

Report to COUNCIL

Statement of Community Involvement 2020

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Roberts, Cabinet Member for Housing

SRO: Helen Lockwood, Deputy Chief Executive – People and Place

Officer Contact: Emma Barton, Director of Economy

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Date: 9 September 2020

Reason for Decision

To adopt the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

The SCI sets out how Oldham Council will involve the community in the preparation and the revision of planning policy such as the Local Plan, together with the consideration of planning applications.

Recommendations

To adopt the SCI and make it available to view alongside the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA).

Statement of Community Involvement

1 Background

- 1.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires local planning authorities to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). Oldham Council first adopted its SCI in April 2007. The SCI document identifies how the council will involve the community in the consideration of planning applications, the preparation and revision of the Local Plan, the preparation of Greater Manchester's Plan for Homes, Jobs, and the Environment – the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF); and it also sets out policies for giving advice or assistance on neighbourhood planning.
- 1.2 Since the SCI was reviewed and adopted in 2019, the planning department have been deploying new ways of working, new systems and processes to work towards a more efficient and customer focused service. It was considered necessary to update the SCI to introduce proposals, which include to:
- make clear that statutory consultees, councillors and Oldham Partnership receive an email or letter with details of strategic planning consultations rather than an electronic copy of the documents;
 - publicise planning applications by site notices and / or neighbour notification letters, removing the requirement to do both, where it is not deemed necessary;
 - remove copies of planning applications being available in paper files. Planning applications will be available online. This reduces time spent by officers creating paper files;
 - publish individual comments anonymously, however, names and addresses of respondents cannot be treated as confidential and are available for public inspection without exception. Representations are kept on file with the application and form part of the public record, which must be presented upon request; and
 - make submitting representations on planning applications to online only. This is to reduce the time spent by officers scanning and saving representations to ensure that planning applications can be handled efficiently.
- 1.3 The SCI has also been updated to reflect The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 to allow Local Plan consultations and development management decisions to continue to progress during the Coronavirus pandemic.
- 1.7 This decision links to the Corporate Plan as the SCI seeks to promote working with a resident focus through encouraging residents and other stakeholders to be engaged in the planning process. The SCI sets out what methods we will use to engage with people, how people can comment and get involved in the planning process and the result is a Local Plan / planning decisions that have been influenced co-operatively.

2 Current Position

- 2.1 The updated SCI (Appendix 1) and supporting Equalities Impact Assessment (Appendix 2) now need to be adopted at Full Council as it is a Local Development Document. This then needs to be made available on the council's website and publicised. It will be made available Oldham Library, with additional copies being made available in other libraries and / or Access Oldham when they are open to the public again.
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3 Options/Alternatives

- 3.1 Option 1 – Adopt the SCI and make it available to view alongside the EIA. The advantage of this option is that the SCI will provide certainty to residents, developers and other key groups and organisations as to the consultation methods the council will use. It will also allow us to progress the Local Plan whilst coronavirus is restricting consultation methods normally used. In addition, it will also ensure that planning consultations are carried out in accordance with the most up to date legislation and guidance. There are no disadvantages to this option.
- 3.2 Option 2 – Not to adopt the SCI and make it available to view alongside the EIA. There are no advantages to this option. The disadvantages will be that consultation cannot commence on the GMSF and the Local Plan review because not all minimum consultation methods can currently be met whilst coronavirus is restricting public places from being open. In addition, changes will not be made in the SCI to allow development management processes to be more efficient.

4 Preferred Option

- 4.1 Option 1 – Adopt the SCI and make it available to view alongside the EIA. The advantage of this option is that the SCI will provide certainty to residents, developers and other key groups and organisations as to the consultation methods the council will use. It will also allow us to progress the Local Plan whilst coronavirus is restricting consultation methods normally used. In addition, it will also ensure that planning consultations are carried out in accordance with the most up to date legislation and guidance. There are no disadvantages to this option.

5 Consultation

- 5.1 Public consultation is not required on the SCI, however the amendments and updates have been developed in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

6 Financial Implications

- 6.1 Adopting the SCI in line with Regulation 35 will involve making the documents available on the council's website and publishing an adoption statement in a local newspaper. Therefore, the decision will result in no major financial implications. The service will incur small costs for publication and notifying people on the Local Plan mailing list. This is expected to be between £600 - £1000 and will be met from within the existing Strategic Planning and Information revenue budget. (Jamie Kelly)

7 Legal Services Comments

- 7.1 The SCI is a local development document. Section 23 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 deals with the adoption of local development documents and it states at section 23(5) that a document is adopted for the purposes of the section if it is adopted by resolution of the authority i.e. by full Council. (Alan Evans)

8. Co-operative Agenda

- 8.1 The draft SCI links to the Corporate Plan and co-operative agenda as it seeks to promote working with a resident focus through encouraging residents and other stakeholders to be engaged in the planning process. The SCI sets out what methods we will use to engage
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with people, how people can comment and get involved in the planning process and the result is a Local Plan / planning decisions that have been influenced co-operatively.

9. Communications comments

9.1 The communications of any changes which could affect the existing processes for residents should be considered. For example: “make submitting representations to planning applications to online only.”

9.2 This could be publicised through communications such as press releases, dedicated copy on web pages and council social media channels as necessary.

9.3 Communications can also support with publicising the updated SCI via the above methods to further underpin Oldham Council’s commitment to working with a resident focus. (Jessica Beckett)

10 Human Resources Comments

10.1 N/A.

11 Risk Assessments

11.1 N/A (Mark Stenson)

12 IT Implications

12.1 None

13 Property Implications

13.1 None.

14 Procurement Implications

14.1 N/A

15 Environmental and Health & Safety Implications

15.1 The Local Plan is a land use plan and may have environmental impacts, but the SCI, as the document which will set out how the council will involve the community in planning, has no implications.

16 Equality, community cohesion and crime implications

16.1 The SCI vision is that “through a co-operative approach we will enable, empower and encourage all residents and stakeholders of the borough to actively participate in the planning process to help achieve our corporate outcome of engaging and resilient communities”. This can only have a positive effect on all residents and stakeholders.

17 Equality Impact Assessment Completed?

17.1 Yes

18 Key Decision

18.1 Yes

19 **Key Decision Reference**

19.1 HSG-03-20

20 **Background Papers**

20.1 The following is a list of background papers on which this report is based in accordance with the requirements of Section 100(1) of the Local Government Act 1972. It does not include documents which would disclose exempt or confidential information as defined by the Act:

Name of File: Statement of Community Involvement 2020
Records held in Strategic Planning, Room 310, Level 3, Civic Centre
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21 **Appendices**

Appendix 1: Statement of Community Involvement 2020

Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment
