

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Background Report

1. Context

- 1.1. The report sets out a proposal to consult on a new SCI which, given the joint working on the Joint Local Plan, will relate to Plymouth, South Hams and West Devon and require separate adoption by the three councils. Following consultation the SCI will return to Cabinet and Full Council for formal adoption.
- 1.2. The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) provides certainty for communities about the basis upon which the Local Planning Authority (LPA) will engage with them in the future and to guide the LPA to provide an excellent and professional process as they undertake their responsibilities. The primary aim is to ensure that consultation and engagement is meaningful and effective, resulting in better outcomes for everyone.
- 1.3. The City Council has a statutory duty to review its SCI at least once every 5 years, a provision introduced in The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2017. The current SCI was adopted in 2009 and it is considered a necessary and appropriate stage to review its content following the adoption of the Joint Local Plan.
- 1.4. Under s180 of the Planning Act 2008, Statements of Community Involvement are considered to be Local Development Documents. S6 of the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 requires SCIs to set out how a council as LPA will support groups undertaking neighbourhood planning.
- 1.5. The SCI has been prepared as a joint document between Plymouth City Council, South Hams District Council and West Devon Borough Council. It builds on the work of the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan, providing a consistent baseline to support the continued cooperation in planning across the three LPAs.
- 1.6. The SCI sets out the minimum requirements for consultation and involvement that must be followed by the LPAs of the Councils when preparing planning documents or consulting on planning applications. The document also sets out how the LPAs will support groups undertaking neighbourhood planning.
- 1.7. Consultation in Plymouth has been held up as exemplarity best practice for both the Core Strategy (2007) and the Joint Local Plan (2019). The SCI seeks to maintain this level of success and take further advantage of technology to further improve engagement.

2. Structure and Content of the Revised SCI

- 2.1. The first section is the Introduction and provides the lay reader with a context and information about the SCI and answers some of the frequently asked questions.
- 2.2. The second section, 'Principles', sets the overarching principles for how the Councils will aim to conduct their community engagement and consultation processes for planning matters. The principles are:

1. Appropriate, Meaningful and Relevant

- We will deliver meaningful consultations, proportionate to their complexity, using Plain English and explaining technical terms.

2. Integrity and Honesty

- We will be clear about the scope of our consultations, so that those responding are aware of what they are able to influence.

3. Equality and Diversity

- We will ensure that all our consultations are fair and open, taking into account the needs of all sectors of the community relevant to the consultation.

4. Open and Fair

- We will give sufficient information and reasoning to allow for an informed response and we will give sufficient time for responses to be made, taking into account any statutory time requirements.

5. New Technology and e-consultation

- We will look to make best use of technology in the way we advertise consultations, provide information and collect comments from participants,

6. Climate Emergency

- We will design our consultation programmes with a view to an awareness of the climate emergency and the sustainability agenda.

7. Responsibility and Accountability

- We will ensure that all comments made in relation to our consultations are considered conscientiously when decisions are made, where appropriate publishing reports that explain key issues raised and how the consultation influenced the decision.

2.3. The third section of the SCI provides some information and guidance about what a Consultation Programme should include. A core aspect of the SCI is the use of a Consultation Programme for most consultations. This ensures that the principles of the SCI and good practice of consultation are taken into account when conducting a consultation.

2.4. There are then a series of 'Consultation on' sections relating to the following topics which specify the minimum steps that must be taken when consulting on different types of documents and areas of planning. These sections ensure that legislative requirements are met:

- Development Plan Documents
- Consultation on Supplementary Planning Documents
- Consultation on Neighbourhood Plans
- Consultation on Other Planning Documents
- Consultation on Planning Applications and Related Applications

2.5. The final section provides some additional tools and links for people carrying out consultations to go to and explore lots of information about techniques and best practice for engaging with communities.

3. Next Steps

3.1. Following approval by Cabinet, and the relevant executive decisions in South Hams and West Devon there will be further discussions with key stakeholders and an opportunity for public involvement through six week consultation period.

3.2. Amendments may be made to the SCI as a result of this process. The SCI will come back to Cabinet, and then Full Council in the Spring of 2020 for formal adoption.