

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (SCI) FOR THE ROCHFORD DISTRICT

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Government's Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that the Council must, as part of the Local Development Framework (LDF), prepare a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). This document will outline the Council's approach to involving the public in the planning process. The first draft of the SCI is scheduled in the approved LDS to go to public consultation in November.
- 1.2 This report seeks Members' approval for the deposit version of the SCI that will go out for public consultation.
- 1.3 Following public consultation, a public inquiry may be required. If this is necessary, the Planning Inspectorate will administer it and the Council will need to employ a programme officer. The Council's Local Development Scheme (LDS) schedules this for March 2006. The Inspector's decision will be binding on the Council.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The SCI (see Appendix 1) has been produced in line with various ODPM guidance that has been published on SCIs and community participation in general. The document has drawn on advice, information and ideas from numerous sources. These have included, amongst others, RTPI seminars, the Countryside Agency, Home Office, Rural Community Council of Essex, Active Citizenship Centre, Chelmsford Borough Council, Castle Point Borough Council, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, and Mid-Sussex District Council.
- 2.2 The SCI comprises the following:
 - An explanation of what the SCI is, what is its purposes and what perceived benefits it will bring;
 - What techniques the Council will deploy in order to encourage public involvement and overcome perceived barriers to participation;
 - How and when planning matters will be publicised;
 - How and when people can get involved in the LDF, planning applications and enforcement;
 - Public involvement at the pre-application stage;
 - How the SCI links with other Council strategies;
 - Which representative groups and organisations will be consulted;
 - How the SCI will be reviewed; and
 - A list of useful planning contacts.

- 2.3 The SCI is intended to be as accessible to members of the public as possible. It therefore aims to be easy to read and understand and to be free of jargon.
- 2.4 The SCI is required to address the need to involve groups who have traditionally been under-represented in the planning process. Accordingly, the SCI identifies a number of representative groups and organisations that will be asked if they wish to be consulted on planning matters for the District.
- 2.5 Although the SCI is required to outline the minimum consultation requirements, it also has to avoid being overly prescriptive in outlining the techniques and methods that will be used to facilitate public involvement. It is intended for the methods outlined in the SCI to be flexible to meet different planning circumstances.
- 2.6 The next stage of the preparation process, in accordance with regulations 25 and 26 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004, is for the Authority to undertake extensive community and stakeholder consultation. Regulation 25 requires consultation with key consultees. This is required prior to the more general consultation under Regulation 26.

3 RISK IMPLICATIONS

3.1 Operational Risk

It is envisaged that the majority of the requirements that the Council will set itself in the SCI can be met using existing resources. Some of the public engagement techniques may require out of hours working, as was noted during the preparation of the LDS. Additional resources may be required to employ consultants on specific elements of community engagement.

3.2 Regulatory Risk

The timetable for the preparation, consultation on, and adoption of the SCI is contained within the adopted LDS. Failure to meet these deadlines may lead to action being taken against the Council by the ODPM or Regional Government Office. The performance of the SCI against the LDS may affect awards made through the Planning Delivery Grant scheme.

4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 As stated in 3.1, the implementation of public engagement, as set out in the SCI, may require out of hours working and the employment of consultants.
- 4.2 As noted in 3.2, the ability of the Council to adopt its SCI within the time requirement outlined in the LDS is likely to affect awards made through the Planning Delivery Grant scheme.

5 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The various legal implications are specified in the Planning and Compulsory Act Purchase (2004). These outline the implementation and consultation requirements for the SCI.

6 PARISH IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Parish Councils will be requested to comment on the draft SCI. The SCI notes the need to consult relevant Parish Councils on various planning aspects.

7 RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**
- (1) That the draft Statement of Community Involvement for the Rochford District be approved for community and stakeholder consultation.
 - (2) That the outcome of the public consultation be reported back to the Committee.
 - (3) That authority be delegated to the Head of Planning Services to carry out minor amendments to the LDS to ensure consistency and correctness following Regulation 25 consultation under the Planning and Compulsory Act 2004.

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Background Documents:

Planning Policy Statement 12, ODPM

Creating Local Development Frameworks – A companion guide to PPS12, ODPM

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