Civic Centre, Riverside, Stafford

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Dear Members

Cabinet

A meeting of the Cabinet will be held on **Thursday 12 November 2026** at **6.30pm** in the **Craddock Room, Civic Centre, Riverside, Stafford** to deal with the business as set out on the agenda.

Please note that this meeting will be recorded.

Members are reminded that contact officers are shown at the top of each report and members are welcome to raise questions etc in advance of the meeting with the appropriate officer.

Head of Law and Governance

CABINET - 12 NOVEMBER 2026

Chair - Councillor A T A Godfrey

AGENDA

1 Minutes of 14 October 2026 as circulated and published on 16 October 2026

2 Apologies

3 Councillors' Question Time (if any)

4 Proposals of the Cabinet Members (as follows):-

			Page Nos
(a)	**RESOURCES PORTFOLIO**		
	(i)	Committee Cycle 2027/28	3 - 17
(b)	**ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO**		
	(i)	Building Safety Levy Implementation	18 - 22
(c)	**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING PORTFOLIO**		
	(i)	Stafford Borough Statement of Community Involvement 2026 - Adoption	23 - 65
	(ii)	Stafford Borough Communication and Engagement Strategy 2026 - Adoption	66 - 101

Membership

Chair - Councillor A T A Godfrey

A T A Godfrey	-	Leader
R Kenney	-	Deputy Leader (Town Centres Regeneration Portfolio)
R P Cooke	-	Resources Portfolio
I D Fordham	-	Environment Portfolio
J Hood	-	Community Portfolio
G P K Pardesi	-	Leisure Portfolio
A N Pearce	-	Climate Action and Nature Recovery Portfolio
A F Reid	-	Economic Development and Planning Portfolio

Agenda Item 4(a)i

Committee Cycle 2027/28

Committee: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 12 November 2026

Report of: Head of Law and Governance

Portfolio: Resources Portfolio

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1 Purpose of Report

1.1 To consider the proposed Committee Cycle for 2027/28.

2 Recommendations

2.1 That the Committee Cycle for 2027/28 be approved.

Reasons for Recommendations

2.2 The Committee Cycle for 2027/28 has been produced on the basis of the current committee structure, and a similar basis to 2026/27. It also provides for the process leading to the 2028/29 budget.

3 Key Issues

3.1 Once again, timing of the Scrutiny Committees has been arranged in order to coincide with the production of performance and budgetary information. This enables the Scrutiny Committees to look at more current information with a view to taking more timely action, where necessary.

3.2 The Planning Committee remains four weekly, in line with Cannock Chase District Council.

4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

4.1 The Committee Cycle will assist the Council to support all Corporate Priorities.

5 Report Detail

5.1 The proposed Committee Cycle for 2027/28 is attached as an **APPENDIX.**

6 Implications

6.1 Financial

None

6.2 Legal

None

6.3 Human Resources

None

6.4 Risk Management

None

6.5 Equalities and Diversity

None

6.6 Health

None

6.7 Climate Change

None

7 Appendices

Appendix: Yearly Committee Cycle 2027-2028

8 Previous Consideration

None

9 Background Papers

None

Contact Officer: Jackie Allen

Telephone Number: 01785 619552

Ward Interest: Nil

Report Track: Cabinet 12 November 2026 (Only)

Key Decision: No

Yearly Committee Cycle

2027 - 2028

Stafford
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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January 7
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March 8
April 9
May 10

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Please Note: All meetings start at 6.30pm unless otherwise indicated

2027

May

Saturday	1	
Sunday	2	
Monday	3	**May Day**
Tuesday	4	
Wednesday	5	
Thursday	6	
Friday	7	
Saturday	8	
Sunday	9	
Monday	10	
Tuesday	11	
Wednesday	12	Planning Committee
Thursday	13	
Friday	14	
Saturday	15	Council (Mayor Making) 10.30am
Sunday	16	
Monday	17	Council (Appointments) 7pm
Tuesday	18	
Wednesday	19	
Thursday	20	Cabinet
Friday	21	
Saturday	22	
Sunday	23	
Monday	24	
Tuesday	25	
Wednesday	26	
Thursday	27	
Friday	28	
Saturday	29	
Sunday	30	
Monday	31	**Spring Bank Holiday**

June

Tuesday	1	
Wednesday	2	
Thursday	3	
Friday	4	

Saturday	5	
Sunday	6	
Monday	7	
Tuesday	8	
Wednesday	9	Planning Committee
Thursday	10	
Friday	11	
Saturday	12	
Sunday	13	
Monday	14	
Tuesday	15	Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee
Wednesday	16	
Thursday	17	Cabinet
Friday	18	
Saturday	19	
Sunday	20	
Monday	21	
Tuesday	22	Resources Scrutiny Committee
Wednesday	23	
Thursday	24	Audit and Accounts
Friday	25	
Saturday	26	
Sunday	27	
Monday	28	
Tuesday	29	Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee
Wednesday	30	

July

Thursday	1	
Friday	2	
Saturday	3	
Sunday	4	
Monday	5	
Tuesday	6	
Wednesday	7	Planning Committee
Thursday	8	
Friday	9	
Saturday	10	
Sunday	11	
Monday	12	
Tuesday	13	
Wednesday	14	
Thursday	15	Cabinet

Friday	16	
Saturday	17	
Sunday	18	
Monday	19	
Tuesday	20	Council 7.00pm
Wednesday	21	
Thursday	22	
Friday	23	
Saturday	24	
Sunday	25	
Monday	26	
Tuesday	27	
Wednesday	28	
Thursday	29	
Friday	30	
Saturday	31	

August

Sunday	1	
Monday	2	
Tuesday	3	
Wednesday	4	Planning Committee
Thursday	5	
Friday	6	
Saturday	7	
Sunday	8	
Monday	9	
Tuesday	10	
Wednesday	11	
Thursday	12	Cabinet
Friday	13	
Saturday	14	
Sunday	15	
Monday	16	
Tuesday	17	
Wednesday	18	
Thursday	19	
Friday	20	
Saturday	21	
Sunday	22	
Monday	23	
Tuesday	24	
Wednesday	25	

Thursday	26	
Friday	27	
Saturday	28	
Sunday	29	
Monday	30	**Bank Holiday**
Tuesday	31	

September

Wednesday	1	Planning Committee
Thursday	2	
Friday	3	
Saturday	4	
Sunday	5	
Monday	6	
Tuesday	7	Council 7.00pm
Wednesday	8	
Thursday	9	
Friday	10	
Saturday	11	
Sunday	12	
Monday	13	
Tuesday	14	
Wednesday	15	
Thursday	16	Cabinet
Friday	17	
Saturday	18	
Sunday	19	
Monday	20	
Tuesday	21	Resources Scrutiny Committee
Wednesday	22	
Thursday	23	Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee
Friday	24	
Saturday	25	
Sunday	26	
Monday	27	
Tuesday	28	Audit and Accounts Committee
Wednesday	29	Planning Committee
Thursday	30	

October

Friday	1	
Saturday	2	
Sunday	3	
Monday	4	
Tuesday	5	
Wednesday	6	Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee
Thursday	7	
Friday	8	
Saturday	9	
Sunday	10	
Monday	11	
Tuesday	12	
Wednesday	13	
Thursday	14	Cabinet
Friday	15	
Saturday	16	
Sunday	17	
Monday	18	
Tuesday	19	
Wednesday	20	
Thursday	21	
Friday	22	
Saturday	23	
Sunday	24	
Monday	25	
Tuesday	26	
Wednesday	27	Planning Committee
Thursday	28	
Friday	29	
Saturday	30	
Sunday	31	

November

Monday	1	
Tuesday	2	
Wednesday	3	
Thursday	4	
Friday	5	
Saturday	6	
Sunday	7	Remembrance Day Service and Parade
Monday	8	

Tuesday	9	
Wednesday	10	
Thursday	11	Cabinet
Friday	12	
Saturday	13	
Sunday	14	
Monday	15	
Tuesday	16	
Wednesday	17	
Thursday	18	
Friday	19	
Saturday	20	
Sunday	21	
Monday	22	
Tuesday	23	
Wednesday	24	Planning Committee
Thursday	25	
Friday	26	
Saturday	27	
Sunday	28	
Monday	29	
Tuesday	30	Council 7.00pm

December

Wednesday	1	
Thursday	2	Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee
Friday	3	
Saturday	4	
Sunday	5	
Monday	6	
Tuesday	7	Audit and Accounts Committee
Wednesday	8	
Thursday	9	Cabinet
Friday	10	
Saturday	11	
Sunday	12	
Monday	13	
Tuesday	14	Resources Scrutiny Committee
Wednesday	15	
Thursday	16	Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee
Friday	17	
Saturday	18	
Sunday	19	

Monday	20	Borough Carol Service
Tuesday	21	
Wednesday	22	
Thursday	23	
Friday	24	
Saturday	25	**Christmas Day**
Sunday	26	**Boxing Day**
Monday	27	**Bank Holiday**
Tuesday	28	**Bank Holiday**
Wednesday	29	
Thursday	30	
Friday	31	

2028

January

Saturday	1	**New Year's Day**
Sunday	2	
Monday	3	**Bank Holiday**
Tuesday	4	
Wednesday	5	Planning Committee
Thursday	6	
Friday	7	
Saturday	8	
Sunday	9	
Monday	10	
Tuesday	11	Cabinet Briefing (Budget)
Wednesday	12	
Thursday	13	
Friday	14	
Saturday	15	
Sunday	16	
Monday	17	
Tuesday	18	Resources Scrutiny Committee
Wednesday	19	
Thursday	20	Cabinet (Budget)
Friday	21	
Saturday	22	
Sunday	23	
Monday	24	
Tuesday	25	
Wednesday	26	
Thursday	27	
Friday	28	

Saturday	29	
Sunday	30	
Monday	31	

February

Tuesday	1	
Wednesday	2	Planning Committee
Thursday	3	Audit and Accounts Committee
Friday	4	
Saturday	5	
Sunday	6	
Monday	7	
Tuesday	8	Council 7.00pm
Wednesday	9	
Thursday	10	
Friday	11	
Saturday	12	
Sunday	13	
Monday	14	
Tuesday	15	Cabinet (Provisional)
Wednesday	16	
Thursday	17	
Friday	18	
Saturday	19	
Sunday	20	
Monday	21	
Tuesday	22	Council 7.00pm
Wednesday	23	
Thursday	24	
Friday	25	
Saturday	26	
Sunday	27	
Monday	28	
Tuesday	29	

March

Wednesday	1	Planning Committee
Thursday	2	
Friday	3	
Saturday	4	
Sunday	5	

Monday	6	
Tuesday	7	
Wednesday	8	
Thursday	9	
Friday	10	
Saturday	11	
Sunday	12	
Monday	13	
Tuesday	14	Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee
Wednesday	15	Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee
Thursday	16	Cabinet
Friday	17	
Saturday	18	
Sunday	19	
Monday	20	
Tuesday	21	Resources Scrutiny Committee
Wednesday	22	
Thursday	23	Audit and Accounts Committee
Friday	24	
Saturday	25	
Sunday	26	
Monday	27	
Tuesday	28	
Wednesday	29	Planning Committee
Thursday	30	
Friday	31	

April

Saturday	1	
Sunday	2	
Monday	3	
Tuesday	4	
Wednesday	5	
Thursday	6	
Friday	7	
Saturday	8	
Sunday	9	
Monday	10	
Tuesday	11	Council 7.00pm
Wednesday	12	
Thursday	13	Cabinet
Friday	14	**Good Friday**
Saturday	15	

Sunday	16	
Monday	17	**Easter Monday**
Tuesday	18	
Wednesday	19	
Thursday	20	
Friday	21	
Saturday	22	
Sunday	23	
Monday	24	
Tuesday	25	
Wednesday	26	Planning Committee
Thursday	27	
Friday	28	
Saturday	29	
Sunday	30	

May

Monday	1	**May Day**
Tuesday	2	
Wednesday	3	
Thursday	4	**Elections**
Friday	5	
Saturday	6	
Sunday	7	
Monday	8	
Tuesday	9	
Wednesday	10	
Thursday	11	
Friday	12	
Saturday	13	Council (Mayor Making) 10.30am
Sunday	14	
Monday	15	Council (Appointments) 7.00pm
Tuesday	16	
Wednesday	17	
Thursday	18	Cabinet
Friday	19	
Saturday	20	
Sunday	21	
Monday	22	
Tuesday	23	
Wednesday	24	Planning Committee
Thursday	25	
Friday	26	

Saturday	27	
Sunday	28	

Monday	29	**Spring Bank Holiday**
Tuesday	30	
Wednesday	31	

NOTE: School Holidays 2027-2028

- Monday 3 May 2026 (May Day)
- Monday 31 May - Friday 4 June 2027 (Half Term)
- Thursday 22 July to Wednesday 1 September 2027 (Summer Holiday)
- Thursday 2 September 2027 (Inset Day)
- Monday 25 October - Friday 29 October 2027 (Half Term)
- Monday 20 December 2026 - Friday 31 December 2027 (Christmas Holiday)
- Monday 14 February - Friday 18 February 2028 (Half Term)
- Monday 10 April - Friday 21 April 2028 (Easter Holiday)
- Monday 1 May 2028 (May Day)
- Monday 29 May - Friday 2 June 2028 (Half Term)

Agenda Item 4(b)i

Building Safety Levy Implementation

Committee: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 12 November 2026

Report of: Head of Regulatory Services

Portfolio: Environment Portfolio

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1 Purpose of Report

1.1 To brief Members regarding a new requirement placed on the Council to collect the Building Safety Levy.

2 Recommendations

2.1 That Cabinet notes the new statutory duty placed on the local authority and endorses the delivery model set out in this report;

2.2 Cabinet approves the delegation of administering the Council's duties under the Building Safety Levy Regulations to the Head of Regulatory Services;

2.3 That Cabinet recommends that Council add £63,000 to the 2026-27 Capital programme. This capital funding along with a further £69,000 is provided by Government 'New Burdens' monies to fund the collection of this Levy.

