

Agenda Item IMD19

INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION

REFERENCE IMD: 2023/19

TITLE	Statement of Community Involvement
DECISION TO BE MADE BY	Executive Member for Planning and Local Plan - Lindsay Ferris
DATE, MEETING ROOM and TIME	10 August 2023 FF12 at 10.30am
WARD	None specific
DIRECTOR / KEY OFFICER	Director, Place and Growth - Giorgio Framaliccio

PURPOSE OF REPORT (Inc Strategic Outcomes)

The purpose of this report is to consider the approval of a draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) for consultation. The SCI is a document that sets out how we will ensure effective community involvement at all stages of the land use planning process.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive Member for Planning and Local Plan approves the draft Statement of Community Involvement 2023, attached as Enclosure 1, for consultation.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

A Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is a document that sets out how we will ensure effective community involvement at all stages of the land use planning process, covering the preparation of local plans, neighbourhood development plans, and supplementary planning guidance, as well as in the consideration of planning applications. Our current SCI was adopted in 2019.

The recommended draft SCI has been prepared to ensure our practice remains effective and up-to-date. The opportunity has also been taken to improve the accessibility of the document overall.

The recommended draft SCI maintains the current commitment to engagement. One major change is to extend the consultation period for major planning applications from the statutory requirement of 21 days to 28 days (excluding bank holidays). This change is recommended to ensure there is sufficient opportunity for residents and stakeholders to review such applications and provide comments.

If the recommendation is approved, the draft SCI will be published for public consultation in line with the adopted SCI, for a period of 6 weeks.

Following the closure of the consultation, all responses will be carefully considered and an updated draft SCI prepared. This will be reported to a meeting of the council's Executive in the autumn.

Background

A Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is a document that sets out how we will ensure effective community involvement at all stages of the land use planning process.

It explains when, how and for what reasons people are able to be involved. This includes the preparation of local plans, neighbourhood development plans, and supplementary planning guidance, as well as in the consideration of planning applications.

Business Case (including Analysis of Issues)

Our current SCI was adopted in 2019. The recommended draft SCI has been prepared to ensure practice remains effective and up-to-date, for example referencing the e-newsletter which did not exist in 2019. The opportunity has also been taken to improve the accessibility of the document overall.

In broad terms, the recommended draft SCI maintains the current commitment to engagement. One major change is however the proposed commitment to extend consultation on major planning applications from the statutory requirement of 21 days to 28 days (excluding bank holidays). This change recognises that planning applications for larger developments are more complex to understand. The proposal to extend the consultation period seeks to ensure there sufficient opportunity for residents and stakeholders to review and provide comments. The change is not expected to impact the planning functions performance statistics.

If the recommendation is approved, the draft SCI will be published for public consultation in line with the adopted SCI, for a period of 6 weeks.

Following the closure of the consultation, all responses will be carefully considered and an updated draft SCI prepared. This will be reported to a meeting of the council's Executive in the autumn to consider adoption.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures as a result of; the longer term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are optimised and are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	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 costs. Costs in preparing and actioning the draft SCI are contained by existing budgets.	Yes	Revenue

Next Financial Year (Year 2)	No additional costs. Costs of actioning the draft SCI are contained by existing budgets.	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	No additional costs. Costs of actioning the draft SCI are contained by existing budgets.	Yes	Revenue

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
The costs of preparing the recommended LDS, consultation and adoption (subject to a future decision) are contained within existing budgets.
The costs of implementing the recommended SCI are also contained within existing budgets, with actions such as the proposed extension to the consultation period for major applications not changing the costs of consultation.

Cross-Council Implications
There are no implications for other council services from the recommended SCI. The council's property function already budgets for and undertakes proportionate engagement activity to inform its own development proposals.

Public Sector Equality Duty
A Stage 1 Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken to support the preparation of the recommended SCI. The assessment concluded the recommendation would have a neutral or no impact.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES	
Director – Resources and Assets	No comments.
Monitoring Officer	No comments.
Leader of the Council	No comments.

List of Background Papers
WBC Statement of Community Involvement, 2019.

Contact Ian Bellinger, Ian Church	Service Delivery and Infrastructure
Telephone No Tel: 0118 974 6231, Tel: 07824521749	Email ian.bellinger@wokingham.gov.uk, ian.church@wokingham.gov.uk

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