for money

- Identify critical systems and integrate them with our corporate customer relationship system and operating environment

- Conduct a cost benefit analysis to determine the most appropriate solution

- Ensure we have a rigid scope to support successful deployment on time and to budget

- Make our implementation collaborative and business led, but technically informed

- Appropriate skilled people to support the work at the right time

- Embed being a digital organisation within our procurement process

Our Digital Governance:

To provide assurance to our workforce, Councillors, citizens, and residents as we continue delivering our Digital strategy, we have put strong governance in place. For SMBC, this governance approach is based on our Corporate Approach to Projects and Programmes and follows established best practice methodologies. The overall governance group for our digital transformation is our Corporate Leadership Team, and we report annually to our Resources and Delivering Value Scrutiny Board to ensure members are kept up to date and can provide proper scrutiny.

The projects that aim to deliver our vision are divided into various programmes. These programmes are then divided into collections of projects that together lead to a major step forward in meeting our goals.

Other digital work across the Council is owned and run by directorates and their individual programmes but overseen by the Digital Transformation Programme Board. This acts as an oversight group to ensure that we avoid duplicate work, identify efficiencies, and get the best value for money.

For SCH, the approach is overseen by the Digital Programme and reports into our Executive Leadership Team to monitor and provide good governance.

The SCH Digital Programme Board links into the SMBC Digital Transformation Programme to ensure that we are aligned in what we are implementing and that we can ensure best value and the most efficient use of resources.

To ensure that we have oversight of local and corporate digital projects and programmes we oversee digital activity through our programme governance and liaise with our local 'Digital Leads', our 'Digital Champions' and our corporate ICT leads.

This helps us to assess which projects need corporate leadership and support, and which ones can be led locally. It also helps us to make sure we have people with the right skills and business knowledge supporting the work.

As it is important that digital projects are not seen as simply 'technical upgrades' we follow an approach to projects which looks at the whole life of the project. This includes planning support before, during, and after the rollout of a digital solution as well as reviews after it has been implemented to learn lessons and ensure we get the expected benefits.

THE WIDER STRATEGIC PICTURE

Solihull MBC

For SMBC, our Council Plan outlines the overall strategic direction of the Council. In particular, it sets our strategy and our contribution to the delivery of Our Vision for Solihull: where everyone has an equal chance to be healthier, happier, safer, and more prosperous.

The Council Plan also lays out our priorities, deliverables, and outcomes, including 'Digital Empowerment' which supports this strategy, and outlines planned digital work that underpins the delivery of our digital objectives.

The Council Plan sits alongside our other key strategy – the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The MTFS underpins the Council's medium-term policy and financial planning process and outlines a deliverable and affordable approach to meeting the challenges presented by reductions in funding and sustained and growing demand for our services.

These plans are revised yearly and updated as needed to reflect the changing delivery environment and activities undertaken by the Council.

Solihull Community Housing

For SCH, our Future Strategic Vision 2020-2025 sets out our Vision, the five strategic aims which support it, and the core values and commitments that will shape the way that we achieve it.

Our core purpose remains to provide homes and housing related services but we want to do this in a way that makes our customers lives easier and supports them and our wider communities to thrive.

This commitment is reflected in the way that our vision supports the Solihull Council Plan in addressing fundamental issues such as climate change, health and social care, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and vulnerable people, and delivering inclusive growth

Alongside our Future Strategic Vision, our Delivery Plan sets out our priority work for the next 12 months.

It outlines our ambitions for the coming year and embodies our values, commitments and the aims of our organisation.

HOW OUR STRATEGY LINKS TO OUR WIDER PRIORITIES

Digital is an enabler that supports many of our wider priorities and objectives. Across Solihull MBC and Solihull Community Housing we have four main priorities which we focus on to achieve our vision. These are:

- **Efficiency and value for money**
- **Economy**
- **Environment**
- **People and Communities**

Our Digital Strategy links to these priorities in the following ways:

Efficiency and value for money: enable the future service offer built around 'universal, targeted and specialist' services Improve customer experience and save money e.g., through new website, e-revenues

Economy: Supporting the UKC and Inclusive Growth programmes to maximise the opportunities generated in a digital economy Superfast broadband/5G

Environment: redesigning services in ways that lower the impact on the environment and utilising digital technology to enable efficient management of buildings and monitor highway condition

