

## REVIEW OF STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (SCI)

### Executive Summary

The planning system and, in particular, the Localism Act puts public involvement at the heart of the planning process. Local Authorities are therefore required to prepare a SCI to demonstrate what, how and when it intends to engage the public in the planning process. National policy requires an SCI to be reviewed every five years from the date of adoption. The current SC was adopted in February 2015. The SCI is therefore due for its statutory review. The revised SCI is in Appendix 1. The revised SCI will bring it up to date to reflect current changes in national planning policy. The Executive is therefore requested to approve it for public consultation between September 2021 and November 2021.

### Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

#### RESOLVE That

- (i) the draft Statement of Community Involvement be approved for public engagement and consultation between September 2021 and November 2021; and
- (ii) delegated authority be given to the Director of Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, to approve amendments to the revised SCI to reflect new information before it is published for community engagement and consultation.

### Reasons for Decision

Reason: To enable the Council to comply with government policy.

The Executive has the authority to determine the recommendations set out above.

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**Background Papers:** None.

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## Review of Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek authority to publish the draft revised Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) for public consultation between September 2021 and November 2021. The draft revised SCI is included in Appendix 1.
- 1.2 Woking Borough Council has a statutory obligation to prepare a SCI setting out how it wishes the local community to be involved and engaged when preparing key planning policy documents and determining planning applications. The Council places community involvement at the heart of the delivery of its planning service. This has become even more so important with the Council's clear objective in the Corporate Plan to establishing a stronger commitment to embedding a culture of engagement and consultation into the decision making process, empowering communities and making decisions alongside communities. The SCI provides a transparent framework to ensure that public involvement is embedded in service provision in a consistent and appropriate manner.
- 1.3 The current SCI of the Council was adopted in 12 February 2015. It can be accessed by this link: <https://www.woking2027.info/community/sci2015.pdf>. The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2017/1244 requires local planning authorities to review their SCIs every five years from the date of adoption of the SCI. The review of the SCI will satisfy this legal requirement. Since its adoption, there have been a number of changes to the planning system including the various amendments to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Ministerial Statements. The SCI has been amended to reflect these changes. In doing so, an opportunity has also been taken to make the document much more user-friendly to appeal to the diverse nature of the customers who are likely to use the planning service. It future proofs the SCI to respond to unforeseen circumstances such as the current pandemic.
- 1.4 Whilst there is no longer a legal requirement to submit the SCI to the Secretary of State, public involvement and engagement in its preparation or review continues to be essential. In this regard, it is intended that the SCI will be published for public engagement and consultation between September 2021 and November 2021 to give the public the opportunity to comment on it before it is finalised for approval by Council.
- 1.5 The report was considered by the LDF Working Group at its meeting on 22 July 2021. Members of the Working Group were supportive of the recommendations of the report. The Draft Minute of the Working Group meeting is in Appendix 2.

### 2.0 Summary of key topics covered in the SCI

2.1 The SCI broadly covers the following:

- **Section 1** – explains what SCI is about and how it has been developed. It also provides an overview of the nature of the community the planning service is likely to engage with and a list of the general and specific consultation bodies who will be consulted on planning issues.
- **Section 2** – provides a list of Local Development Documents that the Council is likely to prepare and involve the community in their preparation, the various stages of preparing the documents and the techniques that would be used to involve the community.
- **Section 3** – sets out how people can get involved in the planning application process, including pre-application consultations and engagement by developers.
- **Section 4** – deal with how the Council will engage with local communities in preparing their Neighbourhood Plans. It also highlights how local residents will be involved in the key stages of the Neighbourhood Planning process.
- **Section 5** – sets out how the Council will monitor what it says it will do in the SCI. It identifies the resources that will be needed to ensure that all sections of the community are involved

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in the preparation of key planning policy documents and when determining planning applications.

### **3.0 Next stages**

- 3.1 Subject to the Executive approving the recommendations of the report, it is anticipated that the SCI will be published for a six weeks public engagement and consultation between September 2021 and November 2021. Representations received will be taken into account in finalising the SCI. It is expected that the SCI will be adopted by the end of the year subject to the scrutiny of the Working Group, the Executive and approval by the Council.

### **4.0 Corporate Strategy**

- 4.1 As highlighted in the Corporate Plan, the Council is establishing a stronger commitment to embedding a culture of consultation into decision making process, empowering communities and making decisions alongside communities. The SCI will provide a transparent framework to ensure that public involvement is embedded in service provision in a consistent and appropriate manner.

### **5.0 Implications**

#### Finance and Risk

- 5.1 There is no additional financial implication for preparing the SCI. Its preparation is funded from the Planning Policy Service budget.
- 5.2 The Council has a statutory obligation to review the SCI every five years. The Council will be failing in its duty if the SCI is not reviewed.

#### Equalities and Human Resources

- 5.3 There are no human resources implications.
- 5.4 The SCI will ensure that all sections of the community are engaged in the planning process.

#### Legal

- 5.5 The Council has a legal obligation to prepare an SCI, and review it every five years. The review of the SCI will ensure that this duty is met.

### **6.0 Engagement and Consultation**

- 6.1 The revised SCI has been prepared with the active involvement of the relevant sections of the Council. The draft SCI has already been scrutinised by the LDF Working Group. The community will be given a minimum of six weeks to comment on the document, and their comments will inform the final version of the SCI. The Working Group and the Executive will have the opportunity to consider the final draft of the SCI before it is adopted by Council.

REPORT ENDS