

Shropshire Council Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) consultation responses

Shropshire Council carried out a public consultation on its draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) between 9th November 2020 and 1st February 2020. The consultation took place on Shropshire Councils Get Involved consultation portal and members of the public were also able to submit written comments on the draft SCI.

The responses to the consultation questions are shown below along with a summary of responses to each question.

Question one

Do you agree that Shropshire Council should maintain an up to date Statement of Community Involvement that reflects National Planning Policy?

Yes – 88%

No – 12%

Comments

- National Planning Policy is limited. Shropshire Council should look to do more than just meet national standards
- There should be more community involvement in all stages of the planning process
- There are proposals to change the National Planning Policies so revising the Statement of Community Involvement now is inappropriate

Question two

Do you agree that the SCI has considered all of the relevant legislation and regulations?

Yes - 72%

No – 28%

Comments

- Shropshire Council needs to make sure the importance of Neighbourhood Plans is reflected in their Planning Policies
- Would like to see Shropshire Council take more consideration of Parish Plans, Community Led Plans and Design statements in their decision making
- More consideration of the Flood Risk Strategy for England (2020) and how Shropshire Council engages with communities around the impact of flooding and planning needs to be made

Question three

Do you agree with these guiding principles for consultation and the methods Shropshire Council will use?

Yes – 63%

No – 37%

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Comments

- The guiding principles are good, but need to be backed up with actions
- Community consultation needs to be included at all stages of the planning process including Policy development, planning applications and monitoring
- Planning documents should use plain English
- Concern that electronic communication and consultation excludes sectors of the community
- More should be done to promote consultations including information in local papers, via social media and letters to residents where an application is contentious
- All people paying Council tax in a district should be written to with details of proposed developments seeking their agreement and feedback by questionnaire

Question four

Do you agree with the consultation methods and timescales?

Yes – 50%

No – 50%

Comments

- More emphasis needs to be given to Neighbourhood Plans in the formation of the Local Plan
- The SCI is simply repeating its legal obligations set down nationally. There does not appear to be a proposal to make these more relevant to Shropshire's communities and circumstances.
- Timescales for consultation at all stages not consistent are too short and don't allow enough time for the public to fully scrutinise what are often long and complex documents
- Involving Town and Parish Councils in consultations is good, but not all Councils meet monthly and need more time to review and comment on policy and applications
- Walking and rambling groups should be included as consultees on applications
- More engagement should take place with under-represented and hard to reach groups
- A wide variety of media should be used to inform the community about changes to planning policy and planning applications

Question five

Do you agree with the policies Shropshire Council will follow in managing its consultee database?

Yes – 74%

No – 26%

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- A consultee database is good but who will make the decisions on adding and removing people and groups to and from the database? And on what basis?
- The Council needs to think about a system which ensures interactive dialogue with its communities; ensuring that the public debate and shaping of the claimed integration of local plans with place plans with flood risk management with neighbourhood plans actually takes place.
- The Council tax register should be used to consult with all residents
- Walking groups in Shropshire should be included as consultee organisations
- Consideration needs to be made on how consultees are informed about monitoring of developments once they have been approved

Question six

Do you agree with the principle of enhancing electronic communications as part of the planning process?

Yes – 75%

No – 25%

Comments

- Concern not all of Shropshire's residents have access to fast broadband or have the skills needed to use digital communications to their full affect
- Paper documents available through community buildings and letters to residents should continue to be made by the Council to make sure no one is digitally excluded
- Shropshire Council should consider using new digital tools to enhance involvement in the planning process, especially amongst young people
- Consultations often refer to large policy documents which are difficult to read online. Consultee documents must be made simpler with less jargon.

Question seven

Do you agree with the level of monitoring proposed in the SCI and the possible revisions that maybe required in the SCI?

Yes – 76%

No – 24%

Comments

- More details on how the system is to be monitored coupled with the resources needed to achieve it are needed
- Monitoring of planning applications is poor and needs more resources, not just from Shropshire Council but other statutory organisations
- Shropshire Council should cast it consultee net wider than at present into local communities. The local member should be cognisant about who should be consulted.
- How will the Council measure the increase or decrease in the levels of trust that the people of Shropshire have for the planning system in the county?

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Question 8

Please make any additional comments on this consultation and the Statement of Community Involvement

- If the tone of the SCI is simply to meet national legal minimums and not to promote a better, transparent and more public planning process, communities will resist development and build adversarial opposition, making the role of the Council much more difficult and expensive.
- The biggest issue with the Council's "Community Involvement" is not the process of informing residents or them submitting responses, it is the fact that the majority preference view is often not followed
- The new statement is much improved on its previous incarnation, which succeeded in excluding members of the community rather than including it. This update must ensure that the community is fully included.
- The government is proposing significant changes to National Planning Policy and the way consultation is carried out – how will the SCI be amended to reflect these changes
- Thought needs to be given on how a wide range of the community can be engaged and take part in the planning process at all stages