People and communities: encouraging and supporting residents to do as much as possible for themselves through digital inclusion and empowerment

Work with community groups, networks and charities to help communities make the shift to digital

Our Digital Strategy also links to other organisational strategies such as our Carers' Strategy and regional strategies such as the Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care System Digital, Data and Technology Strategy.
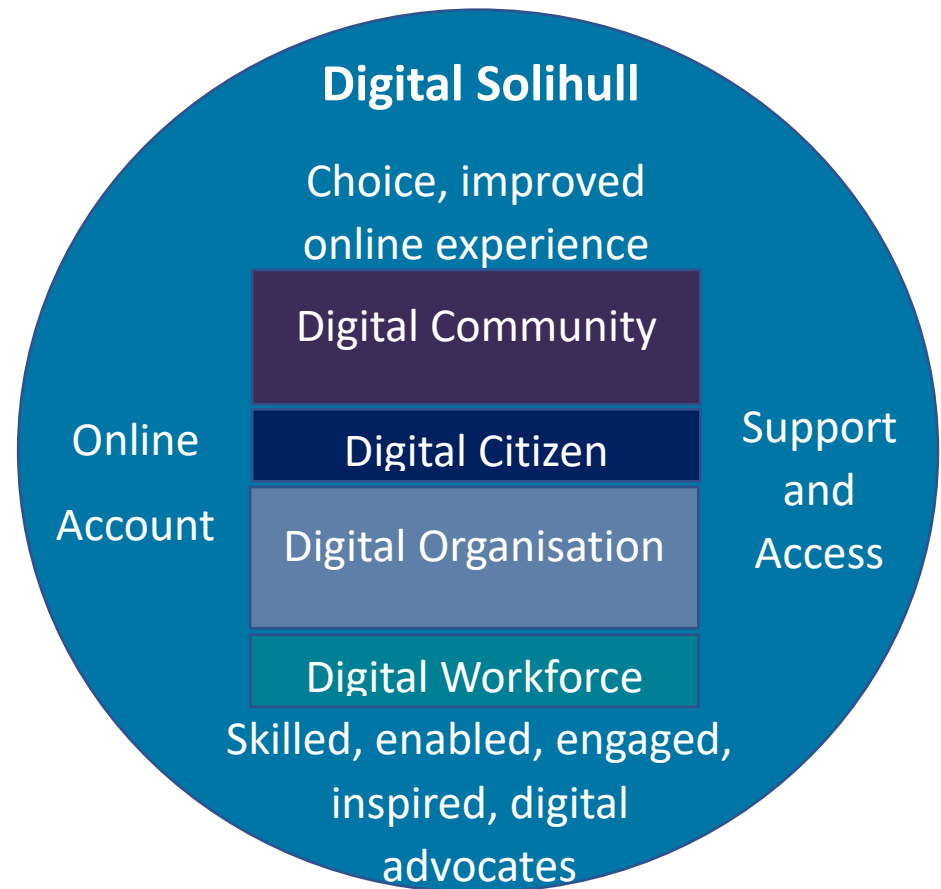
OUR DIGITAL THEMES

Our digital themes provide a focus on what we will do to achieve our vision. Five major themes have been identified - with the addition of 'Digital Workforce' as a theme in this revision of the strategy.

The themes focus, in order of size, on our wider community across Solihull, our residents, our organisations and partners, and on our workforce.

Each theme contains specific goals that our digital projects contribute towards. These are high level goals that we then plan our projects and programmes to deliver, with milestones set against each goal to track our progress.

Wrapping around our themes are our key aims for each theme. These provide a focus for us to meet our vision and represent the link to our principles and standards we refer back to as we implement our goals.

These aims are to have single online accounts for SMBC and for SCH to access services, give choices and improved experiences in our services, provide support and access to residents, and promote our workforce to be skilled and inspired digital advocates.

Digital Solihull

Choice, improved online experience

Online Account

Digital Community
Digital Citizen
Digital Organisation
Digital Workforce

Support and Access

Skilled, enabled, engaged, inspired, digital advocates

Digital Solihull:

"Bringing digital businesses and partners together within a digital community"

Better connectivity:

Support the roll out of superfast and full fibre broadband through the CSW Broadband project, and interested companies such as CityFibre, along with improved 4G / 5G mobile networks with the WMCA's WM5G team.

