

TO: PLANNING & REGULATORY COMMITTEE

DATE: 10 July 2019

BY: MINERALS AND WASTE POLICY TEAM MANAGER/
PLANNING DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

DISTRICT(S) All

ELECTORAL DIVISION(S) All

PURPOSE: FOR INFORMATION AND REVIEW

TITLE: REVISED STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Purpose of the Report:

To inform the Committee of the proposed revision to the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and of the public consultation on a draft SCI that took place between 7 May and 18 June 2019. The SCI is relevant to the work of this Committee since it deals with publicity and community engagement during the consideration of planning applications. The revised SCI will be considered for adoption by Cabinet and Council in September and October 2019.

Recommendation:

1. The Committee is asked to note the proposed revised SCI which is attached as Annex 1 for information and review.

Introduction:

2. A public consultation has recently taken place on a revised SCI which includes a number of changes that we are proposing to improve the efficiency of our service in line with legislation. The SCI outlines the ways in which the Planning Service involves the community in the planning process.

The Revised Statement of Community Involvement

3. The SCI sets out how people can be involved in the process of planning for minerals and waste development in Surrey. It sets out our approach for public consultation and involvement in the preparation of the minerals and waste plans, and in the determination of planning applications for minerals and waste development and our own development proposals.
4. The County Council is required to produce a SCI by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

5. Since the current SCI was adopted by the County Council in May 2015 there have been a number of changes to legislation and planning policy guidance which make it necessary to revise the SCI so that it reflects these changes. The main changes to the SCI to reflect current legislation, are:
 - a. Highlighting changes to how we collect and process data in light of the General Data Protection Regulations introduced in 2018.
 - b. A section on Neighbourhood Planning has been added to provide more clarity on support that Surrey County Council can provide.
6. With regard to development management, the protocol for consulting residents and other statutory and non-statutory consultees in respect of applications for planning permission remains broadly unchanged. Where they are consulted, adjoining residents will continue to be notified by letter since it is the only way of ensuring they are reached. Nevertheless there will be an emphasis on electronic communication wherever possible and the reduction of unnecessary paperwork. Since June 2015, the County Council has made planning application documents and documents for other types of submissions requiring approval available to view on our online register. Members of the public can find out about and view details of all types of applications on our website; found out about and review any amendments; and follow progress, whether or not they have been directly contacted about an application.
7. Changes are proposed to streamline the development management process and to make best use of resources. The publicity for major applications for planning permission will remain unchanged: a newspaper advert will be posted, site notices displayed and letters will be sent to neighbours, generally within 90 metres of the application site boundary. The protocol for publicising minor planning applications and other types of applications is proposed to be amended to bring it into line with the requirements set out in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, to better reflect the application fees paid, to improve the County Council's efficiency in managing minor and other applications, as well as to allow more resources to be put towards more complex applications.

The changes to simplify publicity are as follows:

- a. For minor applications: a site notice will be displayed or a letter sent to adjoining neighbours, with any wider publicity at the case officer's discretion
- b. Other proposals such as approvals of details under conditions, non-material amendments, prior notifications and Certificates of Lawfulness will usually involve relevant statutory and non-statutory consultees and technical advisers only.

8. A section on Environmental Impact Assessment has been added to provide clarity on the difference between EIA and non-EIA development and the publicity of such development, as well as information on Screen and Scoping Opinions.

Consultation Outcome:

9. There were a total of six responses to the SCI consultation. All comments received have been assessed and changes made where appropriate. Some comments refer to matters outside the scope of this consultation such as the Scheme of Delegation, public speaking at committee and the structure of planning application documents. Many comments relate to sections of the SCI that have not been amended. In broad terms, all respondents are seeking greater and further reaching publicity. Publicity has to be proportionate to the scale of the proposal and the likely impacts. The SCI complies with the statutory requirements as a minimum in all respects, exceeding them in some cases, such as in respect of neighbour notifications for planning applications.

Conclusions:

10. The County Council has a duty to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). It is important that it is up to date and accurately indicates how people can be involved in the planning process. The suggested amendments to the SCI take account of current legislation, the fees payable and our own experience of the effectiveness of our current consultation methods.

Financial and value for money implications

11. No direct implications although the new procedures better reflect the planning application fees paid and enable officer time to be more focused on major applications. The increased use of IT where possible will provide better value for money.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

12. The existing SCI ensures that a wide range of people are consulted with regard to planning matters. The revised SCI carries this forward. The consultation currently taking place has included groups representing those with the protected characteristics as identified in the Equality Act 2010.

Risk Management Implications

13. None.

Next steps:

14. It is intended to report to the Cabinet on the results of the consultation on 24 September 2019 with a recommendation that the County Council adopts the revised SCI at its meeting on 8 October 2019.

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Annexes:

Annex 1: Statement of Community Involvement- June 2019