

CABINET - 19TH NOVEMBER 2020

Report of the Head of Planning Lead Member: Councillor Bailey

Part A

ITEM 9 STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Purpose of Report

The report proposes an updated Statement of Community Involvement for adoption. The document sets out how the Council will consult on planning policy documents (including the Local Plan), engage with and support neighbourhood planning, and consult on planning applications.

Recommendations

1. That the Statement of Community Involvement in Appendix A of Part B to the report be adopted.
2. That the fee proposal (detailed at paragraph 2.2 of Appendix A of Part B to the report) to charge an administration fee for requests to provide physical copies of consultation documents at a rate of £5 per document plus the printing cost be approved.

Reasons

1. To meet statutory timescales to update the Statement of Community Involvement every five years and ensure that the Council has modern and engaging approaches to plan-making consultations that are sufficiently flexible to enable plan-making to progress in the context of COVID-19 restrictions. Also to set out the Council's approach to supporting neighbourhood planning and consult on planning applications.
2. To establish a new discretionary service charge as set out at paragraph 5.3 of the Council's Income and Charging Policy.

Policy Justification and Previous Decisions

The Council is required to produce a Statement of Community Involvement under Section 18 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and is required to update it every five years under Regulation 4 of the Town and Country Planning Regulations 2017. The Cabinet adopted the current Statement of Community Involvement in January 2014 (Minute 69 2013 refers).

In the context of COVID-19, the Government's Planning Practice Guidance has been updated to encourage local authorities to undertake an immediate update to their Statement of Community Involvement to ensure that plan-making can continue during public health restrictions. An update to the Statement of Community Involvement is therefore timely ahead of the anticipated consultation on the Local Plan in early 2021.

The Statement of Community Involvement reflects the ‘Your Council’ section of the Corporate Strategy by committing to modern and effective consultation engagement.

Implementation Timetable including Future Decisions and Scrutiny

The decision will come into effect immediately (subject to Call-in).

Report Implications

The following implications have been identified for this report.

Financial Implications

There are no significant financial implications. Any changes to the Council’s approach to consultations will be met from existing budgets. The recommendation to introduce an administration fee for requests to provide physical copies of consultation documents is likely to be used infrequently as consultation documents are made available online, but is intended to cover the cost of this discretionary function.

Risk Management

The risks associated with the decision Cabinet is asked to make and proposed actions to mitigate those risks are set out in the table below.

Risk Identified	Likelihood	Impact	Overall Risk	Risk Management Actions Planned
Statement of Community Involvement does not comply with minimum legal requirements which could have legal, financial and reputational implications.	Remote (1)	Minor (1)	Very Low (1)	The document has been drafted with full consideration of relevant legislation and identifies optional additional consultation actions that exceed minimum requirements.

Equality and Diversity

An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has been undertaken and is attached at Appendix B. To summarise, the Statement of Community Involvement has been drafted with equalities considerations as a corporate priority. The policies contained apply to the public generally and are not intended to focus on any specific group. For plan-making the Council has committed to maintaining a mix of online and offline consultation methods and to make reasonable adjustments for equalities requests in line with the general equality duty. In all cases, and considering that planning issues can vary significantly depending on individual proposals, the general equality duty applies irrespective of the Statement of Community Involvement.

Councillors are reminded that in making this decision they should give due regard to the need to:

- Encourage participation by disabled people in public life and take account of disabled people's disabilities, even when that involves treating disabled people more favourably.

