South Lakeland District Council  
Cabinet  
18 July 2018  
Draft Revised  
Statement of Community Involvement  

Portfolio: Housing, People and Innovation Portfolio Holder  
Report from: Director, People and Places  
Report Author: Alastair McNeill - Development Plans Manager  
David Cooper – Development Management Team Leader  
Wards: All – except those wards wholly within the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks  

1.0 Expected Outcome

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet’s approval to undertake public consultation for 6 weeks on the draft of a revised Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The updated document sets out how the Council intends to consult with communities and stakeholders on statutory planning documents, planning guidance and planning applications. The guidance relating to development management and community consultation on planning applications has been reviewed and simplified. In terms of neighbourhood planning, the revised document takes account of changes to planning legislation and regulation since the Council adopted the current SCI on 31 March 2016.

1.2 If the recommendation is approved, consultation on the draft revised SCI will take place in the last week of July through to the first week in September 2018 and the results of the consultation and any further changes to the SCI will be reported to Council on 10 October 2018 to consider its adoption as Council policy.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet

(1) approves the draft of a revised Statement of Community Involvement for consultation, as set out in Appendix 1; and

(2) authorises officers in consultation with the Portfolio Holder to make minor presentational and non-substantive changes to the draft Statement of Community Involvement prior to public consultation.
3.0 Background and Proposals

What is the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)?

3.1 The draft revised SCI at Appendix 1 sets out how and when the Council will engage with the community and other key stakeholders when it prepares and revises Local Plan Documents. It also explains how planning advice is provided and how the community will be consulted on planning applications. The revised SCI is intended to update and supersede the existing SCI adopted in March 2016. It reflects recent changes to planning legislation and regulations concerning neighbourhood planning. It also sets out a simplified guidance as to how the Council will consult on planning applications. Following a 6 week consultation, representations will be taken into account to inform the final SCI. The final version of the SCI will then be reported to Full Council to seek approval for its adoption as Council policy.

3.2 The Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Park Authorities, as separate local planning authorities, have their own SCIs to inform their consultation on plan preparation and planning applications in their areas. The revised SCI will only apply to the area for which South Lakeland District Council is the local planning authority.

The Council's approach to community engagement:

3.3 The Council already has a corporate Communications Strategy (May 2013) which sets out how the Council will communicate with local community partners, members and employees and a Community Engagement Strategy (updated in 2012). This summarises the community engagement practices being undertaken by the Council. It also has a Customer Charter and a Parish Charter 2016/2017. The Council is also well underway with a major innovation project, ‘Customer Connect’, to transform the way the Council works with and serves its customers.

3.4 The internet and the use of electronic forms of communication is increasing the opportunity to access information and engage with the Council in different ways - for example by smartphone, social media and e-mail. The Customer Connect project will also significantly change the way the Council engages with residents and customers. However, it remains important that communication include a variety of formats to encourage the widest possible accessibility.

3.5 Looking ahead the Council will continue to review and update the SCI as necessary, to reflect future changes in legislative requirements, best practice guidance, or where appropriate, applying learning from consultation experience(s).

Key changes to the SCI adopted in 2016:

3.6 Neighbourhood Planning Regulations: The 2018 Neighbourhood Planning Regulations require the Council from 31 July 2018 to set out policy in the SCI:

- on the support and advice it will provide to neighbourhood plan groups (Parish and Town Councils) when preparing or modifying Neighbourhood Development Plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders; and
- on how interested parties will be involved in the preliminary stages of neighbourhood plan making.

The current SCI, adopted in 2016, already sets out a Neighbourhood Planning Protocol explaining how the Council will advise and assist Parish and Town Councils in preparing Neighbourhood Plans and Development Orders. The Protocol in the proposed revision to the SCI has been updated to include all of the requirements in the new regulations.
3.7 The Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2018 also requires the Council from 31 January 2018 to notify Parish and Town councils preparing Neighbourhood Plans of any planning applications or alterations to applications in their area. The Council already meets this requirement but it is proposed to update the SCI accordingly to reflect this. This requirement applies when a neighbourhood development plan forms part of the statutory development plan, or where a post-examination neighbourhood plan is in place for a neighbourhood area - unless the parish or town council has given notification in writing that it does not wish to be notified of planning applications.

