
REPORT TO:	Environmental & Development Services Committee	AGENDA ITEM: 9
DATE OF MEETING:	2nd June 2005	CATEGORY: RECOMMENDED
REPORT FROM:	Deputy Chief Executive	OPEN:
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	Gill Hague 595821	DOC:
SUBJECT:	Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)	REF:
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	All	TERMS OF REFERENCE:EDS03

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 Members recommend that Council at its special meeting on 16th June agree the draft Statement of Community Involvement attached as an appendix for the purposes of pre-submission participation; and
- 1.2 That officers investigate options for allowing public speaking at Development Control Committee and report back to a future meeting in due course.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To inform Members about the formulation of the first SCI and seek their agreement of the draft (see appendix) that will form the basis of the first round of formal public consultation.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 One of the first documents to be prepared under the new planning system is an SCI. Its purpose is to let the community know when and how it will be involved in the preparation of new planning documents and the determination of planning applications. The content of the SCI must be subjected to formal consultation and independent examination. Once the document is adopted the Council will have to demonstrate in future that it has complied with it.
- 3.2 Undertaking an audit of previous consultation methods, their response rates and asking the community at large how they would prefer to be

consulted (including the identification and involvement of hard to reach groups) is time consuming and requires specialist skills. Consultants were therefore engaged to undertake the work and prepare the SCI.

- 3.3 A workshop was held in February to which a cross section of representative groups, organisations and individuals from the District were invited. The experiences and suggestions gained at the workshop helped to inform the writing of the attached draft SCI that sets out the minimum requirements and additional measures the Council will adopt when informing and consulting on planning matters.
- 3.4 At the workshop the issue of allowing public speaking at Committee was raised. This issue was subsequently raised again in May at the Parish Liaison Meeting. There are several matters that need to be properly investigated in order to fully consider whether or not this would be appropriate and it is therefore suggested that further work be undertaken. An amendment if necessary can be made to the SCI on a future review.
- 3.5 Another suggestion originally included in the consultant's draft was the ability to track the progress of planning applications on line. Whilst this is desirable the planning department is not currently in a position to implement this. We are however, gradually improving the information made available and the interactivity of the website so this is an area for future development.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The cost of the consultants working up the draft SCI was covered by the approved implementation plan for the spending of the 2004/2005 Planning Delivery Grant.
- 4.2 Securing meaningful public involvement at the pre-submission consultation stage of Development Plan Documents could cost in the region of £3,000-£4,000 for a one day workshop if specialist consultants are engaged as facilitators (including preparation and writing up). Funding would be required as follows:
 - Woodville-Swadlincote Area Action Plan - June 2006
 - Core Strategy and Suite of Development Control Policies - October 2006
- 4.3 Distribution of a newsletter to households and businesses would cost in the region of £5, 500. This would be appropriate for the first stage of the Core Strategy and Suite of Development Control Policies in October 2006.
- 4.4 Ensuring that the Council co-ordinates and combines its consultation activities should help to keep costs down for items such as printing, postage & room hire.

5.0 Corporate Implications

- 5.1 The work began with an audit of previous consultation undertaken by various departments within the Council. This and the other information gathered by the consultants at the SCI workshop will inform the preparation of a Corporate Communication and Consulting Strategy.

6.0 Community Implications

- 6.1 The SCI will inform the community as to how and when they will be consulted on planning issues. A separate report will provide best practice for other departments undertaking consultation, with a view to avoiding consultation overload.
- 6.2 As a direct response to a comment made at the workshop the print size of site notices relating to planning applications has been increased to enable those members of the community that are partially sighted to be better informed.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 The draft SCI forms a logical and realistic basis for public involvement in the planning process and is founded on initial public participation.
- 7.2 Whilst the SCI is not itself a Development Plan Document it does establish how the community will be consulted on such documents. It is therefore appropriate that full Council makes the decision regarding its acceptability.
- 7.3 Following Council agreement the document will undergo a formal six weeks consultation period as programmed in the Local Development Scheme to start before the end of June. A revised version taking on board where appropriate the suggestions received will be reported back to Members prior to submission to the Secretary of State and the start of a further formal 6 weeks consultation programmed for September. An independent examination will then be held into objections and a binding Inspector's Report received.

8.0 Background Papers

Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004
The Town & Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004
Planning Policy Statement 12 – Local Development Frameworks
Creating Local Development Frameworks – A Companion Guide to PPS12