95% of the Borough is connected to superfast broadband with mainly the rural areas still to be connected, however there are many "not spots" within the Borough for mobile networks in both urban and rural areas.

Digital Collaboration:

Using technology such as Microsoft 365 to support closer working among partners to address complex issues seamlessly for communities and individuals.

Local Digital Roadmap:

Bridges the gap between the Sustainability and Transformation Plan and the digital world through identifying our Digital maturity across the economy, focusing on whether: information is paper free and flows between organisations; patients, carers, and citizens are included in the use of digital technology

Digital Community:

"Ensuring our digital workforce supports our digital community"

Digital Community Offer:

Describe for communities what it is that SMBC can offer to support communities to access the digital society and digital economy

- Help to 'get online' through training
- Access to PCs within the community using Council and non-Council devices
- Workforce volunteering involving offering online support and advice including for social media

- Active citizenship through digital learning for pleasure, and connecting with individuals and communities

Digital Citizen:

"Underpinned by our digital workforce working in a digital organisation"

'Digital by choice' first when appropriate: Non digital access channels will remain, but processes will be designed wherever appropriate to enable transactions online including taking payments upfront in a way that people choose.

Drive digital behaviour: Through the provision of assisted self-service at face-to-face service points. There will be active channel management for certain enquiry types.

Digital inclusion: Customers will be encouraged to use online access channels which must be 'right first time'. Support to 'get online' will be available within the community.

Customer online account: Provides customers with a single view of the Council and a single view of SCH. Customers will be able to sign in once and access a range of services through their online account.

Standard and transparent experience: Throughout the end-to-end process there will be a familiar feel to processes. Process design where online will deal with common scenarios. Scenarios outside of 'the norm' will be dealt with through non digital access channels.

Digital Organisation:

"Embedding digital tools and processes to support citizens"

The right tool for the job: People need the right technology to enable them to work effectively in a digital way. These tools are complementary to our ability to be a digital organisation.

Be a digital organisation: Processes designed to be digital by default. Internal processes for workflow across the business such as HR and payroll, Finance and ICT need to be designed in a smart digital way. This becomes the way we work and thus second nature.

Service improvement tested against design principles: Where services are reviewed and 'improved', these proposals need to be tested against digital design principles to ensure that they are digital and customer focussed.

Digital Workforce:

"Ensuring we have the capability to be a digital organisation"

Developing a digital workforce plan that enables:

- Digital awareness and capability: Develop digital thinking, knowledge, skills and behaviours in pursuit of effective citizen, colleague and organisational outcomes

- Digital citizen advocacy: Using digital thinking, systems and processes that support citizen outcomes

- Digital Continuous Improvement: Continually evolving, evaluating our digital approach to add value to our citizen and colleague experience

- Digital Local: Enabling digital to become embedded within the organisation, through employee voice, education, engagement, and participation

- Digital Leadership: Leaders are equipped to lead our workforce towards a digital future

- Digital Diversity and Inclusion: Digital reaches and enables our workforce who have diverse roles, working arrangements and places of work

DIGITAL OPPORTUNITIES

Digital technologies and capabilities provide increasing opportunities to improve the services the Council delivers.

The nature of digital, with:

- growing amounts of information created and owned by residents;
- increased data sharing and ease of communication;
- the use of data to provide insights into the way we work, and;
- the global reach of digital services

deeply affect the services that are needed by residents and open new ways to deliver these.

As we deliver our digital themes in line with our principles, we will continuously look for opportunities to exploit, enhance, and embed the new technologies we develop.

The key opportunities we have identified in the digital space are around:

- Automation and process design

- Data and analytics
- Collaboration and partnership working
- 'Internet of things' and technology enabled care

These opportunities cut across and support all themes and are areas where we have identified 'quick wins' or have identified improvements that we can make to services.

Automation and process design

Automation allows for manual process to be completed automatically. This can be based on a set 'trigger' or can be scheduled to repeat at a particular time.

With digital tools, such as Microsoft 365 and Oracle Cloud, processes that were manual can now be automated. For example, copying required information from an email into a spreadsheet, can now be set up as an automated task – freeing up time to work on other tasks.

