

MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL

Equalities Assessment

Title of Policy/Service/Contract: Statement of Community Involvement (Statement of Community Involvement) (Review)

Division: Planning Policy

Lead Officer: Nathan Spilsted

Date Assessment completed: June 2011

1. SCOPING

1.1 What are the aims of the policy, service/service change or contract?

The Statement of Community Involvement describes how the Council will involve residents, businesses and other local organisations in its decision making on planning and other key matters.

The aim of the review is to produce a Statement of Community Involvement which will guide all the significant community involvement exercises undertaken by the Council, not just those by the Planning Service and be easier to read and understand.

1.2 Who does the service/policy/contract affect? Who are the main customers (internal or external)?

The Statement of Community Involvement has the potential to affect any one who lives, works or visits Mid Sussex.

The main customers of the Statement of Community Involvement are:

- members of the public
- Town and Parish Councillors, District Councillors
- those involved in the development industry (developers, landowners, agents)
- organisations and individuals that provide services to residents and organisations in Mid Sussex
- organisations and individuals that represent groups of people
- internal customers include those service areas responsible for decisions that require consultation such as housing and leisure

1.3 If your service is likely to use contractors you need to consider whether equality is a core contractual requirement by asking the following questions:

a) is the purpose of the contract to provide services directly to the public and is it considered relevant to equality? N/A

b) Is the provision of Goods, Works or Services in question likely to affect, directly or indirectly, your ability to meet the duty to promote equality? N/A

c) is the contract value £1 million or over? N/A

If the answers to the questions are “no” then equality will not be a core requirement of the contract and will have a low relevance to equality issues.

Assessment of Impact and Needs - Supported with evidence from Data and Consultation

The Statement of Community Involvement (Statement of Community Involvement) describes how the Council will engage residents, businesses and other local organisations in its decision making on planning and other key matters. It was considered necessary to update the current Statement (approved in April 2006) as it is out-dated, concentrates solely on planning, is too prescriptive and suggests approaches that are resource intensive and difficult for residents to follow.

The review is being undertaken in two stages. The first stage was preliminary community involvement via a Members Working Group to produce a draft Statement of Community Involvement. The second stage is public consultation on the draft Statement of Community Involvement to help form the final version of the document for adoption by Council.

Evidence

At the Better Environment Advisory Group in March 2011, it was agreed to set up a politically balanced Member Working Group to draw up a revised Statement of Community Involvement including hearing evidence from community groups and other interested parties.

To obtain early community input, about 130 invites were sent to a variety of community groups and organisations which were considered to be a cross section of the community. The invite allowed groups to either attend a Members Working Group meeting to speak to Councillors directly or submit written representations (this Group also considered written representations submitted before this process). The overall response rate was very limited with some representation from the 'seldom heard' or protected characteristic groups. This suggests that a variety of methods should be utilised to engage with all sections of the community for the public consultation to ensure better engagement with these groups. A consultation report was published July 2011 and is available to view on the Council's website at www.midsussex.gov.uk/sci and will be made available at the same places as the draft Statement of Community Involvement when it is consulted on.

As a result of the information received from the community groups and organisations that engaged in the process, and a review of guidance and current best practice, a draft Statement of Community Involvement has been produced. Further consultation is planned on this draft in July and August 2011. This consultation will target all the community as best it can, proportionate to the consultation exercise. A Community Involvement Plan has been produced which details how this exercise will be done.

This Equalities Assessment assesses both the Statement of Community Involvement and the process of consultation. The draft of the Community Involvement Plan considered by the Better Environment Advisory Group will be amended to put into action the results of this Assessment.

