

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL and MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

From: Cabinet Member for Planning	Report Number: MC/17/41
To: Babergh Council Mid Suffolk Council	Date of meetings: 24 April 2018 26 April 2018

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT REVIEW

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present Members with the draft update to the Councils' Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).
- 1.2 To secure agreement to undertake consultation on the draft update to the Statement of Community Involvement for a period of four weeks.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Council note the draft update to the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Statement of Community Involvement: Planning Issues, which updates the March 2014 adopted version.
- 2.2 That Council agree to public consultation for four weeks during May and June on the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Statement of Community Involvement: Planning Issues (Draft Update, April 2018)
- 2.3 That the Corporate Manager – Spatial Planning Policy be authorised to make minor technical and formatting amendments to the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Statement of Community Involvement: Planning Issues (Draft Update, April 2018) prior to consultation.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 Financial implications of consultation were an integral consideration through the production of the 2014 SCI. Opportunities were identified to make cost savings through such means as increased use of electronic communications. The proposed update to the SCI does not alter this approach and therefore does not in itself result in additional expenditure.
- 3.2 Provision of advice and assistance to support those producing neighbourhood plans is an expanding area of work. The proposed amendments to the SCI in relation to neighbourhood planning reflect the Councils' current approach to the provision of support and assistance which is largely officer time and is funded through the Councils' Strategic Planning budget. The Councils receive £20,000 from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for each neighbourhood plan once a referendum date has been set following a successful examination. In relation to a modified neighbourhood plan, the Councils are able to claim £10,000 once a referendum date has been set following a successful examination.

The amendments to the SCI refer to the broad ways in which the Councils will offer support and as such do not in themselves represent a financial commitment over and above current working practices.

3.3 The costs of updating the SCI, including consultation, can be met through the Strategic Planning budget.

4. Legal Implications

4.1 The Councils are required to produce an SCI under Section 18 of the Planning and Compulsory Act 2004. The Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 has introduced new duties in relation to the content of SCIs. The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2017 has introduced a requirement to review SCIs every five years. As detailed within this report, the update to the Babergh and Mid Suffolk SCI will ensure that these new legislative requirements are met.

5. Risk Management

5.1 This report is most closely linked with the Council's Corporate / Significant Business Risk No. 3b 'If we do not effectively engage our communities about their future needs, then we will not be able to help them become more sustainable'. Key risks are set out below:

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
If the SCI is not updated, there is a risk that the Councils will not meet their statutory duties in relation to the SCI and that communities / stakeholders will not have an up to date statement of how the Council will engage on planning matters.	2 – Unlikely	2 – Noticeable (should the Councils' consultation practices not reflect the SCI).	Members to agree to consultation on the SCI Draft Update (April 2018)

6. Consultations

6.1 Consultation has been undertaken internally with officers from Development Management, Communities and Communications. As the review is an update to the existing SCI, the purpose of this consultation was to ensure that the amendments are consistent with the Councils' current or emerging practices and strategies.

6.2 In respect of neighbourhood planning, a Task and Finish Group was set up to look at Neighbourhood Plan support by the Councils and the outcomes were reported to the Joint Scrutiny Committee on 19th April 2017. These have been incorporated into the support provided by the Councils to the preparation of neighbourhood plans, which are detailed in the draft update to the SCI.

- 6.3 There are no statutory requirements for public consultation as part of the preparation of an SCI however it is acknowledged to be good practice, and the Councils wish to listen to the views of the community in preparing this document. Public consultation was undertaken as part of the production of the adopted 2014 SCI. It is proposed that public consultation is undertaken in respect of the proposed update and that this will take place during May and June 2018 for a period of four weeks.

7. Equality Analysis

- 7.1 An Equality Analysis was undertaken in relation to the production of the 2014 SCI, and can be viewed at <http://www.babergh.gov.uk/assets/Strategic-Planning/Statement-of-Community-Involvement/EqualityScreeningSCI2014.pdf> and <http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Strategic-Planning/Statement-of-Community-Involvement/EqualityScreeningSCI2014.pdf>. A Screening Exercise has been undertaken in relation to the update of the SCI.

8. Shared Service / Partnership Implications

- 8.1 Implications for shared service / partnership arrangements were considered through the production of the 2014 SCI. The proposed updates to the SCI do not have any further implications in relation to shared service or partnership arrangements.

