

Statement of Community Involvement in the Planning Process

Cabinet

Date: 6th February 2019

Author:	Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Sustainability, and Head of Planning, Regulatory Services and Heritage
Wards:	All
Parishes Affected:	All

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1. To seek Cabinet's approval that the revised Swindon Borough Statement of Community Involvement in the Planning Process be adopted.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 Adopt the Revised Swindon Borough Statement of Community Involvement in the Planning Process (attached at Appendix 1) and authorise the Head of Planning, Regulatory Services and Heritage to make it available in accordance with the arrangements detailed in paragraph 4.1 of this report; and
- 2.2 Authorise the Head of Planning, Regulatory Services and Heritage in consultation with the interim Director of Law to make minor changes to the content of the Statement of Community Involvement in the Planning Process, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning prior to publication.

3. Detail

- 3.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004, (as amended), requires each Local Planning Authority to produce a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) to set out how the community will be involved in the preparation, alteration and review of planning policy documents, and in the determination of planning applications.
- 3.2 The Borough Council's SCI was originally adopted in January 2007 (Council Minute 106, 18/07/2007 refers), The SCI was revised in 2013 (Cabinet Minute 122, 20/03/2013 refers) to reflect changes to the legislative framework including the publication of the Localism Act 2011 and the National Planning Policy Framework 2012, and changes to the Borough Council's operating model on the 'Stronger Together' principles.
- 3.3 A further review is now necessary in order to ensure the SCI continues to be up-to-date and fit for purpose. In particular it is necessary to comply with further legislative changes including a requirement introduced by the Neighbourhood

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Karen Phimister, 01793 466425, kphimister@swindon.gov.uk

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Planning Act (2017 Regulations) for Local Planning Authorities to review their SCI's every five years and to set out how they will support communities to produce Neighbourhood Development Plans. It also takes account of the increased use of the internet and social media; structural changes (including a move towards increased digitisation of services) within Swindon Borough Council; and financial pressures on the Council.

- 3.4 Planning Practice Guidance (Paragraph 030 Reference ID: 61-030-20180913) states that: 'There is no requirement for local planning authorities to consult when reviewing and updating their Statement of Community Involvement.'
- 3.5 However, prior to reviewing this document some targeted consultation was carried out with a number of community groups in order to gather feedback as to how the current SCI could be improved. These same groups were then invited to make further comments on the draft revised document. This final version has been amended to reflect these comments.
- 3.6 Comments were also sought from internal officers and members. This review also took account of the Council's wider Consultation Strategy which is in the process of being updated.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 Once adopted, the revised SCI will be made available to view on the Council website and paper copies placed in Swindon Borough Council managed libraries. All statutory consultees including Parish and Town Councils will be notified by email with a link to the relevant SBC website page.

5. Alternative Options

- 5.1 There is a legal requirement for Local planning authorities to review their SCI every five years or to publish the reasons why a decision not to carry out a review has been made. Prior to undertaking this review an assessment was made of the 2013 SCI which was felt to be out of date and no longer in line with best practice. The Council could choose to not review the SCI but would result in it being not up-to-date and fit for purpose.

6. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 6.1 The financial implications arising from publishing the Statement of Community Involvement are to be met from existing Forward Planning budgets.

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Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 6.2 It is not envisaged that the content of this report will have a direct implication upon human rights issues, in so far as greater opportunities will be available to individuals to partake in the planning process. The SCI will seek to improve the quality of consultation for Swindon's residents and stakeholders, building on the principles of basic human rights.

All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 6.3 The Council has a duty to ensure that the SCI is in accordance with the sustainability principles of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Diversity Impact Assessment

- 6.4 The SCI requires that all sections of the community, including those that are regarded as "hard to reach" are engaged in planning matters. A DIA was completed which highlighted the risk that people without computer access or skills might find it increasingly difficult to engage in the Council's planning processes. The DIA can be requested from Karen Phimister, Planning Policy at kphimister@swindon.gov.uk

Risk Management

- 6.5 There is a risk that the SCI will become out-dated. To avoid this, the SCI will be reviewed regularly to ensure that it is fit for purpose.

7. Consultees

- 7.1 The Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and Interim Director of Law (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all Cabinet reports.

8. Background Papers

- 8.1 None

9. Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix 1: Revised Swindon Borough Statement of Community Involvement in the Planning Process.

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10. Key Decision/Decision in Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan

- 10.1 This is not a Key Decision and is included in the Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan for February 2019.