

Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group	
Meeting Date	16 th September 2025
Report Title	Statement of Community Involvement – Consultation Responses Received and Adoption
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins – Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Joanne Johnson - Head of Place
Lead Officer	Anna Stonor – Principal Planning Officer (Policy) and Christopher Mansfield Planning Officer (Policy)
Classification	Open
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To note the proposed changes to the draft Statement of Community Involvement found in Appendix I and II for recommendation to Policy and Resources Committee; and 2. To recommend that Policy and Resources Committee agree the proposed changes to the draft Statement if Community Involvement SCI and that it proceeds to Full Council for adoption.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 At the Policy and Resources Committee on 16th October 2024, it was agreed that the draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), subject to minor changes as minuted, be published for public consultation.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to present the proposed changes to the draft SCI following the six-week consultation which ran from 21st May to 2nd July and to recommend the document proceeds to Policy and Resources Committee.

2 Background

- 2.1 The SCI sets out how the community can get involved in local planning matters. It explains how people can play a part in the preparation of Local Plans, Neighbourhood Plans and Supplementary Planning Documents, as well as the consideration of planning applications and dealing with unauthorised development. It also sets out what is expected from those proposing developments.
- 2.2 Local Planning Authorities are required to produce SCIs and review them every 5 years. The current SCI was adopted in 2018 and updated in 2021 largely to reflect health guidelines related to COVID 19. As such, the SCI is now in need of a refresh. and therefore on 16th of October 2024 the draft SCI was agreed for consultation at Policy and Resources Policy Committee, with minor changes.

- 2.3 The draft SCI went out for consultation on 21st May for six weeks. Letters/emails were sent to statutory consultees, relevant borough, district, town and parish councils, residents, stakeholders, organisations and businesses on the Council's consultation database. It was also advertised on social media such as Facebook and Swale Means Business and documents and covering letters were sent to Council offices and libraries in the borough. There was also a page dedicated to the SCI on the Council's website.
- 2.4 The consultation website attracted 149 visitors and 638 page views with submissions from six individuals, two Parish Councils, two Local Authorities, one business, one utility company, three statutory consultees and one developer. The questions that garnered the most responses were 1, 4 and 7.
- 2.5 The majority of comments were supportive of the document overall, although many suggested amendments, which have been included where these improve clarity and understanding and don't have a significant resource implication for the Council unless the benefits merit the costs.
- 2.6 Comments included:
- criticism of historic approach to consultation by Swale Borough Council.
 - concern that those without access to computers/digital engagement may be left out of the consultation process
 - need for varied engagement approaches to reach wider sections of the community
 - requirement for applicants to carry out engagement and to report back on their own community consultation processes and how these have influenced their applications
 - adding glossary
 - adding references/links to legislation and more detailed explanation of system/processes
 - seeking direct engagement with tourism operators/caravan park owners
- 2.6 A spreadsheet of comments received and proposed changes to the SCI can be found in Appendix I. A draft updated SCI can be found in Appendix II.

3. Proposals

- 3.1 To note the proposed changes to the draft Statement of Community Involvement found in Appendix I and II for recommendation to Policy and Resources; and
- 3.2 To recommend that Policy and Resources Committee agree the proposed changes to the Statement of Community Involvement and that it proceeds to Full Council for adoption.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 That members propose to Policy and Resources Committee to reject some or all of the suggested changes to the SCI as set out in Appendix I and II.
- 4.2 That members do not recommend adoption of the SCI and therefore retain the current version.
- 4.3 It is a legislative requirement to update SCIs every five years, and it is beneficial to have an up-to-date SCI published in advance of the next consultation phases of the Local Plan. The Local Plan can then be consulted on in line with the new document. As such these alternatives are not considered recommended options.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 Specific consultation for the draft SCI took place on the 21st of May for six weeks. Officers have worked with colleagues in the Planning Applications and Planning Investigations teams in preparing and updating the SCI before and after consultation.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	The proposals in the report align with the following Corporate Plan action: A Local Plan with local needs and capacity at its heart.
Financial, Resource and Property	The Local Plan work programme is fully funded across a combination of base budget and committed reserves and central government grant.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	Updating the SCI every five years is a legislative requirement, therefore publishing an updated SCI will help meet the Council's statutory requirements.
Crime and Disorder	There are no direct crime and disorder impacts arising from this decision.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	No implications identified at this stage.
Health and Wellbeing	No implications identified at this stage.
Safeguarding of Children, Young	No implications identified at this stage.

People and Vulnerable Adults	
Risk Management and Health and Safety	No implications identified at this stage.
Equality and Diversity	The SCI will allow all member's of Swale society to be involved in the planning process.
Privacy and Data Protection	No implications identified at this stage.

7 Appendices

- 7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:
- Appendix I: SCI Consultation Responses and Summaries
 - Appendix II: Draft Statement of Community Involvement

8 Background Papers

- 8.1 [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group, 17/09/2024 19:00](#) and [Minutes Template](#) for Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group Committee on Tuesday, 17 September 2024, 7.00 pm
- 8.2 [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Policy and Resources Committee, 16/10/2024 19:00](#) and [Minutes Template](#) for Planning and Resources Committee on Wednesday, 16 October 2024 7. pm