

<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>General overview and scrutiny committee</b>
<b>Meeting date:</b>	<b>5 September 2016</b>
<b>Title of report:</b>	<b>Statement of community involvement consultation, communications and programme to adoption</b>
<b>Report by:</b>	<b>Local and neighbourhood planning community engagement officer</b>

## **Classification**

Open

## **Key decision**

This is not an executive decision.

## **Wards affected**

Countywide

## **Purpose**

To seek the committee's views, having regard to the outcome of public consultation, on a revised draft statement of community involvement.

## **Recommendation**

**THAT: the committee provides comments on the revised draft statement of community involvement at appendix 1.**

## **Alternative options**

- 1 To continue use of the existing statement of community involvement. This is not recommended as it does not give due consideration to principal use of online communication whenever practical, contains information which is now obsolete and does not provide information on neighbourhood development planning, community right to build and neighbourhood development orders.

## Reasons for recommendations

- 2 To ensure the council adheres to the local development scheme and the requirement to review the statement of community involvement as and when the need is identified.
- 3 The statement of community involvement forms part of the local plan framework and as such is a budget and policy framework item. The views of the committee are sought to inform cabinet's consideration before making a recommendation to full Council.

## Key considerations

- 4 The revised statement of community involvement would replace the current document adopted in March 2007. Extensive review of the planning process leading to the publication of the Localism Act in 2011 and National Planning Policy Framework in 2012 means there is now far greater emphasis on early engagement with all potentially affected parties.
- 5 Over the last eight years, use of online technology as a communication and information tool has increased extensively. It is accepted that more traditional 'offline' modes of communication, such as letters via post and hard copies of documents are still necessary; however, these can now be used to a much lesser degree. The draft of the new statement of community involvement reflects this culture shift.
- 6 The basis of the Localism Act is to devolve power from central government. It gives communities the opportunity to take responsibility for the shaping of development in their area, within the parameters of the core strategy.
- 7 Along with the new legislation came the introduction of neighbourhood planning, subject to majority support in a referendum and working in tandem with the strategic policies within the Herefordshire local plan – core strategy.
- 8 Each neighbourhood development plan establishes general planning policy for sustainable growth and use of land within a defined area.
- 9 Communities are also given the opportunity to manage development without the need to go through the conventional planning application process, in the form of a neighbourhood development order or community right to build. However, proposals will still need to meet certain criteria and overwhelming community support must be demonstrated before any work can go ahead.
- 10 The revised statement of community involvement details the various ways in which people are able to be involved in the planning process and the commitment the council has to ensure there is ample opportunity to do so.
- 11 Public consultation on the new statement of community involvement has been conducted on-line including email correspondence to specified consultees and the local development framework database to publicise the consultation. It included an on-line questionnaire using the questions set out in appendix 2.
- 12 The consultation was also publicised through the council social media pages and website. A report has been produced setting out the results of the consultation and the conclusions that can be drawn from it – appendix 3.

## **Community impact**

- 13 The statement of community involvement identifies those groups considered to be more of a challenge to engage with and sets out suggested methods to achieve greatest participation.
- 14 Established organisations representing these groups provide a vital communication network for the council to utilise. Many of the organisations listed in the original document, produced in 2007, no longer exist, hence the revised statement of community involvement replaces those with current information.

## **Equality duty**

- 15 In order to ensure that due regard for equality and diversity is met, the following measures will be taken:
  - The document is available in alternative formats
  - A number of changes have been made to the document in light of the consultation including the removal of acronyms and the use of plain English.
  - An easy read summary will be made available to ensure that the information is accessible.

## **Financial implications**

- 16 Emphasis on utilising online communication as much as possible means potential savings if the revised document is adopted.

## **Legal implications**

- 17 Adoption of the revised document fulfils the statutory requirement for the council to maintain an up to date statement of community involvement, detailing its commitment to engage with the public during preparation of planning documents. This is in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 which brought in changes to the development plan system including the creation and use of regional special strategies and local development schemes to replace existing development plan.

## **Risk management**

- 18 By consulting on and adopting the revised document, the council will avoid breaching its statutory duty to maintain a statement of community involvement.

## **Consultees**

- 19 A consultation report is provided at appendix 3 and a list of consultees at appendix 5.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Draft Statement of Community Involvement including proposed changes

Appendix 2 – List of proposed changes to original draft

Appendix 3 - Consultation questions

Appendix 4 – Summary and results of consultation

Appendix 5 – List of consultees

## **Background papers**

- None identified.