Reasons for Recommendations

2.4 The Building Safety Levy is a new tax on residential developments and Members should be aware of this additional cost to developers.

2.5 The collection of the Levy is an administrative duty with all process set out in regulations and it can be accommodated under delegated authority subject to the approval of the above recommendation.

3 Key Issues

3.1 The Building Safety Levy (BSL) is a financial charge on new residential developments in England, introduced in the Building Safety Act 2022. It came into effect on 1 October 2026.

3.2 It aims to raise £3.4 billion to help pay for fixing building safety defects in residential buildings.

3.3 The Government has designated local authorities as the collecting authority for the levy

3.4 The process for determining Levy liability and payment is linked to the building control process. The administration for the BSL will sit within the Council's building control team. Additional capacity in the form of staff and new computer software is required in order to be able to fulfil this new duty.

3.5 The Government has provided New Burdens funding to facilitate recruitment of new staff and for the purchase of software and other equipment.

4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

4.1 **Priority 1 - Prosperous Economy**

This new requirement will have an impact on developers of residential properties. The team administering this will have to work with developers to ensure the processing of notices and payments is as efficient as it can be to prevent delays in the sale or transfer of properties.

4.2 **Priority 4 - Effective Council**

The service will ensure it utilises online portals and electronic means of communication to be as efficient as possible and to minimise the administrative costs.

5 Report Detail

5.1 Following the Grenfell tower fire in 2017 the Government enacted the Building Safety Act 2022. This amended the Building Act 1984 to include a power for the Secretary of State to introduce a Building Safety Levy on building control applications for new residential development. The purpose of the Levy is to help fund building safety improvements on non-compliant buildings.

5.2 The aim is to collect minimum of £3.4 billion over a period of at least 10 years. This is based on the principle that leaseholders must be protected from excessive costs and that the industry responsible should help pay to fix the problems it created.

5.3 The Building Safety Levy (England) Regulations 2025 set out the process for collection, levy rates and make changes to other related regulations to enable the requirement in the Building Act 1984 to be carried out.

5.4 The Regulations designate Local Authorities as the collecting agents on behalf of the Secretary of State. This places a new burden on the authority, so the government has provided a grant for up-front administration and operational costs.

5.5 This is a new statutory duty that the Council has to fulfil.

5.6 Every building control application and notification for residential development will have to go through a new process to firstly determine if the Levy is payable. This is not just applications where the LA is the Building Control Body but also developments where other building control providers have been appointed. There are exemptions to the Levy. For example, the Levy only applies to developments of 10 or more units or at least 30 bedspaces in purpose-built student accommodation. In addition, social housing and some other accommodation such as a care home, hotel, temporary accommodation, etc. are exempt from the requirements. However, every development even if exempt must go through the application process and a certificate issued confirming exemption.

5.7 For applicable developments the Regulations sets out the Levy rate to apply. It is a floor area rate and every LA has different rates. For developments on previously developed land a 50% discount is applied.

5.8 The rates for Stafford BC are:

Not previously developed land - £24.58/m²

Previously developed land - £12.29/m²

5.9 The amount payable on all applicable developments will be calculated by Officers and a notice served on the developer informing them of the charge. This must be paid prior to the issue of the building control completion or final certificates. The certificates must not be issued until payment is received.

5.10 Every quarter the money collected will be transferred to the government. Prior to transfer the income and costs must be certified by the Section 151 Officer. The LA can retain as much as is required to cover all reasonable costs to administer this process.

5.11 There is no capacity to set up and administer this new requirement so additional staff will have to be engaged. It is proposed this will be incorporated into the Building Control Business Support Team. A new software system must be purchased, and Building Control and ICT staff are currently evaluating suitable systems.

5.12 The Government has provided New Burdens funding, and the Council received their payment in mid-June. This amounts to £69,900 revenue grant and £63,000 capital grant. This will be used for new staff costs, software and purchase of other equipment.

5.13 All ongoing costs are to be paid from the Levy payments received. There should be no ongoing costs to the LA. If the Authorities Levy balance is a negative amount in a financial year e.g. costs exceed income, Regulation 70 states that the Secretary of State must make a payment to the Local Authority of an amount equal to the amount of the deficit. Therefore, the Council should never have to subsidise this service.

6 Implications

6.1 Financial

As set out in the main body of the report, New Burdens funding has been received from the Government which will fund initial set up costs and costs for the first few months. All ongoing costs will be covered by Levy income and will be confirmed by the Finance Team and S151 Officer prior to transfer of funds to the Government.

The allocation of spend between capital and revenue will follow the Councils standard financial rules.

6.2 Legal

This is a new mandatory legal requirement introduced under S105C of the Building Act 1984 and S58 of the Building Safety Act 2022. The liability and amount of the tax are set out by legislation and not subject to the discretion of the Council. It is the LA’s responsibility to confirm when a Levy is payable and to calculate the amount.

Under regulation 71 the decision of the Council can be subject to a review request within 28 days of the day on which the levy liability notice is given. The Council must determine the review within 28 days of receipt of the request. Thereafter the decision of the Council may be appealed to the First-Tier Tribunal.

6.3 Human Resources

As set out in the body of the report additional capacity is required to deliver the work. As such, proposed Job Descriptions have been developed and evaluated in accordance with the Councils Job Evaluation scheme. It is anticipated that the work can be accommodated through a combination of revisions to existing job roles and a newly created post which will require external recruitment.

6.4 **Risk Management**

The introduction of the BSL creates new compliance, financial and operational risks for the Council. Key risks include failure to identify liable developments, incorrect calculation of levy amounts, delayed collection or transfer of funds, insufficient staffing capacity, delays in implementing suitable software and delays to Building Control completion or final certificates where payment has not been received. Risks will be higher where the Council is not providing the relevant Building Control sign-off as we will be more reliant on third parties for the notification of developments and provision of information.

6.5 **Equalities and Diversity**

None

6.6 **Health**

None

6.7 **Climate Change**

None

7 Appendices

None

8 Previous Consideration

Nil

9 Background Papers

None

Contact Officer: Paul Beckley

Telephone Number: 01785 619340

Ward Interest: Nil

Report Track: Cabinet 12 November 2026 (Only)

Key Decision: No

Agenda Item 4(c)i

Stafford Borough Statement of Community Involvement 2026 - Adoption

Committee: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 12 November 2026

Report of: Head of Economic Development and Planning

Portfolio: Economic Development and Planning

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1 Purpose of Report

1.1 For Cabinet Members to consider the Statement of Community Involvement 2026 for Stafford Borough and to recommend publishing of the document.

2 Recommendations

2.1 That Cabinet approve the Stafford Borough Statement of Community Involvement 2026 – Adoption for publication, as set out in the **BOOKLET** to this item.

2.2 That Cabinet agrees that the Head of Economic Development and Planning, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Planning, be authorised to make minor amendments to the Statement of Community Involvement 2026 if necessary prior to publication.

3 Key Issues

3.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) places a statutory duty on Local Planning Authorities to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), including Stafford Borough. The SCI has been reviewed to take into account changes to the Planning System for Plan-Making and Decision-Making.

3.2 The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 requires the Local Planning Authority to consult on how the Council should engage with the relevant bodies in the preparation of the new Local Plan. This has been set out through the draft Communication and Engagement Strategy which was consulted upon during June and July 2026 as part of the Scoping and Participation consultation for the New Local Plan 2025-2045, and covers the detail engagement process for Local Plans and Supplementary Plans.

3.3 The Statement of Community Involvement 2026 is required to reflect the introduction of this new document and also provides an opportunity to reflect any changes to Development Management Consultation Procedures.

4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

4.1 The following vision and priorities from the Council's Corporate Plan 2025/26 to 2027/28 are considered relevant to this report:

Vision

- "To be an effective Council that promotes a growing economy, strong, healthy communities and a sustainable environment."

Priorities

- "Prosperous Economy"
- "Effective Council"

5 Report Detail

5.1 The Council is required to produce a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) in accordance with Section 18 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). The purpose of the SCI is to set out how the Council intends to seek the views of different sectors of the community during the preparation of planning documents and when planning applications are received.

5.2 The current Statement of Community Involvement was published in November 2018 with a number of changes in legislation since that time. Therefore the SCI needs to be reviewed and updated to reflect the most up-to-date legislation and Regulations.

5.3 The Council is legally required to consult stakeholders, including the public, on a range of planning matters, with minimum requirements set out in the SCI. The SCI provides the legislative requirements, along with any additional tools and techniques that the Council chooses to use. In June and July 2026 the Council consulted on a draft Communication and Engagement Strategy which sets out more detailed steps that the Council will use in terms of plan-making. A separate item is being brought to Cabinet seeking approval of a final version Communication and Engagement Strategy (CES). The relevant planning matters, include planning applications and the Community Infrastructure Levy process as well as planning policy documents, are covered in the SCI.

5.4 Having a clear arrangement for carrying out consultation will help establish a two-way process between the community and the Council. Alongside the Communication and Engagement Strategy, the SCI provides communities and stakeholders with a detailed understanding of how they will be consulted and how they can engage in planning matters in a transparent way.

5.5 The content and process for preparing a SCI is no longer prescribed by Regulation, and therefore there is no need to consult on the document. The CES provides the significant changes in approach required for plan-making, in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026, and has been consulted on as part of the New Local Plan 2025-2045 Scoping and Participation consultation in June and July 2026. The changes to the SCI are not considered significant, with no amendments to the Community Infrastructure Levy or Neighbourhood Planning sections, whilst changes to the Decision-Making section are also reflected on the Council's website for public knowledge i.e. National Scheme of Delegation. The key requirement of the SCI is with regards to plan-making and that is clearly set out in the CES. Therefore there is no need to carry out a consultation on the 2026 SCI prior to adoption.

6 Implications

6.1 Financial

None. Publication of the Statement of Community Involvement 2026 and its implementation are covered by existing budgets for the New Local Plan 2025-2045 and the Development Management service.

6.2 Legal

The Statement of Community Involvement 2026 has to be prepared in accordance with the relevant Planning Acts and regulations, and be aligned with related national planning policy and guidance. The Statement of Community Involvement will need in accordance with the Council's constitution to be formally endorsed by Full Council prior to publication and on adoption.

Failure to follow the statutory plan-making process under the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 may expose the Council to legal challenge, delay progression of the Local Plan, and result in findings of non-compliance or unsoundness at examination.

6.3 Human Resources

The Statement of Community Involvement requirements will be delivered by existing staff from within Economic Development and Planning, and the wider organisation.

6.4 Risk Management

An adopted Statement of Community Involvement for Stafford Borough is in place. However, there is a requirement on Local Planning Authorities to review the SCI to ensure the document is up to date and to be reviewed.

The Council will continue to closely monitor changes to legislation, regulations and policy as part of reviewing the Statement of Community Involvement whilst deploying robust programme management techniques through the New Local Plan process to deliver effective community involvement and engagement including use of digital services as required through the process. All internal risks will be reviewed when required and proposed actions delivered efficiently.

6.5 Equalities and Diversity

The Statement of Community Involvement 2026 will ensure that throughout the process of preparing the New Local Plan a thorough consultation and engagement process will enable residents and interested parties to be involved in its preparation, including 24/7 access to key documents through the Borough Council's website.

An Equalities Impact Assessment will be published alongside the final version of the Statement of Community Involvement 2026, as set out in the **BOOKLET** to this item.

6.6 Health

The Statement of Community Involvement 2026 will ensure effective involvement with key partners, including the health sector, to ensure that recommendations made in relation to the New Local Plan 2025-2045 with policy-specific areas are consistent and complementary to an approach that supports equality in both service provision and health outcomes.

6.7 Climate Change

The Statement of Community Involvement 2026 will ensure effective involvement with key partners, including the climate change sector, to ensure that recommendations made in relation to the New Local Plan 2025-2045 with policy-specific areas are consistent and complementary to an approach that supports equality in both service provision and health outcomes.

