
Meeting: EXECUTIVE **Agenda Item:**

Portfolio Area: Environment and Regeneration

Date: 11 July 2018

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

KEY DECISION

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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To update Members on progress in producing the revised Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).
- 1.2 To seek approval of the draft SCI and agreement to undertake public consultation on this draft.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the draft Statement of Community Involvement (Appendix 1) be approved for public consultation for a period of four weeks, commencing Wednesday 18 July 2018.
- 2.2 That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director: Planning and Regulation, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration, to make such amendments as considered necessary in the final preparation of the SCI and to make necessary preparations for the public consultation.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires all local authorities to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), which sets out their vision and strategy for effective community engagement throughout the planning process.
- 3.2 New legislation in the form of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2017, requires SCI's to be reviewed every 5 years. The Council's last SCI was adopted in 2012. This will provide

an update to that document and, once adopted, will replace the existing version. Regularly reviewing the SCI allows for any policy changes to be incorporated, and allows for new methods of communication and consultation to be considered.

- 3.3 With the emphasis on community participation and localism high up on the national agenda, it is becoming increasingly important to encourage local people to play an active role in the early stages of all planning activities. The SCI will provide an updated framework to ensure that comprehensive and effective public engagement will take place throughout all stages of the planning process.
- 3.4 The draft SCI sets out:
- Why consultation is important
 - What will be consulted on
 - Who will be consulted
 - When consultation and engagement will take place
 - How these views will be taken into account
- 3.5 It includes guidance on consultation during the production of planning policy documents, as well as setting out the formal statutory processes for producing these documents. It also sets out what we will do to engage people in relation to planning applications, and this version of the SCI has been expanded to include sections on both neighbourhood planning and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).
- 3.6 We generally go over and above the statutory requirements when consulting on any of our planning policy documents, as we recognise the importance of hearing peoples' views. As a minimum we generally do the following for all statutory consultations.

Statutory requirement	Additional consultation (what we generally do...)
4 or 6 week consultation period (depending on regulation requirements)	Extend the consultation period if it falls over summer holidays/Christmas etc.
Make documents available on our website and at inspection points (local libraries and our offices)	Post regular reminders and information about the consultation on social media.
Send notifications to consultation bodies and those on our database	Send reminders throughout the consultation to those on our database
	Drop-in sessions and/or presentations to local community groups (i.e. Older Persons Forum, Youth Council, resident group meetings etc.)

- 3.7 In producing the SCI, Officers have worked with the Council's corporate policy team, as well as the Executive Members for Children, Young People and Leisure and Neighbourhoods and Co-operative Council, in understanding how best to engage with the community. As a result of these meetings, the Planning Policy Team will be attending resident involvement workshops/events with the aim of promoting involvement in Planning Policy more generally, and will work closely with the teams involved in neighbourhoods and Co-operative Council to ensure we take advantage of opportunities to use resident group meetings in the future to publicise our work.
- 3.8 A draft of the SCI was also taken to Planning and Development Committee (on Thursday 24 May), where officers of this group, and those of the Environment and Economy Select Committee were invited to provide comments.

4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

Recommendation 2.1:

That the draft Statement of Community Involvement (Appendix 1) be approved for public consultation for a period of four weeks, commencing Wednesday 18 July 2018

Recommendation 2.2:

That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director: Planning and Regulation, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration, to make such amendments as considered necessary in the final preparation of the SCI and to make necessary preparations for the public consultation.

- 4.1 Whilst there is no longer a statutory requirement to consult on the SCI, we would like to provide the opportunity to here our residents' views on how they would like to engage in the planning process. Therefore, it is recommended that public consultation be undertaken for a period of 4 weeks, to commence on Wednesday 18 July. The consultation would close on Wednesday 15 August.
- 4.2 The consultation will be publicised by a range of measures including:
- The SCI will be made available on the Council's website
 - Inspection copies of the SCI will be available at the Customer Service Centre and the town's two libraries

- All those on the Local Plan consultation database will be notified of the consultation
 - Social Media will be used to try and encourage responses
- 4.3 The draft SCI is appended to this report. However, it may be necessary to make minor changes in its final preparation. This might incorporate cosmetic adjustments, the correction of any typographical errors and any minor factual changes. It is recommended that any such amendments be approved via delegated powers.
- 4.4 The results of the consultation, and recommendations for adopting the SCI, are scheduled to be reported back to Executive in October 2018.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

- 5.1.1 The costs associated with producing and consulting on this SCI will be met from the Local Plan budget for 2018/19.

5.2 Legal Implications

- 5.2.1 Updating the SCI will ensure we are compliant with the most up-to-date regulations.

5.3 Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 5.3.1 The SCI contains a section on equalities and diversity. It seeks to ensure that our consultations and planning activities are open to everyone and we do not discriminate against different groups or individuals, in line with the Equality Act 2010. It recognises that some groups are harder to engage with than others and suggests alternative consultation techniques and methods are used in order to overcome these barriers.
- 5.3.2 An Equality Impact Assessment of the Planning Policy service has previously been carried out. It identified that the unit's responsibilities and methods would not discriminate against people on grounds of age; disability; gender; ethnicity; sexual orientation; religion/belief; or by way of financial exclusion.

5.4 Risk Implications

- 5.4.1 It is not considered there are significant risks associated with the production of a revised SCI.

5.5 Policy Implications

- 5.5.1 The SCI makes reference to the Co-operative Council ethos of Stevenage. It recognises that the council is currently reviewing its corporate strategies in relation to consultation and engagement, but takes into account the Co-operative Council objectives.
- 5.5.2 Officers have worked with the Council's corporate policy team, as well as the Executive Members for Children, Young People and Leisure and Neighbourhoods and Co-operative Council, in producing the SCI and determining how best to engage with the community.

5.6 Planning Implications

- 5.6.1 Once adopted, the revised SCI will provide updated guidelines for public engagement in the planning process. It will replace the existing SCI adopted in May 2012 and should be followed when producing planning policy documents, considering planning applications or undertaking neighbourhood planning.

5.7 Human Rights Implications

- 5.7.1 The SCI should help to ensure that the planning service is fully inclusive and respectful of human rights. The SCI details the rights that the public have to engage with the plan-making process.

5.8 Information Technology Implications

- 5.8.1 The SCI recognises the importance of taking advantage of new technologies to improve and expand our consultation processes, and the opportunities for people to get involved. Whilst we do not require any new systems to enable this, improvements to the Council's website to make consultation events more visible and appealing to users would be welcomed.
- 5.8.2 Proprietary document management and consultation software has been used for the preparation of planning documents since 2008. This allows for documents to be published and responses to be made, directly on-line, via the Council's web-site.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

BD1 – [Statement of Community Involvement, 2012](#)

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Draft Statement of Community Involvement, July 2018