

Part A

Report to: Cabinet

Date of meeting: Monday, 11 November 2019

Report author: Planning Policy Officer

Title: Statement of Community Involvement

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 Every local planning authority is required to prepare and maintain a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) under Section 18 of the [Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004](#)¹, as amended.
- 1.2 The SCI sets out how Watford Borough Council will involve communities, local businesses and other stakeholders in the planning process. It will guide the council's approach to stakeholder engagement with the Local Plan and other planning policy documents, neighbourhood plans and Development Management decisions.
- 1.3 Watford's first Statement of Community Involvement was adopted in 2006 and has subsequently been revised. This document is the fourth revision of the SCI, although it is the first time the document has been completely redrafted since its original version.
- 1.4 This report outlines the issues, benefits and implications of adopting the SCI.

2.0 Risks

2.1

Nature of risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response (treat, tolerate, terminate or transfer)	Risk Rating (combination of severity and likelihood)
Changing government legislation	New national policy could require additional considerations and changes to the text	Update document with changes to national requirements	Treat	4
Changes to Council procedures	Changes to Council procedures could require additional	Update document with changes to Council procedures	Treat	4

¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/5/contents>

	considerations and changes to the text		
--	--	--	--

3.0 **Recommendations**

- 3.1 That Cabinet agree to adopt the Statement of Community Involvement to supersede the 2017 version of the document.
- 3.2 That Cabinet agree to delegate to the Head of Place Shaping in Consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Development the authority to make any minor changes to the document which may be required in the future.

Further information:

Vicky Hughes, Planning Policy Officer
Email: vicky.hughes@watford.gov.uk

Telephone Extension: 8616

Report approved by: Ian Dunsford, Planning Policy Section Head

4.0 **Detailed proposal**

- 4.1 The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is a document that seeks to set out how all members of the community can engage with the planning system, to become involved with local and neighbourhood plan-making and deciding planning applications. It has been updated to reflect changes in the ways we consult, including greater use of technology and social media. It also takes into account changes to national legislation.
- 4.2 Every local planning authority is required to prepare and maintain a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) under Section 18 of the [Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004](#)², as amended. A new version of the document has been prepared to support the New Watford Local Plan.
- 4.3 The updated SCI went out for public consultation between 19 July 2019 and 13 September 2019. This 6 week consultation was endorsed by the Planning Policy Advisory Group (PPAG) on 19 June 2019. PPAG also supported the document at this meeting.
- 4.4 A consultation statement has been provided as Appendix B of the report, which addresses the methods used to consult and the feedback received. Overall, there were three comments received, one of which supported the document and two of which commented that the respondents had no specific feedback. As a result, the document has not been amended since the consultation.

² <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/5/contents>

Main Changes to the Document

- 4.5 Watford's existing Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) was adopted in 2017. Since then, there have been changes to national legislation and guidance which need to be accounted for in the SCI.
- 4.6 The Neighbourhood Planning Act (2017) now requires SCIs to set out how councils will engage with communities and support neighbourhood forums in the process of making a neighbourhood plan. As this legislation was published after the adoption of the existing SCI, the current document currently contains no detailed information on neighbourhood plan making. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was also updated in February 2019 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) came into force in 2018. GDPR has considerably changed the way we collect and hold personal data as part of our consultation database. Collectively, these changes make the existing document out of date.
- 4.7 The updated version of the SCI takes into account these legislative changes. A section has been included on neighbourhood plans and how the community can get involved. References to the NPPF have been refreshed to link to the 2019 version. In terms of data protection, a statement has been added to the document to clarify that personal data will be held in line with GDPR. A link has been provided to the council's updated data protection policy.
- 4.8 It was also considered that the existing document does not fully capture the changing ways that the council now choose to consult on planning issues. Consultations on the New Watford Local Plan have maximised use of technology and social media to reach a broader demographic. This includes young people, who have traditionally been harder to reach. The updated document reflects how technology is being used to shape consultation.
- 4.9 The document has been written in a more accessible way, to explain rather than present the information.
- 4.10 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has been attached to the report as Appendix C to support the proposed SCI.

5.0 Implications

5.1 Financial

- 5.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that there are no financial implications to this report.

5.2 Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)

- 5.2.1 The Group Head of Democracy and Governance comments that the legal implications are contained in the report and appendices. It is a legal requirement to have a SCI.

5.3 Equalities, Human Rights and Data Protection

- 5.3.1 Under s149 (1) of the Equality Act the council must have due regard, in the exercise of its functions, to the need to –
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share relevant protected characteristics and persons who do not share them
 - foster good relations between persons who share relevant protected characteristics and persons who do not share them.
- 5.3.2 As this is a new document, an Equalities Impact Analysis (EIA) has been undertaken and is attached as Appendix C. The SCI is a document that aims to foster better understanding of the planning system and ensure that participation is widened. Therefore, it is considered that greater opportunity for all members of the community to get involved in the planning system could have a positive impact on human rights and issues relating to equality.
- 5.3.3 Having had regard to the council's obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018, it is considered that officers are not required to undertake a Data Processing Impact Assessment (DPIA) for this report. The way the council uses personal information collected as a result of consultations on planning policy are set out in the SCI

5.4 Staffing

- 5.4.1 No additional resources required.

5.5 Accommodation

- 5.5.1 N/A

5.6 Community Safety/Crime and Disorder

- 5.6.1 N/A

5.7 Sustainability

- 5.7.1 N/A

Appendices

Appendix A - Statement of Community Involvement (2019)

Appendix B - Consultation Statement

Appendix C - Equality Impact Analysis

Background papers

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report. If you wish to inspect or take copies of the background papers, please contact the officer named on the front page of the report.

1. Statement of Community Involvement Consultation Document
2. [National Planning Policy Framework](#)