

TO: EXECUTIVE  
11 FEBRUARY 2014

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**ADOPTION OF REVISED STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT  
Director of Environment, Culture & Communities**

**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek the Executive's approval to adopt a revised Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). A six week consultation on a draft version of the document took place during September - October 2013. The SCI sets out who Bracknell Forest Council will engage with on the preparation of planning policies and on planning applications and how and when they will be engaged. It also encourages community and stakeholder involvement.

**2 RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 2.1 **That the revised Statement of Community Involvement (at Appendix A) be adopted (incorporating changes outlined in Appendix B), which will replace the existing SCI, adopted in 2006.**
- 2.2 **That the Consultation Statement (at Appendix C) be noted.**

**3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 3.1 There is a requirement for the Council to prepare an SCI which sets out how the Local Planning Authority (LPA) will involve the community in the exercise of its planning functions.

**4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 The main alternative is not to adopt a revised SCI but to rely on the existing version adopted in 2006. As that version of the SCI does not take account of changes in legislation (see Section 5), the adoption of a fully revised SCI is considered the most appropriate option.

**5 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 5.1 The SCI sets out the Council's standards to be achieved in involving the local community and other stakeholders in the preparation, alteration and continuing review of all planning policy documents and the determination of planning applications.
- 5.2 The current SCI was adopted in July 2006, but needs updating to reflect the changes that have been made (further information was set out in report to 9 July 2013 Executive) at:
- National level (new national policy, and Government guidance/Legislation such as the Localism Act 2011 and the National Planning Policy Framework

2012. These resulted in changes in terminology, consultation requirements and introduced neighbourhood planning and the duty to co-operate).

- At a local level (such as where and how information on planning applications and policy documents is made available).

## **6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS**

### Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 It is important that the Council complies with the approved Statement of Community Involvement as case law has established that a failure to consult as proposed by the SCI can lead to decisions being quashed.

### Borough Treasurer

- 6.2 There are no significant financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

### Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 An EqIA Screening Form was completed for the 9 July 2013 Executive, which did not identify any negative impacts and the proposed changes do not affect the findings. It is not considered that the proposed changes to the SCI (see Appendix B) affect the EqIA screening that was previously undertaken.

### Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 The risk of not adopting the reviewed SCI is that information in the current SCI is out of date, and could therefore be misleading in terms of the Council's approach to involving the local community in the preparation, alteration and continuing review of all planning policy documents and determination of planning applications.

## **7 CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 At the 9 July 2013 Executive meeting, it was resolved to undertake a six week consultation on a draft version of the document. This took place between 9 September and 21 October 2013.
- 7.2 In response to the consultation, 16 representations were received from a range of consultees (local residents and statutory bodies such as the Environment Agency). These have been summarised and are set out with the Council's response to each issue together with any changes required to the SCI, in a 'Consultation Statement'. (Attached in Appendix C).
- 7.3 No fundamental issues were raised as a result of the consultation. A few minor changes have been made to the SCI in terms of clarification.

## **8 CHANGES TO DRAFT CONSULTATION VERSION OF SCI**

- 8.1 A summary of changes made to the revised SCI is contained in Appendix B.

## **9 COMMUNITY AWARENESS OF THE PLANNING PROCESS**

9.1 Whilst the SCI contains provisions as to how individuals and organisations can get involved in decision making on planning applications, and formulation of planning policy, the community may not always be aware of the planning process until they receive a consultation from the planning department. In order to promote wider awareness, and increase the profile of the planning process, the Council's planning web site will be reviewed and amended to include a section relating to how to get involved in planning. This will provide basic information in terms of:

- The planning process;
- Where information can be monitored/reviewed (for example, Council's web site and consultation portal, local libraries and Parish/Town Council offices);
- Will cross refer to the detail in the SCI;
- Officers being available if the community has any queries; and
- Downloadable leaflet in relation to the above.

### Background Papers

Appendix A – Revised Statement of Community Involvement for Adoption

Appendix B – Summary of changes to the SCI

Appendix C – Consultation Statement relating to consultation on revised SCI

Other documents:

Existing SCI: <http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/statementofcommunityinvolvement>

Revised SCI consultation: <http://consult.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/portal/planning/sci/revisedsci>

### Contact for further information

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