

TITLE	Statement of Community Involvement
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 21 February 2019
WARD	None Specific;
DIRECTOR	Director of Locality and Customer Services – Sarah Hollamby
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Business, Economic Development and Strategic Planning - Stuart Munro, Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement - Simon Weeks

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

To introduce a new Statement of Community Involvement which fully reflects latest guidelines. This will ensure that residents, businesses and interested parties will understand how consultation will take place with the community on planning policy documents and planning applications, so enabling the council's decisions to be influenced by local opinion.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the following is agreed by the Executive:

- 1) that the Statement of Community Involvement 2019 is adopted for use in consultation on planning matters;
- 2) that the supporting Consultation Statement and Adoption Statement are noted and published on the Council's website.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is a document that councils are required to produce that sets out how consultation will take place with the community on planning policy documents and planning applications.

Views were sought on a draft version of the SCI for a 6 week period in November – December 2018.

The comments received during this consultation have been considered and where appropriate have been used to update the draft SCI. Appendix A of this report provides a table setting out all the comments received and the Council's response to these. A full Consultation Statement outlining the consultation process that underpinned the production of the SCI and how comments have been addressed is provided in Appendix C (available online and in hard copy from Democratic Services). The recommended final SCI is provided in Appendix B (available online and in hard copy from Democratic Services).

BACKGROUND

What is a Statement of Community Involvement?

A Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is a document that councils are required to produce that sets out how consultation will take place with the community on planning policy documents and planning applications.

The SCI provides clarity on the extent of community involvement that will take place. It further sets out clear consultation procedures and standards that will be followed, so providing transparency for residents and businesses.

Why do we need a new SCI?

The Council adopted its existing SCI in 2014. Since then there have been changes to national planning policy and guidance, for example it is now a requirement for a SCI to incorporate guidance on how the Council will support communities producing neighbourhood plans.

Introduction to the revised SCI and consultation

A new draft SCI document was produced with input from various stakeholders across the Council's planning department and beyond. The main changes that were made to the draft SCI from the existing 2014 version were:

- New introductory chapter;
- New section on Neighbourhood Planning, setting out the ways that we will support groups undertaking neighbourhood plans;
- Increased clarity on the type of engagement activity that people can expect at each stage of the production of planning policy documents;
- Updated planning applications section to reflect current process timescales.

Consultation on the draft SCI was held for 6 weeks from 9 November – 21 December 2018 to seek views on the draft document. Further details on how and where the consultation was advertised are set out in the Consultation Statement (Appendix C – available online and in hard copy from Democratic Services). Consultation arrangements complied with both the Council's existing SCI and the draft SCI.

Analysis of Issues

Representations were received from ten respondents. Of these, seven expressed support for the draft SCI or responded they had no comments, and three either sought amendments or raised objections.

The main areas/issues raised by those seeking amendments or objecting are as follows:

- Lack of detail about what a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is and why they are needed.
- Comments querying whether views expressed in representations will have any impact on planning decisions. It was also expressed that greater feedback should be provided on how views have been addressed.

- Highlighted that adopted local plan should be adhered to as it is perceived that this has not always been the case.
- Perception that the Council does not have the power to ensure developers deliver the effective consultation / engagement the document asks of them.
- View expressed that more needs to be done to engage people with disabilities and address their needs through the planning system.

The matters raised in representations have been fully considered, and where appropriate, changes made to address these. A full summary of the representations and changes made is provided in Appendix A which is an extract from the larger Consultation Statement (available online and in hard copy from democratic services – Appendix C). This provides feedback to every comment raised through the consultation. The Council’s consultation procedure complies with Equalities legislation and is in accordance with the Council’s agreed Equality Objectives.

Having reviewed the representations, and taking into account the proposed changes, the SCI is appropriate to be adopted. A copy of the recommended final SCI is available online and in hard copy from democratic services (Appendix B).

BUSINESS CASE (Including Options and Evidence of Need)

The preparation of a SCI is a statutory requirement under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004). Local authorities are required to review their SCI every five years. The Council’s existing SCI was adopted in 2014 and changes to primary legislation have necessitated a review.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	No additional cost	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	No additional cost	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	No additional cost	Yes	Revenue

Other Financial Information
None.

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation
Consultation undertaken – see main body of report.

Resourcing and Timeline for Next Steps
The report recommends the adoption of the SCI.

Timeline for Review and Evaluation
SCIs are required to be reviewed at least every 5 years.

List of Background Papers
<p>Appendix A – Summary of consultation responses</p> <p>Appendix B – Statement of Community Involvement 2019 (available online and in hard copy from Democratic Services)</p> <p>Appendix C – Consultation Statement (available online and in hard copy from Democratic Services)</p> <p>Appendix D – Adoption Statement (available online and in hard copy from Democratic Services)</p> <p>National Planning Policy Framework available: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/revised-national-planning-policy-framework Link to consultation SCI available: http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/planning-policy/planning-policy-information/local-plan-and-planning-policies/</p>

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