

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Report By: Forward Planning Manager

1. Wards Affected

Countywide

2. Purpose

- 2.1 To inform members of the progress being made on preparation of the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and to receive and agree a draft statement for consultation purposes. This document is required as part of the new planning system and will set out how the Council will consult on planning matters.

3. Background

- 3.1 A Planning Committee report was presented to Members on the 30th September 2005 which provided information on the new planning system and the need to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The purpose of the SCI is to

- Identify who will be consulted on particular types of documents and applications and when they will be actively involved in plan making and in reaching decisions on planning applications;
- Set out transparent, accessible and meaningful approaches to community involvement in plan taking and decision making on planning applications;
- Encourage early involvement in decision making between the community, interest groups and stakeholders. This can help to resolve any conflicts early in the process and can generate a sense of ownership early in the process and on agreed outcomes.
- Recognise and understand the different needs of all sections of the community and stakeholder interests and establish the most effective means of enabling all sections of the community to make their views known and help shape planning decisions in their areas;
- Explain how the results of the consultations will be fed into preparation of local development documents and how those involved will be kept informed;
- Set out standards for the Council to achieve and explain how the process will be resourced and managed and how the new planning process will be co-ordinated with other community involvement and consultation initiatives undertaken by the Council.
- To ensure that the Council complies with the adopted Statement of Community Involvement when preparing its Local Development Documents and this compliance must be kept under review and revised where necessary.

3.2 The process by which an SCI is prepared is laid down by Government in the Town and

Country Planning (Local Development)(England) Regulations 2004. The following provides a summary of some of the key regulations:

- Reg 25 – Initial consultation
- Reg 26 – Draft SCI for public consultation
- Reg 27 – Consider and amend SCI as appropriate
- Reg 28 – Submit SCI to Secretary of State
- Reg 34 – Possible public examination*
- Reg 35 – Binding Inspectors report*
- Reg 35 – Publish inspectors report *
- Reg 36 Adopt the SCI with any revisions

*It is hoped that a public examination into the soundness of the SCI will not be necessary. However if there are objections that cannot be met by the Council then these will be dealt with by an independent Inspector. The Inspectors report will be binding on the authority.

4 Timetable for production

4.1 The Local Development Scheme (LDS) which forms a three year work plan for the Forward Planning policy section is required as part of the new planning system. The LDS has established that the SCI needs to be submitted to the Secretary of State by July 2006. The timetable below indicates the various stages that need to be undertaken to achieve this end date.

AUGUST – SEPTEMBER 05	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compilation of SCI database • Letter informing of ‘informal pre-submission consultation as required by Reg. 25’ • Preparation of leaflet / questionnaire (i.e. pre-submission consultation) and list of consultees with covering letter • New/updated text on the website
OCTOBER – NOVEMBER 05	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-submission consultation (6 weeks) [Reg. 25 (2)]
DECEMBER 05 – JANUARY 06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of responses • Prepare draft SCI
FEBRUARY 06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish draft SCI (i.e. formal pre-submission participation) [Reg. 26] • 6 weeks statutory consultation period
MARCH – JUNE 06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of responses • Responses made available to public i.e. web

JUNE – JULY 06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submission to Secretary of State [Reg. 28] • Public deposit / public consultation
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5 Initial consultation – Regulation 25