Key Decision: No

Background Papers: None

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Part B

1. Background

- 1.1 Charnwood Borough Council's current Statement of Community Involvement was adopted in January 2014, is now outdated, and is not sufficiently flexible to enable the continuation of plan-making during COVID-19 restrictions.
- 1.2 In August 2020, Government indicated in the 'Planning for the Future White Paper' that significant changes to the planning system will take place over the coming years. The key message is one of culture change in planning – to embrace technology, widen consultation methods and reach unheard voices. Planning processes and documents should be simple and streamlined to speed up decision and plan making and further enable public engagement. The proposed Statement of Community Involvement aims to reflect these principles.
- 1.3 There is no legislative requirement to consult when updating a Statement of Community Involvement although the council may do so if it feels this would be appropriate. With this in mind, it is considered the changes proposed do not represent a significant shift in the current approach to consultation on planning documents. The most significant changes relate to: adapting to Covid-19; reflecting feedback collected during recent consultations; making the document itself more concise; and moving to a more online-positive approach alongside enhanced communications. In this context, it is not considered that consultation on the Statement of Community Involvement is necessary.

2. Summary of the Proposed Changes

- 2.1 The proposed Statement of Community Involvement sets out the Council's approach towards community and stakeholder engagement on planning matters and has been written to be concise and accessible. The document has been reduced in size from 36 to 10 pages, compared with the existing Statement of Community Involvement. The key sections of the document are summarised below.

Planning Policy Documents

- 2.2 This section of the proposed Statement of Community Involvement sets out how the council will consult on planning policy documents as they are prepared. The general principle of this section has been to remove unnecessary detail and to give the Council maximum flexibility in preparing documents, whilst making clear those commitments that exceed the minimum requirements.
- 2.3 In relation to the Local Plan, the council proposes to: retain an additional round of non-statutory consultation to inform plan making; maintain an open consultation database that includes 'hard to reach' groups; and use a range of consultation methods (see Table 1 of Appendix A). The table below summarises the key changes in relation to the Local Plan between the current and proposed Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

New Additions to the SCI	Removed Parts of the SCI
Greater emphasis on social media/online engagement including Facebook, Twitter, video presentations and the Council's 'Charnwood News' email updates	Remove libraries as deposit points and the production of leaflets (in favour of enhanced online engagement)
Inclusion of responding to Equalities requests as a consultation method (for example making reasonable adjustments for an individual's disability to ensure that they can access content and comment).	Remove detailed commitments to focused exhibitions/workshops (although retain commitment to undertake such events if necessary)
Inclusion of a stated fee for providing printed documents (£5 per document plus printing cost).	Removal of explanatory detail in relation to the preparation of the Local Plan (in favour of a concise document that is accessible to the public – inclusion of a general commitment to fulfil procedural duties)
Inclusion of caveat in relation to physical forms of consultation, that the Council will facilitate online alternatives where COVID-19 measures restrict these methods	Removal of lists of consultation bodies (unnecessarily detailed and specified lists generally become outdated as organisations change over time)
Commits to placing site notices near proposed development allocations as part of the preferred options and publication consultations (in place of placing documents in libraries – publicises proposals closer to impacted communities).	

2.4 In relation to Supplementary Planning Documents and Informal Guidance, the Council proposes to use a range of consultation methods (see Table 1 of Appendix A) which enhances the methods specified in the current Statement of Community Involvement. The proposed Statement of Community Involvement commits to making public a report on consultation responses that details actions arising. However, compared to the current Statement of Community Involvement, it is proposed to remove the reference to an additional optional consultation and to consult for the statutorily required 4 weeks (currently 6 weeks) in order to enhance the flexibility of preparing these documents.

2.5 In relation to the Local Development Scheme, commitments reflect the minimum legal requirements.

Neighbourhood Planning Support

2.6 This section of the proposed Statement of Community Involvement sets out the Council's policies for supporting neighbourhood planning reflecting the Council's duty to give advice and assistance to communities that are engaging with neighbourhood planning. Since the adoption of the current Statement of Community Involvement in 2014, the Town and County Planning Act 1990 has been amended to require local authorities to set out specific policies for

neighbourhood planning, therefore the commitments made are a new addition in the proposed Statement of Community Involvement.