7 Appendices

Please refer to associated **BOOKLETS** to this item:

- Stafford Borough Statement of Community Involvement 2026 - Adoption
- Equalities Impact Assessment Stafford Borough Statement of Community Involvement 2026 - Adoption

8 Previous Consideration

None.

9 Background Papers

The adopted Statement of Community Engagement 2018 is available via the Stafford Borough Council website link below:

www.staffordbc.gov.uk/statement-of-community-involvement

Contact Officer:	Alex Yendole
Telephone Number:	07800 619530
Ward Interest:	All
Report Track:	Cabinet 12 November 2026 Council 1 December 2026
Key Decision:	Yes

Stafford Borough Statement of Community Involvement 2026 - Adoption

1. Foreword

1.1 This Statement of Community Involvement demonstrates Stafford Borough Council's continued commitment to engaging with local people and other stakeholders in planning issues.

1.2 It will provide a structured approach to engaging with local people and organisations across Stafford Borough in the preparation of Planning Policy Documents and consideration of Planning Applications.

1.3 A key objective of the planning system is to strengthen local community participation and stakeholder involvement in shaping future development and reaching planning decisions. Stafford Borough Council aims to build on this foundation and provide a transparent, user friendly and accessible platform to encourage and maximise public participation.

1.4 Planning Policy Documents are not prepared in isolation and are progressed with the input of local people, businesses and other stakeholders. Therefore, it is important for those who live, work and enjoy being in Stafford Borough to have every opportunity to influence growth and development through the Council's planning system. This will help us make the best possible planning decisions in the future.

Councillor A F Reid

Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Planning

2. Introduction

What is a Statement of Community Involvement?

2.1 A Statement of Community Involvement explains how the Local Planning Authority will engage with stakeholders, such as their local community and businesses, to prepare Planning Policy Documents and determine Planning Applications by describing who is consulted, how, and when.

2.2 This Statement of Community Involvement sets out Stafford Borough Council's approach to strengthening community involvement, and engaging with stakeholders to help shape the use of land and development.

2.3 The Government makes it clear that the planning system should be as transparent, as accountable, socially inclusive and participatory as possible, the aim of the system is to encourage more meaningful community involvement that provides opportunities for more active participation and discussion earlier in the plan preparation and planning application process.

2.4 When consulting local communities and stakeholders in preparing Planning Policy Documents and determining Planning Applications, consultation and engagement will need to meet the requirements of this Statement of Community Involvement.

2.5 Under Section 18 (Part 2) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, Local Planning Authorities are required to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement to describe how they will engage with local people on planning decisions.

2.6 This document reflects the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026, the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended), the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, the Localism Act 2011 (as amended), Section 13(2) of the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017, the National Planning Policy Framework (2024), and the National Planning Policy Guidance (PPG).

Why the Statement of Community Involvement has been updated?

2.7 This document provides a new version of the Statement of Community Involvement that was adopted in 2018. The need to update the Statement of Community Involvement has been necessitated as a result of:

- Changes in planning legislation, including The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 and the production of the Communication and Engagement Strategy;

- Increasing use of new technology and social media within the community; and

- The recognised need for a more flexible approach to ensure that the Council can still proceed with its planning duties whilst responding to national or local circumstances.

2.8 The SCI will be reviewed at least every five years and will reflect the most up to date national legislation, policy and guidance at the relevant times. Where changes to national legislation, policy or guidance gives rise to updated provisions for publicity and consultation prior to any review of the Council's SCI, the Council will reflect the most up to date requirements in practice accordingly.

3. Vision and Our Commitment to You

Our Vision

3.1 The Borough Council believes that local community participation and involvement is central to the delivery of sustainable development and helps to provide effective planning for the future.

3.2 Our vision is:

"To provide a platform for people to express their views on planning matters and share their local knowledge in an interactive and inclusive manner, to help inform planning decisions and create effective strategies."

Our Commitment to You

3.3 To achieve our vision:

- We will inform stakeholders about development proposals and planning applications as early as possible using a variety of methods and techniques
- We will create and prepare planning policy documents in a user friendly manner
- We will ensure our methods and approach are transparent and accessible to help people understand the planning process better, including digitally
- We will record and consider views to help inform Planning Policy Documents and determine Planning Applications
- We will seek to work with groups and individuals who do not normally engage with planning
- We will encourage developers to consult on their proposals as soon as practicable.

Council Constitution

3.4 Stafford Borough Council has a Constitution that sets out how the Council conducts its business, how decisions are made and ensure the procedures followed are consistent and transparent, so that the Council remains accountable to local people. To view the Council's Constitution, please visit www.staffordbc.gov.uk/constitution

3.5 The requirements for carrying out effective consultation set out in this Statement of Community Involvement will help deliver the Council's Corporate Plan 2025-2028 key objective:

"Being an effective Council is crucial for meeting the needs of the local community, providing value for money, and ensuring good governance."

3.6 Stafford Borough Council has a responsibility to provide excellent services to the public and value for money to the taxpayer. The channels through which public services are delivered and by which the public has contact with the authority, (be that via telephone, online, in person or other means) are a critical part of public service provision and there is an ongoing impetus for them to be managed effectively and efficiently for everyone. By increasing the range of channels available for accessing a full range of services, customers are better able to engage at a time and in a way that suits their lifestyle. This makes it easier and more convenient for our customers to access services, when, where and how they choose to do so in the most cost effective way.

Involving the Community

3.7 Community involvement is about communicating information to people and gaining information from people in a collaborative process. The aim is to enable everyone to access information which allows them to become involved collaboratively in planning the future of the Borough. The Council will seek to facilitate the involvement of the wider community through the approach outlined in this Statement of Community Involvement.

3.8 By involving the community in its widest sense, it is possible to identify more clearly local priorities and needs. In addition, through local knowledge or personal understanding of the issues, solutions can often be identified more easily. Without the close involvement of the community there will be no ownership of the Local Plan and hence delivery will be much more difficult.

3.9 Those who may have a role or an interest in shaping the planning of the area, including local people, local organisations, local community groups, landowners and developers, regional organisations, national organisations and Government agencies should actively engage in the processes for plan making and determining planning applications. The level of engagement will vary depending on the nature of the plan or proposal.

3.10 The key to successful community involvement is engaging right across the community regardless of age, gender, race, religious values etc. It is important therefore that a range of different techniques for engagement that consider the different requirements of the different sectors of the community are employed, and a flexible approach is taken to take advantage of opportunities and address issues as they arise.

3.11 **Council Members:** Councillors are kept up to date with relevant information and Councillors in turn keep constituents in their wards informed of progress on the Local Plan and on any key planning application issues for their area. Policy development is considered through formal reporting via Cabinet and Council where appropriate. Working groups are established as and when necessary. Planning applications are decided by a Planning Control Committee unless delegated to Council officers.

3.12 **Parish / Town Councils:** As community representatives including Parish and Town Councils both within and adjoining the Borough will have the opportunity to be frequently involved in all aspects of relevant planning, by being consulted on planning applications and planning policy documents.

3.13 **Local People:** The Council wishes to ensure that no one is excluded from the planning process and will therefore seek to make use of the groups/networks that already exist in parts of the Borough, including the third sector organisations operating in the Borough and resident or special interest groups. In addition, the Council will pass information on relevant issues to the established community groups and attend meetings when requested, wherever practicable. The Council maintains a Local Plan database which local people can request to be added to in order to be kept informed of relevant plan-making public consultations (with personal details maintained in accordance with the Councils' Privacy Notice[1]).

3.14 **Neighbouring Authorities and Communities:** Development proposals not only affect communities within a local authority's boundaries, but can directly or indirectly affect neighbouring communities. The Council will ensure that neighbouring local authorities, Parish Councils, and residents within adjoining local authority's areas are given the opportunity where appropriate to be involved in the planning process in Stafford Borough. Where evidence might need to be considered by neighbouring authorities when producing or updating plans, this will be shared at the earliest opportunity.

[1] www.staffordbc.gov.uk/PrivacyNotices

3.15 The importance of cross boundary cooperation was introduced into the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 through the Localism Act 2011. The new plan-making system provided by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 does not include the Duty. Instead, the new system will rely on revised national policy and the new tier of strategic planning to ensure effective cooperation between plan-making authorities.

3.16 **National, Regional and Local Organisations:** The Council understands that many local, regional and national organisations have to deal with a significant amount of information being forwarded to them for comment. Existing networks/stakeholder groups will be utilised wherever possible and the Council will maintain its Local Plan database of organisations to ensure that they are all made fully aware of key stages of consultation. Organisations can request to be added to the database at any time. Networks may include those operated by the third sector and those which the Council is already a member of (such as the Stafford Borough Community Safety Partnership, which brings together a number of partners to reduce crime and disorder).

3.17 **Agents/Developers:** This group includes landowners and those with potential development interests. Many of these are already involved in planning applications, are aware of the Local Plan and are likely to maintain their involvement. Within the area, there is a wealth of knowledge and expertise that will contribute to the delivery of the Local Plan and Supplementary Plans.

3.18 **Business Groups:** A number of existing business networks are already established within the Borough and officers will utilise these groups, working closely with officers in economic development, to generate a two-way flow of information.

3.19 **Hard to Reach Groups:** In terms of the sectors of the local community who may be harder to reach, efforts will be made to ensure that they are not excluded from planning processes.

4. The Planning System

4.1 The Planning System plays a key role in shaping the use of land and development to provide attractive, vibrant and well-designed places to live and work. Whilst it seeks to conserve and protect the environment, it also aims to provide new development that meets the needs for new housing, employment, and other facilities. This inevitably involves making some challenging decisions. The role of the Local Planning Authority is to make balanced decisions after considering consultation responses and other material planning matters.

4.2 The Planning System is made up of two parts

- Plan Making - Planning Policy Documents
- Development Management - Planning Applications

Plan Making

4.3 Plan Making is referred to as planning policy or spatial planning. Plan Making requires Local Planning Authorities to produce a Local Plan for the area which sets out how the area will develop over a period of time. The Local Plan policies will be used to guide future development.

4.4 The process of creating a Local Plan requires Local Planning Authorities to identify and engage, at an early stage, with all those that may be interested in the development or content of the Local Plan, and with groups who may be affected by proposals. With the help of the local community and the collation of an evidence base, the Local Planning Authority will identify options for addressing local development needs, to inform a preferred approach for future development. This requires carrying out a robust community consultation with local communities, businesses and other interested parties.

Development Management

4.5 Development Management is the process of determining Planning Applications. Planning Applications are submitted to the Council by those seeking permission from the Local Planning Authority to make changes to the use of land, existing buildings, or development of new buildings.

4.6 When determining Planning Applications, the Local Planning Authority has to consider the contents of the Local Plan, and other material considerations such as the National Planning Policy Framework, consultation responses, and any other relevant planning issues.

A Customer Service Approach

4.7 At Stafford Borough Council the Development Management team is committed to providing a customer focused service of a high standard. At the heart of processing Planning Applications is a customer care promise, which is effectively working towards specific standards of service. These standards can be found in the Planning Customer Service Charter, which includes a list of objectives, one of which embraces involving people in taking decisions that affect them.

5. Plan Making Processes

5.1 The following approach will be used for all stages of plan making where consultation is undertaken. These will be applied to Local Plans and Supplementary Plans (where appropriate):

1. Place relevant documents on the Council's website with any supporting information, where appropriate, to enable people to understand what they are being asked to comment on and state where and when documentation can be inspected;

2. Make available all relevant materials, where appropriate, for inspection at the Council Civic Centre in Stafford for the period during which comments are being sought. Additionally, the relevant materials will also be made available for inspection at the Borough's public libraries, where appropriate;

3. Contact specific and general consultation bodies in line with the Regulations, and other consultees who may have an interest in the document and invite to make representations, advising where and when the relevant material can be inspected, how copies can be obtained, the closing date for representations and where to send any representations;

4. Use the Council's website and social media accounts, as appropriate, on the relevant stages of the Local Plan process and raise awareness of consultation events: advising when and where the relevant material can be inspected, the closing date and where to send representations;

5. Make available jargon free English summary documents and/or leaflets as appropriate;

6. Provide appropriate advice and information to the public;

7. Produce a report summarising consultation methods and representations (with regards to the Local Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents this will be in accordance with the appropriate Regulations);

8. Provide a range of ways to respond to a consultation as appropriate to the statutory stage of plan making.

5.2 Where appropriate, Artificial Intelligence (AI) will be used to summarise consultation responses, which will be reviewed by officers. Where AI is to be used this will be clearly outlined on the relevant document and an option to opt out will be provided.

5.3 Policies and procedures for plan-making can change over time in response to changes in national legislation, policy and guidance. The Council will undertake consultations in accordance with current legislation, policy and practice that is in place at the relevant time.

