



CABINET REPORT

Report Title	West Northamptonshire Statement of Community Involvement
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AGENDA STATUS: PUBLIC

Cabinet Meeting Date:	23 rd September 2020
Key Decision:	YES
Within Policy:	YES
Policy Document:	YES
Service Area:	Planning
Accountable Cabinet Member:	Councillor James Hill
Ward(s)	All

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report is seeking Cabinet approval for the draft Statement of Community Involvement for the West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan to go out to public consultation.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet approve the draft West Northamptonshire Statement of Community Involvement for public consultation.

3. Issues and Choices

3.1 Report Background

- 3.1.1 On behalf of this Council, Daventry District Council and South Northamptonshire Council, the West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit is producing the West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan to replace the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy, adopted 2014. It is intended that the Strategic Plan will set a spatial vision and strategic planning policies for West Northamptonshire for the period to 2050.
- 3.1.2 There is a legal requirement (Section 18 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) for local planning authorities to produce a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) setting out how the local community, business and other organisations can engage with the planning system including planning policies such as the Strategic Plan.
- 3.1.3 This Council, Daventry District Council and South Northamptonshire Council each have their own existing SCIs. From a planning policy perspective, these were largely developed to cover the preparation of their respective Local Plan Part 2s. It is now considered necessary to have a joint SCI adopted by all three councils to set out the approach to engagement for the Strategic Plan
- 3.1.4 Production of the Strategic Plan is in its early stages. It is intended that the next stage of preparing the Strategic Plan, public consultation on Options, will take place in the New Year and it is considered necessary to have an SCI agreed by all three councils before that consultation can take place.

3.2 Issues

- 3.2.1 The draft West Northamptonshire SCI is attached at Appendix A. It deals solely with the preparation of the West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan. It is anticipated that West Northamptonshire Council will, in due course, produce a single SCI for the whole area covering all planning processes.
- 3.2.2 The draft SCI sets out clearly the national context for producing it in terms of government guidance and legal requirements as well as the local context in terms of existing Local Plans and governance arrangements.
- 3.2.3 It also sets out how the Councils will consult on the Strategic Plan at all stages in the preparation of the Plan, engaging with relevant stakeholders, making efforts to engage with parts of the community that are not always adequately represented and maximising the use of email and social media to make involvement easier, quicker and more cost effective whilst recognising that not everyone has access to the internet.
- 3.2.4 The draft SCI sets out in detail how the Strategic Plan will be publicised at each stage including internet and social media, local media (including newspapers and local radio), presentations, public exhibitions, workshops, surveys and questionnaires as well as engagement with town and parish

councils, neighbourhood forums and other existing community forums. It also sets out:

- how long the Councils will consult for (six weeks);
- how comments can be submitted;
- how the councils will feed back on consultation responses; and
- how the councils will keep people informed of progress on the Strategic Plan.

3.2.5 There is an additional section on dealing with extraordinary circumstances should a situation arise where the local authorities are not able to implement normal consultation or engagement activities.

3.2.6 For public consultation on the draft SCI to go ahead, it has to be agreed by each of the three councils. The draft SCI is to be considered at the 9th September 2020 meeting of Daventry District Council's Strategy Group and the 22nd September 2020 meeting of South Northamptonshire Council's Planning Policy and Regeneration Strategy Committee. An update on the outcomes of those meetings will be provided at this meeting.

3.2.7 It is proposed that a six-week period of public consultation on the draft SCI starts in October 2020 simultaneously across the administrative areas of Northampton Borough Council, Daventry District Council and South Northamptonshire Council. Precise dates for the consultation will be agreed between officers of the three councils.

3.3 Choices (Options)

Option 1 – approve the draft West Northamptonshire SCI for public consultation

3.3.1 Provided it has already been approved for consultation by Daventry District Council and South Northamptonshire Council, public consultation can take place for six weeks commencing in October 2020. This will allow sufficient time for the responses to be considered and for the SCI to be adopted by the three Councils. Having the SCI in place will then allow the three councils to carry out Options consultation on the West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan which it is envisaged will take place early in the New Year.

Option 2 – do not approve the draft West Northamptonshire SCI for public consultation

3.3.2 If the draft SCI is not approved for public consultation now, this means that further consultation on the West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan could not take place early in the New Year as there would not be time to adopt the SCI in advance of date envisaged for the Options consultation on the West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan.

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Policy

- 4.1.1 The proposed public consultation on the draft West Northamptonshire Statement of Community Involvement does not, of itself, set policy. However, if the SCI is subsequently adopted by the Council, it would set policy for how stakeholders are engaged in consultation for the West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan.

4.2 Resources and Risk

- 4.2.1 The proposed public consultation on the SCI has been factored into the West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit's budget as part of its normal business. There are adequate staffing resources for this project.
- 4.2.2 The main risk is that one of three partner councils does not agree to go ahead with the public consultation. Without the agreement of all three partner councils, public consultation cannot go ahead.

4.3 Legal

- 4.3.1 It is a legal requirement for local planning authorities to have a Statement of Community Involvement in place. Following public consultation on the draft document, and if it is subsequently adopted, this will mean that there is an up-to-date set of criteria for carrying out public consultation on the West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan.

4.4 Equality and Health

- 4.4.1 An Equality Impact Assessment Screening analysis revealed that it was not necessary to proceed to a full impact assessment.

4.5 Consultees (Internal and External)

- 4.5.1 The West Northamptonshire Strategic Programme Board, consisting of officers from this Council, the West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit, Daventry District Council, South Northamptonshire Council and Northamptonshire County Council, has overseen the production of the draft SCI. The proposed public consultation will be an opportunity for stakeholders and the general public to influence the content of the SCI.

4.6 How the Proposals deliver Priority Outcomes

- 4.6.1 By providing a clear set of criteria for consultation on the West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan, the SCI, if approved, will ensure that stakeholders and local communities have the best possible opportunity to help shape the development of West Northamptonshire to 2050. This should help to deliver more homes, empower local people and build a stronger economy.

4.7 Environmental Implications (including climate change issues)

- 4.7.1 There are do direct environmental implications arising from the proposed public consultation on the draft SCI. However, if the SCI is adopted, this will give people the opportunity to shape the West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan which will have environmental implications for West Northamptonshire.

4.8 Other Implications

- 4.7.1 None.

5. Background Papers

Appendix A – Draft West Northamptonshire Statement of Community Involvement

6. Next Steps

- 6.1 If public consultation on the draft SCI takes place, the responses will be analysed, and a final version will be taken to Full Council meetings of this Council, Daventry District Council and South Northamptonshire Council for adoption.

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