

This Report will be made public on 6 December 2022



Report Number **C/22/65**

To: Cabinet
Date: 14th December 2022
Status: Non key
Responsible Officer: Rebecca Chittock, Planning Policy Specialist
Cabinet Member: Cllr Monk, Leader of the Council

SUBJECT: Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) Update

SUMMARY: The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet on the outcome of the public consultation and set out recommended changes to the document before adoption.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

So that the council has an up-to-date Statement of Community Involvement in place, to guide community engagement on planning applications and the local plan, taking account of recent consultation comments as far as possible.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To receive and note report C/22/65.
2. That Cabinet supports work being carried out to update the SCI.
3. That Cabinet support the changes to the SCI as set out in Appendix 1.
4. That Cabinet approves the updated SCI for adoption.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is a statutory document that all local planning authorities are required to have in place. The SCI explains how people can get involved in decisions about plan making and planning applications, these are the two main ways to get involved in the planning system locally.
- 1.2 The SCI update was presented to Cabinet on 21st September (C/22/33) and a six-week public consultation on the document was approved.

2. CONSULTATION

- 2.1 The public consultation took place between 3rd October and 14th November 2022. The consultation was advertised through the council's social media channels, the council website, a press release in local media and direct email notification to over 1400 statutory consultees, businesses, groups and individuals on the consultation database the Strategy and Policy Team hold. Hard copies of the consultation document were made available for inspection at the council office and all local libraries in the district. Officers also attended a Parish Planning Forum meeting to explain the SCI update and highlight the consultation with parish and town councils. Comments could be made on the council's consultation portal directly against the relevant section of the SCI document. Alternatively, comments could be emailed or posted to us.
- 2.2 We received 66 comments in total on the SCI update, from 17 contributing consultees. Appendix 1 sets out the comments received, as well as officer responses and where necessary, changes to the document are suggested. Appendix 2 sets out the draft SCI text, published from the online Objective software, with the suggested changes underlined and in red (the final will be published inhouse).
- 2.3 The nature of the comments saw general support for the SCI, with the majority of comments falling in to two categories, those that were seeking clarification and those reflecting on past consultations and development carried out.
- 2.4 Given the issues raised by the consultation comments, there are no major amendments proposed. The amendments suggested, are mainly textual changes to help further clarify a point, avoid repetition and ensure the document is clear and concise.
- 2.5 If Cabinet approves the amended SCI, together with any other amendments Cabinet considers necessary, officers will produce a final version of the document and publish it on the website. It will be used to guide consultation on planning applications and engagement with the next local plan, which is in its early stages.

3. OPTIONS

- 3.1 The options are:
1. To adopt the SCI with the proposed changes set out in Appendix 1, and with any other amendments considered necessary by Cabinet. This would ensure that the council has an up-to-date SCI in place and show that the council has taken account of the comments that emerged from the consultation, as far as possible within legislative and resource constraints.
 2. To adopt the SCI without any proposed amendments. This would ensure that the council has an up-to-date SCI in place but would fail to demonstrate that the council had taken account of the consultation comments in its preparation.
 3. Not to adopt the SCI, but to rely on the existing 2015 SCI. The 2015 SCI is out-of-date in certain aspects and a resolution to full Council on 30th March 2022 called for it to be updated by the end of 2022 which the current report aims to achieve.
- 3.2 Given the need to have an up-to-date SCI in place, and to take account of public views in preparing the document, option 1 is the recommended option.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 4.1 A summary of the perceived risks follows:

Perceived risk	Seriousness	Likelihood	Preventative action
That the council is held to account by a future local plan Inspector for having out-of-date materials to support its local plan.	Medium	Medium	That the council proceeds to amend the SCI as necessary, adopt it in reasonable time and keep it under periodic review.
That emerging planning reforms (the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill and supporting Regulations) remove the need to prepare an SCI or supersede it with an alternative mechanism.	Low	Medium	That the council continues to monitor emerging legislation and regulations and responds accordingly.

That the council cannot meet the engagement commitments set out in the SCI.	Low	Low	That the SCI is sufficiently flexible to adapt to changing circumstances (e.g. the occurrence of a pandemic-type emergency) while also meeting the community's needs and expectations to be engaged in planning decisions.
That the practices of the Development Management and/or Strategy, Policy and Performance teams fall short of the standards set out in the SCI.	Low	Low	That the Development Management and Strategy, Policy and Performance teams periodically compare their respective working practices to the standards set out in the SCI and amend practices as necessary. That the teams attend training on best practice in engagement techniques, when available, and familiarise new team members with the latest adopted SCI when there are personnel changes.

5. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

5.1 Legal Officer's Comments (NM)

"It is a legal requirement for the council to have both an SCI and to update it at least once every five years.

The review and subsequent update of the SCI means that the Council is acting in accordance with s18 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. It also ensures compliance with regulation 10A(b) of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning)(England) Regulations 2012 (as amended by The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning)(England) (Amendment) Regulations 2017) which requires the Council to review their SCI every 5 years from the date of adoption.

5.2 Finance Officer's Comments (RH)

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

5.3 **Diversities and Equalities Implications (GE)**

There are no equality and diversity implications directly arising from this report. The Statement of Community Involvement is designed to encourage and engage with the widest range people within local communities across the district on decisions relating to plan making and planning applications.

5.4 **Climate Change Implications (AT)**

There are no Climate Change implications relating to the Statement of Community Involvement update.

6. **CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officer prior to the meeting

Rebecca Chittock Planning Policy Specialist
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Appendices:

Appendix 1: Statement of Community Involvement Consultation
Comments Report

Appendix 2: SCI Portal Document with changes