

## STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT – FINAL FOR ADOPTION

### Local Planning and Environment Advisory Committee – 23 October 2014

Report of: Chief Planning Officer

Status: For decision

Also considered by: Cabinet – 13 November 2014

Key Decision: No

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#### **Executive Summary:**

The Council's Statement of Community Involvement in Planning (SCI) sets out how we propose to engage local people and organisations in the development planning process, both in Planning Policy and Development Management.

The 2006 adopted SCI was refreshed in 2013/14 in order to bring it up to date with current consultation methods, particularly in relation to electronic communication.

Consultation on the refreshed SCI was undertaken for six weeks earlier this year, and this report outlines the proposed changes to the document arising from the comments made during the public consultation, and seeks permission to adopt the SCI.

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#### **This report supports the Key Aims of the Community Plan**

**Portfolio Holder** Cllr. Robert Piper

**Contact Officer(s)** Emma Boshell Ext. 7358

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**Recommendation to Local Planning and Environment Advisory Committee:** That the recommendation to Cabinet is endorsed.

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**Recommendation to Cabinet:** That Cabinet adopts the Statement of Community Involvement in Planning, as amended (attached at Appendix A).

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**Reason for recommendation:** To update the previously adopted Statement of Community Involvement to provide a current code of practice for community involvement in planning.

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## **1. Background**

- 1.1 This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been produced to make sure the Council can involve the community effectively in the development of local planning policy and decisions on planning applications.
- 1.2 The Council's first SCI was adopted in 2006. Since then there have been significant changes to the planning system and a refreshed version of the SCI was produced earlier this year to reflect the most up to date legislation and regulation changes.
- 1.3 We understand that in order to try to reach agreement within communities, people need to be involved from the early stages of the planning process. The SCI is therefore a public statement that lets communities and stakeholders know when and how they can be involved.

## **2. Consultation**

- 2.1 Earlier this year, Cabinet approved the draft SCI for public consultation. This was carried out for six weeks, from 23 May to 4 July 2014. All contacts on the Local Plan consultation database were notified by email or by letter, including Parish and Town Councils, and a notice was placed on the Council's website. Copies of the document were placed in local libraries for inspection.
- 2.2 A total of 4 comments were received from stakeholders and members of the public. A summary of these comments is set out in Appendix B.

## **3. Amendments**

- 3.1 There are a number of amendments that are proposed to the SCI, in order for it to be adopted. These amendments have been incorporated into the document which is attached at Appendix A.
- 3.2 The table in Appendix B sets out the proposed amendments in response to the comments made during the public consultation.
- 3.3 In addition to these, some general amendments are proposed in order to improve the document. These amendments are set out as follows:
  - i. There is a new section on permitted development in order to provide clear guidance for householders.
  - ii. Explanations have been given for some technical terms e.g. spatial, in order to provide clarity.
  - iii. The Enforcement section has been re-drafted in order to reflect new processes.

## **4. Conclusion and Next Steps**

- 4.1 This report sets out the proposed amendments to the SCI following public consultation. It is recommended that this document, as amended and attached at Appendix A, is adopted by the Council.

**Other Options Considered and/or Rejected**

The Council could continue to rely on the existing Statement of Community Involvement from 2006, but this is out of date, and therefore this option is not recommended.

**Key Implications**

Financial

No additional costs to the Council arise from the adoption of the SCI.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

All local authorities are required to produce an SCI to set out their vision and strategy for effective community participation.

Equality Impacts

Consideration of impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty:		
Question	Answer	Explanation / Evidence
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to disadvantage or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	The SCI is designed to ensure that Sevenoaks District Council effectively involves the community in the development of all documents, SPDs and DPDs that make up the Local Plan (also known as the LDF). The SCI also details how the Council consults on planning applications. The SCI aims to consider the needs and priorities of the whole community, and attempts to overcome any barriers which may prevent groups or individuals within the community from being involved in the planning process.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have the potential to promote equality of opportunity?	Yes	
c. What steps can be taken to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?	N/A	

**Appendices**

Appendix A – Statement of Community Involvement in Planning 2014

Appendix B – Representations on the Statement of Community Involvement

**Background documents**

None

**Mr Richard Morris**

**Chief Planning Officer**