

# Forest Heath District Council

(This report is not a key decision. This report has been subject to appropriate notice of publication under the Council's Access to Information Rules)

## Report of the Cabinet Member for Planning, Housing and Transport

**LOCAL PLAN  
WORKING GROUP**

**4 JULY 2013**

**LOP13/006**

### **JOINT STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (SCI) - PROPOSED CONSULTATION** (Key Decision Reference: MAY13/03)

#### **1. Summary and reasons for recommendation(s)**

- 1.1 The Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act requires local planning authorities to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) strategy for involving the community in the preparation of their local plan documents as well as how the community can become more involved in the planning application processes. Given the approach to a shared planning service for Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury, it is now appropriate to have a joint SCI that sets out a consistent approach across both districts. Prior to the SCI being adopted by the respective councils, it needs itself to be subject to consultation.

#### **2. Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 The Working Group resolves to recommend to Cabinet that the Draft Joint Statement of Community Involvement be approved for consultation.**

#### **Contact details**

Name

Title

Telephone

E-mail

#### **Portfolio holder**

Councillor Mrs R E Burt

Cabinet Member for Planning,  
Housing and Transport

01638 712309

[rona.burt@forest-heath.gov.uk](mailto:rona.burt@forest-heath.gov.uk)

#### **Lead officers**

Ian Poole

Place Shaping Manager

01284 757350

[Ian.poole@westsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:Ian.poole@westsuffolk.gov.uk)

Marie Smith

Place Shaping Manager

01638 719260

[Marie.smith@westsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:Marie.smith@westsuffolk.gov.uk)

### **3. Corporate priorities**

- 3.1 The preparation of the Statement of Community Involvement, (SCI), and the development plan in more general terms relate to a number of corporate priorities across both Authorities including economic development, community development and housing.

### **4. Key issues**

- 4.1 The Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act requires local planning authorities to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) strategy for involving the community in the preparation of their local plan documents as well as how the community can become more involved in the planning application processes. Given the approach to a shared planning service for Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury, it is now appropriate to have a joint SCI that sets out a consistent approach across both districts.
- 4.2 A SCI for St Edmundsbury was prepared, consulted upon and finally adopted and published in February 2008. In the case of Forest Heath, a 'Preferred Option' version of the SCI was prepared and consulted on in June 2005. A final version of the document was not produced and as a consequence, the Council does not currently have an adopted SCI.
- 4.3 Attached as Appendix A of this paper is a Draft Joint Statement of Community Involvement for both authorities. It takes into consideration comments received on the draft Forest Heath SCI and updates the content of the adopted St Edmundsbury SCI to reflect current and proposed practices and provide a consistent approach to community engagement across both districts.
- 4.4 Although the preparation requirements have changed since 2008 and the regulations are silent on consultation on a draft SCI, DCLG advice recommends there is a period of consultation on a draft document prior to its adoption. There is no longer a need for examination of the draft by a Planning Inspector. It is therefore proposed to undertake a joint consultation, for a period of 4 weeks, commencing as soon as is expedient following the respective Cabinet approvals. Following this consultation exercise, officers will assess comments received and seek to finalise the document in readiness for adoption by both Councils.

### **5. Other options considered**

- 5.1 The requirement to produce a SCI provides little in the way of alternatives. It would be possible to prepare separate District/Borough wide SCI's for Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury. However, given that both authorities are implementing a shared Planning service, it is appropriate that a joint document reflecting the up-to-date approach to involvement is prepared.

## **6. Community impact**

### **6.1 Crime and disorder impact** *(including Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998)*

6.1.1 It is not considered that the SCI will have any impact on crime and disorder in the district.

### **6.2 Diversity and equality impact** *(including the findings of the Equality Impact Assessment)*

6.2.1 The draft SCI incorporates measures that seek to identify and engage all appropriate members of the community.

### **6.3 Sustainability impact** *(including completing a Sustainability Impact Assessment)*

6.3.1 The draft SCI does not have any sustainability implications.

### **6.4 Other impact** *(any other impacts affecting this report)*

6.4.1 None associated with this report.

## **7. Consultation** *(what consultation has been undertaken, and what were the outcomes?)*

7.1 Consultation arrangements are noted above. All those individuals and organisations on the Councils consultation database will be notified of the consultation on the draft SCI and each website will provide a link to the consultation document.

## **8. Financial and resource implications** *(including asset management implications)*

8.1 There are no potential adverse financial or resource impacts councils resulting from the consultation on the draft SCI. The preparation of this document can be prepared within the respective council's existing budgets.

## **9. Risk/opportunity assessment** *(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)*

9.1 Without evidencing proper community engagement in the planning process there is a risk that the Local Plan documents that are produced could not proceed to examination/adoption. The subsequent lack of a sound development plan framework militates against the proper planning of the borough/district and could place the councils at risk of planning appeals being upheld, with the possible award of costs against them.

## **10. Legal and policy implications**

10.1 There is a requirement for LPAs to produce a SCI, (part 18 of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004).

## **11. Ward(s) affected**

11.1 All wards in Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury.

**12. Background papers**

12.1 None.

**13. Documents attached**

13.1 Appendix A: Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council  
– Consultation Draft Joint Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)