9. Links to Joint Strategic Plan

- 9.1 The update to the SCI is consistent with the Councils' priority area of 'Strong and healthy communities' and the strategic outcome of 'Community capacity building and engagement – All communities are thriving, growing, healthy, active and self-sufficient', through providing an up-to-date basis on which consultation on planning matters can take place.

10. Background

- 10.1 Local planning authorities are required to produce a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) under Regulation 18 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. An SCI sets out an authority's policy in relation to involvement of the community in its planning functions.
- 10.2 The Councils' current SCI was adopted in March 2014 and can be viewed at <http://www.babergh.gov.uk/assets/Strategic-Planning/Statement-of-Community-Involvement/SCIMarch2014.pdf> and <http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Strategic-Planning/Statement-of-Community-Involvement/SCIMarch2014.pdf>.
- 10.3 The adopted SCI was developed through internal consultation with relevant departments to ensure it aligned with other adopted and emerging Council strategies, and through external consultation which included engagement with Town and Parish Councils as well as a formal consultation exercise.
- 10.4 Recently, a number of legislation changes have resulted in the need to update the SCI. These include, through the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017, a requirement for the SCI to set out the local planning authority's policies for giving advice and assistance in relation to making and modifying neighbourhood plans and neighbourhood development orders. The Neighbourhood Planning Act also requires the SCI to include the authorities' policies for involvement in relation to the production of the Local Development Scheme and in the preliminary stages of plan production.

- 10.5 There is also a need to update the SCI to reflect the Councils' new arrangements for public access including the opening of the two customer service centres in Stowmarket and Sudbury.
- 10.6 Further, updating the SCI provides an opportunity to reflect changes to the Councils' practices such as the introduction of charging for pre-application advice in 2017.

11. Update to Statement of Community Involvement

- 11.1 The Babergh and Mid Suffolk Statement of Community Involvement: Planning Issues (Draft Update 2018) is attached at Appendix 1 (referred to hereafter as SCI Draft Update). The principles of community involvement are considered to remain relevant, albeit that there is now greater emphasis on the use of the Councils' website, and the focus of the update therefore relates largely to specific practices.
- 11.2 Amendments in relation to consultation in relation to the production of plans largely reflects the move of the Councils' headquarters and opening of the two customer access points in Stowmarket and Sudbury. Further amendments are also proposed to meet the requirements of Section 13 of the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 in relation to setting policies for involvement in evidence gathering stages and in the production of the Local Development Scheme.
- 11.3 Neighbourhood Planning was introduced via the 2011 Localism Act as a means of enabling communities to have a greater say in the future development of their areas. To date, four Neighbourhood Plans have been 'made' in Babergh and Mid Suffolk and over 20 are currently in progress with numerous other communities showing interest. The Councils have a duty to provide advice and assistance to 'qualifying bodies' producing a neighbourhood plan or order, as well as a number of specific statutory duties. The Councils support the production of neighbourhood plans in particular through the provision of officer time to provide assistance in relation to both the process and content of neighbourhood plans. The SCI Draft Update reflects current practice in terms of the support offered. This reflects the requirement of Section 6 of the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017.
- 11.4 The proposed amendments relating to community involvement in relation to planning applications largely reflects the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy in 2016 and charging for pre-application advice in 2017, a greater focus on use of the websites, the move of the Councils' headquarters and the opening of the two customer access points.
- 11.5 The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2017 introduce a requirement to review the SCI every five years. However, it may be the case that further updates or reviews are needed in advance of this time and the SCI Draft Update contains reference to this.
- 11.6 The SCI Draft Update will inform the preparation of the Councils' wider Communities and Communications Strategies.

12. Appendices

Title	Location
(a) Babergh and Mid Suffolk Statement of Community Involvement: Planning Issues (Draft Update, April 2018)	Attached.

13. Background Documents

- 13.1 Babergh and Mid Suffolk Statement of Community Involvement: Planning Issues (March 2014).

<http://www.babergh.gov.uk/assets/Strategic-Planning/Statement-of-Community-Involvement/SCIMarch2014.pdf>

<http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Strategic-Planning/Statement-of-Community-Involvement/SCIMarch2014.pdf>

- 13.2 Joint Scrutiny Committee Report JSC/16/16 'Report from the Task and Finish Group set up to look at Neighbour Plan support by the Councils', 19th April 2017.
<http://baberghmidsuffolk.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s4593/JSC1616.pdf>

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