5.4 These standards (and the proceeding standards for aspects of plan-making) may need to be varied in response to circumstances beyond the Councils control. For instance, Government - imposed restrictions on movement.

5.5 Given that the Council's approach to publicity and consultation in part reflects legislative requirements, any changes will be in accordance with temporary or updated legislation. In these instances, the Council may be limited in its ability to provide hard copies of documents for inspection and may restrict/suspend face-to-face meetings, in person public exhibitions, and the in person attendance of workshop/events.

5.6 Therefore, the Council website will be the primary source for consultation documents and an email address and phone number for the Strategic Planning team will be provided on the website or via the main switchboard to enable everyone to obtain further information or assistance.

5.7 The Council will continue to communicate and engage and will endeavour to provide alternative methods of engagement including (where appropriate technology is available) virtual presentations, video conferencing, teleconferencing / telephone appointments and email.

5.8 Any changes to the methods of consultation used will be clearly communicated and explained via available channels, including the Council website, social media and letters or email (as appropriate).

Plan-making and the Communication and Engagement Strategy

5.9 The SCI is one of the planning documents which the Council is required to produce. It is important that community consultation forms an integral part of the changes in Stafford Borough. The Statement of Community Involvement has been prepared to ensure that the people of the Borough know when, how and for what reason they will be able to participate in planning matters. In terms of plan-making the SCI is supported by the Council's Communication and Engagement Strategy (CES).

5.10 In producing the Statement of Community Involvement 2026 alongside the Communication and Engagement Strategy, it is the Council's intention to promote effective public participation in the planning system. This will make sure that all sections of the community have the opportunity to be actively and continuously involved from the very start of the planning process both in the preparation and subsequent revision of the Local Plan and in significant development management decisions.

5.11 Involvement in the planning process should enable the local community to say what sort of place they want to live and work in the initial stages of plan production when it can make a difference. The Council will aim to include "hard to reach groups" that have historically not engaged with the planning system.

5.12 Therefore the CES identifies how the Council will consult and engage with communities and stakeholders specifically on the new Local Plan and any related Supplementary Plans. Consultation on Neighbourhood Plans, planning applications and decision-making remains within the SCI, alongside an overview of the Local Plan stages through which community engagement is key.

5.13 The benefits of involving a wider range of people and organisations throughout the planning process include:

- Community commitment to the future development of an area;
- Promoting regeneration and investment, creating certainty and commitment to change;
- Providing a strong basis for successful negotiations on development proposals, including developer contributions; and
- Providing a robust basis for addressing difficult decisions - it is important that in seeking to build consensus addressing controversial issues is not avoided.

5.14 When preparing planning policy documents or determining planning applications the Council must comply with the community engagement requirements as set out in the adopted SCI and CES (where applicable). When a Local Plan is submitted to the Secretary of State for Examination in Public, a "Statement of Compliance" will be required to be submitted outlining how the community engagement requirements of the Statement of Community Involvement and the Communication and Engagement Strategy have been met during the Plan making process.

5.15 The Communication and Engagement Strategy will be reviewed and consulted upon in line with the requirements to review Local Plans every five years and in accordance with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026.

Local Plans

5.16 Local Plans are planning documents that have been subject to independent examination and once adopted form part of the statutory Development Plan. These are the documents against which planning applications are assessed. Planning decision must be in accordance with these documents unless material considerations outweigh the need to adhere to their policies.

5.17 The Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 is the current adopted Local Plan for Stafford Borough alongside Part 2 adopted in January 2017 and 'made' Neighbourhood Plans. The adopted Local Plans set out a vision, spatial objectives, policies and site allocations through to 2031. The policies cover specific issues for use in determining individual planning applications, and is supported by the Stafford Borough Design Supplementary Planning Document which is a material consideration in determining planning applications.

5.18 Following publication of the National Planning Policy Framework in December 2024 and changes to the standard method calculation, has prompted the preparation of a new Local Plan under the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026. The new Local Plan is to be prepared in accordance with new national policy, with the Government publishing the new NPPF in August 2026. This includes non-statutory plan-making and decision-making policies.

5.19 In March 2026 the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 were published, which enable the Council to commence work on the New Local Plan consult on planning policy documents during June and July 2026 including a draft Communication and Engagement Strategy for the Local Plan and any subsequent Supplementary Plans. These should be read in conjunction with the general standards of consultation as set out in this document.

5.20 The Council will publish on its website all completed evidence used for developing the Local Plan (including non-technical summaries where available and appropriate).

5.21 The most up-to-date Local Plan Timetable (the project timetable for Local Plan documents) has been published on the Council's website in accordance with the Notice of Intention to Commence a new Plan. Any subsequent updates will be made available on the Council's website.

5.22 The individual consultation periods and requirements as set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 are set out below. Further details can be found in the Communication and Engagement Strategy.

Regulation 20: Scoping Consultation

1. *The scoping consultation cannot commence any earlier than the date on which the Local Planning Authority publish their Notice of Intention to Commence Local Plan preparation.*

2. *The Council are required to invite those that are identified as general consultation bodies or specific consultation bodies to make representations to the Council. There is no requirement to include residents as part of this consultation though the Council can choose to do so.*

3. *There is **no** minimum consultation period though guidance identifies a **minimum** of 21 days is appropriate.*

   Any associated documents must be published on the Council's website, made available at the Civic Centre during normal opening hours, and made available at other locations within the Borough as the Council consider appropriate. In this instance the Council will make the documents available in the Borough's local libraries.

Regulation 23: Proposed Local Plan content and evidence

1. *The Regulation 23 consultation cannot commence any earlier than the date on which the Local Planning Authority publish the Summary of the Regulation 20 Scoping Consultation.*

2. *The Council are required to invite the following persons to make representations:*

   - *General Consultation Bodies;*
   - *Specific Consultation Bodies;*
   - *Residents or other persons carrying out business in the Borough; and*

- *anyone that has requested to be notified of the proposed local plan content and evidence.*

3. *The consultation must be a **minimum** of six weeks.*

4. *Any representations made to the consultation must be received by the Council on or before the time and date specified on commencement of the consultation.*

   Any associated documents must be published on the Council's website, made available at the Civic Centre during normal opening hours, and made available at other locations within the Borough as the Council consider appropriate. In this instance the Council will make the documents available in the Borough's local libraries.

Regulation 27: Proposed Local Plan

1. *The Regulation 27 consultation cannot commence any earlier than the date on which the Local Planning Authority publish the Summary of the Regulation 23 consultation.*

2. *The Council are required to invite the following persons to make representations:*

   - *General Consultation Bodies;*
   - *Specific Consultation Bodies;*
   - *Residents or other persons carrying out business in the Borough; and*
   - *anyone that has requested to be notified of the proposed local plan content and evidence.*

3. *The consultation must be a **minimum** of eight weeks.*

4. *Any representations made to the consultation must be received by the Council on or before the time and date specified on commencement of the consultation.*

   Any associated documents must be published on the Council's website, made available at the Civic Centre during normal opening hours, and made available at other locations within the Borough as the Council consider appropriate. In this instance the Council will make the documents available in the Borough's local libraries.

Supplementary Plans

5.21 Supplementary Plans (SPs) relate to specific sites or specific planning issues and have the same weight as a local plan for the purpose of decision-making. This would also include Infrastructure Levy regimes to apply at the local level for securing developer contributions in the future.

5.22 The process for SPs is similar to that of Local Plan but require only one consultation to be undertaken prior to examination as set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 and identified below.

Regulation 70: Proposed Supplementary Plan Consultation

1. *The Regulation 70 consultation cannot commence any earlier than the date on which the Local Planning Authority publish their Notice of Intention to Commence Supplementary Planning preparation.*

2. *The Council are required to invite the following persons to make representations:*

    - *General Consultation Bodies;*
    - *Specific Consultation Bodies; and*
    - *Residents or other persons carrying out business in the Borough.*

3. *The consultation must be a **minimum** of six weeks.*

4. *Any representations made to the consultation must be received by the Council on or before the time and date specified on commencement of the consultation.*

    Any associated documents must be published on the Council's website, made available at the Civic Centre during normal opening hours, and made available at other locations within the Borough as the Council consider appropriate. In this instance the Council will make the documents available in the Borough's local libraries

5.23 Further guidance on the community engagement approach of the Council on SPs is set out in the Communication and Engagement Strategy.

Neighbourhood Plans

5.24 The Localism Act introduced new powers to allow local communities to prepare 'Neighbourhood Plans' and 'Neighbourhood Development Orders' to guide the future developments of their areas.

5.25 Neighbourhood Plans must be in general conformity with the adopted Local Plan and once approved by the Council are subject to a local referendum before coming into force with full development plan status.

5.26 There are three main mechanisms for Neighbourhood Planning - Neighbourhood Plans, Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build. Each enables a community to achieve different things.

A Neighbourhood Plan *is a way of helping local communities to influence the planning of the area in which they live and work. It can be used to:*

- *Develop a shared vision for a neighbourhood.*
- *Choose where homes, shops, offices and other development may be built.*
- *Identify and protect important local green spaces.*
- *Influence what new buildings should look like.*

A Neighbourhood Development Order *can help to implement a shared vision by granting planning permission to certain types of development in certain locations, without the need to submit a planning application to the local planning authority. A Neighbourhood Development Order can apply to all of a Neighbourhood Plan area, or a particular site within the neighbourhood.*

The Community Right to Build (CRTB) *allows local communities to undertake small-scale, site-specific, community-led developments. It is a particular type of Neighbourhood Development Order which allows community organisations in some cases to bring forward small scale development on specific sites without following the usual planning permission process*

5.27 However, a CRTB need to be in conformity with the Local Plan and, if applicable, the Neighbourhood Plan for any given area. A CRTB needs to relate to an approved Neighbourhood Area. As with Neighbourhood Plans and Development Orders, a CRTB is subject to an independent examination and a referendum, and the Local Authority needs to be involved in these stages in the same way.

5.28 The process for preparing a Neighbourhood Plan and a Neighbourhood Development Order is similar. Unlike Local Plans, Neighbourhood Plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders are not prepared by the local planning authority. There are two types of ‘qualifying body’ that can prepare a Neighbourhood Plan or a Neighbourhood Development Order:

- Parish and Town Councils: In areas where a parish or town council exists, these are the organisations which will usually be responsible for a Neighbourhood Plan, but other parts of the community may prepare a plan if they are established as a neighbourhood area. A Neighbourhood Plan can, but does not have to, cover the whole area of the parish or town.

- Neighbourhood Forums: Where a parish or town council does not exist, community members, including those with business interests in the area, can come together to create a neighbourhood forum. Only one neighbourhood forum is allowed to exist for each neighbourhood to be covered by a Neighbourhood Plan.

5.29 Consultation and community involvement are important elements in the Neighbourhood Planning process. At the issues and draft plan stages, this will be the responsibility of the plan making body, but the Borough Council has a significant role at the other stages identified below, including the proposed Neighbourhood Plan Area, the proposed creation of a Neighbourhood Plan Forum, Submission, the Independent Examination and the Local Referendum.

5.30 The requirements for consultation are set out in the 2012 Town And Country Planning, England - The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended), In each case, the regulations refer to the need for the Borough Council to; - “publicise…… on their website and in such other manner as they consider is likely to bring the area application to the attention of people who live, work or carry on business in the area to which the area application relates”.

5.31 The NPPG explains the Neighbourhood Plan system including the key stages and considerations required.

The Council’s role in Neighbourhood Planning

5.32 The Planning Policy pages on the Council’s website will be used to provide further information and key stakeholders up to date, include on the dedicated web page. The Council will ensure that the Qualifying Body preparing a Neighbourhood Plan (NP), Neighbourhood Development Order (NDO) or Community Right to Buy (CRTB) are informed by email:

(a) as to where the Evidence Base is located and when it has been updated; and

(b) as to where the Local Plan Timetable (the project timetable for Local Plan Documents) is located and when it has been updated.

5.33 The Borough Council will make available Neighbourhood Planning Guidance to Parish and Town Councils and Neighbourhood Forums.

5.34 The Council, as the local planning authority, will, if requested administer the formal designation of Neighbourhood Area(s) to be covered by Neighbourhood Plan(s). where relevant the Council will formally approve a Neighbourhood Forum.

5.35 The Council will check a draft Neighbourhood Plan, Neighbourhood Development Order or CRTB to ensure that it meets all the relevant legislation and regulations and that it generally confirms to the strategic elements of the Local Plan.

5.36 Subject to the above, the Council will undertake the statutory stages of consultation required to be carried out by the local authority and arrange an independent examination.

5.37 If the plan passes an examination, the Council, as local planning authority, will arrange a local referendum. If the referendum supports the document, the Council will adopt it as part of the overall development plan (which includes the Local Plan). Should post-adoption modifications become necessary, the Council will offer guidance and support on the process.

5.38 Parish and Town Councils, and Neighbourhood Forums will be encouraged to apply the principles set out in this SCI, and the Communication and Engagement Strategy.

5.39 The Council will undertake the statutory consultation stages in accordance with the relevant Regulations, taking account of the general standards of consultation for plan making (as appropriate).

5.40 As outlined above, the methods of consultation and engagement may need to be varied in response to circumstances beyond the Councils control. For instance, Government - imposed restrictions on movement and social interaction.

5.41 If compliance with Government-imposed restrictions results in the statutory stages of a Neighbourhood Plan being temporarily suspended (e.g. referendums) this will be clearly communicated and explained via available channels, including the Council website, social media and letters or email (as appropriate).

6. Development Management Processes

6.1 This section sets out how people have the opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process on individual planning applications.

6.2 The Government sets out the minimum standards for consultation on planning applications in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. There are three main categories of application, which require differing levels of publicity:

1. All applications subject to an environmental assessment, all applications which are a departure from the Development Plan, and all applications affecting public rights of way are required to be publicised by the display of a notice on the site, and by the placing of an advertisement in a local newspaper.

2. Other applications defined as “major” applications by the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 are required to be publicised by the display of a site notice or letters written to adjoining neighbours, and by placing an advertisement in a local newspaper. Major applications are those comprising a residential development of more than 10 dwellings, or residential development in outline form on a site of 0.5 hectares or more, or the erection of other buildings creating 1,000 square metres of floor space, or outline applications on sites of 1 hectare or more.

3. All other applications are publicised by the display of a site notice or letters written to adjoining neighbours (with some exceptions e.g. Non-Material Minor Amendment applications and Lawful Development Certificates for proposed development).

6.3 For the following application types, newspaper advertisements may be required in addition to site notices and/or neighbour notification:

- Applications for Listed Building Consent,
- Applications affecting the setting of a Listed Building
- Applications affecting the character or appearance of a Conservation Area

6.4 Significant amended or additional details relating to any of the above categories of application received whilst an application is being processed are also publicised.

6.5 A considerable amount of negotiation takes place on a large number of applications, particularly the major ones. This is a very important and crucial part of the Development Management process, steering development towards a more acceptable form and therefore acting in a positive manner. This dialogue between planning officers and developers and their professional advisors is something which the Government and this Council actively encourages.

6.6 Section 122 of the Localism Act 2011 makes it a requirement for applicants for a development of a description specified within a development order to carry out a pre-application consultation on the proposed application and to demonstrate how they have taken account of the responses resulting from that consultation.

6.7 In addition, to the above categories of planning application there are publicity requirements for applications related to more recent procedures: Permissions in Principle and Prior Approvals.

Permission in Principle

6.8 The Permission in Principle consent route is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission which separates the consideration of matters of principle for proposed residential-led development ('Permission in Principle') from the technical detail of the development ('Technical Details Consent').

6.9 Permission in Principle cannot be granted for habitats development, householder development or Environmental Impact Assessment development. At present, Permission in Principle for 'major' residential-led development can only be granted through entry of a site in Part 2 of the Councils' Brownfield Land Register. Other 'minor' residential-led development on previously developed land can be granted Permission in Principle through an application route. The Government is currently reviewing the potential for Permission in Principle to be applied to major developments via the application route.

6.10 Provisions for applications for Permissions in Principle (PiP's) for minor residential development of land have been in place since 1st June 2018. A consequent application for Technical Details Consent (TDC) has then to be determined in accordance with the Permission in Principle; the result would be the grant of full planning permission.

6.11 Permission in Principle can also be triggered when suitable sites are entered in Part 2 of the Council's Brownfield Land Register (subject to undertaking necessary publicity, notification and consultation). Technical Details Consent can be obtained via an application process in accordance with the Permission in Principle granted via a Part 2 Brownfield Register.

6.12 Community involvement procedures will follow the requirements set out in the relevant regulations and order. The current procedures and consultation / publicity / notification requirements that the Council will adhere to are set out in:

- Town and Country Planning (Brownfield Land Register) Regulations 2017
- Town and Country Planning (Permission in Principle) Order 2017

6.13 Key requirements include the need for site notices; website-based notices; directly consulting key persons, bodies or authorities (where necessary). The time periods for consultations are also specified e.g. publicity must be undertaken for at least 14-21 days depending upon the Permission in Principle route.

Prior Approval

6.14 This process is for proposals where applicants must submit either a prior approval or prior notification form to the Council prior to a development taking place which represent 'permitted development'. This can include, but is not restricted to, proposals for larger householder extensions, demolition and telecommunications.

6.15 The Council will adhere to the specific notification and publicity requirements for individual proposals in accordance with the most up to date legislation at the relevant time of the application. At present, applications for prior approval for development which are subject to permitted development rights will be processed in accordance with Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended). Set out below are the forms of notification used for planning applications:

1. **Newspaper Advertisement**

   The following categories of application are publicised by way of newspaper advertisement:-

   - Applications including an Environmental Statement.
   - Departures from the Development Plan.
   - Applications affecting public rights of way.
   - Major applications (see above).
   - Applications for Listed Building consent.

- Applications for development affecting the setting of a Listed Building or a Conservation Area.

2. **Site Notices**

   Brightly coloured site notices are displayed in connection with all application categories with the exception of Prior Notifications for non-commercial development, Non-Material Minor Amendments and Lawful Development Certificates (for proposed development).

3. **Notification by Letter**

   Occupiers of properties, whether residential or business or community services (e.g. schools, churches, community halls) are notified by letter of all application categories with the exception of Non-Material Minor Amendments and Lawful Development Certificates (for proposed development). Notification by letter involves those neighbouring properties directly adjoining the application site boundary.

4. **Content of notification letters, site notices and newspaper advertisements**

   All the published material contains a description of the application, where it can be viewed, the timescale for responses.

6.16 Policies and procedures for publicising planning applications can change over time in response to changes in national legislation, policy and guidance. Therefore applications will be publicised in accordance with current legislation, policy and practice at the time the application is being processed. The most up to date arrangements for publicising planning applications can be found on the Council's website.

6.17 Other ways in which information can be obtained on applications being considered by the Council are:

- Weekly List of Planning Applications: This is made available on the Council's website and contains basic information about the location of the proposed development and a description of it.

- Availability of copies of applications: To conform with the Government's targets for electronic communication, the Council provides all information on 'live' planning applications and those determined after 2010 on the Council's website.

- Parish and Town Councils: Parish and Town Councils are notified as part of the consultation process and invited to inspect applications on the Council's website.

- Exhibitions and presentations: For applications which would involve major new development affecting a substantial area of the Borough, for example large new housing areas, employment sites or town centre redevelopment, plans are displayed in an appropriate location close to where the development is taking place.

- Officer meetings: Case officers are available, by appointment, at the Civic Centre to meet people wishing to discuss applications in which they have an interest.

Responding to Publicity about Applications

6.18 All comments which people wish to be taken into account in the decision-making process need to be made in writing either by letter, email or by completing a comments form available at the Council offices. Anyone can respond to a planning application consultation; responses are not limited to those parties that have been directly notified.

Timescale for Responses

6.19 21 days is allowed for responses to initial notification of applications and in most cases 14 days for re-notification on amendments.

Consultation on Planning Applications and other applications submitted under the Town and Country Planning Acts

6.20 This part of the process includes both the statutory requirements for consultation prior to decision being made on applications, most of which are included in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, and non-statutory consultation with organisations with expertise to contribute to the process.

Pre-Application Advice

6.21 Planning officers can be available to offer pre-application advice (www.staffordbc.gov.uk/pre-application-advice) by telephone, meeting or in writing. There are fees for pre-application advice for specified types of developments, which the Council may update over time. The most up to date pre application charges will be publicised on the Council website. Other professional 'in-house' advice can be made available at this stage for example from the Design Advisor, Heritage and Conservation Officer, Planning Policy, Arboriculturists, and the Council's Ecologist.

6.22 Article 22 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 relates to the duty to respond to consultations within 21 days, which is an appropriate target in relation to the provision of pre-application advice.

6.23 External advice from other organisations (such as the Environment Agency, Natural England or Highways England) should be sought separately and may be subject to the pre-application charges of those organisations. External consultees, such as the Canal and River Trust and Historic England, welcome consultation at an informal level where issues may benefit from their early involvement.

6.24 Staffordshire County Council Transportation, Education, Flood Risk, Historic Environment and Planning (for waste, minerals and County matters) teams provide pre-application services that may incur a charge. The most up to date information should be sought from the County Council website and relevant teams.

Application Consultations - Statutory

6.25 Consultees are notified as part of the consultation process and invited to inspect applications on the Council's website. The Highway Authority also provides advice by Highway Engineers, when required.

Application Consultations - Non-Statutory

6.26 This includes both internal (other Council departments) and external bodies with expertise relevant to particular types of application. Consultees are notified as part of the consultation process and invited to inspect applications on the Council's website.

6.27 The means of publicity and consultation may need to be varied in response to circumstances beyond the Councils control. For instance, Government - imposed restrictions on movement and social interaction.

6.28 Given that the Councils' approach to publicity and consultation reflects legislative requirements, any changes will be in accordance with temporary or updated legislation. If means of publicity such as site notices are restricted, the Council will notify anyone that is likely to have an interest in a relevant planning or listed building consent application through a notice on the Council website (or any alternative means as required by legislation).

6.29 In the instance of Government-imposed restrictions, the Council will limit/suspend face-to-face meetings. The Council will continue to communicate and engage via alternative methods (where appropriate technology is available) including virtual presentations, video conferencing, teleconferences/telephone appointments and email.

6.30 Where remote means of communication are not possible (or are likely to be ineffective) the Council will endeavour to attend in person meetings with organisations and stakeholders, if requested. These will need to be arranged in a location that is compliant with any restrictions that may be in place at the relevant time and undertaken in accordance with such restrictions.

6.31 Any changes to the means of publicity and consultation used will be clearly communicated and explained via available channels, including the Council website.

The Decision Making Process

6.32 The Council's provides information (www.staffordbc.gov.uk/what-happens-after-a-decision-is-made) on the web-site to explains what happens after decisions are made on planning applications. Decisions need to be made in the context of the National Scheme of Delegation, including decisions are delegated to officers or can be considered by Planning Committee, and how comments made as a result of publicity on applications are addressed before making a decision. The provision for people to address the Planning Committee when it is meeting to determine applications is also explained. Information received from Statutory Consultees as a result of consultations will be taken into account when drafting any necessary conditions and Section106 agreements.

Process Following a Decision

6.33 The Council will publish the decision on a planning application on the Council's website. The applicant will be informed directly of the decision. The Council do not inform any other parties and the website should be consulted regularly to obtain the latest information. The decision, if taken at Committee, is also publicised in the Committee minutes on the Council's website

Appealing a Decision

6.34 If an applicant has an application refused or disagrees with conditions attached to the granting of permission they have a right of appeal. This right of appeal does not extend to a person notified of an application - known as a third party.

6.35 If and when an appeal is received, the comments received as part of the application will be provided to PINS (the independent determining body). There will not be an opportunity to provide additional comments through the appeal process and there is no need to re-submit previous information sent in on the planning application as all this information will be copied and sent to the Inspectorate. Councillors are also notified.

6.36 Where an informal hearing or Public Inquiry is to be held to consider an appeal a site notice is erected and the appeal is publicised in the press, including the date, time and the location of the hearing / Inquiry. Third parties are able to attend both informal hearings and Inquiries and speak subject to the discretion of the Inspector, who may limit the number of individuals wishing to make very similar points.

Enforcement

6.37 When development takes place without permission the Council has a range of enforcement powers available to it to establish whether a breach of planning control has taken place. The Council has additional guidance available on the Council's website[2].

6.38 The name and address of any complainant will be kept confidential; however, representations on any subsequent planning applications will be publicly available. The complainant will be informed of any enforcement notice and will be advised of any appeal that is lodged against an enforcement notice.

[2] www.staffordbc.gov.uk/planning-enforcement

7. Monitoring and Review of the SCI

7.1 The Council's Strategic Planning and Development Management teams seek to adopt a positive approach to involving external groups and individuals in planning processes. By ensuring that community involvement is targeted and realistic the Council aims to make the best use of the resources available to it, recognising that existing networks linked to other plans and programmes will be particularly valuable. In determining the most appropriate and effective means of community involvement in different instances, the Council will take into consideration costs and benefits to ensure best value is achieved.

7.2 The costs of community involvement will be met from dedicated budgets. Where possible, joint community consultation and engagement will be undertaken. Community involvement in the development management process, following procedures in Section 4, is an integral part of the processing of planning applications.

7.3 The management of resources and their availability for community involvement will be dependent on the progress made on the preparation of relevant documents. Monitoring progress in plan making and an assessment of the success of various community involvement exercises will inform the Council on the need to review, and where necessary, amend the SCI.

