

**SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE COUNCIL**

**COUNCIL – 10 SEPTEMBER 2019**

**ADOPTION OF THE SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE DISTRICT  
STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (SCI)**

**REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR ENTERPRISE AND GROWTH**

**COUNCILLOR B. COX - CABINET MEMBER, PLANNING AND BUSINESS ENTERPRISE**

**PART A – SUMMARY REPORT**

**1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members that the South Staffordshire District Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been subject to consultation, and can now be adopted as Council policy.
- 1.2 The SCI is a statutory planning document which provides detail on how the district council will engage with local communities and stakeholders during the preparation of the Local Plan documents, prior to making decisions on planning applications and support neighbourhood planning initiatives. This is the third version of the statement. This update will support the ongoing Local Plan Review process and also reflects the requirements identified in the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 for local planning authorities to set out within the SCI the advice and support they will provide to support the process of developing Neighbourhood Plans.
- 1.3 The report seeks Members' agreement to adopt the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) be adopted by the Council;
- 2.2 Members endorse the supporting table of consultation responses and the Council response.

**3. SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

POLICY/COMMUNITY IMPACT	Do these proposals contribute to specific Council Plan objectives?	
	Yes	It is important that the Council prepares and maintains

		<p>a development plan for South Staffordshire, and does so in a legally compliant way that engages with as wider an audience as possible. This will ensure that the right forms of development take place in the right locations, in a timely manner.</p> <p>The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) will contribute to the following aims of the Council Plan:  A Skilled and Prosperous District – Supporting and growing businesses and attracting and supporting new businesses.  A Safe &amp; Sustainable District – Providing homes that people need and protecting the green belt.  A Connected District – supporting our communities</p>
	Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) been completed?	
	Yes	An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been carried out for the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).
SCRUTINY POWERS APPLICABLE	Report to Full Council	
KEY DECISION	Yes	
TARGET COMPLETION/ DELIVERY DATE	Adoption of the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) by September 2019.	
FINANCIAL IMPACT	Yes	<p>There are no additional costs of preparing the new Local Plan over and above the relevant service functions costs which are contained within the Medium Term Financial Strategy.</p> <p>Should Parish Councils choose to prepare Neighbourhood Plans in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012, which is set out in the SCI, there may be additional, unbudgeted costs to the Council as a direct consequence.</p> <p>Some of the expenditure related to officer time gathering the evidence base and associated expenditure could be absorbed within existing staffing resources. However there may be further (should, for example temporary additional staffing be required) unavoidable one-off costs associated with the preparation of one-off plans. From the experience of other local authorities these can vary from as little as £5,000 at the low end to as much as £25,000 per plan produced as a worst case. Any such costs, in the absence of any alternative identified funding would be a burden on the MTFS that would have to be</p>

		recognised in monitoring. Such costs are however an unavoidable consequence of our obligations to meet the Parish's request.
LEGAL ISSUES	Yes	We have a statutory duty to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement as required by The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended).  Failure to undertake appropriate consultation during the discharging of the council's planning functions could result in legal challenges related to lack of due process.
OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES	Yes	The SCI aims to support engagement and transparency in relation to the delivery of planning services – both Development Management and Local Plans – to the community. The SCI identifies the need to ensure that all sections of the community are targeted to enable a full and diverse range of opinions to be heard. Early and on-going community involvement with the planning process enables opportunities to be identified and issues addressed leading to better informed decision making.
IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS	No	No, the SCI is districtwide.

## **PART B – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **4. INFORMATION**

#### Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) Summary

- 4.1 The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is a statutory planning document which provides details on the approach which will be undertaken to engage local communities and stakeholders during the delivery of the council's planning services, both Development Management and Local Plans. The requirement to publish an SCI was introduced in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 4.2 The SCI identifies who will be involved at each of the statutory stages of Local Plan document preparation; the minimum timescales for each stage of public consultation and the methods to be employed to foster engagement. Included within the SCI is a list of the Statutory and General Consultation Bodies to be targeted in respect of local plan document production and planning applications. These lists are included as Appendices to the main document and act as a 'live' document which can be revised without the need for a full SCI review.
- 4.3 The SCI also provides information on community involvement in the making of planning application decisions, the consultation stages associated with the production of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) and if the Council were to introduce of a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

- 4.4 The passing of the Neighbourhood Planning Act in 2017 introduced a new requirement on local planning authorities to clearly state within their SCI documents the assistance they will provide to those bodies engaged in the production of a neighbourhood plan. This latest version of the SCI has been modified to reflect to reflect this new requirement. The SCI also outlines the approach which will be adopted in fulfilling the statutory 'Duty to Cooperate' requirements to ensure the cross boundary issues are appropriately addressed.
- 4.5 The Council has previously adopted two versions of the SCI, the first in 2006 which was subsequently updated in 2014.

### Conclusion

- 4.4 The SCI sets out how the local planning authority intends to adopt a proactive and positive approach to community engagement from the outset of plan preparation and when determining planning applications. Failure to engage in a meaningful way with local communities and stakeholders would present a number of issues including the risk of legal challenge and the missed opportunities associated with the knowledge. Previous versions of the SCI have committed the Council to undertaking a review of the document to reflect any significant changes to national statute, policy or guidance which would mean that it no longer reflects the required approach. Recent commitments identified in the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 have required an update to the SCI and these have been incorporated into the document.
- 4.5 As part of the SCI adoption process, the draft SCI was the subject to a formal public consultation for 8 weeks from 8 October 2018 to 30 November 2018, during which time 3 representations were made to the documents. All responses welcomed the production of the SCI and this support has been noted. A schedule of representations and the Council's response to those representations has been prepared. This can be viewed in Appendix 2.
- 4.6 The SCI proposed for adoption can be viewed in Appendix 1.

## **5. IMPACT ASSESSMENT – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- 5.1 No impact assessment required.

## **6. PREVIOUS MINUTES**

- 6.1 No previous minutes.

## **7. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 7.1 **Appendix 1** – South Staffordshire Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

**Appendix 2** – Schedule of representations received to the draft SCI, and the proposed Council response.

Report prepared by:

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