



CABINET – 26 APRIL 2022

**LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S STATEMENT OF
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

PART A

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to report on the public consultation undertaken on the draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and to seek the approval to adopt a revised SCI, attached to this report as Appendix A.

Recommendations

2. That the Cabinet agrees to adopt the revised Statement of Community Involvement.

Reasons for Recommendation

3. It is a legal requirement for planning authorities to prepare an SCI which sets out their policies on involving the community in parts of the statutory planning function, and to review their SCI every five years. The current SCI was adopted in 2015.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

4. The revised SCI was presented to the Development Control and Regulatory Board (DCRB) on 10 February 2022. The DCRB resolved the revised SCI be supported and submitted to the Cabinet, following the conclusion of the public consultation.
5. It is a legal requirement for planning authorities to prepare an SCI which sets out their policies on involving the community in parts of the statutory planning function, and to review their SCI every five years. The current SCI was adopted in 2015 and the review is overdue, having been delayed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

6. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) (as amended) requires planning authorities to prepare an SCI which sets out the authority's policy for involving the community as they exercise their statutory functions of producing

planning policy, determining planning applications, and providing advice or assistance to communities which make or modify a Neighbourhood Plan.

7. The requirement to include a planning authority's policy on providing advice or assistance to communities which make or modify a Neighbourhood Plan has been introduced since the current SCI was adopted in 2015.
8. The revised SCI has been expanded to include reference to the climate emergency to address Leicestershire County Council's decision to declare a Climate Emergency in 2019, and how this will influence decisions made around community consultation.

Resource Implications

9. There are no resources implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

10. None.

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PART B

Background

11. It is a legal requirement for planning authorities to prepare an SCI which sets out their policy on involving the community as they exercise relevant parts of their statutory planning function, and to review their SCI regularly.
12. The purpose of the SCI is to explain how and when the community will be able to take part in the production of planning policy and how they will be consulted on applications for planning permission. It also sets out how local planning authorities will provide advice or assistance to communities which make or modify a Neighbourhood Plan.
13. Community means any individual, organisation or group that appears to the County Council as having an interest in a development.
14. Leicestershire County Council's current SCI was adopted in 2015, and there are some aspects of it which need updating to reflect recent developments in the Development Plan, the wider Council, and society more generally:
 - In 2018 regulations which require an SCI were amended to include reference to neighbourhood planning, and the revised SCI complies with this amendment.
 - In May 2019 the County Council declared a Climate Emergency, and a section has been included in the revised SCI to set out how the Council's response to climate change will be taken into account in planning consultation activities.
 - In September 2019 the County Council adopted the current Minerals and Waste Local Plan which plans for development up to 2031. The Council is now looking ahead to the Plan review process. More information has been included about the Plan process in the revised SCI to support and enable community understanding and engagement.
 - During the last five years the County Council's use of social media has grown, and the revised SCI sets out how the Council will use social media to engage communities in the planning process.
 - Since early 2020 the global spread of Covid-19 led to changes to the way the Council uses technology. This has facilitated different ways of working (e.g. virtual meetings) which are now included in the SCI.
 - Planning officers are often approached by prospective applicants for their thoughts on how pre-planning application community engagement should be carried out, and the revised SCI now includes advice about how to carry out effective community consultation, and a non-exhaustive list of potential consultees.

- Since the current SCI was adopted the County Council has adopted organisation-wide Engagement Principles, and the revised SCI includes an update to refer to and align with these principles.

Consultation

15. Whilst there is no statutory requirement to carry out consultation on an SCI review, given the nature of the document both internal and external consultation was appropriate. A consultation summary is attached to this report as Appendix B and the process is outlined below.
16. A six-week external consultation period on the revised SCI was carried out between 10 January 2022 and 21 February 2022. This involved:
 - Uploading the draft revised SCI on Leicestershire County Council's website with instructions of how to provide comments.
 - Sending the draft revised SCI by email to local and national organisations identified as likely to have an interest to invite comments.
 - Including information about the revised SCI and consultation period in the Leicestershire Communities website and their newsletter.
17. The revised SCI was presented to Development Control and Regulatory Board (DCRB) on 10 February 2022 for its consideration. Some comments were made about how the effectiveness of the SCI would be measured. It was resolved that the revised SCI be supported and submitted to the Cabinet following the conclusion of the public consultation.
18. Authority Monitoring Reports (AMRs) are required by The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 to monitor planning policies. Following comments from DCRB regarding how the effectiveness of the SCI is measured, it has been concluded that the AMR can be used to monitor the revised SCI by annually compiling and reviewing all feedback received in relation to consultation on planning matters. This feedback can then help shape how the SCI is implemented and inform the next SCI review process.
19. Internal consultation was carried out through the SCI review process, across various Leicestershire County Council services that have an interest in the Council's statutory planning function.
20. During the consultation period, a total of 11 comments were received on the draft SCI. The draft revised SCI has been updated following comments received during the consultation period by:
 - Correcting minor typographic and grammar errors.

- Providing additional website links to DCRB information and the Council's Engagement Principles.
- Refining the list of potential consultees to ensure fair representation of local and national action and interest groups.

Equality and Human Rights Implications

21. An Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) screening exercise has been carried out in relation to the revised SCI.
22. This screening exercise concluded that the revised SCI would have a neutral impact on equality and human rights, and therefore a full EHRIA is not necessary.

Background Papers

Report of the Chief Executive to the Development Control and Regulatory Board on 10th February 2022: <https://bit.ly/3JcLf6G>

Minutes of the meeting of the Development Control and Regulatory Board held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 10 February 2022: <https://bit.ly/3DHEKYk>

Statement of Community Involvement 2015
<https://bit.ly/3DHEVms>

Appendices

Appendix A: Statement of Community Involvement
Appendix B: Consultation Summary

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