- 2.7 As a minimum, commitments made broadly reflect the Council's legal duties. The Council makes commitments to exceed the requirements by providing assistance on the specified technical matters; providing informal advice on draft policies/orders; and coordinating consultation materials. In response to COVID-19, a caveat is included that the fulfilling of duties will be subject to COVID-19 measures.

Development Management – Processing Planning Applications

- 2.8 This section sets out how the Council will consult on planning applications and broadly reflects the minimum legal requirements for each application type (see Table 2 of Appendix A). It also highlights the Council's policies towards pre-application advice and public involvement at Planning Committee.

Appendices

Appendix A – Statement of Community Involvement

Appendix B – Equalities Impact Assessment

Statement of Community Involvement

Charnwood Borough Council

November 2020



Statement of Community Involvement

Charnwood Borough Council

Executive Summary

This document sets out how Charnwood Borough Council will consult the community, business and organisations on planning matters. Planning shapes the environments where people live, work and spend their time and the Council recognises that effective and meaningful consultation is a valuable component of the planning process. The Statement of Community Involvement sets out how the Council will:

- Consult on **planning policy** documents (including the Local Plan)
- Engage with and support **neighbourhood planning**
- Consult on **development management** planning applications

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1. Introduction

What is and why adopt a Statement of Community Involvement?

The Statement of Community Involvement sets out how Charnwood Borough Council will consult on the preparation of planning policy documents, the processing of planning applications and how the Council will engage with neighbourhood planning. The Council is required by legislation to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement¹.

Planning shapes the places where people live, work and spend their time and, in turn, community involvement should help shape planning decisions. The Council values community engagement as a fundamental component of planning and, through this document, our vision is to empower communities to engage in modern, dynamic, efficient and effective ways.

This document replaces the previous Statement of Community Involvement (adopted January 2014) and will be reviewed regularly in accordance with the requirement to review this document every five years².

How to read the Statement of Community Involvement

This document is split into three themes – planning policy documents, neighbourhood planning, and development management. **The Council's specific consultation commitments are shown as Green text for ease of reference.**

¹ Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended), Section 18

² The Town and Country Planning Regulations 2017, Regulation 4

2. Planning Policy Documents

2.1 Planning policy documents set a framework for managing development in the area. The adopted Local Plan and adopted Neighbourhood Plans together form the ‘Development Plan’ for the area. Supplementary Planning Documents can add further detail to the Development Plan. Public consultation forms a key element of the preparation of planning policy documents and the Council attaches great importance to facilitating meaningful and wide-reaching public participation. The Statement of Community Involvement is required to set out the Council’s consultation policy in respect the preparation of planning policy documents³.

Local Plan

2.2 Local Plans set out a vision and planning policies to guide the determination of future planning applications within the area, and allocate land for housing, employment, retail and protective uses. Information about the role and scope of Local Plans is on the Government website⁴. The process for preparing a Local Plan and minimum consultation requirements are set out in legislation⁵. The Council aims to make local plan consultations meaningful and engaging. Our commitments in relation to preparing the Local Plan are to:

- ✓ **Undertake the following six-week consultations:-**
 - **Preparation Stage (Regulation 18) – to survey the scope and content of the plan at an early stage.**
 - **Preferred Options Stage (non-statutory) – to further inform plan content.**
 - **Publication Stage (Regulation 19/20) – to seek final views on the plan, to be considered by the independent Planning Inspector.**
- ✓ **Consult using all the methods listed in Table 1. Consultation procedures will be clearly explained and engaging.**
- ✓ **Fulfil procedural duties for Local Plan preparation, examination and adoption.**
- ✓ **Upon request, provide physical copies of consultation documents for a charge of the printing cost + £5 (per document) administration fee.**
- ✓ **Maintain a consultation database of consultees including ‘specific’ organisations prescribed by legislation; ‘general’ consultation bodies considered appropriate by the Council (including hard to read groups); and any other person/organisation that requests to join the database⁶**
- ✓ **Maintain a separate e-mail alert service that provides regular updates to people/organisations that join the mail list⁷.**
- ✓ **If revising the local plan pursuant to legislation⁸, the Council will undertake two six-week consultations (as per Regulation 18 and 19/20 above).**
- ✓ **For each consultation undertaken, publish a report on the website that collates and responds to consultation representations and identifies actions taken.**
- ✓ **Engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis with neighbouring local authorities on issues of a strategic and cross-boundary nature (including consideration of joint working opportunities).**

³ Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended), Section 18 (2)

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/plan-making>

⁵ Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

⁶ Sign up to the consultation database by e-mailing: localplans@charnwood.gov.uk

⁷ <https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/lpsignup>

⁸ Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended), Section 26

Table 1: Consultation methods for preparing planning policy documents

Method	Details
Online copy availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents and latest information via www.charnwood.gov.uk/planningpolicy
Hard copy availability*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation documents made available at the Council's principal office
Site Notices*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the Preferred Options and Publication stages consultations, at least 1 general site notice will be placed near each proposed housing and employment allocation.
E-mail and letter notification to those on the consultation database/ e-mail alert.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Plan: to be sent to all consultees on the database Other documents: to be sent to consultees dependent on the relevance of the consultation to them (i.e. impacts their area/ specialist topic).
Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicity material to be posted on the Council's Facebook and Twitter accounts Video/presentation material will be produced at the Council's discretion.
Local Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Press releases will be prepared and sent to local media organisations The Council will respond constructively to media requests for more information
Focused Meetings*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where requested, the Council will facilitate meetings with interest groups; organisations and community advocates. Where necessary the Council will work with stakeholders to coordinate such meetings where there is a high level of demand.
Parish and Town Councils and Neighbourhood Planning Forums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be notified of all Local Plan consultations, and consultations on other document that impact their area, and encouraged to publicise in newsletters.
Notify Local Politicians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where their areas are impacted, Councillors (district and county) and Members of Parliament to be notified of the consultation by e-mail
Exhibitions/ Workshops*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be facilitated at the Council's discretion and can focus on specific topics or localities.
Charnwood News	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where timescales permit, publicity material on consultations will be published in the 'Charnwood News' magazine which is distributed to most homes in the Borough.* Consultations will be publicised on the Council corporate 'Charnwood News' e-mailing list
Consultation Responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses will be welcomed online or by post to widen engagement
Developer/Stakeholder/Community Forums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members of planning developer/stakeholder/community forums that the Council facilitates will be notified of the consultation by e-mail.
Equal Access Requests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council will respond positively to equal access requests in line with the public sector equalities duty (for example advancing opportunity of access to consultation documents where inequalities derive from characteristics such as race, disability and age).

*COVID-19 measures may temporarily restrict the Council's ability to undertake physical consultation methods. Should this be the case the Council will facilitate online alternatives.

Supplementary Planning Documents/ Informal Guidance

2.3 Supplementary Planning Documents add detail to, but do not have the same status as, policies in the Local Plan. The process for preparing and consulting on a Supplementary Planning Document is set out in legislation⁹. Informal Guidance is sometimes published to add more clarity to aid the interpretation of policy. Our commitments in relation to preparing Supplementary Planning Documents/ Informal Guidance are to:

- ✓ **Undertake a four-week consultation on the proposed document.**
- ✓ **Consult using all the methods listed in Table 1. Consultation procedures will be clearly explained and seek engagement of those most affected.**
- ✓ **Upon request, provide physical copies of consultation documents for a charge of the printing cost + £5 (per document) administration fee.**
- ✓ **Publish a report on the website that collates and responds to consultation representations and identifies actions taken.**

Local Development Scheme

2.4 Charnwood Borough Council's Local Development Schemes sets out an up-to-date programme and timescales for preparing the Local Plan¹⁰. Our commitments in relation to the Local Development Scheme are to:

- ✓ **Ensure that the scheme is kept up-to-date and publicly available on the website.**
- ✓ **Annually report on progress made on the scheme in the Council's Annual Monitoring Report.**

⁹ Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, Part 5.