7.4 The effectiveness of the Councils' publicity and consultation methods can be monitored and evaluated in various ways including providing the opportunity for comments on the consultation methods themselves as part of representations submitted; responding to specific concerns that may be raised during a consultation process and learning from this to improve the next consultation event e.g. requests for additional information or public exhibition locations; reports from the Communications team on the 'reach' and response rates e.g. number of 'visits' to the website arising from corporate social media posts and the degree of local newspaper / social media coverage; and monitoring attendance levels of public exhibitions. Feedback from local Councillors is also an important source of information for evaluating effectiveness.

7.5 The SCI will be reviewed as appropriate in the light of changes in national legislation and policy, joint working experiences and consultation with stakeholders. This might include changes to reflect best practice in community / stakeholder involvement, managing expectations more effectively or addressing specific problems or concerns in relation to joint working. We are legally required to review the SCI at least every five years.

8. Data Protection

8.1 For many aspects of the planning process we will need to gather personal data. Our reasons for this, and they type of data required will vary depending upon the particular procedure and stage in the process.

8.2 When we collect such data, we will ensure that we do so in a clear and legally compliant manner to fulfil the requirements of current data protection legislation. The relevant Privacy Notices can be found on the data protection pages of the Council's website at www.staffordbc.gov.uk/PrivacyNotices and can also be found on all forms which we use for consultation purposes.

Glossary of Terms

Adoption - When a Planning Policy Document has been through all the stages of production and is accepted by the Council (and Inspector where relevant) it will then be adopted by full Council.

Appeals - This is a process designed for anyone who has applied to the Council for planning permission and is unhappy with the resulting refusal, conditions, or the lack of decision.

Community Infrastructure Levy - This is a levy allowing local authorities to raise funds from owners and developers of land undertaking new building projects in their area. Stafford Borough Council does not currently have an adopted CIL.

Examination in Public - Planning Policy documents including the Local Plan and Supplementary Plans are subject to an Examination. This is where an independent Planning Inspector assesses the soundness of the document. Representatives can provide their views to the Inspector.

General Consultation Bodies - These are organisations defined by the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 that are required to be consulted at key stages of plan production. These include groups which represent different interests within a Local Planning Authority area.

Inspector's Report - A report issued by a Planning Inspector regarding the planning matters discussed at the Examination in Public.

Local Plan - The Plan for the future development of the local area prepared by the Local Authority in consultation with the local community which is used to determine Planning Applications.

Local Planning Authority - The public authority whose duty it is to carry out specific planning functions for a particular area.

Material Planning Considerations - Factors that are considered when determining a planning application, i.e. loss of light, parking or noise.

National Planning Policy Framework - This sets out the Government's national planning requirements, policies and objectives which are used to inform production of Planning Policy Documents and help determine Planning Applications.

Neighbourhood Plans - A plan prepared by a Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum for a particular neighbourhood area (introduced by the Localism Act 2011). It can include planning policies and land allocations for new development.

Planning Committee - This is a committee of local councillors that determine Planning Applications referred to them under the Borough Council's Constitution and the National Scheme of Delegation from November 2026.

Policies Maps - These illustrate the local plan policies on an Ordnance Survey Base Map.

Stakeholders - Any individual, group, organisation, developer or other party that is affected by or has an interest in planning matters.

Statement of Community Involvement - A statement explaining how and when the Council will consult with local and statutory stakeholders in the process of planning for the local authority area. This sets out the standards that the Council intends to achieve in relation to involving the community and stakeholders.

Specific Consultation Bodies - These are organisations defined by the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 that are required to be consulted at key stages of plan production. They include neighbouring and Parish Councils, key service providers, Government agencies and Non-Government Organisations.

Strategic Environmental Assessment - This is a form of environmental assessment which considers the environmental, social and economic effects of a Planning Policy Document. It appraises the contents of the document and suggests alterations to help achieve sustainable development.

Supplementary Plans - Documents prepared and produced by the Council that provide further guidance on specific policies to support the Local Plan or provide detailed guidance on the development of specific sites in the form of a master plan or development brief.

Equalities Impact Assessment

Stafford Borough Statement of Community Involvement 2026 - Adoption

1. Introduction

1.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty, introduced under the Equality Act 2010, requires all public bodies, including local authorities, to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not

1.2 Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) allow the Council to:

- Show that we are meeting this legal duty by demonstrating due regard for the provisions of the Public Sector Equality Duty
- Identify possible negative impacts on individuals and groups with protected characteristics, plan mitigating action and seek to maximise opportunities to advance equality within our activities.

1.3 The Equality Act 2010 identifies nine ‘protected characteristics’ and seeks to protect people from discrimination on the basis of these characteristics. They are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief

- Sex
- Sexual orientation

2. Identifying Details

Officer Completing EqIA	Alex Yendole Planning Policy Manager
Team and Service	Strategic Planning and Placemaking Economic Development and Planning Stafford Borough Council
Title of Proposal	Statement of Community Involvement
EqIA Completion Date	9 October 2026
Proposal Implementation Date	2 December 2026
Who will be responsible for implementing this proposal	Stafford Borough Council

3. Assessment

Stage 1: Scoping and Defining

What are the aims and objectives of Plan/Strategy/Service/Policy?

3.1 The purpose of the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is to set out how the Council intends to engage with communities through the planning process.

3.2 The SCI is structured into separate sections and this EqIA relates to the following:

Section 1 - Foreword

Section 2 - Introduction

Section 3 - Vision and Our Commitment to You

Section 4 - The Planning System

Section 5 - Plan Making processes

Section 6 - Development Management processes

Section 7 - Monitoring and Review of the SCI

Section 8 - Data Protection

How does it fit within Stafford Borough Council's wider objectives

3.3 The Council's Corporate Plan 2025-2028 identifies the Council's long-term objectives serving the residents and communities of the Borough. The SCI is consistent with the following objective of the Corporate Plan:

"Being an effective Council is crucial for meeting the needs of the local community, providing value for money, and ensuring good governance."

What are the expected outcomes?

3.4 The SCI provides certainty to both applicants and the community by setting out how consultation and engagement will be undertaken with communities across the Borough. Ultimately, the application of the SCI should lead to better development outcomes for local communities and the Borough as a whole by setting out how engagement in the planning process can be undertaken.

- Section 1: Foreword - introduces the SCI and the Council's continued commitment to engage communities in plan-making and planning decisions
- Section 2: Introduction - provides an overview of the purpose of the SCI, why it has been updated and the legislative background
- Section 3: Vision and Our Commitment to You - sets out the Council's vision, commitment, the Constitution and an overview on community involvement applying to different groups and their engagement within the process
- Section 4: The Planning System - provides a general overview of plan-making and Development Management together with the customer services approach
- Section 5: Plan Making processes - sets out an overview of the plan-making process and detailed linked to the Communication and Engagement Strategy. The legislative process for consultations includes Local Plans, Supplementary Plans as well as the mechanisms for Neighbourhood Planning and the role undertaken by the Council

- Section 6: Development Management processes - details information on the levels of engagement that will be undertaken at the various stages of the process for determining applications, and sets out the process involved in an application for Permission in Principle and Prior Approval as well as the levels of engagement that will be undertaken at each stage. It also provides information on the pre-application process and the level of engagement at this stage

- Section 7: Monitoring and Review of the SCI - provides the monitoring approach and mechanisms to be used, together with the review timescales

- Section 8: Data Protection - sets out the legislative requirements and approach used by the Council

Which of the groups with protected characteristics is this intended to benefit?

3.5 The SCI is not intended to benefit any one particular group. As such, the SCI is relevant to everyone who will live, work and visit the Borough.

Stage 2: Information Gathering

What type and range of evidence or information have you used to help you make a judgement about the plan/strategy/service/policy?

3.6 The updated SCI is informed by legislation and national guidance, along with good practice guidance on consultation techniques and methods.

Have you consulted on the plan/strategy/service/policy and if so with whom?

3.7 The SCI has not been consulted on as the Communication and Engagement Strategy provides the significant changes to the approach to plan-making as required by the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 and has been consulted on as part of the Local Plan Scoping and Participation consultation.

3.8 The changes to the SCI are not considered significant. There has been no amendments to the section on Neighbourhood Planning, and the changes to the decision-making section align with the Council's approach with public knowledge. The key requirement of the SCI is with regards to plan-making and that is clearly set out in the CES.

Which of the groups with protected characteristics have you consulted with?

3.9 Not applicable as all groups in the Borough engaged in consultation.

Stage 3: Analysis of Impact

From your data and consultations is there any adverse or negative impact identified for any particular group which could amount to discrimination? If yes, identify the groups and how they are affected.

RACE The SCI is inclusive of all equality groups.	**DISABILITY** The SCI sets out how the consultation and engagement will be undertaken using a variety of methods. This approach enables all groups to be able to engage in the plan-making process.	**SEX** The SCI is inclusive of all gender groups.
MARRIAGE/CIVIL PARTNERSHIP The legislative requirements relating to this group are only relevant in the context of the Borough Council's role as an employer and are not therefore relevant to the EqIA for the SCI.	**AGE** The SCI sets out how consultation and engagement will be undertaken using a variety of methods. This approach enables all groups to be able to engage in the process.	**GENDER REASSIGNMENT** The SCI is inclusive of all gender groups.
RELIGION/BELIEF The SCI is inclusive of all religions and faiths.	**PREGNANCY/MATERNITY** The SCI sets out how the consultation and engagement will be undertaken using a variety of methods. This approach enables all groups to be able to engage in the plan-making process.	**SEXUAL ORIENTATION** The SCI is inclusive of all sexual orientations.

If there is an adverse impact, can this be justified.

3.10 No adverse impacts in relation to the identified groups are anticipated.

What actions are going to be taken to reduce or eliminate negative or adverse impact? (This should form part of your action plan under Stage 4)

3.11 No negative or adverse impacts are anticipated; therefore, no actions are needed.

How does the plan/strategy/service/policy contribute to promotion of equality? If no what can be done?

3.12 The SCI sets out how consultation and engagement will be undertaken with communities across the Borough and therefore contributes to equality by enabling all people to be aware of how they are able to engage with the various aspects of the planning process.

How does the plan/strategy/service/policy promote good relations between groups? If not, what can be done?

3.13 The SCI sets out how the community can be involved in the planning process through a variety of methods, thus continuing to develop better relationships between different groups.

Are there any obvious barriers to accessing the service? If yes, how can they be overcome?

3.14 The SCI sets out how consultation and engagement will be undertaken using a variety of methods including virtual and remote methods. This approach enables all groups to be able to engage in the planning process thus reducing barriers to engaging with the planning process.

Stage 4: Action Planning, Review and Monitoring

Action Planning - Specify any changes or improvements which can be made to the service or policy to mitigate or eradicate negative or adverse impact on specific groups, including resource implications. If No Further Action is required, then go to - Review and Monitoring

3.15 No Further Action is required

Review and Monitoring - State how and when you will monitor policy and Action Plan

3.16 An Authority Monitoring Report is produced by the Borough Council on an annual basis to review the effectiveness of policies and proposals in the

Development Plan. The SCI will be reviewed every five years in accordance with legislation and guidance.

Agenda Item 4(c)ii

Stafford Borough Communication and Engagement Strategy 2026 - Adoption

Committee: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 12 November 2026

Report of: Head of Economic Development and Planning

Portfolio: Economic Development and Planning

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1 Purpose of Report

1.1 For Cabinet Members to consider an amended Communication and Engagement Strategy consultation 2026 document following the New Local Plan 2025-2045 Scoping and Participation consultation, and to recommend adoption of the Stafford Borough Communication and Engagement Strategy 2026, as set out in the **BOOKLET** to this item.

2 Recommendations

2.1 That Cabinet approve the Stafford Borough Communication and Engagement Strategy 2026 for adoption and publication, subject to Full Council agreement on 1 December 2026, as set out in the **BOOKLETS** to this item.

2.2 That Cabinet agrees that the Head of Economic Development and Planning, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Planning, be authorised to make minor amendments to the Stafford Borough Communication and Engagement Strategy 2026 if necessary prior to publication.

3 Key Issues

3.1 The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 requires the local planning authority to set out details relating to the proposed approach to consultation and engagement in preparing their Local Plan, and to consult on how the Council should engage with the bodies specified in paragraph 2 of Regulation 20. This has taken place through the Communication and Engagement Strategy consultation 2026 document which formed part of the New Local Plan 2025-2045 Scoping and Participation consultation in June and July 2026. The Stafford Borough Communication and Engagement Strategy 2026 covers the detailed engagement process for Local Plans and Supplementary Plans.

3.2 The adoption and publication of the Stafford Borough Communication and Engagement Strategy 2026, alongside the Statement of Community Involvement 2026, ensures that the Council's approach is clearly adopted prior to the New Local Plan proposed content and evidence base consultation (Regulation 23) in the Summer 2027. Therefore, the Stafford Borough Community and Engagement Strategy (CES) 2026 supports the proposed update to the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and ensures the Council meets the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026.

4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

4.1 The following vision and priorities from the Council's Corporate Plan 2025/26 to 2027/28 are considered relevant to this report:

Vision

- "To be an effective Council that promotes a growing economy, strong, healthy communities and a sustainable environment."