2. Assessment of Impact and Needs - Supported with evidence from Data and Consultation

	Opportunity to promote equality and/or barriers to service/differential impact	Evidence base	Current actions taken to address these	Further actions required
Race	<p>The draft Statement of Community Involvement promotes the use of engagement methods accessible to all sections of the community that are appropriate to this group and proportionate to the consultation exercise.</p> <p>The consultation process on the draft Statement of Community Involvement should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Give adequate consideration to engaging the travelling community to ensure that they can positively input into decision making at Council. -Note potential barriers exist for those for whom English is a second language. 	<p>Engagement with representatives of the travelling community has been limited in past consultations and no representation was made during the early consultation work on the Statement of Community Involvement.</p> <p>Community Profiling has indicated potential for groups for whom English is a second language. However, from the data provided by Community Profiling, these groups are not significant enough to justify work on providing documents in alternative languages as a matter of course.</p>	<p>Letters sent to representative organisations.</p> <p>A translation service is provided by the Council.</p>	<p>Targeted engagement with the travelling community to ensure that they have the opportunity to input into the Statement of Community Involvement.</p> <p>Ensure methods publicising the consultation process in the Community Involvement Plan will engage with the widest possible reach of people. For instance publicising consultation at community centres, doctor surgeries, job centres, schools, supermarkets and train station. These consultation methods should be reflected in the draft Statement of Community Involvement.</p> <p>The translation service should be advertised on the Statement of Community Involvement cover and on the posters advertising public consultation.</p> <p>Considered appropriate to monitor level of response received from this group.</p>
Disability	<p>The draft Statement of Community Involvement promotes the use of engagement methods accessible to all sections of the community that are appropriate to this group and proportionate to the consultation exercise.</p> <p>The consultation process on the draft Statement of Community Involvement should ensure that engagement methods are accessible to those with a physical disability or a mental impairment to ensure that disability is not a barrier to engagement.</p>	<p>Previous consultation exercises and early engagement on the draft Statement of Community Involvement with accessibility groups has raised issues.</p>	<p>Letters sent to representative organisations.</p> <p>The Statement of Community Involvement and supporting material is made available on the website which is equipped with 'browse aloud' for those with visual impairments. Consideration given to font size and design in the drafting of the document. Terminology used explained in the clearest possible terms. Documents written in plain English. Officers are available to explain</p>	<p>The draft Statement of Community Involvement will be made available at all the district's libraries and help-point which are all 'DDA compliant'.</p> <p>Ensure methods publicising the consultation process in the Community Involvement Plan will engage with the widest possible reach of people. For instance publicising consultation at community centres, doctor surgeries, job centres, schools, supermarkets and train station. These consultation methods should be reflected in the draft Statement of Community Involvement.</p> <p>Response forms will be available on-line equipped with 'browse aloud'.</p>

			the process in person, over the phone and via email.	Considered appropriate to monitor level of response received from this group.
Age	<p>The draft Statement of Community Involvement promotes the use of engagement methods accessible to all sections of the community that are appropriate to this group and proportionate to the consultation exercise.</p> <p>The consultation process on the draft Statement of Community Involvement should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -note that young/older age groups may not engage with the consultation process in the same way as other age groups. Adequate consideration should be given to engaging with young and elderly people to ensure that they can positively input into decision making at Council. 	Representations from young and older age groups are 'traditionally low' during consultation.	Letters sent to representative organisations.	<p>Letters should be sent to representative groups with publicity posters for display.</p> <p>Ensure methods publicising the consultation process in the Community Involvement Plan will engage with the widest possible reach of people. For instance publicising consultation at community centres, doctor surgeries, job centres, schools, supermarkets and train station. These consultation methods should be reflected in the draft Statement of Community Involvement.</p> <p>Considered appropriate to monitor level of response received from this group.</p>
Pregnancy and maternity	<p>The draft Statement of Community Involvement promotes the use of engagement methods accessible to all sections of the community that are appropriate to this group and proportionate to the consultation exercise.</p> <p>The consultation process on the draft Statement of Community Involvement should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -note that engagement methods must be accessible to those who are expecting and those with very young babies to ensure that this is not a barrier to engagement and to ensure that they can positively input into decision making at Council. 	None	No specific action	<p>Material is available on the website and at places that are accessible to this group.</p> <p>Ensure methods publicising the consultation process in the Community Involvement Plan will engage with the widest possible reach of people. For instance publicising consultation at community centres, doctor surgeries, job centres, schools, supermarkets and train station. These consultation methods should be reflected in the draft Statement of Community Involvement.</p>
Gender	The draft Statement of Community Involvement promotes the use of engagement methods accessible to all sections of the community that are appropriate to this group and proportionate to the consultation exercise.	Representation has been received from past consultations from both sexes.	No specific action.	Ensure methods publicising the consultation process in the Community Involvement Plan will engage with the widest possible reach of people. For instance publicising consultation at community centres, doctor surgeries, job centres, schools, supermarkets and train station. These consultation methods should

	It is not currently considered that additional requirements for the review consultation process are required to successfully engage with these groups although this should be monitored.			be reflected in the draft Statement of Community Involvement. Considered appropriate to monitor level of response received from this group.
Religion and Belief / Gender reassignment / Sexual Orientation / Marriage and civil partnership	<p>The draft Statement of Community Involvement promotes the use of engagement methods accessible to all sections of the community that are appropriate to this group and proportionate to the consultation exercise.</p> <p>It is not considered that additional requirements for the review consultation process are required to successfully engage with these groups.</p>	<p>Representation has been received from past consultations from various faith groups therefore not considered an issue.</p> <p>It is unknown what the response rate is from the remaining groups.</p>	No specific action required.	Ensure methods publicising the consultation process in the Community Involvement Plan will engage with the widest possible reach of people. For instance publicising consultation at community centres, doctor surgeries, job centres, schools, supermarkets and train station. These consultation methods should be reflected in the draft Statement of Community Involvement.
Socio-economic factors	<p>The draft Statement of Community Involvement promotes the use of engagement methods accessible to all sections of the community that are appropriate to this group and proportionate to the consultation exercise.</p> <p>The consultation process on the draft Statement of Community Involvement must ensure that engagement methods are accessible to those who are disadvantaged by their socio-economic background to ensure that they can positively input into decision making at Council.</p>	Evidence from the Indexes of Multiple Deprivation and Community Profiling work indicate wide variations in deprivation within the district.	Letters sent to voluntary services and registered social landlord.	<p>Ensure methods publicising the consultation process in the Community Involvement Plan will engage with the widest possible reach of people. For instance publicising consultation at community centres, doctor surgeries, job centres, schools, supermarkets and train station. These consultation methods should be reflected in the draft Statement of Community Involvement.</p> <p>Material will be made available at places that are accessible to this group such as libraries and help-points. Internet access is available at the libraries for a small amount and material is available to view on-line and representations/queries can be made through this channel. Help-points and local Councillors can also raise queries on this group's behalf.</p> <p>Considered appropriate to monitor level of response received from this group.</p>
Living in a rural area	The draft Statement of Community Involvement promotes the use of engagement methods accessible to all sections of the community that are appropriate to this group and proportionate to the consultation exercise.	None	Letters sent to Town and Parish Council and representative group.	Ensure methods publicising the consultation process in the Community Involvement Plan will engage with the widest possible reach of people. For instance publicising consultation at community centres, doctor surgeries, job centres, schools, supermarkets and train station. These consultation methods should