¹⁰ <https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/localdevelopmentscheme>

3. Neighbourhood Planning Support

3.1 Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their local area and takes two forms, which are prepared by the local community, usually parish councils (designated 'qualifying bodies') and endorsed by referendum:

- **Neighbourhood plans** can contain development allocations and planning policies to guide the development of the local area to which the plan relates.
- **Neighbourhood development orders** grant planning permission for specific types of development within a local area.

3.2 Information about neighbourhood planning is on the Government website¹¹. The procedure and timescales for engaging with neighbourhood planning is prescribed by legislation¹². The Council has a duty to give advice and assistance to qualifying bodies (those engaging with neighbourhood planning)¹³. The Statement of Community Involvement is required set out the Council's policy for engaging with neighbourhood planning¹⁴. Considering these matters, The Council will engage positively with local communities partaking in neighbourhood planning.

Neighbourhood Plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders

3.3 Our commitments in relation to neighbourhood planning are to:

- ✓ **Fulfil our duties within statutory timescales unless otherwise agreed with qualifying bodies (subject to consideration of COVID-19 measures)**
- ✓ **Maintain dialogue with qualifying bodies at all procedural stages.**
- ✓ **Where requested, support qualifying bodies with digital mapping, Strategic Environmental Assessment/Habitats Regulations Assessment screening, Environmental Impact Assessment, the establishment of Neighbourhood Forums, and sharing relevant parts of the Council's Local Plan evidence base.**
- ✓ **Where requested, provide informal advice on draft neighbourhood plan policies and draft neighbourhood development orders.**
- ✓ **Respond to the Regulation 14 and 21 consultations (those organised by the qualifying body).**
- ✓ **Communicate with qualifying bodies when organising regulation 6 and 16 consultations (those organised by the Council) in order to coordinate publicity materials. Where the Council is responsible for consultations it will:**
 - **publicise consultation documents the website;**
 - **deposit physical consultation documents at one location within the neighbourhood area;**
 - **consult relevant parties within the Council's planning consultation database. (The same approach will be taken for the publicity of modification or revocation of a plan or order).**
- ✓ **Maintain a webpage, including links to documents, on the Borough Council's website about the neighbourhood plan or neighbourhood development order.**

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2>

¹² The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended by 2015, 2016 and 2017 regulations)

¹³ The Town and County Planning Act 1990 (as amended), Schedule 4b, Paragraph 3

¹⁴ Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended), Section 18 (2B)

3.4 It is not the Council's role to lead on the establishment or drafting of neighbourhood plans or orders. The Council seeks a proactive relationship in assisting qualifying bodies but will not take responsibility for preparing documents or offer additional administrative/ printing facilities.

4. Development Management – Processing Planning Applications

4.1 The Council processes a range of planning applications from householder and minor applications to major housing/ employment sites, and other specific consent routes detailed below. The Council attaches great importance to providing an effective and efficient development management service, including good stakeholder and community consultation, and sets out below how this will be achieved at the various stages.

Pre-Application Engagement

4.2 Pre-application advice helps applicants understand and resolve key issues prior to submitting a formal planning application. Although not a statutory function, the Council encourages and values early pre-application engagement (particularly alongside community engagement exercises) and has set out procedural information and **ten pre-application commitments in the document ‘Pre-Application Advice Service: Guidance Note’¹⁵**. The Council recognises its data protection responsibilities.

