

# Cabinet Report



Listening Learning Leading

Report of Head of Planning

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Wards affected: All wards

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To: CABINET

Date: 15 June 2017

## **South Oxfordshire District Council - Statement of Community Involvement: Planning Service – April 2017**

### **Recommendations**

1. To adopt the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), April 2017 as set out under Appendix 1 of this report.
2. To authorise the Head of Planning in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning to make any minor changes, typographical corrections or non-material amendments to the SCI prior to formal publication.

### **Purpose of Report**

1. To report to Cabinet the key issues raised following the six-week public consultation and to recommend that Cabinet adopts the new 'South Oxfordshire District Council - Statement of Community Involvement: Planning Service – April 2017' as set out in Appendix 1.

### **Corporate Objectives**

2. Setting out how the council will engage our communities and businesses in the planning process will contribute to the council's corporate priority, 'To Build Thriving Communities'.

## Background

3. The adoption of a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is a requirement of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended).
4. The SCI sets out how South Oxfordshire District Council will engage with our communities and businesses so they can comment on:
  - planning applications
  - the formation of new planning policy (such as the Local Plan)
5. Our current SCI was adopted on 6 July 2006. It is now out of date. The new 2017 SCI, if adopted, would replace the current 2006 SCI.
6. Process
7. On 13 September 2016 a draft version of the SCI received approval via an Individual Cabinet Member Decision for a six-week public consultation (along with an Equalities Impact Assessment (Appendix 2)).
8. At the same time as the SCI consultation, the opportunity was used to update the planning consultation mailing list to assist with future planning policy consultations. Online consultation software named 'Smart Survey' was also used for the first time (as opposed to existing software named 'Objective') to assess alternative consultation software.
9. Public consultation
10. A public consultation on the draft SCI and Equalities Impact Assessment was undertaken for six weeks from 11 January to 22 February 2017. There is a background report on the results of the consultation providing more detail in Appendix 3. The consultation asked for feedback on the format, layout and content of the draft SCI.
11. *Public consultation summary:*
  - 168 responses were received
  - 85% of respondents completed the consultation online
  - 92% rated the format and layout of the draft SCI as reasonable or good
  - 48% rated the consultation survey method as satisfied or very satisfied
  - For methods of consultation:
    - 79% rated online questionnaires as a good or average
    - 78% and 74% rated public meetings and public exhibitions as a good or average
    - social media received a lower rating with 36% rating it as poor
    - 80% rated email communication as a good method
  - Respondents from the working age population were under-represented whilst those of the 65+ age group were over-represented
  - 71 comments were made regarding changes to the SCI
  - Several respondents used the consultation as an opportunity to raise general issues about other planning matters
12. Changes to the SCI following public consultation

- Title of the SCI changed to refer to the planning service for clarity
- Improved introduction setting out the purpose of the SCI
- Text simplified or clarified in several sections
- Additional links to planning information webpages added
- Additional information on Developer Forums added
- Information provided on how we will work with those promoting development sites to make those affected aware of new planning proposals
- General corrections made

13. These small changes are captured and tracked in the attached 'tracked changes' version of the SCI; Appendix 4.

## Options

14. Option 1 – continue to use the current 2006 SCI. The 2006 SCI is out of date and therefore this is not recommended as an appropriate option.

15. Option 2 – request that the attached 2017 version of the SCI is subject to major changes and subject to the full consultation process again.

16. Option 3 – adopt this new 2017 SCI as attached, with delegation to the Head of Planning in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning to make any minor changes, typographical corrections or non-material amendments to the SCI prior to formal publication. This is the recommended option.

## Financial Implications

17. Publication costs of the SCI will be absorbed within existing budgets.

18. The SCI provides guidance on how the council will engage our communities and businesses in the planning process. Community and business engagement are on-going costs of the planning service and would remain unchanged by the adoption of this new SCI.

## Legal Implications

19. Any legal implications are addressed in the general body of the report.

## Risks

20. A decision to not adopt the 2017 SCI would leave the council with the out of date 2006 SCI which could result in confusion on how the council engages with our communities and businesses on planning matters and the possibility of not complying with current legislation. Having an up-to-date SCI helps to ensure clarity on how we consult on planning matters.

## Conclusion

21. It is recommended that Cabinet adopts the new 'South Oxfordshire District Council - Statement of Community Involvement: Planning Service – April 2017' with delegation to the Head of Planning in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning to make any minor changes, typographical corrections or non-material amendments to the SCI prior to formal publication.

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