

**REPORT TO:** CABINET POLICY DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP

**DATE:** 7 OCTOBER 2021

**TITLE:** STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

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**RECOMMENDED that:**

- A** The Working Group notes the contents of this report and comments as necessary.

**BACKGROUND**

1. A Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) explains how a local authority intends to involve the community in the preparation, alteration or review of local planning policies as set out in various Development Plan Documents or in determining planning applications. The planning system can be complex and the SCI aims to address uncertainty by setting out how the Council will engage with people at various stages of the planning process.
2. The preparation of an SCI is a legal requirement of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (section 18) as amended by the Planning Act 2008, the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017. Once adopted, the Council must follow the procedures set out in the SCI when consulting on planning-related matters.
3. The current SCI was adopted by the Council in 2014. Since then, there have been some changes which necessitate a review of the SCI. These changes will be published for consultation. Appendix A to this report sets out the revised SCI.

**ISSUES/PROPOSALS**

4. The Harlow Local Development Plan (HLDP) was adopted in December 2020. The SCI has been updated to set out how the Council will consult on the various stages relating to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). This is similar to the

consultation stages expected for Local Plan production and the methods in which the Council will engage the community are broadly the same. This includes the use of the Forward Planning Teams consultation database, letters and emails and the use of social media.

5. The SCI has been updated to make reference to the Quality Review Panel (QRP) and when it is appropriate for developers to engage in this process. The QRP provides independent and impartial 'critical friend' advice and design guidance on significant proposed development. The panel usually considers development to be significant if, for example, it is for groups of buildings, is an infrastructure project, affects sensitive views, involves significant public investment or is likely to set a future precedent. Development is usually referred to the panel by planning officers at an early stage, to identify and consider the key assumptions of the proposed design. Officers may also request a review once an application is submitted.
6. In addition to the above, the SCI now includes information on the pre-application advice offered by the Planning Team and information on how residents can be informed of applications in their area through the use of on-line mapping tools.
7. A significant change to the SCI is the inclusion of a pre-application consultation section which applicants are expected to undertake prior to the submission of their application. Pre-application engagement with the community is an important part of the application process and can often resolve conflicts and issues prior to an application being submitted. This could be through the use of exhibitions and presentations/briefings for major applications, or for the case of smaller applications, neighbour discussions.
8. Table 4.3 of the SCI sets out the engagement methods that will be used by the Council when an application is submitted. This has been amended from the previous 2014 SCI to enable a more flexible approach based on the circumstances of individual planning applications. The Council will continue to use letters and/or site notices where appropriate. This still meets the minimum legislative requirements for planning related consultations and where appropriate and where resources allow, the Council will exceed these requirements.
9. Subject to any changes that arise at Cabinet, the SCI will then be published for a six week consultation period. It will be made available at the Civic Centre and local libraries. It will also be published on the Council's website. A consultation statement will then be prepared setting out a summary of the issues raised and how these issues were incorporated into the SCI.
10. The Head of Environment and Planning will be given delegated authority to make and approve any minor or inconsequential amendments to the Draft Statement of Community Involvement arising from the consultation. The final SCI will then be placed on the Council's website and circulated to interested parties.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

### **Environment and Planning (Includes Sustainability)**

As contained within the report.

**Author: Andrew Bramidge, Head of Environment and Planning**

### **Finance (Includes ICT, and Property and Facilities)**

**Author: Simon Freeman, Head of Finance and Property and Deputy to the Chief Executive**

### **Housing**

**Author: Andrew Murray, Head of Housing**

### **Community Wellbeing**

**Author: Jane Greer, Head of Community Wellbeing**

### **Governance (Includes HR)**

**Author: Simon Hill, Head of Governance**

## **Appendices**

Appendix A – Draft Statement of Community Involvement

## **Background Papers**

Harlow Statement of Community Involvement 2014 -

<https://www.harlow.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Statement%20of%20Community%20Involvement.pdf>

Harlow Local Development Plan - <https://www.harlow.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/harlow-local-development-plan/harlow-local>

## **Glossary of terms/abbreviations used**

CIL – Community Infrastructure Levy

HLDP – Harlow Local Development Plan

SCI – Statement of Community Involvement

QRP – Quality Review Panel