Priorities

- "Prosperous Economy"
- "Effective Council"

5 Report Detail

5.1 In accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 the Council is required to set out details relating to the local planning authority's proposed approach to consultation and engagement in preparing their local plan as part of the Gateway 1 Self-Assessment Summary required under Regulation 21.

5.2 Publication of the Gateway 1 Self-Assessment Summary has been delegated to the Head of Economic Development and Planning, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Planning, through the Cabinet decision on 21 May 2026 (New Local Plan - Notice of Intention to Commence, and Scoping and Engagement consultations). However, this does not include the adoption of the Stafford Borough Communication and Engagement Strategy 2026 to enable its approach to be implemented for future Local Plan and Supplementary Plan consultations.

5.3 The Council is legally required to consult stakeholders, including the public, on a range of planning matters with the Stafford Borough Communication and Engagement Strategy 2026 setting out more detailed steps that the Council will undertake with regards to plan-making, and supports the proposed 2026 update to the Statement of Community Involvement. A separate item is being brought to Cabinet seeking approval of the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) 2026 - Adoption.

5.4 Having a clear arrangement for carrying out consultation will help establish a two-way process between the community and the Council. The Communication and Engagement Strategy consultation 2026 document has been consulted on in line with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026. A total of 121 responses were received from 65 organisations and individuals regarding the Communication and Engagement Strategy consultation 2026 document. Where applicable these have been considered and amendments undertaken in the proposed adoption version of the CES, as set out in the **BOOKLET** to this item. The two questions relating to the CES and summary of responses are set out below:

Question 19: Do you agree with the Communication and Engagement Strategy and the approach we have taken?

Most respondents supported the Communication and Engagement Strategy and welcomed early, transparent and inclusive consultation. Key requests were for clearer evidence that feedback influences decisions, stronger rural and parish council engagement, improved non-digital communication methods, ongoing stakeholder involvement and shorter, more accessible consultation material.

Question 20: Is there anything you think is missing from the Communication and Engagement Strategy document?

Respondents generally supported the Strategy but requested stronger transparency, clearer feedback on how comments influence decisions, enhanced engagement with parish councils and rural communities, improved accessibility for under-represented groups, wider stakeholder involvement and publication of assessment information. Many respondents considered these measures essential for meaningful participation.

5.5 A summary of the New Local Plan 2025-2045 Scoping and Participation consultation will be published in line with the requirements of Regulation 22 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026; the publication of which has been delegated to the Head of Economic Development and Planning, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Planning, through the Cabinet decision on 21 May 2026 (New Local Plan - Notice of Intention to Commence, and Scoping and Engagement consultations).

6 Implications

6.1 Financial

None. Publication of the Stafford Borough Communication and Engagement Strategy 2026, and its implementation are covered by existing budgets for the New Local Plan 2025-2045.

6.2 Legal

The Stafford Borough Communication and Engagement Strategy 2026 has to be prepared in accordance with the relevant Planning Acts and regulations, and be aligned with related national planning policy and guidance. The Stafford Borough Communication and Engagement Strategy 2026 will need, in accordance with the Council's constitution, to be formally endorsed by Full Council prior to publication and adoption.

Failure to follow the statutory plan-making process under the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 may expose the Council to legal challenge, delay progression of the Local Plan, and result in findings of non-compliance or unsoundness at examination.

6.3 Human Resources

The Stafford Borough Communication and Engagement Strategy 2026 requirements will be delivered by existing staff from within Economic Development and Planning, and the wider organisation.

6.4 Risk Management

There is a requirement on Local Planning Authorities to have in place the Stafford Borough Communication and Engagement Strategy 2026, which will be updated and reviewed in due course.

The Council will continue to closely monitor changes to legislation, regulations and policy as part of reviewing the Stafford Borough Communication and Engagement Strategy 2026 whilst deploying robust programme management techniques through the New Local Plan process to deliver effective community involvement and engagement including use of digital services as

required through the process. All internal risks will be reviewed when required and proposed actions delivered efficiently.

6.5 Equalities and Diversity

The Stafford Borough Communication and Engagement Strategy 2026 will ensure that throughout the process of preparing the New Local Plan a thorough consultation and engagement process will enable residents and interested parties to be involved in its preparation, including 24/7 access to key documents through the Borough Council's website.

An Equalities Impact Assessment will be published alongside the final version of the Stafford Borough Communication and Engagement Strategy 2026 as set out in the **BOOKLET** to this item.

6.6 Health

The Stafford Borough Communication and Engagement Strategy 2026 will ensure effective involvement with key partners, including the health sector, to ensure that recommendations made in relation to the New Local Plan 2025-2045 with policy-specific areas are consistent and complementary to an approach that supports equality in both service provision and health outcomes.

6.7 Climate Change

The Stafford Borough Communication and Engagement Strategy 2026 will ensure effective involvement with key partners, including the climate change sector, to ensure that recommendations made in relation to the New Local Plan 2025-2045 with policy-specific areas are consistent and complementary to an approach that supports equality in both service provision and climate change outcomes.

7 Appendices

Please refer to associated **BOOKLETS** to this item.

- Stafford Borough Communication and Engagement Strategy 2026 - Adoption

- Equalities Impact Assessment Stafford Borough Communication and Engagement Strategy 2026 - Adoption

8 Previous Consideration

Cabinet held on 21 May 2026: New Local Plan - Notice of Intention to Commence, and Scoping and Engagement consultations

www.staffordbc.gov.uk/cabinet-21-may-2026-agenda

www.staffordbc.gov.uk/cabinet-21-may-2026-minutes

9 Background Papers

The Communication and Engagement Strategy consultation 2026 document is available via the Stafford Borough Council website link below:

www.staffordbc.gov.uk/communication-and-engagement-strategy

Contact Officer:	Alex Yendole
Telephone Number:	07800 619530
Ward Interest:	All
Report Track:	Cabinet 12 November 2026 Council 1 December 2026
Key Decision:	Yes

Stafford Borough Communication and Engagement Strategy 2026 - Adoption

1. Introduction

1.1 The Stafford Borough Communication and Engagement Strategy (CES) 2026 sets out how the Council will involve the community and other stakeholders in the main planning functions of preparing a local plan (or other planning policy document). Consultation and engagement concerning planning applications and the decision-making process is covered by other processes. For plan-making this document sets out:

- What will be consulted upon;
- Who we will consult;
- When the Council will consult; and
- How the Council will consult (methods used to consult).

1.2 The CES will also provide information about:

- The role of elected councillors, parish and town councils, and voluntary and community groups in planning matters;
- Who you can contact for assistance in local planning matters, and
- What will be expected of you when you make comments and how those comments will be presented.

2. Legal and Policy Requirements

2.1 The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 requires the local planning authority to set out details relating to the proposed approach to consultation and engagement in preparing their Local Plans and Supplementary Plans, and to consult on how the Council should engage with the bodies specified in paragraph 2 of Regulation 20.

2.2 There is a clear emphasis throughout national policy on engaging positively with communities and other key stakeholders as set out in PM6: General Principles for plan-making in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

published in August 2026. The online Planning Practice Guidance and Local Plan guidance ‘Engaging the public when preparing a local plan’ encourages engagement and co-operation with the community so that local plans reflect a collective vision and agreed set of priorities.

3. Vision and Our Commitment to You

Our Vision

3.1 The Borough Council believes that local community participation and involvement is central to the delivery of sustainable development and helps to provide effective planning for the future.

3.2 Our vision is “to provide a platform for people to express their views on planning matters and share their local knowledge in an interactive and inclusive manner, to help inform plan making decisions and create effective strategies.”

3.3 To achieve our vision we will:

- create and prepare planning policy documents in a user-friendly manner
- ensure our methods and approach are transparent and accessible to help people understand the plan making process better
- record and assess responses to help inform Planning Policy Documents
- seek to work with groups and individuals who do not normally engage with plan making
- encourage developers to engage with local communities on their proposals as soon as practicable.

4. The Planning System

4.1 The Planning System plays a key role in shaping the use of land and development to provide attractive, vibrant and well-designed places to live and work. Whilst it seeks to conserve and protect the environment, it also aims to provide new development that meets the needs for new housing, employment, and other facilities. This inevitably involves making some challenging decisions. The role of the Local Planning Authority is to make balanced decisions after considering consultation responses and other material planning matters.

Plan Making

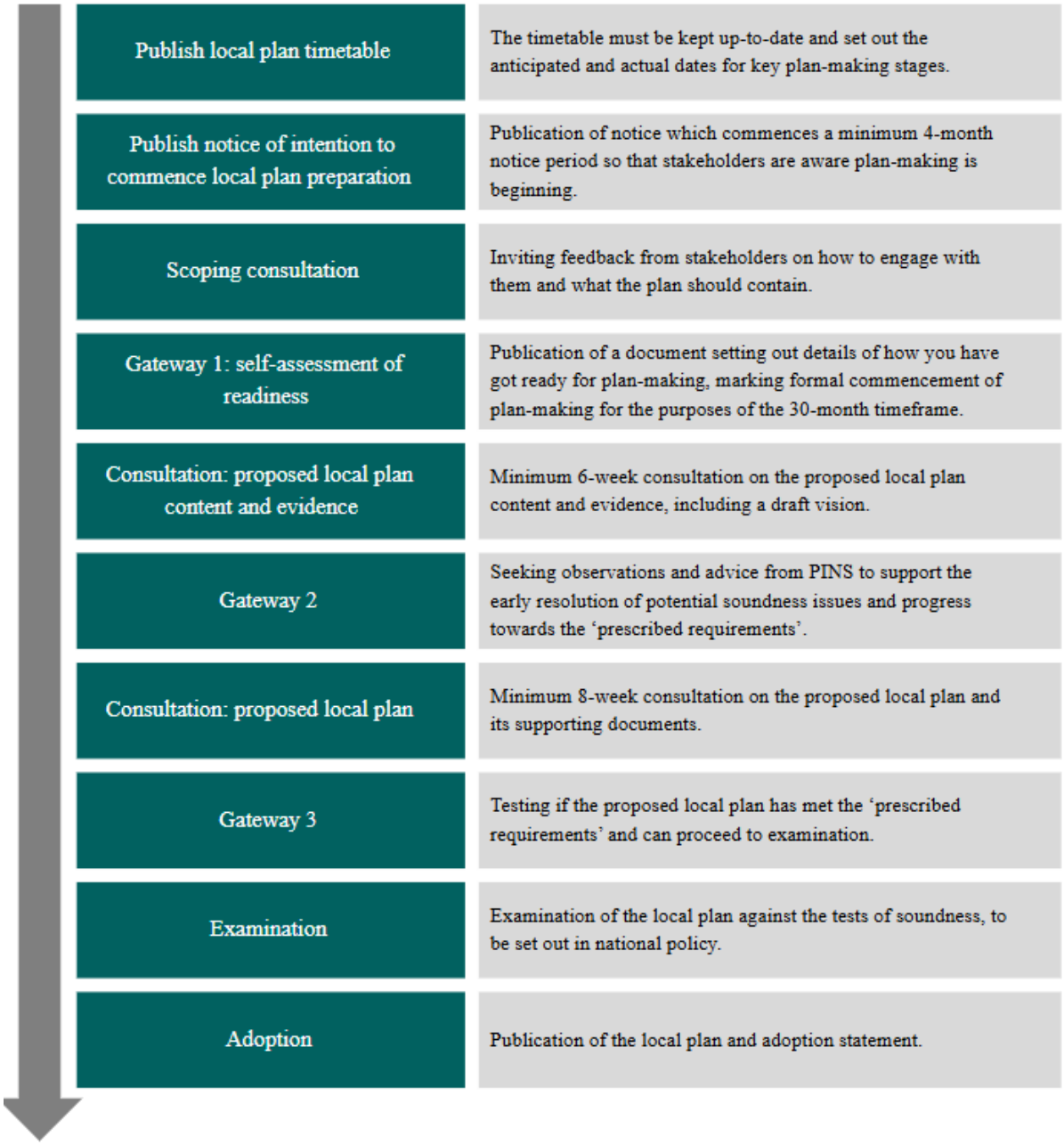
4.2 Plan Making is referred to as planning policy or spatial planning. Plan Making requires Local Planning Authorities to produce a Local Plan for the area, which sets out how the area will develop over a period of time. The Local Plan policies will be used to guide future development and provide the framework for decisions on planning applications.

4.3 The process of creating a Local Plan requires Local Planning Authorities to identify and engage, at an early stage, with all those that may be interested in the development or content of the Local Plan, and with groups who may be affected by proposals. With the help of the local community and the collation of an evidence base, the Local Planning Authority will identify options for addressing local development needs, to inform a preferred approach for future development. This requires carrying out a robust community consultation with local communities, businesses and other interested parties to gather views.

