COMMITTEE: COUNCIL  REF NO: C/13/21
DATE: 19 MARCH 2014
SUBJECT: STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT REVIEW
PORTFOLIO HOLDER: COUNCILLOR CAROLE JONES
HEAD OF SERVICE: MATTHEW LING

Short description of report content and the decision requested:

The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out how the Council intends to involve the community in the planning system. The ‘community’ comprises voluntary and community groups, local residents, businesses, landowners, statutory agencies and others with an interest in planning. The SCI deals with community involvement in local plan documents and in determining planning applications.

The review will update the SCI following changes to the planning regulations and to improve its effectiveness. A statutory public consultation was undertaken for eight weeks between 19th July and 12th September 2013.

This report considers the SCI review produced by the Town Planning Service (Appendix 1) and the Consultation Statement (Appendix 2) and recommends that Executive:

- Approves the Draft SCI for Ipswich Review (Appendix 1) for referral to Council to adopt at the meeting on 19th March 2014.
- Authorises the Head of Development and Public Protection to publish the Draft SCI Review and make any future minor updates.

Ward(s) affected:

All

List of Appendices included in this report:

a) Appendix 1 – Statement of Community Involvement for Ipswich Draft Review
b) Appendix 2 – Statement of Community Involvement for Ipswich Draft Review Consultation Statement

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**This report was prepared after consultation with:**

Internal consultees

External consultees

Public consultation 19/7/13 – 12/9/13

**The following policies form a context to this report:**

(all relevant policies must also be referred to in the body of the report)

- Building a Better Ipswich
- Ipswich Borough Council Core Strategy and Policies development plan document (2011)
- Site Allocations and Policies development plan document preferred options (2007)
- Ipswich Local Plan (1997)
- Local Development Scheme for Ipswich (2013)

**LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS AS REQUIRED BY LAW**

(papers relied on to write the report but which are not published and do not contain exempt information)

1. None.
OTHER HELPFUL PAPERS

(papers which the report author considers might be helpful – this might include published material)

1. Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (referred to as ‘the Act’)
2. Planning Act 2008
3. Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 (referred to as ‘the 2004 Regulations’)
4. Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2008 (referred to as ‘the 2008 Regulations’)
5. Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2009 (referred to as ‘the 2009 Regulations’)
6. Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (referred to as ‘the 2012 Regulations’)
7. Localism Act 2011 (referred to as ‘the Localism Act’)
1. Introduction

1.1 The Ipswich Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out the Council’s policies for involving consultees, including the public, in plan preparation and in the determination of planning applications. It was adopted in September 2007.

1.2 The Local Development Scheme identifies the preparation of a SCI review. An initial ‘call for ideas’ informal public consultation was undertaken in May and June 2012. This was followed by an 8 week formal public consultation on a draft document between 19th July and 12th September 2013.

1.3 This report seeks Executive approval of the draft SCI review for referral to Council on 19th March 2014 for formal adoption.

2. Background

2.1 The Local Development Scheme commits the Council to review and update the SCI during 2012/13. This is necessary in order to:

   a) reflect more recent changes to the relevant legislation and regulations, which have altered the process for preparing local development documents – the regulations are now less prescriptive about the informal consultation stages for development plan documents prior to the formal pre-submission consultation (Regulation 19 in the 2012 regulations), and therefore references in the SCI to separate ‘issues and options’ and ‘preferred options’ stages are now out of date. Furthermore following the introduction of the 2012 regulations, the regulation numbers for stages of document production have changed and need to be updated;

   b) reflect experience gained implementing the SCI to date in preparing the Core Strategy and other local development documents;

   c) ensure that it is up to date in relation to the Equality Duty;

   d) ensure it is up to date in relation to the Localism Act; and

   e) reflect experience of involvement in major planning applications.

