

# Report

**Subject** : Adoption of the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)  
**Report to** : The Cabinet  
**Date** : 15 November 2006  
**Author** : John Meeker - Principal (Forward) Planning Officer  
**Cabinet Member for Planning & Economic Development** : Councillor Mrs P Brown

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## 1.0 Summary

1.1 The report presents to members the revised Statement of Community Involvement (attached at Appendix A) which sets out the council's consultation methods to be used in the production of new planning policies and in the consideration of planning applications. The document has now been the subject of a formal public examination and Cabinet is asked to recommend it to Full Council for formal adoption as the first element of the new Local Development Framework (LDF).

## 2.0 Document Preparation

- 2.1 Statements of Community Involvement are required to be prepared by all planning authorities to set out how they will engage the community in the plan making process and in decision making on planning applications.
- 2.2 During 2005, the council prepared its planning consultation approach, based on cross departmental working and discussion with external partners, which led to the formal publication of an initial draft for consultation in September 2005. The public consultation period attracted a total of 43 responses. 15 of the responses were in support of the proposals, 27 made neutral comments and observations and there were no outright objections.
- 2.3 Alterations to the document, in light of the public consultation, were then made prior to the submission of the document to the Secretary of State on 21st December 2005. Immediately after the Christmas break a second formal public consultation exercise, required under the regulations, was held which attracted 33 responses (3 objections, 13 in support and 17 neutral observations). These responses were submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in April 2006 for consideration by a planning inspector who was appointed to hold an Examination in Public of the SCI.

## 3.0 Examination

- 3.1 In August 2006, the council was informed that the Planning Inspectorate would conduct the Examination in Public via the medium of written representations (i.e. using written communication



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between objectors and the council to address points of concern). This approach has been quite common in the examination of other SCIs. The Inspector, Ben Linscott BSc MRTPI, issued his binding report on 30<sup>th</sup> August. This is attached at Appendix B.

3.2 Examinations, under the new LDF system, are concerned with meeting 'tests of soundness'. In the case of SCIs there are 9 such tests. The table below outlines the performance of the submitted SCI against those tests

Test	Criteria	SDC Performance
1	Local planning authority has complied with the minimum requirements for consultation as set out in Regulations;	Test fully met .
2	Local planning authority's strategy for community involvement links with other community involvement initiatives e.g. the community strategy;	Test met subject to reference being made to Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan and update on status of Wiltshire Community Strategy.
3	Statement identifies in general terms which local community groups and other bodies will be consulted;	Test met subject to inclusion of a handful of additional organisations and caveats to ensure that the list of consultees is subject to change.
4	Statement identifies how the community and other bodies can be involved in a timely and accessible manner;	Test met subject to tables in section 4.3 making reference to the groups being consulted at each stage.
5	Methods of consultation to be employed are suitable for the intended audience and for the different stages in the preparation of local development documents;	Test met subject to the inclusion of more measures to promote consultation with 'hard to reach groups' and clearer reference to race relations and disability discrimination legislation.
6	Resources are available to manage community involvement effectively;	Test fully met.
7	Statement shows how the results of community involvement will be fed into the preparation of development plan documents and supplementary planning documents;	Test met subject to the inclusion of a list of locations where printed material will be made available.
8	Authority has mechanisms for reviewing the statement of community involvement;	Test fully met.
9	Statement clearly describes the planning authority's policy for consultation on planning applications.	Test met subject to the inclusion of revised text related to the treatment of major applications.

3.3 During the examination process, officers liaised with the Planning Inspectorate to agree suitable changes to address specific concerns. As a result the outcome of the report is accepted to be reasonable and has responded to concerns raised by those making inputs at submission consultation stage held in January/February 2006.

3.4 Accordingly, all the changes required by the Inspector have been included in the revised SCI document attached at Appendix A.

#### 4.0 Recommendation:

That Cabinet recommends the adoption of the Statement of Community Involvement attached at Appendix A by Full Council.

#### 5.0 Background Papers:

PPS12 – Local Development Frameworks (2004) ODPM

## 6.0 Implications:

**Financial:** The resourcing of the consultation proposed was carefully considered in the preparation of the document and was examined by the Inspector. Approval of the SCI in the timetable agreed in the Local Development Scheme will ensure the Council is awarded a component of Planning Delivery Grant (PDG).

**Legal:** The measures set out in the SCI become binding upon the council and the community at large in defining the consultation measures to be used in preparing the LDF and in considering planning applications. From an LDF perspective, the observance of SCI requirements will be examined by Inspectors in future LDF document Inquiries.

**Human Rights:** Article 6 (the right to a fair hearing) may apply. The consultation process used to develop the SCI and the principles it enshrines for future use contribute to compliance with the legislation.

**Personnel:** None at this stage. The resourcing of the consultation proposed was carefully considered in the preparation of the document and was examined by the Inspector.

**IT:** None at this stage. The Forward Planning service may bid for resources as required to supplement its consultation methods as opportunities emerge that would improve efficiency.

**Community Safety:** None at this stage

**Council's Core Values:** Excellent service, fairness & equality, communicating, especially listening and responding, working together with public private and voluntary sectors to develop a better and more sustainable district.

**Parishes Affected:** All