- 5.1 In line with Regulation 25 and as outlined to Planning Committee on the 30th September an initial information gathering consultation has been undertaken and which finished on 30th November 2005. Views/comments of late submissions will be considered in any revised statement. A variety of consultation methods were used to gain information on how successfully the Council has consulted people on planning matters in the past and how it could make improvements.
- 5.2 Methods of consultation included distribution of a questionnaire, leaflet and letter to over 1,000 people listed on the newly emerging LDF database, a press release, and public notice encouraging people to have their say.
- 5.3 The questionnaire achieved a response rate of 26%, which has provided a useful basis from which to draft the SCI. The following points provide a summary of the main findings of the exercise all of which have been taken account of in the drafting of the SCI. A more detailed account is provided in a consultation report which can be summarised as follows:
- Over 70% of respondents have been involved in planning matters before,
 - 25% of respondents have experienced difficulty in getting involved in planning matters,
 - The preferred form of keeping people informed on progress with future planning matters is via a letter (31%) followed by email (24%). 55% of respondents preferred hard copies of documents to comment on with 26% content with email versions,
 - In respect of public participation, public meetings and presentations were ranked first followed by one to one meetings and public exhibitions third. This is noted, however, it needs to be balanced against the high costs of resourcing these methods of consultation,
 - In respect of planning applications, 67% of respondents stated that the list of measures to keep people informed on planning applications was sufficient. In terms of improvements, the most responses indicated a requirement to be included on the electronic mailing list of all registered weekly planning applications. However, it should be noted that this list is available to download from the Council's website.
- 5.4 A significant number of general comments were also made to the questionnaire and the following provide a flavour of some of these:
- “People become cynical as consultation and putting a case forward takes time and it is felt that it is ignored by the planning section.”
 - “Information needs to be in an accessible format”
 - “Need sufficient time for the community to respond”
 - “Support pre-consultation”

- “Closer liaison between parish council and the planning section”
- “Develop systems to involve migrant workers and travellers”
- “Develop links with Parish Plan groups”
- “Consult and take notice”
- “Provide member so f the public with all the facts”
- “Less use of acronyms”
- “Use of parish magazines”

6 Herefordshire’s Draft SCI

6.1 As a result of the information gathered in the first round of consultations an SCI document has been drafted and is attached to this report.

6.2 This document covers the following areas:

1. An introduction to the New Planning System
2. An explanation of the role and purpose of the Statement Of Community Involvement
3. When can you get involved? - Provision of information on the opportunities available to become involved in the new planning system.
4. Who will be involved? - In line with PPS 12 and the Regulations the SCI at Appendix 2/3 provides a comprehensive list identifying who the Council will consult with on planning issues. The list will provide a guide to identifying the types of groups to involve and consult with depending on the issue under consideration.
5. Links with other strategies – the new planning system aims to promote greater integration between the various strategies produced by local authorities and other organisations and the land use planning system. The SCI identifies relevant strategies that it needs to integrate and work with.
6. Understanding the County of Herefordshire - To be in a position to be able to develop a sound and effective SCI which is based on an inclusive approach, the Council needs to have a clear understanding of Herefordshire’s community in terms of community profile, diversity of interests and hard to reach groups and existing partnerships and communication networks. The SCI looks at each of these areas.
7. Herefordshire’s approach to community involvement – The SCI outlines the Council’s key principles to community involvement which are enshrined in its Community Involvement Strategy.
8. Community involvement techniques – The SCI sets out a range of formal and informal community involvement methods and techniques which are considered most appropriate for use. This is based on the Regulations, advantages and disadvantages of different methods, local circumstances and previous experiences, feedback from the questionnaire and the resources available to manage the community involvement process.

9. The SCI provides Herefordshire's consultation standards for Development Plan Documents (DPD's) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's)
10. The SCI provides Herefordshire's consultation standards for planning applications
12. The last section covers monitoring and reviewing. The SCI will be reviewed every year through the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR).

7 Next stage

- 7.1 In line with Regulation 26 this first draft of the SCI is subject to further consultation and this is proposed to take place between January 30th and March 17th 2006. The SCI at appendix 2 lists all those organisations on the LDF database that the Council will consult with. In addition and during this time a questionnaire response form will be made available to the wider public to enable as many people as possible to make comment on the document. The consultation will be advertised by public notice and press release. In addition two workshop sessions are proposed to gain further feedback on the SCI. One of these workshops will be targeted at hard to reach groups with the other open to the public, parish councils and statutory agencies. At the end of this second round of consultation the SCI will be revised and full Council will need to agree the final draft SCI in May before it is submitted to the Secretary of State in June/July 2006.

8 RECOMMENDATION

It be recommended to the Cabinet Member (Environment) that the draft SCI be published for consultation purposes in line with the Town and Country Planning (Local Development)(England) Regulations 2004.

Background papers

Pre Submission Draft SCI Consultation Report January 2006
The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004
Town and Country Planning (Local Development)(England) Regulations 2004.
Planning Policy Statement 12

