

Chelmsford City Council Equality Analysis

This form enables an assessment of the impact a policy, strategy or activity on customers and employees.

A: Assessor Details	
Name of policy / function(s):	Statement of Community Involvement
Officer(s) completing this assessment:	Gemma Nicholson, Jenny Robinson and Claire Stuckey
Date of assessment:	July 2020

Please note this document has been drafted during the current Covid-19 outbreak and the requirement for social distancing restrictions are in place. Whilst the Council had made every effort to introduce appropriate alternative consultations methods as needed to reflect any current limitations on access and meetings, this will be reviewed and be updated as restrictions are eased.

Planning Policy documentation will be made available for inspection at main Council offices only when it is safe and practically possible. For further information about how Council services are affected, please visit www.chelmsford.gov.uk/coronavirus

B: Summary Details	
Description of policy, strategy or activity and what it is aiming to do	<p>The draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out the strategy for involving the community, interested organisations and statutory stakeholders in planning and development matters which affect them.</p> <p>It covers both planning policy and development management functions and complements Council-wide engagement commitments set out in the <i>Consultation and Engagement Strategy</i> and <i>Our Chelmsford, Our Plan</i>.</p> <p>The requirement for Planning Authorities to publish an SCI is set out in Section 18 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.</p>

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	<input type="checkbox"/> new OR <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> existing (<i>If existing, when was the last assessment?</i> March 2016) <input type="checkbox"/> internal OR <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> external (i.e. public-facing) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> statutory OR <input type="checkbox"/> non-statutory
Policy Owner (service)	Spatial Planning service, Sustainable Communities
Scope: Internal - Service/Directorate/Council wide External – specify community groups	<p>The current version of the SCI was published in 2016. The legislation states that an SCI should be reviewed within five years of publication, i.e. by March 2021. The intention was to review the SCI later this year, following the adoption of the Local Plan, alongside an update of the Local Development Scheme outlining the timetable for production of future planning documents.</p> <p>Additionally, due to the coronavirus situation, the Council is unable to meet some of its usual consultation commitments such as holding face to face meetings and placing documents on deposit in public locations. A temporary explanatory note was added to the current SCI in April 2020, and updated in July, to address this. Recognising the wider impact of the inability of Councils to meet commitments of their SCI, the Government issued updated advice on 13 May. It advises that an immediate review is made of current SCI so that consultation policies can be updated to allow plan-making to continue.</p> <p>The SCI provides a framework for effectively involving the whole community, interested organisations and statutory stakeholders in planning and development matters which affect them.</p> <p>The content of the updated draft SCI has not changed significantly, as the legislation prescribes what should be included such as how we will consult on Local Plan and other planning policy documents including Neighbourhood Plans, and how we will involve people in consideration of planning applications.</p>

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	<p>However, the opportunity has been taken to update information to reflect the adoption of the new Local Plan (May 2020), include the updated Master planning procedure agreed by the Council's Cabinet in October 2019, update web links, and to reference how our commitments might be altered in line with Government advice in exceptional circumstances where the usual consultation commitments cannot be met.</p> <p>The types of consultation activity we will run, including greater use of social media, and digital access to documents will also be updated and the format and language will be simplified to ensure clarity and accessibility.</p>
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C: Assessment of impact

Using the information above, assess if the policy / function could potentially disproportionately impact on different protected groups. Specify if the potential impact is positive, could adversely impact or if there is no impact. If an adverse impact, indicate how the impact will be mitigated.

Characteristic	Positive impact	Could adversely impact	No impact	How different groups could be affected	Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact
<p>Age What will the impact be on different age groups such as younger or older people?</p>	<p>The SCI sets out a variety of methods for engagement with all groups in line with best practice and guidance.</p> <p>This will benefit all groups for their</p>			<p>The planning process involves changes to the environment, services and facilities such as housing, jobs, schools and shops. Throughout the Local Plan process and planning applications the community are invited to have their say on the plan preparation and development proposals.</p>	<p>Age may be a factor when encouraging engagement in the planning process. It is important to continue to ensure consultation and engagement is open, inclusive, accessible and effective to all groups. The SCI and the Corporate Consultation and Engagement Strategy include working with groups that represent the interests of different age groups like the</p>