2.2 The Council’s adopted SCI (2007) was subject to independent examination. The Planning Act 2008 removed the requirement for an SCI to be submitted for independent examination.
2.3 In spite of the changes to the plan preparation process, the emphasis remains on early community engagement in preparing plans so that people can influence the content and focus of policies from the early stages.

2.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (March 2012) in paragraph 155 requires ‘early and meaningful engagement and collaboration with neighbourhoods, local organisations and businesses’ in preparing local plans to reflect a ‘collective vision and a set of agreed priorities for the sustainable development of the area’.

2.5 Effective engagement is not about delivering every engagement activity possible or seeking to involve everyone every time. Engagement should be proportionate to the scale of issues involved.

2.6 The Planning Inspectorate’s guidance states, ‘At Examination, LPAs (Local Planning Authorities) will need to show a clear trail of options generation, appraisal, selection or rejection and the role that sustainability appraisal and community engagement have played in this process’ (Lessons Learnt Examining DPDs, 2007).

2.7 The Statement of Community Involvement was the first document prepared as part of the Ipswich Local Development Framework (now Local Plan). It was adopted in 2007 ahead of most of the consultation stages on the Core Strategy and before the preferred options consultation on all three development plan documents (Core Strategy and Policies, Site Allocations and Policies, and IP-One Area Action Plan).

2.8 The experience gained in the meantime has highlighted the following issues with the SCI in relation to plan preparation:

- The SCI commits to making available background documents in paper copy at the Council’s offices and libraries. For the Core Strategy Examination, the Core Document Library was made available at Grafton House, the Customer Service Centre, the Ipswich County Library, and Westbourne Library. Whilst this had the advantage of maximising opportunities for access to paper copies of the documents, the disadvantage was that it committed the Council to costs in replicating documents multiple times. A further disadvantage was that it required the venues concerned to make space for a bulky collection of documents, which ran to five large crates full for the Core Document Library. Some venues struggled to accommodate this paperwork.

The draft reviewed SCI suggests the Core Document Library is held at the Ipswich County Library and the Council’s offices at Grafton House.
• The Core Strategy post submission stage involved additional rounds of consultation, most notably relating to the changes agreed through the Examination Hearings. The SCI does not deal with such consultations as they are not a formal part of the process. In the case of the Core Strategy, the Inspector instructed the Council to undertake the consultation and the approaches adopted were agreed with the Programme Officer. Some comments were received from the public that the consultation had not been undertaken in conformity with the SCI.

The draft reviewed SCI therefore makes it clear that post submission consultations are outside its scope and are controlled by the Inspector.

• In 2012/13 work was undertaken on three supplementary planning documents (SPDs): Local List (Buildings of Townscape Interest), Development and Flood Risk, and the Northern Fringe Area Development Brief (now Ipswich Garden Suburb). The SCI commits the Council to the same activities to involve the community in the preparation of an SPD as for a DPD. However, SPDs by their nature are more specialised and simply add detail to policies in development plan documents, such as the Core Strategy, which themselves have already undergone extensive and rigorous consultation and testing. Some SPDs may be of wide interest, such as space and design guidelines in new development, which could affect all areas of the Borough. However, others such as the Northern Fringe Area Development Brief will be of interest to a more targeted section of the community.

Therefore a more flexible and proportionate approach is needed to involvement in preparing SPDs, which offers opportunities appropriate to the topic under consideration. This is proposed in the draft reviewed SCI.

2.9 In respect of Local Plan production the Council is required to:

• Notify ‘specific’ consultation bodies the Council considers may have an interest in the subject of the proposed local plan, for example neighbouring local authorities, the County Council, English Heritage, the Environment Agency, Natural England and Anglian Water.

• Notify ‘general’ consultation bodies the Council considers appropriate, for example these could include voluntary groups, the Home Builders Federation and Chamber of Commerce.

• Notify residents or people undertaking business in the Borough, which the Council considers appropriate to invite
representations. This must be proportionate to the Local Plan
document being produced.

