

Title: Revised Statement of Community Involvement
Lead Officer: Aspia Jannat - Planning Officer, Planning Policy & Delivery
(01926 456519,
aspia.jannat@warwickdc.gov.uk)
Wards of the District directly affected: All

| Approvals required | Date | Name |
|---|---|-------------------------|
| Portfolio Holder | | Cllr Chris King (Place) |
| Finance | 19/06/23 | Andrew Rollins |
| Legal Services | 06/06/23 | Ross Chambers |
| Chief Executive | 09/06/23 | Chris Elliott |
| Director of Climate Change | 09/06/23 | Dave Barber |
| Head of Service(s) | 05/06/23 | Philip Clarke |
| Section 151 Officer | | Andrew Rollins |
| Monitoring Officer | 08/06/23 | Andy Jones |
| Leadership Co-ordination Group | 19/06/23 | |
| Final decision by this Committee or rec to another Cttee / Council? | Yes | |
| Contrary to Policy / Budget framework? | No | |
| Does this report contain exempt info/Confidential? If so, which paragraph(s)? | No | |
| Does this report relate to a key decision (referred to in the Cabinet Forward Plan)? | Yes, Forward Plan item 1356 – scheduled for 5 th July 2023 | |
| Accessibility Checked? | Yes | |

Summary

This report seeks approval to consult on an update to the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), last updated in April 2020. The SCI sets out the council's commitment to consult on the preparation of its planning policy documents and planning applications at key stages throughout the process. The document covers the whole of the district.

Recommendation(s)

1. That Cabinet agrees to the commencement of a six-week public consultation on an updated version of the adopted Statement of Community Involvement and notes that a further report will be brought to them following the consultation relating to the adoption of the SCI in its current, or an amended form.
2. That Cabinet agrees to the commencement of a six-week public consultation on an updated version of the adopted Statement of Community Involvement, and, subject to SCI not requiring significant amendments as a result of the consultation, delegated authority is given to the Head of Service for Place, Arts & Economy, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Place to subsequently make any necessary minor amendments and adopt the updated SCI.

1 Reasons for the Recommendation

- 1.1 Production and adoption of a SCI is a statutory requirement under Section 18 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) as amended (2008).
- 1.2 The SCI formally sets out the policy and standards for engaging residents, local groups, stakeholders and statutory consultees in preparing development plans and any relevant documents identified in the Local Development Scheme (LDS) and how the council will consult on planning applications.
- 1.3 It also sets out how the Council will meet its 'duty to co-operate' as required by the Localism Act 2011 by engaging with neighbouring local authorities and other relevant government and statutory bodies to consider strategic issues and joint approaches to plan-making.
- 1.4 The Council's current Statement of Community Involvement was produced in July 2007 and updated in April 2014 as there had been a number of changes to the planning system. These were introduced through the Localism Act 2011 and the National Planning Policy Framework in March 2012. The SCI was then revised in January 2016 as a result of legislative changes to the planning system which set out new requirements for local councils. The SCI was briefly updated in April 2020 in response to the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic when the Council was unable to provide access to hard copies of consultation documents due to restrictions on movement and opening of premises imposed by the Government. The SCI reflected changes made by the Government to planning regulations and the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) which influenced how consultations could be undertaken during the pandemic.
- 1.5 Following the pandemic, the Council committed in its 2022 Local Development Scheme to review and update this version of the SCI to ensure it is fit for purpose and appropriately details how the council will consult on planning matters.

- 1.6 The 2020 SCI primarily sets out how the Council will engage with communities as it prepares Development Plan Documents (DPD's), Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's) and other relevant documents in the LDS. However, a limitation of the current SCI is that it provides little guidance on how it will assist neighbourhood planning groups producing Neighbourhood Plans.
- 1.7 Neighbourhood Planning was introduced by the Localism Act (2011). It is a way for communities to influence the future of the places where they live and work by having more of a say in where new homes, businesses, shops and community facilities should be placed in their local area, along with being able to allocate sites for development. The Neighbourhood Planning Act (2017) introduced a new requirement for SCIs to set out how the Local Planning Authority will support groups undertaking Neighbourhood Plans. This allows communities to establish general planning policies for the development of land in their area. These must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Council's Local Plan and have regard to national planning policy.
- 1.8 Other changes in the proposed updated SCI include the following:
- How we will consult people on the 'permission in principle' (PIP) process. PIP consent is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing led development. Local planning authorities can grant permission in principle upon receipt of a valid application for any site that might accommodate minor housing led development (from 1 June 2018), or by entering a site in Part 2 of its Brownfield Land Register which will trigger a grant of permission in principle for that land providing the statutory requirements set out in The Town and Country Planning (Brownfield Land Register) Regulations 2017 are met. The two processes for obtaining permission in principle and opportunities for engagement are set out in the updated SCI.
 - Update to the list of statutory consultees, including the addition of Active Travel England who became a statutory consultee from 1st June 2023 on all planning applications for large housing developments.
 - Additional consultation methods that could be used to communicate with statutory consultees, individuals and community groups.
- 1.9 Following the consultation, a further report will be brought back to Cabinet with a summary of responses received to the consultation, any amendments deemed appropriate and, most likely a request to adopt an updated version of the SCI.