Consultation on Planning Application – by type

4.3 The minimum requirements for community consultation on planning applications are set out in legislation¹⁶. Other specific consent routes are governed by different legislation, the requirements of which are as a minimum reflected below. Our commitments in relation to consulting on planning applications are to:

- ✓ **Undertake the consultation actions set out in Table 2. The following will apply to the different consultation methods:-**
 - **Website – documents and information considered to be relevant will be placed on the Council’s Planning Explorer¹⁷ public access website.**
 - **Site Notices – at least 1 will be placed on or near the proposal site. Reasonable steps will be taken to replace removed, obscured or defaced site notices where the Council is made aware.**
 - **Neighbour Letters – sent to the occupier of adjoining properties.**
 - **Newspaper Notice – in the Loughborough Echo or Leicester Mercury.**
- ✓ **Consult statutory consultees¹⁸.**
- ✓ **Invite consultation responses in writing only, using the following routes:-**
 - **Online – using the Council’s Planning Explorer (see footnote 17).**
 - **E-mail – development.control@charnwood.gov.uk**
 - **Post – Planning Services, Charnwood Borough Council, Southfield Road, Loughborough, Leicestershire, LE11 2TN.**

Other Procedural Matters

4.4 Our general commitments in relation to the Development management process are to:

- ✓ **Aim to process planning applications within statutory timescales, unless an extension of time is agreed with the applicant.**
- ✓ **Support public involvement at Planning Committee in accordance with the Council’s ‘Public speaking at Planning Committee’¹⁹ policy.**

¹⁵https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/files/documents/pre_application_advice_guidance_note/Charnwood%20Borough%20Council%20Pre-Application%20Advice%20Service%20May%202017%20-%20mod%20Jan%202018.pdf

¹⁶ The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended), Article 15

¹⁷ <https://portal.charnwood.gov.uk/Northgate/PlanningExplorerAA/GeneralSearch.aspx>

¹⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/consultation-and-pre-decision-matters#Statutory-consultees-on-applications>

¹⁹https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/files/documents/speaking_at_committee/Public%20Speaking%20leaflet%20A5%20Oct%202011.pdf

- ✓ **Make decisions on planning applications available on the website.**
- ✓ **Fulfil statutory duties where an appeal against refusal of planning permission is made and notify in writing those who commented on the application.**

Table 2: Consultation actions on planning applications by type

Application Type	Consultation Duration	Documents on Website	Newspaper Notice	Site Notice or Neighbour Letter
Major Development (10 or more dwellings, 1000 sqm or floorspace, or 0.5ha site)	21 days	✓	✓	✓
Applications that do not accord with the provisions of the Development Plan	21 days	✓	✓	✓
Environmental Impact Assessment applications accompanied by an environmental statement	30 days	✓	✓	✓
Affects a Public Right of Way	21 days	✓	✓	✓
Development affecting or within the setting of a Listed Building, or within a Conservation Area	21 days	✓	✓	✓
All other planning applications (minor, including householder)	21 days	✓		✓
Where an amendment that materially effects the proposal has been received on a planning application.	7-21 days (additional)	✓		✓
Works to trees protected by Tree Preservation Order (TPO) or trees within a Conservation Area.	21 days	✓		✓
Prior notification (where consultation is required only)	As required	✓		✓
Variation/ removal of condition.	21 days	✓		✓
Discharge of conditions	None			
Lawful development certificates	None			
Advertisement consent	None			
Non-material amendments	None			
Hedgerow removal	None			
Environmental Assessment screening or scoping opinion	Consult statutory consultees			

5. Further Advice and Contact

5.1 For more information about community consultation on the preparation of planning documents or neighbourhood planning, contact localplans@charnwood.gov.uk.

5.2 For more information about community consultation on planning applications, contact development.control@charnwood.gov.uk.

APPENDIX B –

Equality Impact Assessment ‘Knowing the needs of your customers and employees’

■ Background

An Equality Impact Assessment is an improvement tool. It will assist you in ensuring that you have thought about the needs and impacts of your service/policy/function in relation to the protected characteristics. It enables a systematic approach to identifying and recording gaps and actions.