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Characteristic	Positive impact	Could adversely impact	No impact	How different groups could be affected	Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact
	involvement in the planning process.				<p>YMCA, Colleges or Age UK Essex will help to ensure consultation are accessible; make the most of innovative techniques and technology.</p> <p>The Customer Service Centre has a dedicated planning services team for answering planning queries or directing calls to key officers.</p> <p>Staff have undertaken equality/diversity awareness training.</p>
<p>Disability Consider all disabilities such as hearing loss, dyslexia etc as well as access issues for wheelchair users where appropriate</p>	As above			<p>The planning process involves changes to the environment, services and facilities such as housing, jobs, schools and shops. Throughout the Local Plan process and planning applications the community are invited to have their say on the plan</p>	<p>A range of factors are relevant when encouraging engagement in any planning process. It is important to continue to ensure consultation and engagement is open, inclusive, accessible and effective all groups as required through SCI and the Corporate Consultation and Engagement Strategy e.g. working with groups that represent the interests of</p>

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Characteristic	Positive impact	Could adversely impact	No impact	How different groups could be affected	Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact
				preparation and development proposals.	<p>different groups and ensuring that engagement is accessible; making the most of innovative techniques and technology.</p> <p>Documentation can be provided in alternative formats including audio and Braille as appropriate and all online documents meet accessibility standards. The Customer Service Centre has a dedicated planning services team for answering planning queries or directing calls to key officers.</p> <p>Staff have undertaken equality/diversity awareness training.</p>
Pregnancy and maternity Pregnant women and new and breastfeeding Mums	As above			As above	As above
Marriage or Civil Partnership Could this policy discriminate on the grounds of marriage or civil partnership	As above			As above	Staff have undertaken equality/diversity awareness training.

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Characteristic	Positive impact	Could adversely impact	No impact	How different groups could be affected	Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact
Sex Is the service used by more than one gender and are the sexes given equal opportunity?	As above			As above	As above
Gender reassignment Is there an impact on people who are going through or who have completed Gender Reassignment?	As above			As above	As above
Religion or belief Includes not having religion or belief	As above			As above	As above
Sexual Orientation What is the impact on heterosexual, lesbian, gay or bisexual people?	As above			As above	As above
Race Includes ethnic or national origins	As above			As above	A range of factors are relevant when encouraging engagement in any planning process. It is important to continue to ensure consultation and engagement is open, inclusive, accessible and effective all groups as required

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Characteristic	Positive impact	Could adversely impact	No impact	How different groups could be affected	Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact
					<p>through SCI and the Corporate Consultation and Engagement Strategy e.g. working with groups that represent the interests of different groups and ensuring that engagement is accessible; making the most of innovative techniques and technology.</p> <p>Staff have undertaken equality/diversity awareness training.</p>
<p>Are there any other groups who could find it difficult to access or make use of the policy / function? For example: low income / people living in rural areas / single parents / carers and the cared for / past offenders / long-term unemployed / housebound / history of domestic abuse / people who don't speak English as a first language / people without computer access etc.</p>					<p>A range of factors are relevant when encouraging engagement in any planning process. It is important to continue to ensure consultation and engagement is open, inclusive, accessible and effective all groups as required through SCI and the Corporate Consultation and Engagement Strategy e.g. working with groups that represent the interests of different groups and ensuring that engagement is accessible;</p>

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Characteristic	Positive impact	Could adversely impact	No impact	How different groups could be affected	Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact
					<p>making the most of innovative techniques and technology.</p> <p>Documentation can be made available in paper format for those without computer access and other languages (where possible) for people who don't speak English as a first language. Local Plan documentation and planning application material can be made available for inspection at main Council offices, taking into account local restrictions which may apply at the time, and information can be sent in the post upon request.</p> <p>The Customer Service Centre has a dedicated planning services team for answering planning queries or directing calls to key officers.</p> <p>Staff have undertaken equality/diversity awareness training.</p>

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D: Information used to analyse the effects on equality:

Please itemise available evidence, stating which protected groups are covered and when this evidence was gathered. You may attach copies or links to the data / research you are using.

1.	<p><u>Consultation/engagement</u> What consultation or engagement has been undertaken regarding this policy? <i>[If yes, please summarise what, when, who was involved and key findings]</i></p>	<p>Unlike other local development documents, there is no requirement to consult on the review of an SCI. However, it has always been Council practice to consult on versions of the SCI and it is therefore considered as best practice to do so for this revision.</p> <p>It is proposed that the draft SCI will be consulted on in July-August. The exact dates will be confirmed following Chelmsford Policy Board.</p> <p>The Council will publish a Feedback Report following the consultation which will summarise the main issues raised in comments, and use this feedback to finalise the document.</p> <p>The City Council will continue to work in partnership with a range of other public and private organisations and agencies. These include Essex County Council, developers, Parish Councils, utility providers and service providers. The consultation will target statutory stakeholders, duty to co-operate and other interested bodies, developers and planning agents. For the public, the consultation will comprise consultees on the planning policy consultation database, and website publicity, media releases and social media channels in an attempt to consult people not already involved with the planning process.</p>
2.	<p><u>Data/Information</u> What relevant data or information is currently available about the customers and employees who may use this service or could be affected by this policy? <i>[For example: equality monitoring, surveys, demographic data, research, evidence about demand/ take-up/satisfaction etc].</i></p>	<p>The commitment to preparing a new SCI has been set out above and will be reported to the Council's Chelmsford Policy Board on 16 July 2020.</p> <p>The consultations and engagement exercises that have been undertaken during the preparation of the Local Plan and for planning application process in the past has provided key information on how well consultation methods have worked previously.</p> <p>Furthermore, those registered on the Council's Local Plan database will be contacted as part of the consultation on the SCI.</p>