- There is also a duty to co-operate with certain bodies in relation
to the planning of sustainable development. This means that the
Council must engage in discussion and joint work where
necessary with bodies including neighbouring local authorities,
the County Council, English Heritage, the Environment Agency
and Natural England in the production of Local Plans.

- In undertaking sustainability appraisal in respect of the Strategic
Environmental Assessment Directive, the Council must also
consult English Heritage, the Environment Agency and Natural
England in the scoping of sustainability appraisal reports.

- Make documents available for inspection at the Council’s
offices, that is consultation documents will be available to view
at the Customer Service Centre and background documentation
at Grafton House, and at other places within Ipswich that the
Council considers appropriate during normal office hours, which
will be the Ipswich County Library.

- Publish documents on the Council’s website.

- Printed copies of documents if requested will be available at
cost price plus postage.

- Local Plans are to be consulted on for a minimum period of 6
weeks.

- Supplementary planning documents are to be consulted on for a
minimum of 4 weeks.

2.10 Beyond this it is at the discretion of the Council as to how it undertakes
consultation on Local plan documents. It is proposed in the draft SCI
review (Appendix 1) that the Council will organise at least one public
exhibition for a draft development plan document consultation and
where a document identifies a development proposal relating to a
specific area of land, that the Council posts notices in prominent
locations. It is also proposed that where the Council consults over the
summer holidays and the Christmas period that a further two weeks
are added to the minimum consultation period.

2.11 In respect of planning applications, the Council is required to consult
what are termed ‘statutory’ consultees depending upon the nature of
the proposals and the specific consultees required for that class of
development proposal. Statutory consultees may include the Ancient
Monuments Society, English Heritage, the Environment Agency,
Natural England and Suffolk County Council.
2.12 Beyond this other main consultees could include Anglian Water, Suffolk Constabulary and the Suffolk Wildlife Trust. It is also important where appropriate that the Council consults with neighbouring local authorities and parish councils on major planning applications that raise cross-boundary strategic planning issues.

2.13 The Government also prescribes required minimum standards for publicity on planning applications and encourages councils to undertake pre-application discussions for a fee, which the Council does. Methods of publicity the Council undertakes in respect of consultation on planning applications is through displaying site notices, sending letters to local residents and businesses, and a weekly list of applications is published in the local press and on the Council’s website. Responses are invited to be made within 21 days. The Council is only legally required to undertake two of these three methods of communication. In addition, planning applications can be viewed electronically via the Council’s website and on-line at the Customer Service Centre.

3. Relevant Policies

3.1 Building a Better Ipswich Theme 1: A Stronger Ipswich Economy, Theme 2: A Safer and Healthier Ipswich, Theme 3: Keeping Ipswich Moving, Theme 4: Quality Housing for All and Theme 5: A Greener Ipswich, are all relevant through the documents produced in accordance with the SCI.

3.2 The one-Ipswich Community Strategy previously informed the production of the Ipswich Borough Council Core Strategy and Policies development plan document and the visions and outcomes of the community strategy are addressed in the core strategy. Furthermore the Suffolk Community Strategy was considered in the preparation of the one-Ipswich Community Strategy to ensure that both strategies are pulling in the same direction and working towards complementary outcomes.

4. Options Considered / Under Consideration

4.1 This report pursues the Option to recommend for approval the adoption of the draft review of the Statement of Community Involvement for Ipswich.

4.2 Not adopting a draft review of the SCI would result in an out-of-date and burdensome document that has become ineffective in areas outlined in section 2 of this report. It would also result in additional cost to the Council, for example in the production of multiple copies of printed documents at the publication stage of the local plan documents.
5. **Consultations**

5.1 In May 2012 the Council published an Ipswich Local Plan newsletter, number 5, which invited people to give their views on the effectiveness of techniques used by the Council to engage the public and other interested parties in the plan-making process.