2 Alternative Options

- 2.1 Alternative Option 1: There is no statutory requirement to undertake a public consultation on any update to the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. Therefore, the Council could decide not to consult on the amendments and simply adopt an updated version. However, given the subject nature of this document, it feels appropriate and prudent to consult on a document that identifies how the Council will engage with its communities and other customers on planning matters.
- 2.2 Alternative Option 2: The Council could choose not to update the 2020 SCI, thus also negating the requirement for a public consultation. However, the SCI must be kept up to date, providing our communities, customers and stakeholders with clarity on the level of involvement that they should expect in planning processes.

3 Legal Implications

- 3.1 As mentioned in paragraph 1.1 above, the Council has a legal duty to prepare a SCI. As mentioned in paragraph 1.5 above, there is a commitment in the Council's adopted Local Development Scheme to update the SCI to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

4 Financial

- 4.1 There are no financial impacts associated with the update of the SCI. The work will be carried out by existing members of the Planning Policy & Site Delivery team and the SCI will be delivered using the existing allocated budget.

5 Business Strategy

- 5.1 Warwick District Council has adopted a [Business Strategy](#) which sets out key areas for service delivery. The Council's Fit for the Future (FFF) Strategy set out in the strategy aims to deliver the Council's vision. The FFF has three strands People, Services and Money, and each has external and internal elements to it. The section below illustrates the impact of the proposal if any in relation to the Council's FFF Strategy.

5.2 FFF Strands: External Impacts

5.3 People- Health, Homes, Communities

- 5.4 The consultation processes set out in the SCI could have a significant impact on lives of the district's residents, as they will be given the opportunity to have their say on the future development proposals in their areas. Residents will be given the chance to voice their concerns and raise issues that they consider to be important through the consultation process. This will help them feel that they are able to shape their areas and will have a positive impact on their physical and mental health.

5.5 Services-Green, Clean Safe

- 5.6 Although the SCI does not include any documents that directly will deliver carbon savings, the Plans and Strategies that will be consulted upon will include policies, proposals and guidance to deliver low carbon homes and neighbourhoods.

5.7 Money-Infrastructure, Enterprise, Employment

- 5.8 The documents that will be consulted upon will contain policies and proposals that will help to improve the quality of housing and provision of employment opportunities in the district.

5.9 FFF- Internal Strands

5.10 People- Effective Staff

- 5.11 The production of the SCI will help members of staff to learn about some of the consultation methods used and will help them to get involved in the consultation process.

5.12 Services- Maintain or improve services

5.13 Updating of the SCI will include more guidance on how we will assist neighbourhood planning groups producing Neighbourhood Plans, therefore will improve the service we provide to our customers. The SCI encourages people to use the Council's online portal to submit responses, which will help improve consultation process and reduce time and effort to be undertaken using postal consultation process.

5.14 **Money- Firm Financial footing over the Longer Term**

5.15 Update of the SCI will not have any significant implications on the finances of the Council.

6 Environmental/Climate Change Implications

6.1 Updating of the SCI itself will not have any direct environmental/climate change implications. However, encouraging people to use online methods of consultation will help towards reducing the need for postal consultation thereby saving printing costs and less use of paper and printer ink. These measures will have some environmental benefits.

7 Analysis of the effects on Equality

7.1 It is considered that the SCI will not have any adverse impact in respect of Equality. The SCI seeks to involve people from all sectors and with all abilities and disabilities to engage in planning issues. Where relevant, the individual documents that will be consulted upon using the SCI will also be subjected to an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA).

8 Data Protection

8.1 There are no data protection implications associated with updating the SCI.

9 Health and Wellbeing

9.1 There are no health and wellbeing implications associated with updating the SCI. However, the planning documents which the SCI has included to be consulted upon, such as Neighbourhood Plans will involve communities/neighbourhood planning group members working together to promote health and wellbeing in their Plans which is required by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The updated SCI sets out the level of support the Council will provide to Neighbourhood Planning groups which will help to achieve the health and wellbeing requirements of the NPPF.

10 Risk Assessment

10.1 Continuing with a SCI which is out of date would not provide clear guidance for stakeholders and local communities as to when they can expect to be involved in the planning process and their views sought.

11 Consultation

11.1 The initial SCI that formed the basis of much of the SCI being updated was last subject to a period of six-week consultation from 5th October to 16th November 2015.

Background papers:

The Council's existing Statement of Community Involvement 2020:

https://www.warwickdc.gov.uk/downloads/file/6024/updated_statement_of_community_involvement_2020

The Council's Local Development Scheme 2022:

https://www.warwickdc.gov.uk/downloads/file/7660/local_development_scheme_2022-23

Supporting documents:

Appendix 1 – Draft Statement of Community Involvement, June 2023