

Mrs Urquhart, Cabinet Member for Environment	Ref No: ENV08 (18/19)
September 2018	Key Decision: Yes
Approval of the Statement of Community Involvement (Third Review)	Part I
Report by Lee Harris, Executive Director of Economy, Infrastructure and Environment	Electoral Division(s): All
<p>Summary</p> <p>The County Council is required to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The SCI is a formal statement of the County Council's policy that identifies how local communities and stakeholders can be involved in planning. The current SCI (Second Review) was adopted in June 2012.</p> <p>The Third Review SCI (attached as Appendix A) addresses recent regulation changes, as well as capturing improvements since 2012 in the way that the County Council deals with planning applications. However, there are no changes to the principles and approaches established in the adopted SCI.</p>	
<p>West Sussex Plan: Policy Impact and Context</p> <p>The third Review SCI does not set out any changes to the principles and approaches set out within the adopted SCI, but it does include reference to the West Sussex Plan priorities. Consultation in accordance with the SCI will ensure that communities have the opportunity to provide input into both plan making and the determination of planning applications, in keeping with the 'A council that works for the community' priority.</p>	
<p>Financial Impact</p> <p>The cost of preparing and publishing the review of the SCI will be met by provision within the base budget.</p>	
<p>Recommendation</p> <p>That the Cabinet Member for Environment approves the West Sussex Statement of Community Involvement: Third Review (attached as Appendix A).</p>	

PROPOSAL

1. Background and Context

- 1.1 The County Council is required to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The SCI is a formal statement of the County Council's

policy that identifies how local communities and stakeholders can be involved in

- the preparation of local plans and policy documents;
- the consideration of planning applications; and
- how the County Council is involved in neighbourhood planning.

1.2 Recent changes to Regulations require the SCI to be reviewed every five years and to include how the County Council will assist in the preparation of neighbourhood plans. The current SCI (Second Review) was adopted in June 2012 and, therefore, an updated version, the Third Review, has been prepared. This report considers the revised SCI, which is attached as Appendix A to this report.

2. Proposal Details

2.1. The Third Review SCI addresses recent regulation changes, as well capturing improvements in the way the County Council deals with planning applications since 2012. However, there are no changes to the principles and approaches established in the adopted SCI.

2.2. The SCI continues to accord with Government Principles, seeking community involvement to be legitimate and timely, with outcomes in the public interest. Emphasis is put on 'early and meaningful engagement', and all sections of community should be able to be involved in planning decisions.

Local Plans and Planning Policy Documents

2.3. The SCI is fundamental to the production of new plans, as it enables local requirements and community expectations to be addressed at an early stage in the plan making process. The documents that the County Council prepares are set out in the annually updated Minerals and Waste Development Scheme.

2.4. The SCI sets out the approaches that will be taken at each stage during the preparation of planning policy documents, including who will be consulted and the potential methods and techniques that will be applied. The SCI is a consideration when preparing plans; failure to comply with its requirements could result in a Planning Inspector recommending withdrawal of a local plan if they consider that the 'soundness' of the plan has been undermined.

2.5. Appendix A of the SCI sets out the potential methods and techniques for community engagement when preparing policy documents.

Neighbourhood Planning

2.6. Neighbourhood planning allows local communities to prepare Neighbourhood Development Plans; once adopted, they become part of the development plan for the area. In West Sussex, the seven district and borough planning authorities, and the South Downs National Park Authority, have a legal duty to provide support to neighbourhood plan groups.

- 2.7. The County Council is primarily involved during the preparation of a draft neighbourhood plan. Consultation responses are provided at both pre-submission and submission stage where there are any impacts on the statutory responsibilities of the County Council or on its activities as a service provider.

Planning Applications

- 2.8. The County Council is responsible for determining three types of planning applications:
- minerals development;
 - waste development; and
 - County Council development (such as schools, libraries, fire stations, and county highways)
- 2.9. The SCI sets out the requirements on the County Council, and how consultation will be undertaken with groups and organisations (such as the local district or borough councils, Historic England or the Environment Agency), as well as the public. Appendix B of the SCI sets out the methods for publicising planning applications.
- 2.10. The SCI provides information on where planning applications can be viewed, other methods of public engagement that may be applied, and the methods that will be used for decision making and reporting back.

FACTORS TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT

3. Consultation

- 3.1. Public consultation was undertaken on the draft Third Review SCI from 30 July 2018 to 7 September 2018. The process involved writing to approximately 3,000 organisations and individuals by letter or email, providing hard copy documentation at council offices and libraries, and providing the updated SCI on our website.
- 3.2. Only one response was received from Highways England, which made 'no comment' on the draft.

4. Resource Implications

- 4.1. The cost of preparing and publishing the review of the SCI will be met by provision within the base budget. The SCI will have no resource implications on revenue or capital budgets going forward.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1. It is a legal requirement for the County Council to produce and review the SCI, and to carry out consultation on planning policies and planning applications in line with the SCI. The SCI reflects current planning legislation.

6. Risk Assessment Implications and Mitigations

- 6.1. The County Council is required to ensure that all planning activities are undertaken in accordance with Regulations, and to take account of guidance when engaging with communities and stakeholders. The current SCI is over five years old and, therefore, requires a review.
- 6.2. Without an updated SCI, the County Council could be subject to challenge with regard to planning decisions and planning policy documents could be found 'unsound'.

7. Other Options Considered

- 7.1. There is a statutory duty to prepare and review the SCI; therefore, no other options have been considered.

8. Equality and Human Rights Assessment

- 8.1. An Equality Impact Report is not required for this decision because it only deals with procedural matters.

9. Social Value and Sustainability Assessment

- 9.1. Not applicable as the decision does not relate to procurement.

10. Crime and Disorder Reduction Assessment

- 10.1. None.

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Appendices

Appendix A – West Sussex Statement of Community Involvement: Third Review

Background Papers

None