

Statement of Community Involvement: Monitoring Report 2015

The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) was adopted in 2010, just ten months after the former Wiltshire districts and county councils merged to become one unitary council. Section 6 of the current SCI sets out how the SCI can be monitored and reviewed. It explains that the council will actively monitor the success of community involvement techniques and envisaged that this monitoring would occur within the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR<sup>1</sup>) after a major consultation exercise.

Monitoring the effectiveness of consultation following a major consultation exercise has taken place, albeit through a different reporting vehicle. For example, during the Wiltshire Core Strategy production process, there have been several major consultation exercises. Consultation output reports were produced after each consultation period. These reports document the activities that took place during the consultation period.

The consultation write up documents include:

- Wiltshire Core Strategy Consultation Methodology Output Report Reg 22 (1) (c) Statement June 2012 available from <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/wiltshire-core-strategy-regulation-22-1-c-statement>
- Wiltshire Core Strategy, Consultation Statement, January 2012 available from <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/wcs-consultation-document-consultation-statement-2012-january.pdf>
- Wiltshire 2026 Consultation Methodology and Output Report August 2010 available from [http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/wiltshire\\_2026\\_consultation\\_methodology\\_and\\_output\\_report\\_august\\_2010.pdf](http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/wiltshire_2026_consultation_methodology_and_output_report_august_2010.pdf)

These reports have demonstrated that the procedures for involving the community are achieving a representative level and that community involvement has been effective. A review of consultation methods as set out in the SCI is therefore not necessary.

However, paragraph 6.3 of the current 2010 SCI also identifies that monitoring will identify any key challenges and opportunities enabling adjustments and revisions to be made to the SCI if necessary.

Since the SCI was first adopted in 2010, the Government has introduced substantial changes to the planning system through the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012, the Localism Act 2011, the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010 and the launch of the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) 2014 web-based resource.

The Localism Act 2011 brought in a more streamlined approach to plan preparation, and introduced the duty to cooperate with neighbouring local authorities and other identified stakeholders on matters of strategic cross-boundary significance. The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 reflect the reforms in the Localism Act 2011.

The legislative reforms simplify the plan preparation process with fewer formal stages. This encourages efficiency in plan making, including consultation and engagement requirements.

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<sup>1</sup> The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 now refer to these documents as the Authority's Monitoring Report, rather than Annual Monitoring Report. Future monitoring reports that the Council produces will therefore be known under this new terminology.

The increased use and availability of electronic communications such as email and the web will also help to increase efficiency in plan making.

In light of these more recent legislative and policy changes, it is appropriate to update the SCI to ensure that it is current, flexible, effective and efficient in its approach to consultation. Updating the SCI is important so that the best use of resources is made during consultation, both in terms of financial and staff resources in order to ensure efficient and effective plan making; and so that consultation can be meaningful and avoid consultation fatigue, particularly with the local community. This is particularly pertinent given the challenges of the current economic climate and the requirements of the NPPF to ensure that up to date Plans remain in place.

An update will also provide the opportunity to amend now out-of-date references in the SCI, for example, references to the former districts and to clarify the currency of various partnerships that now exist.

### *Proposed Amendments*

It is proposed that the SCI should be updated, as follows:

- Reference made to and explanation of the recent legislative changes including Duty to Cooperate.
- Reference made to other community groups and partnerships who the Council work with in facilitating other plans, strategies and community ambitions.
- For community involvement on the Local Plan to reflect the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
- Clarify that Wiltshire Council will consult with specific consultation bodies which they consider may have an interest in the subject and the general consultation bodies which it considers appropriate.
- Clarify who the specific and general consultation bodies are.
- Clarify that the council will also consult “such residents or other persons carrying on business in the local planning authority’s area from which the local planning authority considers it appropriate to invite representations”.
- Update the minimum legal requirements for consultation.
- Update the stages of DPD production in accordance with the Regulations, which no longer requires a draft plan to be produced, and the community involvement that the council will undertake at each stage.
- Update the stages of SPD production to more accurately reflect the Regulations.
- Update the section on Sustainability Appraisal to more accurately reflect the 2012 Regulations.

### Conclusion

Whilst this report does not indicate a need to review consultation methods (and hence the SCI), it is clear that in the light of legislative and policy updates, and that in the interests of clarity and efficiency, a refresh of the SCI is necessary, as per the proposed amendments as outlined above.