

**CAMBRIDGESHIRE STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (SCI)**

*To:* **Cabinet**

*Date:* **4<sup>th</sup> March 2014**

*From:* **Executive Director: Economy, Transport and Environment**

*Electoral division(s):* **All**

*Forward Plan ref:* **2014/012** *Key decision:* **Yes**

*Purpose:* **For Cabinet to consider the results of the public consultation on the Draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) November 2013, and the proposed amendments to the SCI arising from that consultation.**

*Recommendation:* **That Cabinet recommend Council to adopt the SCI as proposed to be amended.**

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## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 In December 2012 Cabinet gave approval for a full review of the Cambridgeshire Statement of Community Involvement (2006) to be undertaken. This document sets out the County Council's policy on how it will involve local communities (e.g. through consultation) in the land use planning work it does.
- 1.2 The County Council is required by legislation to prepare and maintain a Statement of Community Involvement; the existing one is limited in its coverage and out of date. The new SCI addresses the wide range of land use planning functions carried out by the County Council, as well as the remit of the Planning Inspectorate in determining Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, e.g. the A14. The arrangements for consulting and engaging the community in land use projects and planning applications have been reviewed and now reflect current regulatory requirements and consultation methods.
- 1.3 The activities covered by the SCI include Plans and Strategies such as the Minerals and Waste Local Plan and Local Enforcement Plan; the Local Transport Plan and the Council's Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. It also covers the delivery of projects and proposals on the ground, including planning applications, and in due course it will also encompass the functions of the Council as the Sustainable Drainage Systems Approval Body (SAB).
- 1.4 A new Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) was produced and shared with lead members in September 2013, prior to it being subject to six weeks' public consultation in November/December 2013. Responses have now been reviewed and amendments to the SCI are proposed.

## **2. PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE NEW SCI**

- 2.1 The full results of the public consultation exercise and the proposed amendments to the SCI can be viewed in Appendix 1.

The draft SCI, which was subject to public consultation, can be found here:

<http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/environment/planning/applications/submitapplication/supportinfo/cambridgeshirestatementofcommunityinvolvement.htm>

- 2.2 19 responses were received, 7 of which were no comment. The main matters raised and the proposed responses are summarised below:
  - a) The need for updating the SCI in light of the move to the Committee system was raised, and it is agreed that the SCI will be amended to address this.
  - b) Regarding planning applications, it was suggested that public speaking at Planning Committee be amended to allow applicants/agents and other supporters of a planning application to have a 5 minute speaking slot each. However, if this were done 'supporters' would then have 10 minutes' public speaking time and objectors to the scheme would have 5 minutes, which is not equitable. No amendments are therefore proposed.
  - c) Also for planning applications, it was requested that the pre-planning application actions for developers be 'recommended', as the National

Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that authorities cannot require that a developer engage in pre-application discussions. In response it is noted that the NPPF recognises that early engagement significantly improves the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system. This should be encouraged. It is proposed to prefix the pre-application actions in the SCI with: *'To reflect best practice, applicants should undertake the following actions....'*

- d) In addition it was suggested that there should be more flexibility in the referral of planning applications to the Design Quality Panel (DQP). New schools should only be referred where they give rise to significant effects on the environment / significant design issues. School extensions should only go in exceptional circumstances. In response, it is considered that a new school is extensive and by its nature have always have a significant and long term effect on its locality, either in an existing or new settlement. They should always be considered by the DQP. The SCI already states that school extensions will be referred only if they 'give rise to significant effects on the locality'. Both circumstances can be discussed in pre-application discussions. No amendments are proposed.
- e) It was requested that the Rights of Way Improvement Plan should be included in the SCI, as it forms part of the Local Transport Plan. This is agreed.
- f) It was requested that Parish Councils be added to the list of public bodies that can speak at Planning Committee. It is agreed that this omission be addressed and the SCI be amended accordingly.

2.3 Planning Committee considered this matter on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2014, and was content with the responses to points made through the consultation, and the consequential amendments to the SCI.

2.4 A number of respondents sought to clarify details; to advise about the circumstances in which they wished to be consulted; or to raise general queries. The SCI will be amended to provide further clarity; such detailed amendments do not fundamentally affect the content or approach of the SCI.

### **3. ALIGNMENT WITH PRIORITIES AND WAYS OF WORKING**

#### **3.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all**

The land use planning strategies and proposals that the SCI include are key to delivering planned growth in Cambridgeshire. More effective community involvement will assist in making decision and strategies more robust, ensuring that the right investment is made in existing and new communities.

#### **3.2 Ways of working**

The SCI will enable the Council to work more locally. Local communities and individuals will be able to understand and engage in the land use planning work undertaken by the Council in a more effective way.

**3.3 Helping people live healthy and independent lives  
Supporting and protecting vulnerable people**

There are no significant implications for these priorities.

**4. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS**

**4.1 Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications**

There is a statutory requirement for the County Council to prepare and maintain an SCI.

**4.2 Engagement and Consultation Implications**

The draft SCI has been subject to six weeks' public consultation. The SCI will facilitate more effective community engagement in the County Council's land use planning activities.

**4.3 Resource and Performance / Equality and Diversity / Public Health Implications**

There are no implications under these headings.

Source Documents	Location
Draft Statement of Community Involvement 2013	<a href="http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/environment/planning/applications/submitapplication/supportinfo/cambridgeshirestatementofcommunityinvolvement.htm">http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/environment/planning/applications/submitapplication/supportinfo/cambridgeshirestatementofcommunityinvolvement.htm</a>