	<p>The consultation process on the draft Statement of Community Involvement must ensure that engagement methods are to those who are living and perhaps isolated in rural areas to ensure that they can positively input into decision making at Council.</p>			<p>be reflected in the draft Statement of Community Involvement.</p> <p>Material will be made available at places accessible to this group such as on the internet, via the mobile library and at Parish Council offices. Local Councillors can also raise queries on this group's behalf.</p> <p>This group can also be directly targeted via parish Council notice boards.</p> <p>Considered appropriate to monitor level of response received from this group.</p>
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3. ANALYSIS AND ACTION PLANNING

Any gaps in information or provision, opportunities to promote equalities and/or barriers to services identified above need to be translated into SMART targets and recorded here. These actions then need to be incorporated into service plans so that they can be monitored at service level and also as part of a corporate equalities action plan.

Issue	Action/Target	Lead Officer	Deadline	How will impact be measured?
Engaging with the travelling community.	Ensure that they have the opportunity to input into the Statement of Community Involvement via contact with representative groups (detailed in the Community Involvement Plan).	Nathan Spilsted	15 th July 2011 / monitoring October 2011	Evidence of involvement by monitoring level of response received from this group.
Potential barriers for those for whom English is a second language.	Ensure translation service logo in a prominent place on the Statement of Community Involvement and on the posters advertising public consultation.	Nathan Spilsted	15 th July 2011 / monitoring October 2011	Evidence of involvement by monitoring level of response received from this group.
Engagement methods are accessible to those with a physical disability or a mental impairment.	Make draft Statement of Community Involvement available at all the district's libraries and help-points. Make response forms available on-line.	Nathan Spilsted	15 th July 2011 / monitoring October 2011	Evidence of involvement by monitoring level of response received from this group.
Engaging with young and older people.	Letters to representative groups with publicity posters for display. Make response forms available on-line.	Nathan Spilsted	15 th July 2011 / monitoring October 2011	Evidence of involvement by monitoring level of response received from this group.
Engaging with those who are expecting and those with very young babies.	Ensure material is available on the website and at places that are accessible to this group.	Nathan Spilsted	15 th July 2011 / monitoring October 2011	Not considered appropriate to monitor.
Engaging with those who are disadvantaged by their socio-economic background.	Material to be made available at libraries and help-points and on the internet. Material to be sent to help-points and local Councillors to ensure they are aware of Statement of Community Involvement consultation.	Nathan Spilsted	15 th July 2011 / monitoring October 2011	Evidence of involvement by monitoring level of response received from this group.
Engaging with those who are living and perhaps isolated in rural areas.	Ensure material available on the internet, via the mobile library and at Parish Council offices. Material to be sent to local Councillors to	Nathan Spilsted	15 th July 2011 / monitoring October 2011	Evidence of involvement by monitoring level of response received from this group.

	<p>ensure they are aware of Statement of Community Involvement consultation.</p> <p>Ensure posters are placed on parish Council notice boards / halls/ mobile library.</p>			
<p>Ensure that engagement reaches as wide as possible audience including all groups</p>	<p>Ensure the draft Statement of Community Involvement promotes the use of engagement methods accessible to all sections of the community that are appropriate to all groups and proportionate to the consultation exercise.</p> <p>Ensure the methods adopted in the Community Involvement Plan publicising the consultation process includes methods that will engage with the widest possible reach of people. For instance publicising consultation at community centres, doctor surgeries, job centres, schools and supermarkets and train station notice boards. These consultation methods should be reflected in the draft Statement of Community Involvement.</p>	Nathan Spilsted	15 th July 2011 / monitoring October 2011	Evidence of involvement by monitoring level of response received from various groups.

4. Signing off this assessment and action plan

Signature ...Nathan Spilsted Date June 2011
 Person undertaking the assessment

Signature 
 Head of Service

Date 7th October 2011