

West Wiltshire District Council

Council

14 September 2005

Title:	Statement of Community Involvement
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Jeffrey Osborn
Reporting Officer:	Karol Jakubczyk, Planning Policy & Conservation
Key Decision:	Yes

1. Purpose

To inform Council of the results of the recent consultation and to seek approval by Full Council.

2. Background

The District Council has to produce a SCI as part of the Local Development Framework process, which has to be submitted to the Secretary of State before the end of September 2005. The SCI provides a clear statement of how the District Council will engage with the community during the preparation of the West Wiltshire LDF and during the planning application process. The West Wiltshire SCI contains an additional section that explains how the District Council will engage the community within its other, non-planning, service areas.

The adoption of the SCI will help achieve the Corporate objectives of improving services and Council management, and help to strengthen the culture of corporate working. The adoption of the SCI will also help to strengthen the links between the District Council and the wider community, in particular through the Local Strategic Partnership.

The draft SCI was prepared by an internal officer-working group composed of representative officers from appropriate key service areas. Further input came from a specially convened PPG, which met on two occasions to discuss the contents of the draft SCI. The preparation of the draft SCI included an informal issues and options consultation exercise that sought the views of key consultees, including members of LSP and local town and parish councils. An additional informal consultation exercise sought input from all service managers.

The SCI has been the subject of a statutory six-week period of consultation that commenced in June and ended on 12 August 2005. The District Council has received 78 representations from a broad range of the community. These representations are summarised under Appendix 1. The SCI PPG has considered the representations and the District Council's response. A report on the consultation process and the proposed amendments went before Cabinet on 31 August 2005.

The adoption of the SCI will have an immediate impact on the way that the District Council engages with the community throughout all its services. The SCI document sets out a template, which along with other corporate mechanisms (such as ICT and CRM), will help to improve the District Council engagement with the community.

3. Key Issues

Set out in Appendix 1 is a summary of all representations made during the statutory six-week consultation period and the District Council's draft response. In general a significant majority of representations were broadly supportive of the draft SCI. Those representations that objected to the SCI, in the majority, tended to focus upon detail elements of the document rather than the principles used.

In summary, the key issues raised by the consultation are:

The length of the document

It is suggested that the draft SCI is too long and as a consequence ungainly. These objectors have not suggested how the District Council could shorten the document.

The use of a list of generic consultees

The SCI includes, as an appendix, a list of generic consultees that together make-up the community. It has been suggested by a number of respondents that such a list should identify all consultees either by title or name.

Detailed objections relating to development control

The SCI sets out in detail how the District Council will engage the community throughout the development control process. A number of representations have been made in relation to the community involvement mechanisms proposed through the SCI.

4. Financial Implications

There are no immediate financial implications.

5. Legal Implications

There are no legal implications.

6. Options

At this stage, Council can choose to agree or amend the draft SCI, before submitting the document to the Secretary of State.

The proposed amendments include; providing a specific list of key consultees, improvements to the executive summary and sign-posting section, and addressing some of the concerns, raised by respondents, relating to the development control section,

The adoption of the SCI will have an immediate impact on the way that the District Council engages the community. In the longer term, following the independent examination, the SCI will become a valuable component of the West Wiltshire LDF and in determining planning applications.

A copy of the recommended SCI, including amendments, has been produced for Council members and a copy is also available in the Member's room.

7. Human Rights

There are no human rights implications.

8. List of Background Papers

File Ref: Statement of Community Involvement

File Location: Planning Policy and Conservation Section

9. Recommendation

The Council agrees the Statement of Community Involvement before submission to the Secretary of State.

Plain English