5.2 There were two comments received at that time. Issues raised included the need to maintain more traditional means of communication, for example post; to improve electronic response tools to accommodate detailed responses; give appropriate weight to group responses relative to individual responses as it is easier and more cost effective to give a group response; greater transparency of working with neighbouring councils; and clarification on the role of the Area Committees. Other issues raised referred to the adopted Statement of Community Involvement and its implementation leading to confusion; and that the Local Plan newsletter should be more wide-reaching for example distributed through the Angle and placed in libraries.

5.3 Officers took these considerations into account and received a number of subsequent requests to receive correspondence by e-mail rather than post. There is a cost implication by post. It is suggested that either e-mail or post is used as appropriate. Council publications provide a good opportunity for the distribution of messages such as the Local Plan newsletter and the Angle. The Local Plan newsletter can be distributed to the libraries for reference only at a small cost of printing and it is available electronically on the Council's website.

5.4 An 8 week formal public consultation was undertaken between 19th July and 12th September 2013 on a draft reviewed SCI. Twelve responses were received including the two groups who responded to the earlier consultation. Summaries of the comments received are shown on the Consultation Statement (Appendix 2) together with the Council's responses.

5.5 Comments included commitment to the use of Area Committees for planning document consultations and major planning applications; clarification over who would be directly consulted and when; clarification in respect of the communication tools to be used to ensure effective community engagement; a request for a greater role for businesses in planning decisions; a commitment to use the Angle as a key method of communication; the need to commit to making the evidence informing the planning documents publically available; and to extend the public consultation period when there are multiple planning documents produced.

5.6 These comments have been taken into consideration by officers and the document has been revised where appropriate. For example the background to the SCI has been mentioned in the introduction along with references to business; clarification of the neighbourhood planning
process has been mentioned in chapter 1; a new paragraph in chapter 2 summarising the communication tools including Twitter and Facebook has been added; changes to figures 1(a) and 1(b) to include reference to the Angle and clarification that all evidence required to support a local plan examination will be published in a Core Document Library; and a new chapter 5 on monitoring and review.

### 6. Risk Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Description</th>
<th>Consequence of risk</th>
<th>Risk Controls</th>
<th>Probability of risk occurring taking account of controls (scale A-F)</th>
<th>Impact of risk, if it occurred taking account of actions (scale 1 - catastrophic; 4 - negligible)</th>
<th>Actions to mitigate risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Process failures if the SCI review is not adopted</td>
<td>Plans being found unsound</td>
<td>Adopt the SCI review and rigorously check the regulations</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Adopt the up-to-date SCI review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. SCI review fails to meet minimum regulatory requirements</td>
<td>Plans being found unsound</td>
<td>Legal input to the SCI to ensure the regulations are addressed</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ensure Legal input to the SCI review</td>
</tr>
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### 7. Environmental Impact Assessment

7.1 The report does not have any significant direct environmental impacts. It is about consulting on a document that sets out how future consultations will be conducted, and not about proposals or policies affecting land.

### 8. Equalities and Diversity Implications

8.1 Evidence collected during the plan making process over the past few years has suggested that responses to planning policy consultations are usually made by people aged over 60. Therefore when undertaking consultation the Council needs to reach all ages of the population and this can be achieved through both electronic and traditional means. Twitter for example could be a way of reaching a wider audience.

8.2 Venues used for public consultation events need to ensure that they are accessible to all otherwise non-attendance could occur.
8.3 Planning policy documents are currently produced in English. It may be necessary to offer support with the translation of information, especially where documents have implications for certain sections of the community, for example the development of site nearby to residents whose first language is not English.

8.4 Chapters 1.4 and 1.5 of the draft Statement of Community Involvement identifies the Council aims to seek the diverse views of the community and demonstrate due regard under the Equality Duty by involving people with different protected characteristics.