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	<p>What additional information could be collected which would increase your understanding about the potential impact of the policy? <i>What involvement or consultation with affected groups is still needed?</i></p>	<p>The Council has and will continue to promote consultation and engagement on planning matters in order to maximise involvement and representations from residents, employers, developers, public bodies and service providers. We will also be asking for feedback on the way this specific consultation has been conducted.</p>
3.	<p>For existing policies only: What has changed since the last assessment? <i>[For example: evidence of public concern or complaints / new information has come to light / changes in service provision / changes in service users etc]</i></p>	<p>The SCI has been refreshed and updated although the overall content of the SCI has not changed significantly. However, the opportunity has been taken to update information to reflect the adoption of new Local Plan (May 2020), include the updated Masterplanning procedure agreed by the Council’s Cabinet in October 2019, update web links, and to reference how our commitments might be altered in line with Government advice in exceptional circumstances where the commitments cannot be met.</p>

<p>E: Relevance to the Equality Duty Aims: <i>Consider how the policy relates to the aims below (directly or indirectly), and if it could be adjusted to further meet these equality aims.</i></p>		
1.	<p>To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation</p>	<p>The planning process seeks to promote social inclusion and ensure that all people (including vulnerable groups) have access to the services and opportunities that they may need such as housing, employment, public transport and community facilities (e.g. education, health and local shopping). This will work towards meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty as the needs of these individuals are incorporated into future development.</p> <p>In addition, the Council’s Sustainable Communities Directorate seeks to ensure that the public have access to information to Local Plan and planning application documents. This works toward meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty as the needs of individuals are considered carefully in the information made available e.g. providing written information in alternative formats on request.</p>

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2.	<p>To advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not <i>[This means removing or minimising disadvantages, taking steps to meet needs of different people and encouraging participation. It can involve treating people better than others, e.g. disabled people].</i></p>	<p>We can provide information in a number of different formats and would aim to honour any special requests to accommodate any gender, religious beliefs etc.</p> <p>All engagement seeks to inform and involve communities early and continuously throughout the planning process. The SCI sets out the Council’s commitment to public participation and details activities used to engage harder to reach groups. Example of methods of involvement used previously include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posters • Press releases • Social media • Leaflets • Exhibitions • Letters and emails, and • Public meetings
3.	<p>To foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. If so, how? <i>[This means promoting understanding between different groups and tackling prejudice].</i></p>	<p>Information on the Local Plan and planning applications are made available to Chelmsford residents, landowners, developers and businesses. All groups are provided with opportunities to get involved and have their say on draft plans and proposals and are notified at formal stages of the process.</p> <p>We encourage good community relations by working with partners and other third parties e.g. increasing understanding of the Local Plan process and planning applications by presentations to Agent and Parish/Town Forums.</p>

F: Conclusion	
Decision:	Explanation:

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<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Continue the policy with no changes <i>[For example: evidence suggests no potential for discrimination / all opportunities have been taken to advance equality.]</i></p>	<p>The revised draft SCI updates key information on how we will consult on planning matters and meets Government guidance on the timing of revision of SCI documents.</p> <p>It is considered that the SCI has no negative impacts and there is a low risk of negative impact on the affected groups. Impacts will continue to be monitored and if particular issues are identified, appropriate action will be taken. This could include changes to future consultation approaches and activities. It is considered that all opportunities will be taken to advance equality through planning consultations and engagement events.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Continue the policy with adjustments <i>[For example: Low risk of negative impact / actions or adjustments would further improve positives or remove a potential negative impact.]</i></p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Adverse impact but continue <i>[For example: Negative impact has been objectively justified.]</i></p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Suspend or withdraw the policy for further review / consideration of alternative proposals <i>[For example: High risk of negative impact for any group / insufficient evidence / need to involve or consult with protected groups / negative impact which cannot be mitigated or justified / unlawful discrimination etc.]</i></p>	

Approved by:

Lead Officer / Responsible officer: ...*Claire Stuckey* ...Date: 16/07/2020

Senior Manager: ... *David Green*.....Date: 17/07/2020