■ Legislation- Equality Duty

As a local authority that provides services to the public, Charnwood Borough Council has a legal responsibility to ensure that we can demonstrate having paid due regard to the need to:

- ✓ Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- ✓ Advance Equality of Opportunity
- ✓ Foster good relations

For the following protected characteristics:

1. Age
2. Disability
3. Gender reassignment
4. Marriage and civil partnership
5. Pregnancy and maternity
6. Race
7. Religion and belief
8. Sex (Gender)
9. Sexual orientation

What is prohibited?

1. Direct Discrimination
2. Indirect Discrimination
3. Harassment
4. Victimisation
5. Discrimination by association
6. Discrimination by perception
7. Pregnancy and maternity discrimination
8. Discrimination arising from disability
9. Failing to make reasonable adjustments

Note: Complete the action plan as you go through the questions

■ **Step 1 – Introductory information**

Title of the policy	Statement of Community Involvement
Name of lead officer and others undertaking this assessment	Seb Wilkins (Senior Planning Officer)
Date EIA started	31/08/2020
Date EIA completed	06/10/2020

■ **Step 2 – Overview of policy/function being assessed:**

Outline: What is the purpose of this policy? (Specify aims and objectives)
The Statement of Community Involvement sets out how the Council will consult on planning policy documents (including the Local Plan), engage with and support neighbourhood planning, and consult on planning applications.
What specific group/s is the policy designed to affect/impact and what is the intended change or outcome for them?
None – relates to the general public.
Which groups have been consulted as part of the creation or review of the policy?
None.

■ **Step 3 – What we already know and where there are gaps**

List any existing information/data do you have/monitor about different diverse groups in relation to this policy? Such as in relation to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation etc.
Data/information such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consultation ▪ Previous Equality Impact Assessments ▪ Demographic information ▪ Anecdotal and other evidence
Consultations for plan-making and development management are applicable to the public generally. The Council's policy towards neighbourhood planning engagement is applicable to neighbourhood planning groups generally.
In relation to plan-making, the Council maintains a consultation database that includes consultees that are considered 'hard to reach', some of which will represent groups with protected characteristics. The list is not exhaustive due to the wide range of potential groups, however the Council encourages interested groups to register onto the consultation database on its website.

What does this information / data tell you about diverse groups? If you do not hold or have access to any data/information on diverse groups, what do you need to begin collating / monitoring? (Please list)
Community interest groups exist for a range of reasons that reflect the diversity of society. Each group may have a unique perspective that would make a valuable contribution to plan-making and it is incumbent on the Council to enable/facilitate these groups to participate in planning consultations.

■ **Step 4 – Do we need to seek the views of others? If so, who?**

In light of the answers you have given in Step 2, do you need to consult with specific groups to identify needs / issues? If not please explain why.
No, the Statement of Community Involvement relates to the public generally. In relation to plan-making, a specific consultation commitment is made to respond to Equalities requests as a consultation method.
Public interest, or the interest of specific equalities groups, in plan-making and development management functions can vary significantly depending on the proposal. In any event the Council has a general equalities duty to respond to equalities matters accordingly.

■ **Step 5 – Assessing the impact**

In light of any data/consultation/information and your own knowledge and awareness, please identify whether the policy has a positive or negative impact on the individuals or community groups (including what barriers these individuals or groups may face) who identify with any 'protected characteristics' and provide an explanation for your decision (please refer to the general duties on the front page).

