

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL and MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: Babergh Council Mid Suffolk Council	REPORT NUMBER: MC/18/41
FROM: Cabinet Members for Planning	DATE OF MEETING: BDC – 19 February 2019 MSDC – 21 February 2019
OFFICER: Robert Hobbs – Corporate Manager Strategic Planning	KEY DECISION REF NO. CNL39

JOINT STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT: PLANNING MATTERS

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present Councillors with the finalised update to the Councils' Joint Statement of Community Involvement (SCI): Planning Matters following formal consultation.
- 1.2 To agree to adopt and publish the SCI document.

2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Prior to presentation of this document to Council a formal four-week public consultation has been undertaken between the period 29th June to 30th July 2018. All consultation responses have been fully considered, summarised and appropriate amendments to the draft SCI document have been made accordingly and where necessary before finalising. A list of summarised consultation responses and the Councils' response can be seen in Appendix 1 of the SCI document.
- 2.2 Not adopting the Statement of Community Involvement review would result in the Councils having a document that is more than five years old, when there is a requirement to review them every five years, and it would not conform with the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the Council note the update to the finalised Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Statement of Community Involvement: Planning Matters (February 2019), which updates the March 2014 adopted version.
- 3.2 The Council agree to adopt and publish the finalised Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Statement of Community Involvement: Planning Matters (February 2019).
- 3.3 To allow the Corporate Manager – Strategic Planning to be authorised to make minor technical and formatting amendments if necessary to the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Statement of Community Involvement: Planning Matters (February 2019) prior to adoption and publication.

REASON FOR DECISION

- 3.4 To adopt and publish the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Statement of Community Involvement: Planning Matters (February 2019) for day-to-day implementation in plan-making and decision-making.

4. KEY INFORMATION

- 4.1 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. The links to the previous SCI (March 2014) can be found within the background documents section of this report below.
- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 Recently, a number of legislative 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 authority's policies for involvement in relation to the production of the Local Development Scheme and in the preliminary stages of plan production.
- 4.4 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. In addition, Babergh District Council has explored alternative provision in Hadleigh and Sudbury.
- 4.5 Further updating of the SCI provides an opportunity to reflect changes to the Councils' practices such as the introduction of charging for pre-application advice in 2017.
- 4.6 Amendments made to the SCI in relation to the consultation and in relation to the production of plans largely reflects the following:
- Greater emphasis on the use of the Councils' website.
 - The production of planning documents reflects the move of the Council headquarters and opening of two customer access points (Stowmarket and Sudbury).
 - Requirements to meet Section 13 of the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 (including setting policies for involvement in evidence gathering stages and production in Local Development Scheme).
 - Provides update and clarification of support offered and consultation stages within neighbourhood planning.
 - Amendments relating to community involvement in relation to planning applications.
 - Reflects the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy in 2016 and charging for pre-application advice in 2017.
 - The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2017 introduce a requirement to review the SCI every five years.
 - The SCI informs the preparation of the Councils' wider Communities and Communications Strategies.
 - Clarifications including footnotes made throughout the document to take account of changes and updates.

5. LINKS TO JOINT STRATEGIC PLAN

- 5.1 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.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Revenue/Capital/ Expenditure/Income Item	Total	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
No significant alteration in approach therefore does not in itself result in additional expenditure.				
Net Effect				

- 6.1 Financial implications of consultation were an integral consideration through the production of the 2014 SCI and the February 2019 SCI update. Opportunities have been 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. In addition, costs in relation to hard copy requests have been included where necessary.
- 6.2 Provision of advice and assistance to support communities producing neighbourhood plans is an expanding area of work. The Councils' current approach is to provide support and assistance, which is largely officer time and is funded through the Councils' Strategic Planning budget. The Councils can claim £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. Where a made neighbourhood plan is being modified, 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. As such, do not in themselves represent a financial commitment over and above current working practices.
- 6.3 The costs of updating the SCI, including consultation are met through the Strategic Planning budget.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 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 Joint Babergh and Mid Suffolk SCI will ensure that these new legislative requirements are met.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 This report is most closely linked with the Councils' Significant Business Risk No. 3a 'We may not be able to help communities 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 Councils will engage on planning matters.	2 - Unlikely	2 - Noticeable (should the Councils' consultation practices not reflect the SCI).	Councillors to agree to adopt and publish the final SCI document.

9. CONSULTATIONS

- 9.1 A formal consultation process has been undertaken internally and externally allowing comments to be received from everyone who wishes to participate. As this is a review to update 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. The formal SCI consultation process was undertaken between the period 29th June to 30th July 2018 (four weeks). All consultation responses have been fully considered, summarised and appropriate amendments to the draft SCI document have been made accordingly and where necessary before finalised. A list of summarised consultation responses and the Councils' response can be seen in Appendix 1 of the SCI document.
- 9.2 The Councils received comments from 24 respondents which included a mix of Parish Councils and private individuals across the two districts, and statutory bodies.
- 9.3 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 and has also been undertaken for this proposed update.

10. EQUALITY ANALYSIS

- 10.1 This is not a new project. This is a review and update of an existing SCI document. 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.

A further Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) not required.

11. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 This is not a new project. This is a review and update of an existing SCI document. There are not considered to be any negative environmental impacts and therefore there are not considered to be any mitigation measures necessary. The main positive impact is to reduce the amount of hard copy communication and move to more electronic forms of communication, which is a benefit to the environment.

12. APPENDICES

Title	Location
(a) Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Statement of Community Involvement: Planning Matters (February 2019).	Attached

13. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- 13.1 The Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Statement of Community Involvement: Planning Matters (February 2019) will replace the March 2014 versions that can be found at the following links:

<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>