

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (SCI)

REPORT OF: ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE
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Wards Affected: All
Key Decision: Yes
Report to: Council
Date of meeting: 27th March 2019

Purpose of Report

1. The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) for Mid Sussex was adopted in 2011. A revised draft SCI was produced in 2018 to comply with national legislation, the adoption of the District Plan and evolving best practice on community and stakeholder engagement. The draft SCI was subject to consultation in Autumn 2018 and following comments received, the revised draft SCI was considered at the Scrutiny Committee for Community, Housing and Planning on the 29th January 2019. The Scrutiny Committee recommended that Council adopts the revised SCI.
2. The purpose of the report is to recommend that Council adopts the new SCI in accordance with legislation.

Summary

3. This report provides a summary of:
 - The draft revised Statement of Community Involvement (SCI); and
 - The consultation undertaken on the draft SCI and the minor changes made in response to comments received.

Recommendations

4. **That Council:**
 - (i) **Adopts the proposed revised Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) in accordance with legislation, and delegates responsibility to the Divisional Leader for Planning and Economy to ensure that the adopted SCI is placed on the website, and stakeholders are notified accordingly.**

Background: the context for review of the Statement of Community Involvement

5. The requirement to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is set out in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004). An SCI explains how the District Council will engage and involve local people and communities in the planning process. Mid Sussex District Council adopted the current SCI in 2011.
6. Since the current SCI was adopted there have been a number of important changes to national planning law and policy. The Council has adopted the District Plan and there are now a number of neighbourhood plans across the District. These all have implications for the SCI.

7. A requirement of the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 is that from 31st July 2018 all SCIs must:
 - Be updated every five years as a minimum;
 - Set out how the authority will support neighbourhood planning groups in making of neighbourhood development orders and reviewing neighbourhood plans; and
 - State how it will give people and communities opportunities to understand how the Council reviews matters which may affect development in its area or the planning of its development (the 'survey' stage of planning).
8. The proposed revised SCI:
 - Ensures that it complies with all relevant national planning policy and guidance (including the September 2018 update to Planning Practice Guidance); and
 - Updates the Council's commitments to local communities and explain how the Council will engage local communities in planning processes including making and reviewing Neighbourhood Plans.

The draft Statement of Community Involvement

9. In updating the SCI, officers have streamlined the information, incorporating all the required details into one shorter and more accessible document. This provides greater clarity on the Council's commitment to community engagement and offers a useful resource for local people that wish to be involved in local planning.
10. The document covers a range of topics concerning the Council's commitment to engage local communities in planning processes, including:
 - A Code of Practice, setting out six general principles for community engagement, which are intended as a guide to ensure the necessary quality of work is carried out;
 - Information on both the legal requirements for consultation and the ways the Council will involve local communities in plan-making and planning applications, including summaries of the stages and methods of consultation involved in each; and
 - Updated information on the Council's support of neighbourhood planning, the Council's Duty to Cooperate with nearby planning authorities and other public bodies, and monitoring of the Council's consultation activity.
11. In line with the previous version, the document not only covers consultation activities by the Council but also provides advice and information on how private developers should consult and engage with local communities in advance of submitting planning applications for development.
12. Included for the first time is guidance on the appropriate use of social media in engaging with people and communities across the District.

Public consultation on the draft Statement of Community Involvement

13. Following consideration by the Scrutiny Committee for Community, Housing and Planning at its meeting in September 2018, the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning approved a draft version of the SCI for public consultation.
14. Public consultation on the draft document was carried out between Thursday 11th October and Thursday 22nd November 2018 as follows:
 - Notification to the 250+ organisations and almost 150 interested persons on the Council's planning policy e-mail circulation list;
 - Publication on the Council's website; and
 - Copies of the draft document were placed to view in public buildings across the District.
15. Five organisations responded to the consultation (Southern Water, Highways England, Historic England, Hassocks Parish Council and Haywards Heath Town Council). Two respondents acknowledged the consultation with no comments to make; one respondent supported the revised SCI; one respondent made comments with no proposed changes; and one respondent (Haywards Heath Town Council) proposed minor changes relating to encouraging early engagement with Town and Parish Councils. No objections were received.
16. The Scrutiny Committee for Community, Housing and Planning considered the consultation responses and agreed the proposed changes to the draft SCI on the 29th January 2019 and to recommend to Council that the revised draft SCI is adopted.
17. The final draft version of the SCI is attached at Appendix 1.

Guidance Note on the use of Planning Performance Agreements in the District

18. In tandem with the revisions to the SCI, guidance on the use of Planning Performance Agreements (PPA) in the District has been revised. A PPA is a project management tool which local planning authorities and applicants can use to agree timescales, actions and resources for handling some applications. These are usually application for large and complex developments, including strategic allocations or mixed use urban regeneration schemes, that are likely to need extensive discussions with Council officers.
19. The Guidance Note does not require adoption by the Council and following public consultation and consideration by the Scrutiny Committee for Community, Housing and Planning, it has been approved by the Cabinet Member and is now available on the Council's website.

Next Steps

20. According to the District Council's Constitution, a resolution by Council is required to adopt the SCI. Once adopted, the SCI has to be reviewed at a minimum every five years.

Financial Implications

21. There are no financial implications associated with adoption of the SCI.

Legal and Risk Management Implications

22. The Council is required by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 to produce a Statement of Community Involvement. The Council is required to update its SCI every five years under the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017.
23. If the Council does not adopt the updated SCI, it would be in breach of legislation and at risk of any action taken by Government or potentially an interested third party.
24. Although the likelihood of either of these events is low, the reputational risk to the Council should they occur would be significant.

Equality and Customer Service Implications

25. The draft SCI has equality and customer services at the core of its principles. In bringing forward community consultation and engagement activities, advice is given to officers (or private developers in working up development proposals) on targeting hard to reach communities and outreach work with them.

Other material implications

26. There are no other material implications.

Appendix 1: Final draft version of the Statement of Community Involvement