9. Financial Considerations

9.1 Community consultation will incur financial costs, for example in terms of postage, hiring venues for public exhibitions, placing notices in the press and staff resource. Where costs are incurred they will be met by the planning policy team budget or the development management team budget as appropriate. However it is important that costs are kept to a minimum and only incurred where necessary.

9.2 For example in respect of postage, each time the Council sent out a letter to everyone on its Local Plan consultees database in addressing the requirement of contacting such residents or other persons carrying on business it considers appropriate, this costs approximately £700 plus the printing cost of the letter and the envelope, which can add a further £300. Therefore the Council is encouraging e-mail correspondence where possible, while recognising that not everyone has access to a computer or the Internet.

9.3 Currently the Council produces a public notice advertising the Local Plan documents being produced, where they can be viewed and at what time. This is sent to those invited to make representations as legally required either by e-mail or post as noted in paragraph 9.2, is also placed in the local press at a cost of approximately £350 and on the Council’s website. This ensures that those who do not have access to the Internet are able to be informed of the production of Local Plan documents and are able to make comments if felt necessary. The Council also often publishes details of Local Plan documents in Council publications such as the Angle to ensure a wide circulation.

9.4 When advertising planning applications, this is currently done through publishing the weekly list in the local press, writing letters, and placing site notices near the site of the application. The Council is only legally required to undertake at least two of these three methods of communication.

9.5 The Council can reduce costs through limiting the number of staffed exhibitions undertaken as the venue hire costs for these can vary from £50 to £250, depending upon the venue and number of days, in
addition to the staff resource. This review commits to a minimum of one exhibition for development plan document consultation.

9.6 The Council can significantly reduce costs through restricting the display of printed documents to the Customer Service Centre/Grafton House and the Ipswich County Library as a minimum, thus reducing the number of printed copies required. Some of the documents containing supporting evidence consist of several hundreds of pages.

9.7 The costs of the consultation on this document will be met by the planning policy team budget.

10. Legal Considerations

10.1 The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) was a requirement of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and was originally required to undergo formal Examination in Public. The requirement for the document to be publically examined has been removed. Since the SCI was adopted in 2007 there have been changes to planning legislation notably the Planning Act 2008 and the Localism Act 2011, and the planning regulations. The SCI review is required to ensure the SCI refers to the correct legal requirements in the plan making and planning application processes. For example in plan making, the regulation numbers and stages of development plan document production have changed since the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

11. Performance Monitoring

11.1 This document reports back comments from the formal public consultation undertaken in 2013 and a final draft Statement of Community Involvement for Ipswich review has been produced for consideration.

11.2 To adopt the draft Statement of Community Involvement for Ipswich review (March 2014) in accordance with the Council’s Local Development Scheme.

12. Conclusions

12.1 A review of the Statement of Community Involvement, adopted in September 2007 was necessary to bring the document up-to-date in respect of planning legislation, incorporate communications techniques which are now available to the Council, for example Twitter, and reduce the burden on the Council’s resources whilst maintaining effective approaches to involvement in the planning process.

12.2 The review has taken steps to simplify the adopted SCI and reduce the number of chapters and appendices through re-organising the
presentation of content. Amendments have been made to ensure the
document is up-to-date and is more effective for the production of
future planning documents and in consultation on planning
applications.

12.3 The formal public consultation undertaken in 2013 provided the
opportunity for the public and others to contribute to ensuring the
Council undertakes effective public consultation in the future across all
of the population and those who are interested in the planning activities
of the Council.

12.4 The draft SCI review (Appendix 1) has taken these comments into
consideration and has been amended accordingly where appropriate.

13. Recommendations

13.1 That Council:

(i) Approves the draft Statement of Community Involvement
    for Ipswich Review for adoption at the meeting on 19th
    March 2014.

(ii) Authorises the Head of Development and Public Protection
    to publish the Draft SCI for Ipswich Review and make any
    future minor updates.

Reason: To ensure a more effective and up-to-date Statement of Community
Involvement for Ipswich, that is achievable and better utilises the resources
available.