	Comments
Age	Neutral – The document has a greater emphasis on online consultation methods and removes libraries as deposit points which could disproportionately impact older people who are less likely to be online. However, a physical deposit point at the council offices is retained; site notices near proposed allocations will be used to publicise consultations within the direct locality; and the document makes a specific commitment to make reasonable adjustments for equalities purposes upon request. Overall this would maintain the advancement of equality of opportunity.
Disability (Physical, visual, hearing, learning disabilities, mental health)	Positive – the document makes a specific commitment to make reasonable adjustments for equalities purposes upon request. This would particularly benefit individuals with certain disabilities. Overall the aim of this is to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity to respond to consultations.
Gender Reassignment (Transgender)	Neutral – benefits of the document would be equal as they apply to the public generally.
Race	Positive – the document makes a specific commitment to make reasonable adjustments for equalities purposes upon request. This would particularly benefit individuals with language barriers. Overall the aim of this is to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity to respond to consultations.
Religion or Belief (Includes no belief)	Neutral – benefits of the document would be equal as they apply to the public generally.
Sex (Gender)	Neutral – benefits of the document would be equal as they apply to the public generally.
Sexual Orientation	Neutral – benefits of the document would be equal as they apply to the public generally.
Other protected groups (Pregnancy &	Neutral – benefits of the document would be equal as they apply

maternity, marriage & civil partnership)	to the public generally.
Other socially excluded groups (armed forces families/ communities, carers, low literacy, priority neighbourhoods, health inequalities, rural isolation, asylum seeker and refugee communities etc.)	Positive – the document makes a specific commitment to facilitate focused meetings with interest groups, organisations and community advocates where there is demand. Overall the aim of this is to advance equality of opportunity to respond to consultations.

Where there are potential barriers, negative impacts identified and/ or barriers or impacts are unknown, please outline how you propose to minimise all negative impact or discrimination.

Please note:

- If you have identified adverse impact or discrimination that is illegal, you are required to take action to remedy this immediately.
- Additionally, if you have identified adverse impact that is justifiable or legitimate, you will need to consider what actions can be taken to mitigate its effect on those groups of people.

No negative impacts or barriers have been identified.

Summarise your findings and give an overview as to whether the policy will meet Charnwood Borough Council's responsibilities in relation to equality and diversity (please refer to the general duties on the front page).

The Statement of Community Involvement has been drafted with equalities considerations as a corporate priority. The policies contained apply to the public generally and are not intended to focus on any specific group. For plan-making the Council has committed to maintaining a mix of online and offline consultation methods and to make reasonable adjustments for equalities requests in line with the general equality duty. In all cases, and considering that planning issues can vary significantly depending on individual proposals, the general equality duty applies irrespective of the Statement of Community Involvement.

■ Step 6- Monitoring, evaluation and review

Are there processes in place to review the findings of this Assessment and make appropriate changes? In particular, how will you monitor potential barriers and any positive/ negative impact?

There is a legal requirement to review the Statement of Community Involvement every five years. The Council can also review the document at any time. Should unintended barriers become apparent, the Council is within its right to amend the document accordingly.

How will the recommendations of this assessment be built into wider planning and review processes? e.g. policy reviews, annual plans and use of performance management systems.

The Council will remain vigilant of equalities/access considerations in undertaking its planning functions. When the Statement of Community Involvement is next reviewed, equalities considerations at that point in time will inform the review.

■ Step 7- Action Plan


Please include any identified concerns/actions/issues in this action plan:
The issues identified should inform your Service Plan and, if appropriate, your Consultation Plan

Reference Number	Action	Responsible Officer	Target Date
	None		

■ **Step 8- Who needs to know about the outcomes of this assessment and how will they be informed?**

	Who needs to know (Please tick)	How they will be informed (we have a legal duty to publish EIA's)
Employees	Planning staff	If Cabinet adopts the Statement of Community Involvement, planning staff will be notified of this decision. The document will be published online for the reference of all service users (general public and organisations).
Service users	General public	
Partners and stakeholders		
Others		
To ensure ease of access, what other communication needs/concerns are there?		Accessibility requests will be responded to in a positive manner.

■ **Step 9- Conclusion (to be completed and signed by the [Service Head](#))**

Please delete as appropriate
I agree / disagree with this assessment / action plan
If <i>disagree</i>, state action/s required, reasons and details of who is to carry them out with timescales:
Signed (Service Head): 
Date: <u>19/10/20</u>

[Please send completed & signed assessment to Suzanne Kinder for publishing.](#)