

PLANNING POLICY AND LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE

20 DECEMBER 2023

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PLANNING

A.3 - UPDATED STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

(Report prepared by Will Fuller and Paul Woods)

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT
To seek the Planning Policy and Local Plan Committee's approval of the updated Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
<p>Key Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) details the way in which the public will be consulted on all Planning matters.• Before work starts on the review of the Local Plan Members are asked to agree an updated Statement of Community Involvement.

<p>SCIs must be reviewed regularly, to ensure they remain up-to-date and contain appropriate measures for engaging with the community about Planning matters.</p> <p>Members will recall that the Statement of Community Involvement SCI was updated in 2017 (as an agenda item on the Local Plan Committee) to allow for the preparation of the Garden Community Development Plan Document (DPD) and again in 2020 (as an item for this Committee) to incorporate the amended consultation requirements which the Government introduced as part of their broader legislative package in response to the Coronavirus pandemic.</p> <p>Officers have now reviewed the Council's adopted SCI again in advance of the Local Plan review commencing and propose only minor changes to ensure it is consistent with most recent guidance and good practice. The updated SCI itself must be the subject of public consultation, and it is proposed that this takes place early in 2024 to enable the updated document to be adopted before statutory consultation begins on the Local Plan review.</p>
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RECOMMENDATION
<p>That the Planning Policy and Local Plan Committee:</p>

(a) agrees the recommended revisions to the Council’s Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) (as shown in Appendix 1) to reflect the specific requirements arising from national guidance, and

(b) authorises the Director (Planning) to publish the updated Statement of Community Involvement on the Council’s website for Public Consultation for a period of six weeks.

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

The SCI supports the Council’s Corporate Plan 2024-2028, particularly in looking to harness the power of digital delivery of services and ensuring no resident is left behind. It seeks to promote pride in our communities, and encourages residents to engage with the process of reviewing the Local Plan. The proposals in the SCI seek to delivery efficient services, prioritising the Council’s resources during public engagement exercises.

The SCI will be used in conjunction with the Council’s recently adopted Consultation Strategy and Community Engagement Strategy.

RESOURCES AND RISK

The proposed amendments to the SCI were prepared by the Council’s Planning Policy Team under the leadership of the Director of Planning within the agreed ‘LDF Budget’. The SCI sets out the proposed approach to consultation which can have resource implications including costs of media publicity and any exhibitions or public meetings.

Without an up-to-date SCI, the Council would be unable to demonstrate how it will effectively engage with the community in relation to the review of the Local Plan and other Planning matters. This could lead to the Council receiving criticism during examination of the Local Plan for not meeting its statutory obligations.

LEGAL

Section 18 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, as amended provides that the Council must prepare a Statement of Community Involvement, which is a statement of the authority’s policy as to the involvement in the exercise of its functions.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Equality and Diversity: The processes for consultation and community engagement in the updated SCI aim to give people equal opportunity to engage in the planning process, including ‘hard to reach’ groups.

Area or Ward affected: All wards.

Consultation/Public Engagement: The adopted SCI was subject of public consultation in its own right to enable interested parties to comment on the proposed approach to community engagement and consultation on other planning documents and planning applications. The updated SCI will also need to be the subject of consultation and will be published on the Council's website for six weeks to invite comments from members of the public and other interested parties.

THE AMENDED STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVMENT

The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is designed to set out how the Council will involve the community and other stakeholders in the Planning process, in particular when it comes to public consultation on the Local Plan and other Planning Policy documents. It also explains how the Council will consult communities and other stakeholders on Planning Applications and advises developers how best to undertake early community engagement prior to submitting their applications.

The Council's latest SCI was published in 2020 when the Government published legislation around how public engagement should take place during the pandemic. These new requirements meant that we had to arrange consultations in a different way, without requiring members of the public to congregate together. Now that social distancing is no longer a consideration, the foreword relating to the pandemic can now be removed.

Officers are beginning the process of reviewing the Local plan for the District. This updated Local Plan will guide new development in Tendring until the 2040s. This is therefore the appropriate time to also review the SCI and ensure it is up to date and relevant.

The SCI must be published for six weeks consultation in its own right before it can be formally adopted by the Council to give the community and other stakeholders the opportunity to comment on the consultation methods proposed. The Planning Policy and Local Plan Committee is therefore being asked for its agreement to publish the SCI for six weeks consultation after which any necessary amendments can be made before the document returns to this Committee to be formally approved.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – The Updated Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).