3.8 Consultation on planning applications: Section 5 of the revised SCI sets out how the Council will effectively engage interested parties in the development management process. The revised guidance has been simplified and written so that it is more resilient to future changes in regulations. The revised SCI sets out how the Council will provide pre-application planning advice, and also encourage potential applicants to engage with neighbours and the local community before submitting an application.

3.9 The revised SCI also sets out how the Council will publish all applications for planning permission and listed building consent, in accordance with the Council’s legal obligations. These may include by one of the following means: a site notice; press notice or neighbour notification letter. All applications for planning permission and listed building consent will be publicised by e-mail or letter to the town or parish council, or parish meeting for the parish that the site is in. Where a particular application may have more than local impacts and the Council considers it necessary to do so, we will also consult neighbouring parish councils in addition to the immediate council. Other topics addressed include:

- taking representations into account and making decisions;
- publicising decisions and planning appeals;
- and ensuring planning compliance.

4.0 Consultation

4.1 Whilst there is no regulatory requirement to consult on the draft revised SCI and some local authorities merely adopt them, it is considered that the document will have greater credibility if consulted upon. It is therefore recommended that the draft revised SCI be consulted on for period of 6 weeks, from Thursday 26 July to Friday 7 September 2018. The consultation will seek the views of Parish and Town Councils, Ward Members, as well as wider statutory and Duty to Cooperate bodies. The draft revised SCI will also be placed on the Council’s website.

5.0 Alternative Options

5.1 Do not approve the revised draft revised SCI for public consultation: This would mean that the current out-of-date SCI would remain as Council policy.

5.2 Delay public consultation on the draft revised SCI: Again, this would mean that the SCI would remain out-of-date for a longer period.

6.0 Links to Council Priorities

6.1 The production of the revised SCI will assist in the delivery of the Council’s priorities for delivering housing and economic development through improved community and stakeholder engagement in the preparation of Local Plan policy and guidance documents. It is therefore significant for the delivery of the 2014–2019 Council Plan.
7.0 Implications

Financial, Resources and Procurement

7.1 This report's recommendation to undertake consultation on the draft revised SCI can be met within the existing Council budget. The changes to consultation on planning applications is expected to result in significant savings as a result of a greater use of electronic means of consultation in preference to post and paper.

Human Resources

7.2 It is considered that the consultation on the draft revised SCI and reporting to Council for adoption can be met within existing staff resources.

Legal

7.3 The recommendations are in conformity with the relevant requirements in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, the neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 and the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 (Commencement No.3) Regulations 2018 (SI 2018 No 38 (C.7).

Health, Social, Economic and Environmental

7.4 Have you completed a Health, Social, Economic and Environmental Impact Assessment? Yes, (attached at Appendix 3).

7.5 Summary of health, social, economic and environmental impacts: the draft revised SCI is a document setting out how the Council will consult with residents, parish/town councils and stakeholders on planning applications and preparing Local Plan policy and guidance documents. As a result, the draft revised SCI will have limited or no direct impact on the great majority of health, social, economic or environmental factors. It will, however, have some positive impact on communication methods, primarily in relation to planning and environmental, rather than health or social matters.

Equality and Diversity

7.6 Have you completed an Equality Impact Analysis? Yes, (attached at Appendix 2).

7.7 Summary of equality and diversity impacts: The impact of the proposed changes to the SCI are limited. However, the revised SCI document itself will be produced in an accessible format, so that people with impaired vision can read using screen reader software. The expanded Neighbourhood Plan Protocol will also benefit those with protected characteristics.

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<td>The Council cannot continue with revising the Council's SCI. This would mean that the SCI would remain out-of-date for a longer period.</td>
<td>Approve the draft revised SCI for public consultation.</td>
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Appendices Attached to this Report

| Appendix No. | Name of Appendix | Appendix 1 | Draft Revised Statement of Community Involvement, 2018
| Appendix 2 | Equality Impact Assessment | Appendix 2
| Appendix 3 | Health, Social, Economic and Environmental Impact Assessment | Appendix 3

Background Documents Available

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