
STRATEGIC PLANNING BOARD

Date of Meeting: 29 August 2018

Report Title: Cheshire East Statement of Community Involvement

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Ainsley Arnold, Housing, Planning and Regeneration

Senior Officer: Sean Hannaby, Director of Planning & Environment

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. This report seeks approval to consult on a revision and update to the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The SCI sets out how the Council will engage with stakeholders and the wider public on all of its principal planning functions. It will be subject to a six week consultation period alongside the Site Allocations & Development Policies Document.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. To consider the draft SCI attached at Appendix 1
- 2.2. That the Housing, Planning and Regeneration Portfolio Holder be recommended to approve the draft SCI for consultation.

3. Reasons for Recommendation/s

- 3.1. The SCI should be the subject of consultation before it is finalised. This will ensure that the standards that the Council adopts have been the subject of public comment and scrutiny

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. The Council is obliged to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement under section 18 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

5. Background

- 5.1. The first SCI for Cheshire East was prepared in the early years of the Council in 2010. Accordingly it is appropriate to review the document and bring it up to date.
- 5.2. Since 2010 the nature of development plans has changed considerably, with the advent of Neighbourhood Planning and the introduction of the NPPF. In addition, the scale and nature of development proposals received by the Council has also changed over the past 8 years, with Cheshire East receiving the second highest number of residential 'major' planning applications of any Council in England.
- 5.3. Over the same period, the nature of personal communication has evolved significantly, with the rise of social media and the widespread availability of smart phones. In turn, there is markedly less reliance on paper based communication and media. Taking all of these factors together, there is a need to revise and update the SCI so it is better suited to current demands and requirements.
- 5.4. The revised document has been slimmed down and simplified – and covers both planning policy and development management functions. It is always open to the Council to do more than is set out in the SCI, but it can never do less. Consequently there may be occasions where it is necessary and appropriate to adopt a more detailed level of engagement where circumstances dictate.
- 5.5. In terms of planning policy there is less reliance on providing paper copies of documents and greater flexibility as to approach through the different stages of plan making. There is also a dedicated section on Neighbourhood planning and the duty to cooperate. This reflects the importance of Neighbourhood Planning within the suite of development plans and its growing role in decision making.
- 5.6. In terms of Development management the principles of the previous SCI remain the same but updates have been made to the legislative background to the publicity afforded on various types of planning applications. Emphasis has been placed on the use of the Council's website to view applications and to signpost the public to the website to monitor any additional information and updates. The current *Publicity on Planning Applications Protocol* will also be updated alongside the SCI and made available on the Council's website.

6. Implications of the Recommendations

6.1. Legal Implications

6.1.1. The preparation of a Statement of Community Involvement is a requirement of section 18 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The Statement should set out the Council's policy as to how people who have an interest in the development in their area can be involved in our principal planning functions.

6.1.2. Section 6 of the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 requires Local Planning Authorities to set out in their SCI the policies for giving advice or assistance on proposals for the making, or modification, of Neighbourhood Development Plans.

6.2. Finance Implications

6.2.1. The policies adopted by the Council on Community Involvement can have significant financial implications. Obligations to supply hard copy documents, send letters by post or place public notices in newspapers involve a direct financial cost. Others, such as the placing of site notices involve a cost in staff time and resources. Overall, electronic communication such as email notification, web based consultation and social media have lesser financial implications.

6.2.2. In drawing up appropriate policies for community involvement in planning, the Council needs to balance the cost of each form of engagement with the benefit that it accrues to stakeholders and the public.

6.3. Policy Implications

6.3.1. The SCI prescribes the Council's policies on how it will involve people in its planning processes. These policies involve a combination of mandatory and discretionary activities.

6.4. Equality Implications

6.4.1. The Council needs to ensure that its policies and processes for planning engagement enable all sections of the community are involved. The SCI considers if there are any barriers to engagement and how these can be overcome.

6.4.2. Under the Council's public sector equality duty, the authority needs to consider the effect of its policies on members of society with protected characteristics

6.5. Human Resources Implications

6.5.1. There are no direct implications for human resources

6.6. Risk Management Implications

6.6.1. There are no direct implications for risk management

6.7. Rural Communities Implications

6.7.1. The new requirement to include policies on assisting neighbourhood Plans will assist rural communities.

6.8. Implications for Children & Young People

6.8.1. There are no direct implications for children and young people.

6.9. Public Health Implications

6.9.1. There are no direct implications for public health.

7. Ward Members Affected

7.1. All Wards – implications are Borough Wide

8. Consultation & Engagement

8.1. It is proposed that the draft SCI be subject to six weeks consultation to run concurrently with the consultation on the second stage of the Local Plan – the Site Allocations & Development Policies Document. Following this, all comments will be considered and revisions made as appropriate before a final version of the SCI is prepared for approval.

9. Access to Information

9.1. The Council's website includes the current [SCI](#) as well as our policies for assisting [Neighbourhood Plans](#).

10. Contact Information

10.1. Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

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