

LOCAL PLAN WORKING GROUP

A meeting of the Local Plan Working Group was held on 23 October 2019.

PRESENT: Councillors D P Coupe, A High, C Hobson, J Hobson, D Rooney, A Waters and M L Smiles (by invitation)

OFFICERS: S Blood, P Clarke, A Conti, C Gibben and K Whitwell.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Mayor A Preston.

19/8 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The Mayor submitted his apologies to the meeting.

19/9 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were submitted.

19/10 **MINUTES FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 15 AUGUST 2019**

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 August 2019 were submitted and approved as a true record.

19/11 **STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

The Strategic Policy Manager provided a presentation to the Local Plan Working Group in relation to the preparation of a revised Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

The meeting focussed on the following items:

- Requirement to prepare a statement of community involvement
- Middlesbrough's existing Statement of Community Involvement
- Revised Statement of Community Involvement.

Requirement to prepare a statement of community involvement

The Local Plan Working Group were advised that as part of the Planning and Compulsory Purchases Act 2004, Local Authorities have a statutory requirement to prepare a statement of community involvement.

The SCI is the Council's policy on planning consultations, for example on the Local Plan, Neighbourhood Plans or Planning applications. The SCI must not only set out how consultation will take place, but also identify how other legal requirements will be met.

Middlesbrough's existing statement of community involvement

Middlesbrough Council recently adopted their SCI in 2016, however there has been comments that the SCI is potentially too technical and lengthy. Although is this not a negative aspect to the SCI, work needs to be completed on making the SCI more user friendly.

In order to do this, the Council was looking at making the SCI:

- Simple and concise
- Being clear about how legal requirements are met so that there is minimal risk of legal challenge.
- Setting out examples of the types of consultation that may take place.
- Prepare a bespoke consultation plan for every consultation taking place.

- Identify commitment from the Council and expectation from those individuals who wish to get involved

The Strategic Policy Manager spoke about the consultation and the ways the Council may like to consult. The Local Plan Working Group were advised that there was statutory minimum consultation that needed to be met i.e. all plans must be available for inspection and placed online, however the Council may like to use other avenues for consultation, for example, using social media, posters, public notices, press releases, workshops etc as it has done previously. However, the type of document would determine the appropriate level of consultation the Council will undertake.

The Chair outlined that attending community councils would be a useful resident's forum to attend to gather views. The officers responded in that in previous consultations, community councils have been contacted to see if they required an officer to attend, however this would be considered for future consultation periods.

Our Commitment to the Community

The officers commented that it was important to provide early engagement with communities, providing clear and non-technical information. In terms of consultation events, the Council would look to ensuring these were flexible and inclusive and at a range of locations across the areas.

The Council, as outlined above would look to using a variety of different consultation methods, whilst making clear how residents can respond to consultation, e.g. all responses must be made in writing and the time frame they have to do this. The Council will ensure openness, whilst protecting personal information in line with GDPR regulations.

The officers stated that in terms of the stages of the process of a plan, the consultation aspect came under the second stage (options/consultations) and is a critical stage. Once the Plan gets to publication stage it cannot be changed without undertaking a further public consultation.

What was expected from the community

Whilst the Council will make clear commitments, they would also require a level of expectation from the community, including:

- Providing relevant comments in a clear format and relate to the issues being considered
- Respond in line within the specified time period
- Be courteous and respectful of other's views
- If replying as part of a group try to ensure a full range of members views are represented.

The Members commented that it would be useful within the SCI to provide examples of what is required and what will and what won't be accepted in written responses.

The officer read out Regulation 19 from plan making, explaining that this was the minimum requirement of consultation. The Working Group were also provided with examples of SCI from local authorities across the country.

The working group outlined that they were on board with the new approach to the SCI, however suggested the following:

- that the name 'Statement of community involvement' have a strap line to make it more appealing .e.g. Statement of community involvement- your views matter.
- That the Local Plan takes into consideration concerns raised by residents.

- that a communication plan for the media be developed- Council looking at wider communications process.

The SCI also takes into consideration planning applications neighbourhood plans. In terms of planning applications there was a strict set of rules that needed to be adhered to and there is no scope to consult on applications above the statutory minimum. However the working group were advised that within the SCI there would be an expectation to consult on the pre planning application process.

Neighbourhood plans are not prepared by the Council and therefore consultation should be carried out by the Neighbourhood Planning Group for a 6 week period to the neighbourhood plan area. Once consultation has taken place, and the plan is submitted, the Council has a duty to publish the plan so that those who it effects have a chance to make representations.

Next steps

- Prepare a draft SCI, and bring back to the next meeting. There is no legal requirement to consult on the SCI, however targeted consultation will take place with relevant groups/ stakeholders.
- Finalise for Executive approval (March 2020)

In terms of consultation, the officers outlined that anyone who has responded to a consultation is added to the database. Those consultees will be contacted on every local plan consultation.

The Chair also advised that members of the public who are involved in relevant groups will be invited to give their views on the SCI and other planning documents.

Agreed as follows:

That the officers develop the draft SCI and bring back to the working group.

19/12

ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED

Update of Local Plan

The Local Plan Working Group were advised that the Local Plan was currently in the gathering evidence stage and has commissioned evidence and economic scenarios are being developed. This is a crucial stage in the development of the Local Plan.

Once the Local Plan is developed, the Working Group will consider the plan over a series of meetings, possibly looking at sections at a time rather than the whole document.

Agreed- That the update be noted.