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**Meeting:** Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
**Date:** 26 September 2012  
**Subject:** Statement of Community Involvement  
**Report of:** Cllr Nigel Young, Executive Member for Sustainable Communities – Strategic Planning and Economic Development  
**Summary:** The report seeks the views of the Committee prior to the adoption of the Statement of Community Involvement by the Executive

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**Advising Officer:** Richard Fox, Head of Development Planning and Housing Strategy  
**Contact Officer:** Sally Chapman, Development Planning Project and Process Team Leader  
**Public/Exempt:** Public  
**Wards Affected:** All  
**Function of:** Executive

## **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

### **Council Priorities:**

The adoption of the Statement of Community Involvement will support the Council's priority of managing growth effectively in that it sets out consultation processes in relation to town and country planning matters.

### **Financial:**

1. The costs associated with community involvement in planning processes are met within existing budgets.

### **Legal:**

2. The Council is required to produce a Statement of Community Involvement under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

### **Risk Management:**

3. None identified.

### **Staffing (including Trades Unions):**

4. Not applicable as the document refers to process matters

### **Equalities/Human Rights:**

5. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and to foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
6. The Statement of Community Involvement refers to these requirements in the context of involvement in planning matters.

**Public Health**

7. Not applicable as the document refers to process matters.

**Community Safety:**

8. The Council will need to ensure that it complies with its statutory duties under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act.

**Sustainability:**

9.. Not applicable as the document refers to process matters.

**Procurement:**

10. Not applicable.

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

**That the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend to the Executive that the Statement of Community Involvement be adopted.**

**Introduction**

11. All aspects of Town and Country Planning carried out by Central Bedfordshire are subject to statutory requirements for involving the public formally in the processes. These requirements are set out in several Acts and various Town and Country Planning Regulations. In order to provide an overall guide to these, Central Bedfordshire is also required to produce a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).
12. The SCI provides a broad guide to how the Council will engage with the public, stakeholders and community groups etc for:
  - The production of development plan documents such as the Development Strategy;
  - The production of Supplementary Planning Documents such as the design guide 'Design in Central Bedfordshire – a Guide for Developers';
  - Neighbourhood Plans;
  - Planning Applications;
  - Appeals.
13. This SCI covers the whole of Central Bedfordshire, replacing the Mid Bedfordshire SCI which was adopted in 2006 and the joint Luton Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council SCI which was adopted in 2011. It also encompasses changes to the planning system and updates to planning regulations.

14. The Localism Act 2012 introduced major reforms to the planning system including the introduction of neighbourhood planning and the requirement for developers to consult local communities before submitting planning applications for certain developments. In particular, the Act introduced a new initiative, neighbourhood planning which includes Neighbourhood Plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders. These plans set out policies on the development and use of land and buildings in the parish or neighbourhood area. A neighbourhood plan is a document which will set out local policies and allocations, and a neighbourhood development order deals with a specific planning proposal on a specific site, or grants planning permission for a type of development such as change of use.
15. Neighbourhood Plans will be initiated and led by town and parish councils. However, the Council is required to help and advise the communities preparing them, to check the policies conform with any strategic planning policies in place, and to appoint an inspector to examine the Neighbourhood Plan and if successful, to carry out a referendum. Consultation arrangements for this new tier of planning is governed by Town and Country Planning Regulations, but the general requirements are set out in the new SCI.
16. The SCI also refers to the Community Engagement Strategy, the general principles of which will be adhered to. However, Members should note that some timescales for formal periods of consultation for planning documentation differ from those that other corporate documents are subjected to, to ensure that planning documentation complies with statutory timescale requirements and is able to be prepared to timetable.

### **Consultation**

17. There is no current requirement to consult on the SCI in the Town and Country Planning Regulations. However, it was considered to be helpful to consult on the draft document alongside the Development Strategy which is one of the main Development Plan Documents that will be produced. Accordingly, the SCI was published for comment for seven weeks from the 20<sup>th</sup> June to the 8<sup>th</sup> August 2012.
18. Comments were received, some of which suggested that minor changes to the text of the draft document would be helpful. These together with some minor changes arising as a result of recent regulations being published have been incorporated into the final SCI.

### **Conclusion**

19. The final version of the SCI is appended to this report and Members are asked to adopt the document.

### **Appendix:**

Appendix – Statement of Community Involvement