As we design new processes and review existing ones, we are increasingly looking to use automation to free up time for our workforce to use in better ways and eliminate manual processes to create efficiencies.

Data and analytics

With growing amounts of data created by residents and by our services it is important that we use this information responsibly to inform and improve the services we provide.

With new data analysis tools such as Power BI and Oracle Analytics, we are able to link data together to give new insights as well as provide more up to date and interactive dashboards to enable better and quicker decision making.

Linking key indicators together across our systems and analysing the outcomes will also allow us to see where interventions and extra support is needed – helping to align our resources to meet the needs of residents.

This is increasingly important in ensuring effective service development and delivery, for example, when commissioning new services.

Strong data analysis also allows us to be more evidence led in our decision making, allowing for quicker and more helpful responses to resident's needs.

Collaboration and partnership working

Collaboration and partnership working are ever more important with the increasing numbers of communication tools available.

The global reach of digital services allows us to work with and learn from best practice and from partners in ways we haven't been able to previously.

Combined with virtual collaborative spaces such as Microsoft Teams this will allow us to work more widely with partners to design joined up services and to aim for a seamless service offer across Solihull.

'Internet of things' and technology enabled care

The internet of things describes physical objects which have sensors and can communicate over a network with each other. This network can create 'smart homes' and 'smart buildings'.

The internet of things can allow for better technology enabled care for residents – giving increased control over the environment through voice commands and sensor input.

It also allows for increased information for carers and social services, giving early warning and an improved picture of needs.

DIGITAL CHALLENGES

To deliver our digital ambitions there are three key challenges that will have to tackle. These are:

1. Digital inclusion;

2. Skills and knowledge, and;

3. Funding and capacity

These challenges are multifaceted and require complex solutions, but by dealing with them, will allow for the benefits of digital services to be fully realised for residents.

Digital inclusion

Digital services should be inclusive to as many residents as possible. Our work around digital inclusion is intended to reach this aim.

Some of the challenges involved with digital inclusion are around a lack of coordination on a local, regional, and national organisations, which can lead to missed opportunities.

Lack of access to equipment or the internet can also prevent people from being able to access digital services or use those services effectively.

We know that having access to digital services brings social and economic benefits to residents and that increased digital confidence allows residents to adapt to new digital services in their private and public lives.

Digital confidence relies on having three main elements:

- Capability – the ability to take digital actions

- Benefit – the understanding of the benefits of doing so

- Opportunity – the chance to take these actions

Skills and knowledge play a major part of this, as does the systems we put in place as organisations to support residents. These systems need to be clear, beneficial, and available to residents, linking back to our Digital Principles and 'Digital Organisation' theme.

Meeting this challenge requires strong partnership working, as there are many factors to digital inclusion that have multiple contributors. We are increasingly working with regional, community, and health partners to tackle digital isolation and increase digital inclusion, and this focus has been build into our key themes and principles.

Capability

This challenge has two main elements – digital skills of residents and digital skills of our workforce.

We know that digital skills have a wide range, from understanding how to turn on and manage devices, being able to create strong passwords, and being able to connect to the internet, to using social media, being aware of cyber security and potential scams, and using cloud-based software.

As the digital skills that residents have increase, we anticipate increasing demands for digital services. We also know that we have to offer digital services that are accessible and inclusive to a range of skill levels.

Supporting digital skills for residents, linking to the digital isolation challenge above, need to focus on how we can support residents to use the digital access and capabilities they have most effectively, and signpost to training and opportunities to increase digital skills. We are also focused on developing our services so that digital training and skills materials are more easily accessible to residents when they access them.

Digital skills for our workforce need to support them in their role and allow them to share these skills in the community at large. This is driven by our digital workforce plan which focuses on our six digital workforce themes.

Resources and systems

We know that digital solutions and services take resources to deliver. This is why we review each solution on a case-by-case basis to determine:

- The benefits it will bring to residents;

- The cost of implementing and maintaining the digital service, and;

- The time and resource it will take to deliver

We endeavour to align our resources to our priorities across SMBC and SCH, including in the ways we deliver our digital objectives.

We also know that digital solutions increasingly require partnership working to deliver complex digital solutions, particularly those where data needs to be shared or where cloud-based solutions exist and so work increasingly closely with our key partners to look at the most resource-effective way to deliver our digital vision.

