

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, prepare a Statement of Community Involvement. This document will outline the Council's approach to engaging the public in the planning process.
- 1.2 This report seeks Members' approval for the deposit version of the SCI, which has been prepared following the results of a consultation exercise conducted in accordance with the requirements of Regulation 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations. The deposit version will be subject to public consultation as per the requirements of Regulation 26 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations.
- 1.3 Following public consultation, a public inquiry may be required. If this is necessary then 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 ODPM guidance on SCIs and community participation more generally. The document has drawn on advice, information and ideas from numerous sources. These have included RTPI seminars, the Countryside Agency, Home Office, the Rural Community Council of Essex and Active Citizenship Centre.
- 2.2 This second draft of the SCI has been produced following a consultation exercise carried out by the Local Planning Authority, as per the requirements of Regulation 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004. A report into the results of this consultation exercise is attached (Appendix 2). Representative groups were also contacted prior to the production of the first draft SCI and invited to be included as a consultee. Details of this exercise are attached as Appendix 3.
- 2.3 The SCI comprises the following:
 - An explanation of what the SCI is, its purpose and its perceived benefits;
 - What techniques the Council will deploy in order to encourage public engagement 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.

- 2.4 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.
- 2.5 The SCI is required to address the hard to reach groups who have traditionally been under-represented in the planning process. As part of this process 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.
- 2.6 Although the SCI is required to outline the minimum consultation requirements, it also has to avoid being overly prescriptive in explaining the techniques and methods that will be used to facilitate public engagement. It is intended that the methods outlined in the SCI will provide the flexibility required to meet different planning circumstances.
- 2.7 One matter that was not appropriately addressed in the first draft of the document was the role of the Rochford District Local Strategic Partnership in the delivery of the Community Strategy, the links between the LDF and the Community Strategy and the implications of the emerging Local Area Agreement for Essex. Accordingly, these matters have now been incorporated in the SCI.
- 2.8 A short section has also been included in the SCI to highlight the significance of the Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership and Rochford's role in the development of leisure, recreation and tourism initiatives and the Green Grid.

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 for the first round of LDF documents can be met using existing resources, taking account of the Planning Delivery Grant. 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 Local development Scheme (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.
- 4.3 At present it is envisaged that the costs of preparing the first round of Local Development Documents identified in the SCI for the next 2-3 years can be funded through existing provisions together with elements of the PDG and additional resources agreed as part of the 2005/06 budget strategy, though this will be closely monitored.

5 PARISH IMPLICATIONS

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

6 RECOMMENDATION

It is proposed that the Committee **RECOMMENDS**

- (1) That the Statement of Community Involvement for the Rochford District be adopted with a view to submission to GO-East, to enable the Council to comply with the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- (2) That authority be delegated to the Head of Planning Services to carry out minor amendments to the SCI to ensure consistency and correctness following public consultation in line with the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Act 2004.

Shaun Scrutton

Head of Planning Services

Background Papers:-

None

For further information please contact Sam Hollingworth on:-

Tel:- 01702 318102

E-Mail:- samuel.hollingworth@rochford.gov.uk