

HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE MEETING OF 10 FEBRUARY 2020

PUBLIC REPORT: Y

EXEMPT REPORT: N

Report Title	Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) Consultation and Adoption
KEY DECISION	Y
Report Author	Strategic & Local Planning Manager
Purpose of Report	To report the outcome of consultation and seek approval to recommend the Statement of Community Involvement for adoption.
Reason for Decision	To meet the requirements of legislation governing SCIs. Effect change to Council policy.
Portfolio (holder)	Councillor J Bateman (Regulatory)
Corporate Priorities	An enterprising, vibrant place A healthy, inclusive and engaged community
Financial Implications	Nil. Resources for planning policy, development management and support for Neighbourhood Planning are contained within the existing financial and staffing resource of the Council.
Risk Management Implications	See section 4.0 below.
Environmental Implications	Nil
Legal Implications	The SCI has been prepared in accordance with legislation.
Equality Implications	No overall adverse effects identified.
Data Protection Implications	The SCI reflects the Council's obligations under the GDPR regulations.
Consultation	A seven-week period of consultation has been completed. See section 2.0 below.
Options	See section 7.0 below. There are not considered to be any appropriate options.
Background Papers	Executive Report 7 October 2019: Review of SCI
Recommendation	1. For Cabinet to recommend to Council that the Harborough Statement of Community Involvement (Jan 2020) be adopted as Council policy.

1. Introduction

1.1 Each Local Planning Authority has a duty to prepare and maintain a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) setting out how parties with an

interest in planning issues in the district, both planning policy and planning applications, can engage with the planning system.

- 1.2 The Council adopted its SCI in March 2015. Since then there have been several changes to legislation governing the planning system. The most recent brings into effect a requirement to complete a review of the SCI every 5 years, and a requirement to include specific information in the SCI around the support available for Neighbourhood Plan preparation. The SCI has been reviewed and updated to reflect these legislative changes.
- 1.3 On the 18 November 2019 Council approved a draft SCI for the purposes of consultation. Following a period of consultation, a final SCI is now proposed for adoption to replace the 2015 version.

2. Key Facts

- 2.1 A 7-week period of public consultation began on 20 November 2019 and ended on 8 January 2020. In total 1,523 groups, individuals and other interested parties who are on the strategic planning contact database were directly invited to participate in the consultation. Copies of the draft SCI were also made available at locations around the district and the consultation was publicised via the media, social media and on the Council's website.
- 2.2 The consultation generated responses from 28 different respondents, providing 113 separate comments (or representations). A range of different types of groups and individuals took the opportunity to comment as follows;

Type of respondents	Parish Council	Local Group / Org.	Govt Agency / Stat Body	Individuals
No.	10	5	7	6

- 2.3 The majority of comments (78%) were made online using the Strategic Planning Consultation Portal with a further 22% made via email. Comments are assigned to questions posed within the consultation document. The most commented questions / parts of the document were as below;

Question	Nature	No. of comments
1	Core principles	21
2	Extra contacts (for database)	14
5	Minimum 6-week consultation period	14
8	Any other comments	21

- 2.4 The main issues raised through the consultation process are summarised in Appendix 1.
- 2.5 As a result of the consultation several changes have been made to the SCI document, as identified in Appendix 1. Appendix 2 contains the proposed final SCI (Jan 2020) incorporating these amendments.

3. Summary

- 3.1 Overall participation in the SCI consultation, which the authority optionally chose to consult on, was low when compared to other policy consultations. However, it has resulted in some useful suggestions.
- 3.2 It is clear from the response that the opportunity for interested parties to continue to engage with and influence planning is welcomed locally. Albeit collectively there appears to be some scepticism, particularly amongst parish councils, about the Councils commitment to genuine engagement in practice as expressed by the SCI. In part, this reflects the complexity of the planning system and the experiences of certain communities. Positively, it also highlights the scope to build capacity and understanding as a key part of the process of engaging and involving others in future policy work.

4. Risk Management Implications

- 4.1 Conformity with the SCI forms part of the legal compliance tests for development plan documents. As such, any future development plan document (such as a local plan) will be examined to ensure that it has been prepared in accordance with the consultation standards set out in the SCI (as well as other legal compliance tests and 'soundness' tests). As such, it is important that the SCI is robust, future-proofed and capable of being fully complied with over the coming 5-year period, until it is next reviewed.

5. Legal Issues

- 5.1 The requirement for the local planning authority to produce an SCI is set out in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, Section 18, subsections (1) and (2) and other relevant and amended legislation. To accord with legislation the review of the SCI must be completed within 5 years of the date the current SCI was adopted i.e. before 30 March 2020.

6. Equality Implications

- 6.1 A Due Regard (Equality Assessment) has been completed (Appendix 3). No overall adverse effects were identified. Four actions are identified in the Equality Improvement Plan, two relate to equalities data collection and will be undertaken by September 2020 and two concern ongoing work practices.

7. Options

Not recommending the SCI (Jan 2020) for adoption.

The Council may fail to meet its legal obligation to complete the review the SCI within the prescribed 5-year deadline.