

Sevenoaks District Council

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

COVID-19 Review June 2020

The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is a statutory document which provides a guideline framework for development management and strategic planning consultations undertaken by the Council. The latest version of the SCI for Sevenoaks District was adopted in January 2020.

In light of the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak, Sevenoaks District Council may be unable to fully comply with the policies outlined in the January 2020 SCI. The Council is committed to effective consultation and communication with its residents, and in order to continue this, some consultation methods may have to change temporarily. This is to protect both our community and staff in line with Government advice and guidance.

The table below sets out which policies within this document have changed. It should be noted that the changes shown below, and in the track-change version of the SCI, are temporary amendments until such time as national social distancing measures are lifted, at which point we will revert back to the original January 2020 version of the SCI. The Council will continue to monitor the situation and will actively work to find new and innovative ways to consult at this challenging time.

For further information about how Council services are running, please visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/coronavirus.

Paragraph	Existing Policy	Amendment
3.9.	'The regulations require the Council to publicise consultations on the website and to provide documents for inspection at the Council's offices and local libraries, as well as sending emails and/or letters to statutory, general and other consultees.'	'These regulations will be met wherever possible, and where the provision of hard copy documents is in line with national social distancing guidelines and government advice. SDC will undertake ongoing work to find alternative and innovative ways to publicise consultations.'
4.1.	'Since the publication of the last Statement of Community Involvement in 2014, the ways in which the Council engages with community have developed and improved. One of the main changes is the increased use of technology, both for consultation and notification purposes'	Add additional sentence: 'This is now especially important for ongoing consultation during the current COVID-19 outbreak. Previously used face-to-face consultation methods may now be unachievable as a result of UK social distancing guidelines and national government advice, and therefore there will be a larger focus on technological/virtual consultation methods.'

4.3.	‘A variety of methods will be used at various stages of the planning process to engage community involvement in planning. These methods include, but are not limited to:	‘A variety of methods will be used at various stages of the planning process, where these are in line with national government advice and social distancing guidelines, to engage community involvement in planning. These methods include, but are not limited to:
Leaflets	‘Leaflets will be distributed in various places around the District, such as Libraries, Town and Parish Council Offices and Train Stations, as appropriate’	‘Leaflets, flyers, brochures and posters will be distributed, where appropriate, to Town and Parish Councils for display and dissemination within their administrative area. Where it is in line with national COVID-19 guidance, leaflets will also be distributed to other public areas such as libraries and train stations’.
Inspection Points	‘Documents will be made available for inspection at the Council’s offices, Town and Parish Council offices and local libraries, where appropriate’	‘Documents will be made available for inspection at the Sevenoaks District Council offices, as well as Town and Parish Council offices and local libraries, where possible and when in line with national social distancing guidelines and government advice. All consultation documents are made available for view and download at www.sevenoaks.gov.uk .’
Presentations	‘To groups, organisations and stakeholders as appropriate, to target particular people in the community who may be interested in a specific issue, for example the Agents Forum, Interest Groups Forum or the Town and Parish Councils Forum’	‘The use of virtual applications such as Skype, Microsoft Teams and Zoom will be utilised, where necessary, to ensure effective communication with organisations and stakeholders throughout consultation periods.’
Public Exhibitions	<p>‘For larger consultations, the Council may promote events at a public exhibition, display or a roadshow, during the day and in the evening. This has the ability to target members of the community who may not get involved through more formal methods. These include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Town and Parish Council forums - Agents/Developers Forums - Interest Group Forums - Family Fun Days - School Presentations - Drop-in Events 	<p>Add additional sentence:</p> <p>‘The above events may be carried out virtually, or where the relevant social distancing guidelines and national government advice is able to be followed and adhered to safely.’</p>

	- Commuter engagement at railway stations	
Interactive workshops	‘Use of interactive workshops to identify and focus discussion around difficult issues and key themes. These can reach people who might not get involved in more formal groups but who may respond to this kind of contact, for example Placemaking, Drop in Sessions or an Interest Group Forum’	Add additional sentence: ‘Where this is not achievable due to social distancing guidelines and government advice, every effort will be made by the Council for these to be carried out in a virtual and interactive format’.
Community / resident meetings and groups	‘Use of pre-existing community/resident meetings and meetings of community groups to target people with particular characteristics/interests, for example Drop-in Sessions and Interest Group Forums, in conjunction with the Council’s Communities team’	Add additional sentence: ‘Attendance from Planning Officers may depend on national social distancing guidelines and government advice. Where appropriate, every effort will be made for meetings to take place virtually’.
Contacting the Planning Department	ADD NEW LINE	Throughout any Planning consultation, planning officers are contactable by both phone on 01732 227000 or by email at planning.information@sevenoaks.gov.uk / planning.policy@sevenoaks.gov.uk .
6.33. Attending a Site Visit	‘Allocate a case officer who will liaise with all stakeholders and attend a site visit’	‘Allocate a case officer who will liaise with all stakeholders and attend a site visit, where this is in line with national social distancing guidelines and government advice.’
10.3. Publicity in community centres (e.g. libraries, shopping and sports centres)	‘Going out into the community to provide information and access views, reaching those who would not normally seek to be involved’ ‘Information should be accessible to all in terms of mobility, understanding and times available’	Add additional sentence: ‘The Council will need to consider current and up to date social distancing guidelines and national government advice’
Documents available for inspection at local council offices	‘It must be clear how and when people should respond. Information should be accessible to all in terms of mobility, understanding and time available’	Add additional sentence: ‘The Council will need to consider current and up to date social distancing guidelines and national government advice.’

Areas/town forums and Town/Parish Council meetings	'The Council must be aware of the audience and any restrictions. The Council should also consider the time available for consultation on the local plan (alongside other agenda items)	Add additional sentence: 'The Council will need to consider current and up to date social distancing guidelines and national government advice.'
Public exhibitions	'Information should be accessible to all in terms of mobility, understanding and times available'	Add additional sentence: 'The Council will need to consider current and up to date social distancing guidelines and national government advice.'
Participation workshops	'Events require significant preparation and organisation. However they can be very useful for discussing important and/or difficult issues.'	'The Council will need to consider current and up to date social distancing guidelines and national government advice.'