

# 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**

**29 JANUARY 2014**

**LOP14/017**

### **JOINT STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (SCI) - ADOPTION**

(Decision Plan Reference: Feb14/13)

#### **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), which is essentially a strategy for involving the community in the local plan and planning application processes. Given the approach to a shared planning service for Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury, it was considered appropriate to have a joint SCI that set out a consistent 'engagement' strategy for application across both authorities.
- 1.2 The SCI was the subject of a four week public consultation in the period 15 October 2013 to 12 November 2013. Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Council Borough Council Officers have considered all of the responses made during this period of consultation, (see report at Appendix B), and made consequential amendments to the document in light of these and prior to seeking formal adoption of the SCI, (see Appendix A). Some further amendments were made by Officers post consultation and these are identified at Appendix C.

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

- 2.1 **The Working Group resolves to recommend to Cabinet that the joint Statement of Community Involvement, (SCI), be adopted.**

#### **Contact details**

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### **3. How will the recommendations help us meet our strategic priorities?**

- 3.1 This Statement will help ensure that the Council meets all of its strategic priorities by ensuring that the policies that we write and ultimately the decisions that we make are informed by meaningful consultation with our communities and are thus reflective of their needs and aspirations.

### **4. Key issues**

- 4.1 The Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act requires local planning authorities to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement, (SCI), which is essentially a strategy for involving the community in the local plan and planning application processes. Given the approach to a shared planning service for Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury, it is now considered appropriate to have a joint SCI that sets out a consistent 'engagement' strategy for application across both authorities. Prior to the SCI being adopted by the respective Councils, it needed to be the subject of a period of public consultation.
- 4.2 Attached at Appendix B of this paper is a report detailing a summary of the representations made in respect of the consultation, an Officer assessment of these comments and any actions arising that it was considered needed to be taken into account when finalising the document. The SCI as amended in light of the representations received in addition to some additional amendments made by Officers, (Appendix C), can be found at Appendix A of this report and it is for this version that Officers are seeking the recommendation of adoption.

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

- 5.1 The requirement to produce a SCI provides little by way of alternatives. It would have been possible to prepare separate District/Borough-wide SCIs for Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury. However, given that both authorities are implementing a shared planning service, it was considered appropriate that a joint document, reflecting the up-to-date and 'common' approach to community engagement, was 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 mechanisms for engaging with all 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 The SCI was the subject of a four week period of public consultation between 15 October and 12 November 2013.

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

8.1 There are no potential adverse financial or resource implications arising from the adoption of the SCI. The document has been prepared within the respective Council's budget.

**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 prepared 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 and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004).

**11. Ward(s) affected**

11.1 All Wards in both Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury are affected by the provisions of the SCI.

**12. Background papers**

12.1 None.

**13. Documents attached**

13.1 Appendix A: Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

13.2 Appendix B: SCI public consultation report.

13.3 Appendix C: Further amendments made by Officers post consultation and reflected in the SCI (Appendix A).