This also applies to the software systems we use, and we aim to balance the most effective use of software (consolidating systems where reasonable) with the risk of having single systems for SMBC and SCH which would be more vulnerable if they failed.

Security and safety

We know that cyber security is an increasingly challenging threat to our society, infrastructure, and digital environment. We take this threat very seriously and continue to highlight the risk to our staff, citizens, and partners. Our systems are built to strict security standards and employ dedicated software to protect our information.

As cyber-attacks become more sophisticated and need both human and technological responses, we continue to require cyber security training from employees and guests who use our digital infrastructure. We also run regular awareness and cyber testing sessions to understand which areas we need to strengthen and will continue to do so.

Alongside this, we have multiple cyber threat protection solutions in place to protect our network from malicious actors. We will continue to work closely with cyber security experts and our partners to follow best practice and remain up to date with the latest developments.

OUR DELIVERY ROADMAP

As we progress with the delivery of our strategy, we will be focused on key delivery areas. These areas focus on technologies and capabilities that provide the biggest improvement to services or allow for efficiencies to be gained. These areas will form the core focus of our projects and programmes over the life of the strategy.

Data Analysis and Dashboards

Development of our ability to analyse and interpret data in order to provide useful management information and improve our services.

This involves developing our capabilities around data analysis using tools such as Power BI, Oracle Analytics, or other software.

Collaborative Working

Being able to collaborate effectively with colleagues and partners. This means allowing colleagues to connect quickly and securely, share documents and co-produce work.

This involves exploiting tools such as Microsoft 365 and Oracle Cloud and providing good governance around the to ensure we collaborate in a secure way.

Workflow and Process Improvement

Using tools such as Workflow, Oracle Cloud, and Microsoft 365 apps, we will look to improve the way we work by using automating processes and reducing the amount of manual handling needed.

Skills and Training

Improve our offer around digital skills and training for our workforce and residents. This includes reviewing our internal digital competencies and providing a training offer that meets their needs, as well as undertaking a yearly wider organisational assessment of our digital skills.

We will also look to work with communities and partners to offer wider digital skills and training opportunities, linking in with our community engagement projects and programmes.

Engagement and Inclusion

As part of our ongoing work to support digital inclusion for residents and our workforce, we will focus on developing our inclusion offer, linking in with partners and reviewing best practice locally, regionally, and nationally.

This will involve understanding the current landscape around digital inclusion and identifying measurable ways to improve our engagement and inclusion. It will also involve exploiting the engagement and collaboration tools we have, so that we can listen to and understand what the needs of residents are.

LINKS AND FURTHER INFORMATION

To find out more about Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council's Council Plan, please go to:

https://www.solihull.gov.uk/About-the-Council/The-Council-plan

or click: The Solihull Council Plan

To find out more about Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy, please go to:

https://www.solihull.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-04/Medium-Term-Financial-Strategy-2022-23-to-2024-25.pdf

or click: The Solihull Council Medium Term Financial Strategy

To find out more about Solihull Community Housing's Future Strategic Vision 2020-2025, please go to:

https://www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk/about-us/delivery-plan-and-future-strategic-vision/future-strategic-vision-2020-2025/

or click: Future Strategic Vision 2020-2025 - Solihull Community Housing

To find out more about Solihull Community Housing's Delivery Plan, please go to:

https://www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk/about-us/delivery-plan-and-future-strategic-vision/delivery-plan-2022-23/

or click: Delivery Plan 2022/23 - Solihull Community Housing

CONTACT DETAILS

Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council:

If you need to contact Solihull Council our Do It Online (https://www.solihull.gov.uk/doitonline) page lists all of our services in one easy location.

Stay connected - by phone

If you know the service you require visit our Contact us by telephone (https://www.solihull.gov.uk/Tell-us/Contact-us-by-telephone) page.

For general enquiries please call 0121 704 8001.

Stay connected - by email

You can contact us by email at connectcc@solihull.gov.uk.

Solihull Community Housing:

If you need to contact Solihull Community Housing, you can contact us using the channels below:

Contact us online at https://www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk/contact-us/online/

Or for other ways to contact us please visit: Contact Us - Solihull Community Housing (https://www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk/contact-us/)

Phone: 0121 717 1515

Text: 07781 474 722