

Community Involvement Plan

Review of the revised Mid Sussex District Council Statement of Community Involvement - June 2011

The District Council is developing a new 'Statement of Community Involvement', which will set out how it will engage with the communities of the District. We set out below how the public will be able to get involved in this process and can influence the review.

1. Who is to be involved?

To help form a draft Statement for wider public consultation, early community input will be sought from a representative cross section of the community including those that have previously corresponded with the Council about the Statement. This work will be led by elected Councillors via a Members Working Group¹ and will give these organisations the opportunity to speak directly with them. These organisations are:

- Town and Parish Councils in the District
- Residents Groups
- Business Associations
- Voluntary Services associations
- Groups representing 'seldom heard' communities such as disabled people, older people, younger people and Black and minority ethnic groups
- Registered Social Landlords
- Rural interest groups
- Environmental interest groups
- 'Specific consultation bodies' (statutory consultees) as set out in planning legislation

Note: the above stage has already been completed. A consultation report is available on the Council website. Those that have inputted at this stage or indicated they wish to be informed will be notified.

A further stage of public consultation will be held for the public to comment on the draft Statement of Community Involvement. The public consultation is open to all who are interested and will be widely advertised.

Equality Analysis has considered people classified as having 'protected characteristics'² and has indicated that community engagement methods employed should in particular consider the needs of people with a physical disability or a mental impairment, young and older people, women who are pregnant or have very young babies and gypsies and travellers. Particular consideration should also be given to those who are disadvantaged by their socio-economic background and who are living and perhaps isolated in rural areas. Further detail is available in the Equality Analysis.

¹ Agreed to be set up at the Better Environment Advisory Group on 29th March 2011. For terms of reference www.midsussex.gov.uk/sci

² As defined by the Equality Act 2010

A number of groups will be directly informed and asked for their view. These are:

- District Councillors
- Town and Parish Councils in the District
- 'Specific consultation bodies' (statutory consultees) as set out in planning legislation
- Other organisations, groups or individuals that may have an interest in the Statement of Community Involvement as set out in a list available at www.midsussex.gov.uk/sci. This includes the Mid Sussex Partnership, voluntary services associations, residents associations, housing associations, business groups and associations, environmental, countryside and conservation groups and the development industry
- Those groups highlighted as requiring targeted consultation by an Equalities Assessment as detailed above.
- Subscribers to the Local Development Framework email alert service
- Internal consultees at the District Council.

Elected District Councillors will be involved throughout the review process through:

- The Statement of Community Involvement Members Working Group (any District Councillor not sitting on the committee can attend as an observer)
- The Better Environment Advisory Group – (any District Councillor not sitting on the committee can attend)
- Cabinet (consist of the Leader of the Council and Councillors with specific responsibility for Council services)
- Full Council (consists of all District Councillors)
- Councillors will be informed of and can respond during the public consultation period.

More information and details of all the above groups are available on the Council's website at www.midsussex.gov.uk/sci (subject to Data Protection Legislation). To be added to our database of groups or to subscribe to the LDF email alert service, please see www.midsussex.gov.uk/sci or contact Planning Policy by email planningpolicy@midsussex.gov.uk or phone (01444) 477053. All information received will be treated in accordance with Data Protection Legislation.

2. Why are people being involved?

The 'Statement of Community Involvement' sets out how the Council will seek to involve residents, businesses and other local organisations in its decision making on key matters in the District. We are asking for people's views on this draft document so that the Council can improve community involvement. A final version will be written taking into account the results of the consultation exercise.

In order to make the consultation meaningful, it is important that people understand which aspects of the document can and cannot be changed as a result of consultation.

Where the document makes reference to 'statutory obligations', these are things the Council is bound to do by law and cannot change, therefore we are not seeking people's views on these.

The document also refers to a number of existing protocols or committee procedures (e.g. policies for delegation of planning decisions, Councillor involvement in pre-application discussion) that are provided for by the Council constitution. These will not be changed directly as part of the process of review. However, as issues may be highlighted to the Council as part of the review, these can be reviewed as part of a separate exercise at a later date.

All other aspects of the document are up for discussion, including the draft proposals for Planning Policy Agreements. What we want to hear from the community whether they feel the proposed approach to carrying out community engagement is the right one.

3. When will people be involved?

- **Early evidence gathering and first draft prepared – May/June 2011.**
Community involvement has been sought from the very start of this process through the early involvement work outlined in section 1 (complete).
- **Public consultation on draft Statement – scheduled July/August 2011** (for at least six-weeks). There will be a public consultation period on the draft document which will open once the draft is approved by Cabinet, scheduled for six weeks in July and August.
- **Final Statement agreed for adoption – scheduled October 2011.** It is anticipated that the Statement of Community Involvement will be presented to Council in October 2011.

Further details of the timetable are available at www.midsussex.gov.uk/sci

4. How will people be involved?

The consultation will be open to all and we will seek to inform and receive comment from the widest possible range of the community. We will:

- Send out press releases informing people how to get involved.

- Provide details and documentation on the Council's website³ including an on-line response form. All on-line material will be compatible with 'BrowseAloud' for people who find it difficult to read on-line.
- Provide hard copies of the document and posters in accessible places informing people of the consultation for display in the following places⁴:
 - Libraries (including the mobile library);
 - Help points;
 - District Council offices (Main and Planning Receptions); and
 - Town and Parish offices.
- Provide posters for display (if possible) at the District Council campus notice boards and at Council owned community buildings community centres, Parish Council notice boards and Parish Council run halls, doctor's surgeries, job centres, schools, supermarkets and train station notice boards.
- Letters or emails will be sent to all the 'specific consultation bodies' (statutory consultees) and to all the other organisations listed in section 1 above.
- A translation service is available to those for whom English is a second language.

5. What happens to the results?

All comments will be treated equally, although it will be up to the elected Councillors to consider how to balance any conflicting opinions when drafting the final document.

Evidence of involvement by people, particularly those classified as having 'protected characteristics'⁵ and requiring particular consideration as detailed in the Equality Assessment, will be gathered during the course of consultation to monitor the effectiveness of the exercise and will be used to inform future consultation work⁶.

Consultation report/s summarising the issues raised by responses received and how these have been used will be produced and published on the Council website. A notification that this report is available will be sent to all respondents who provide an email address. Copies of the report will also be available from libraries, help points and Town and Parish Councils offices.

If you have any comments or queries on this Community Involvement Plan, please contact Nathan Spilsted (nathan.spilsted@midsussex.gov.uk – (01444) 477455).

³ See www.midsussex.gov.uk/consultation and www.midsussex.gov.uk/sci

⁴ Details of libraries and help-points available at www.midsussex.gov.uk/sci

⁵ Defined by Equalities Legislation

⁶ This information will be used solely for this purpose and kept strictly confidential and is subject to the relevant Data Protection Legislation.