

25 November 2015		ITEM: 11
Council		
Thurrock Local Plan: Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key	
Report of: Councillor Speight, Portfolio Holder for Regeneration		
Accountable Head of Service: Andy Millard, Head of Planning and Growth		
Accountable Director: David Bull, Director of Planning and Transportation		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

At its meeting on the 12th February 2014 Cabinet gave authorisation for the preparation of a new Local Plan to guide the future development of Thurrock. For the new Thurrock Local Plan to be found sound, it must be prepared in accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

The SCI explains how the community is to be involved in decisions on the preparation of the Local Plan and planning applications. The Council's current SCI (adopted in 2007) needed to be updated to reflect recent changes in Government legislation and the national Planning system. On the 8th July 2015, Cabinet approved a revised draft of the SCI for a 6 week period of public consultation. This consultation generated 14 responses. The revised SCI has been amended to reflect some of the responses received. Council are now asked to authorise the adoption of the revised SCI and approve the associated Report of Consultation for publication.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 That Council adopt the Thurrock Local Plan: Statement of Community Involvement.**
- 1.2 That the Report of Consultation be approved by the Council alongside the Statement of Community Involvement.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 At its meeting on the 12th February 2014 Cabinet gave authorisation for the preparation of a new Local Plan to guide the future development of Thurrock.**

2.2 In preparing a new Local Plan the Council is required by legislation to produce a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The SCI sets out how the Council intends to engage with the community and stakeholders through the planning process. This includes the preparation of Local Plans and Supplementary Planning Documents and procedures for consulting the public on planning applications. In doing so the Council must adhere to the Government's principles for community engagement in planning. These require that involvement should be:

- appropriate to the level of planning;
- from the outset – leading to a sense of ownership of local policy decisions;
- continuous – part of an on-going programme, not a one-off event, with clearly articulated opportunities for continuing involvement;
- transparent and accessible – using methods appropriate to the communities concerned; and
- planned - as an integral part of the process for making plans.

2.3 The Government no longer provides guidance on how to produce a SCI with planning authorities now able to decide how they prepare their own SCI. Once the SCI has been adopted, the Council is legally obliged to comply with its Statement of Community Involvement. Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 an Inspector is charged with checking that a Local Plan submitted for adoption has complied with legislation. This includes checking that the plan has been prepared in compliance with the Statement of Community Involvement.

Consultation on draft Statement of Community Involvement

2.4 The draft SCI was granted Cabinet approval for public and stakeholder consultation for a six week period commencing 27th July 2015. Copies of the document were placed on the Council's website, as well as being placed on display in Council offices and in public libraries. Consultees already registered on the Thurrock Local Plan database were also provided with a link to the Council's online public consultation portal where they could make representations on the document as appropriate.

2.5 Below are summaries of the key responses that have been received:

- Make changes to the draft Statement of Community Involvement, to introduce a power of referendum on planning applications.
- The following Local Councils should be included in the list of consultation bodies: Brentwood Borough Council, Havering Borough Council, London Borough of Barking and Dagenham.

2.7 Consultation responses have been assessed and where necessary the SCI amended. A full summary of all the responses is attached at Appendix 2. The Report of Consultation is submitted for approval alongside the final Statement of Community Involvement.

- 2.8 The major costs associated with the preparation of the Local Plan will be incurred during the financial year 2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18, and 2018/19. Subject to the decision of the Council in agreeing the recommendations set out in this report, it is proposed to re-align existing budgets towards the preparation of the new Local Plan in line with the plan-making programme and timescales set out in the revised Statement of Community Involvement appended to this report. This includes the retention and use of the approved LDF Reserve Fund.
- 2.9 The revision of the original SCI has the potential to reduce costs by providing a more flexible and efficient framework for formal public engagement on planning policy documents and planning applications. Increasing the level of community support for the emerging Local Plan through the active involvement of the public in the plan-making process will help contribute towards reducing the number of objections to the plan and the risk of abortive costs arising if the plan needs to be substantially amended before or after the Examination in Public.
- 2.10 The Council has a statutory duty under the Equality Act 2010 to promote equality of opportunity in the provision of services and employment opportunities. An Equality Impact Analysis (EqIA) will be conducted as part of the process of preparing the new Local Plan. The adoption of a new SCI will ensure that the consultation process associated with the new Local Plan will provide an opportunity for all sections of the community, including harder to reach groups, to become fully involved in helping to shape the future planning and development of Thurrock.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 To comply with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008 and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 The draft SCI has been subject to consultation. It should be noted that progress on the Local Plan is to be reported to Overview and Scrutiny in January 2016 together with matters resulting from Issues and Options publications.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1 The revised SCI sets out how the community is to be involved in decisions on the preparation of Local Plans and planning applications, consistent with wider corporate objectives.

7. Implications

7.1 **Financial**

Implications verified by: **Michael Jones**
Management Accountant

Included in the body of the report.

7.2 **Legal**

Implications verified by: **Vivien Williams**
Planning & Regeneration Solicitor

Included in the body of the report.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Price**
Community Development Officer

Included in the body of the report.

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

There are no other implications associated with the report.

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

None.

9. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1: Thurrock Local Plan: Statement of Community Involvement
- Appendix 2: Thurrock Local Plan: Statement of Community Involvement: Report on Consultation.

Report Author:

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