5. The Local Plan

5.1 The Local Plan is prepared through a process of engagement and community involvement, with a timetable setting out details of all the Local Plan documents (including supporting documents) and those that the Council are or will be progressing. The preparation of each of these documents will provide important opportunities for communities to get involved in shaping the places in which they live, as well as showing how the Council has responded to responses received in earlier consultations.

5.2 The process of producing the Local Plan and associated documents involves several stages as set out in the image below:



Access to background Local Plan documents and evidence base

5.3 The documents prepared as part of the Local Plan are produced on the basis of a sound and up-to-date evidence base. All relevant evidence base studies, assessments or strategies will be made available on the Council's website. Paper copies of these documents can be made available upon request subject to the relevant fees and charges.

5.4 The adopted Local Plan is made up of the Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 and Part 2 which is now being replaced with work started on a New Local Plan (2025-2045) including evidence based studies, updating the Brownfield Land Register and initial consultation exercises. Future work on all of these aspects will need to meet the requirements set out in this document, when finalised following this consultation.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

5.5 Local Plan documents are subject to the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process. The SEA assesses the preparation of the Local Plan's policies and proposals as these are progressed, against social, environmental and economic objectives to ensure the best approach is delivered. A key element of the SEA process is the baseline information established through survey data. A series of SEA reports produced through the preparation of the Local Plan are consulted upon alongside the policies and proposals.

Supplementary Plans

5.6 Supplementary Plans are complementary documents that provide further details and guidance to policies contained in the Local Plan, and are used as material considerations in reaching planning decisions.

5.7 Supplementary Plans take many forms, ranging from a master plan or development brief, to design guides and general additional guidance produced by the Council.

6. Engage in the Local Plan

6.1 This section explains how and when you can be involved in influencing and informing the production of the development plan and other planning policy documents for Stafford Borough. Legislation sets out which documents need to be in place, the processes to produce those documents and the minimum requirements for involvement in their production.

How we involve you in the Local Plan

6.2 Advertising and notification of forthcoming opportunities to be involved is essential. To improve efficiency, the Council will make use of electronic communication tools and build upon existing communication channels wherever possible. This may include the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology to assess and summarize responses received. The Council will engage, involve and consult on planning matters in line with the latest Regulations and guidance as appropriate and relevant.

6.3 An assessment under the equalities regulations may be appropriate and a requirement for some planning policy documents. Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA) may be undertaken as a tool for ensuring that equality, social inclusion and community cohesion issues are considered when drawing up policies.

6.4 The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 requires the local planning authority to set out details relating to the proposed approach to consultation and engagement in preparing their Local Plan, and to consult on how the Council should engage with the bodies specified in paragraph 2 of Regulation 20. Furthermore, the Regulations defines ‘relevant consultation bodies’ and the 'specific consultation bodies’ the Council must consult with (please refer to Appendix 1). The Regulations define ‘general consultation bodies’ as voluntary bodies some or all of whose activities benefit any part of the authority’s area and other bodies who represent, in the authority’s area, the interests of different racial, ethnic or national groups; different religious groups; disabled persons; and business interests (please refer to Appendix 2).

Your involvement in the Local Plan

6.5 To ensure that your involvement is effective you will be expected to:

- Make your representation/comments within the specified time period;
- Provide comments in a clear and succinct format, ensuring that representations relate to the matters and documents being consulted upon;
- Be aware that your comments with your name attached (for local plan and planning policy consultations) will be made publicly available, with personal and sensitive information redacted in line with the Council’s privacy notices;

- Be understanding and respectful of alternative views. The Council has a zero tolerance of abusive language etc… All comments are moderated and any that are considered to fall short of these requirements will be rejected; and

- If you are replying on behalf of a group or organisation, consider and explain how members of the group have been involved in formulating the representation.

Role of elected Councillors

6.6 The role of locally elected Councillors in representing the views and concerns of residents in the planning process is very important. However, your views can only be formally considered when you make them in writing (traditional or email) to the Council within the specified time for a particular consultation.

Parish Councils

6.7 Parish and town councils play a vital role in community involvement in the planning system and the production of neighbourhood plans. Parish and town councillors can comment on the preparation of local planning policy documents that may affect their area as well as the Borough. Parish and town councils have an important role when identifying priorities in their areas and provide a valuable means of sharing information about the planning process to their local community. This is particularly important for when parish and town councils produce a neighbourhood plan.

Role of voluntary and community groups

6.8 The Council believes that everyone should have the opportunity to be actively involved in decisions that affect them and their community. Voluntary and community groups are encouraged to be involved in planning matters and can represent their members. Please see the following sections for how to register to be involved in planning policy documents.

Less well-represented groups

6.9 The Council are aware that some people and groups are less well-represented, or thought to be ‘hard to reach’. We also understand that particular groups may have specific areas of interest or a limited capacity for involvement. Every opportunity will be taken to add to our awareness of such groups; to increase engagement and to identify issues and policies that are likely to be of particular concern, and we welcome proactive suggestions to increase such engagement. Documents and information will be made available in alternative formats upon request.

Please note: News updates can only be sent to those that sign up to and remain on the Local Plan consultation list.

7. The Local Plan Process

7.1 The preparation of the Local Plan represents the most resource intensive strand of Local Plan preparation, particularly in relation to community involvement.

7.2 To prepare the policies and proposals for the Development Plan, the Borough Council will consult with the community and statutory organisations listed in Appendix 1 and 2, and establish the main issues for the document to address as part of developing policy options and key matters.

Scoping, Participation and Evidence Gathering

7.3 This stage of the Local Plan is intended to be wide ranging and informal. It will invite discussion on the objectives of the relevant plan making document and the options available for achieving those objectives. The Council will not put forward any specific proposals at this stage.

7.4 The Council will also at this stage be collecting information on a range of socio-economic and environmental matters. Furthermore, survey information will be sought on key elements of the Local Plan, including a Call for Sites exercise alongside key housing and employment statistics. Additionally, each year the Brownfield Land Register will be reviewed to identify new development sites, which will include potential sites through the Permission In Principle approach.

7.5 The local community and stakeholders are encouraged to provide their details via a consultation database so that they can be kept informed throughout the following stages.

7.6 Representations at this stage should be on the questions raised. You will be able to comment online, email or via letter.

7.7 If you are requesting the allocation of a specific site for development, then it is highly desirable that you engage with the Council at this early stage so that community involvement is maximised and appraisal work can be undertaken on the proposed site through the plan preparation process. Development proposals can be more robustly assessed if the site and its proposed use are clearly defined. You can submit your land via the **Call for Sites** webpage.

Local Plan content and evidence

7.8 The Council will use the responses and information gathered during the Scoping the Issues and Participation stage to develop the:

- Draft vision and proposed aims and objectives
- Proposed spatial strategy
- Initial draft policies
- Summary of evidence gathered and evidence still to gather

7.9 This stage will set out the Council's preferred approach to delivering the objectives identified as part of Scoping and Participation stage through the Proposed Local Plan content and evidence, as well as providing the Council's document responding to comments received at the early consultation stage.

7.10 The community and stakeholders, including statutory organisations, will be encouraged to participate in the on-going policy development process and a range of consultation/engagement methods will be used to help achieve this. Following on from the early engagement on key matters, the Council will consult on the Proposed Local Plan content and evidence for a minimum period of 6 weeks.

7.11 This stage provides an opportunity for representations which suggest alternative options for delivery of the Local Plan objectives. You will be able to comment on this stage either online, via email or by letter.

7.12 If you are requesting the allocation of a site for development you will be expected to clearly define the site, the uses proposed for the site, describe any community involvement already undertaken and why you think that the proposed site is a more sustainable option than those put forward by the Council.

Publication and submission

7.13 Following the Local Plan content and evidence consultation, the Council will prepare the Proposed Local Plan in order to publish a final version and invite comments on the document from the community, statutory organisations and other interested parties as part of an 8 week consultation stage.

7.14 This is effectively the final stage to submit formal representations to the Borough Council on the Proposed Local Plan. The Borough Council will then submit the Proposed Local Plan, the Strategic Environmental Assessment and the entire evidence base, including the representations made, to the Secretary of State for an Examination in Public.

Examination

7.15 An independent Inspector is appointed to undertake an Examination in Public (EiP), to test the legal compliance and soundness of the Proposed Local Plan whilst considering all representations made at the Publication stage.

7.16 Prior to the EiP, the Borough Council must publish an advert notifying the public, including any interested parties, about details of the Examination.

7.17 Anybody who submitted representations at the Publication stage will have the opportunity to present their case to the Inspector.

7.18 The Planning Inspector will decide on how to best proceed with the EiP, identifying issues which should be debated. Generally the EiP includes a series of formal hearing which are chaired by the Planning Inspector.

7.19 A Programme Officer will be appointed from outside of the Planning Department and will be responsible for managing all the arrangements of the Examination process, including collating all documents, where appropriate, organising site visits and dealing with all correspondence. The Programme Officer reports to the Planning Inspector and will be the main point of contact for members of the public through the EiP.

7.20 During the Examination in Public stage the Council may propose Main Modifications to the document, if these are needed to make it "sound". If this is the case further consultation on the proposed changes will be carried out.

Adoption of the Local Plan

7.21 Following the conclusion of the EiP, the Inspector will produce a report setting out any changes the Borough Council must make to the document before it can be adopted. The Inspectors' Report and its recommendations are binding on the Council (i.e. the Council must accept these changes should it take forward the Local Plan to adoption).

7.22 Should the Council seek to adopt the Local Plan, the modifications suggested by the Inspector must be undertaken and then a formal decision must be made by Council Members to adopt the Local Plan for planning purposes.

7.23 Following a Member decision to adopt, the Council must notify all consultees registered on the Planning Policy Consultation Database of their intention to adopt the document for planning purposes. A notice of adoption will be placed in all relevant newspaper press and will include information on the statutory rights of appeal.

8. Supplementary Plans

8.1 Supplementary Plans (SPs) relate to specific sites or specific planning issues and have the same weight as a local plan for the purpose of decision-making. This would also include Infrastructure Levy regimes to apply at the local level for securing developer contributions in the future, if applicable.

8.2 There is a three-stage process for the preparation of Supplementary Plans, this includes:

- Evidence Gathering
- The Preparation and Consultation of a Draft Supplementary Plan
- The Adoption of the SPs by Stafford Borough Council

8.3 The key principles for community involvement which are applied to the preparation of Local Plans equally applies to the preparation of Supplementary Plans.

8.4 The approach to community involvement will remain to engage as many people who are interested in the issue/area as possible, although it should be recognised that there is little value in engaging groups whose interests may lie outside both the geographical scope and the subject scope of the document consultation. Any community involvement on SPs should be relevant, proportionate and efficient.

8.5 The Borough Council will arrange for an independent Inspector to examine the Supplementary Plan. Prior to the Examination, the Borough Council must publish an advert notifying the public, including any interested parties, about details of the Examination.

8.6 The procedure for the examination of supplementary plans is set out in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 Section 15DB.

9. Neighbourhood Plans

Designation of Neighbourhood Plan Area

9.1 A Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum can submit an application to the Borough Council requesting for a Neighbourhood Plan Area to be designated.

9.2 The Borough Council will publicise the Neighbourhood Plan Area Application and carry out a statutory consultation for a period of 4 weeks before it is considered for designation as a Neighbourhood Plan Area. The Borough Council will then publish details of its decision, including a map of the designated area.

Preparation of Neighbourhood Plan

9.3 The Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum will prepare their Neighbourhood Plan in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 together with relevant Regulations. This involves collecting evidence, engagement and consultation with the local community on issues and options, and developing draft planning policies for inclusion in the Neighbourhood Plan.

9.4 The Borough Council will provide assistance and advice to the Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum throughout the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan in a timely manner when requested. Prior to the draft Neighbourhood

Plan being subject to consultation, the Borough Council will prepare a Screening Report to assess the environmental implications. The Screening Report will be subject to a six-week consultation exercise with the statutory environmental agencies.

Submission and Publication

9.5 The Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum are required to submit the Neighbourhood Plan to the Borough Council who will then publish the proposed Neighbourhood Plan for a six-week period of consultation. The Borough Council will notify all relevant stakeholders and invite comments during the consultation stage.

Examination

9.6 The Borough Council will arrange for an independent Inspector to examine the Neighbourhood Plan. Prior to the Examination, the Borough Council must publish an advert notifying the public, including any interested parties, about details of the Examination.

Adoption of Neighbourhood Plan

9.7 Following receipt of the Inspector's Report, this recommends any changes required and whether the Neighbourhood Plan can proceed to a referendum (vote).

9.8 The Council will publish the Inspector's Report and arrange a referendum. If the Neighbourhood Plan is successful at referendum (achieved more than a 50% yes vote) the Borough Council will then adopt the Neighbourhood Plan and it will be used in the determination of Planning Applications in the Neighbourhood Plan Area.

Note: The Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum preparing a Neighbourhood Plan is responsible for undertaking community engagement and consultation before the proposed Plan is submitted. Consulting with the wider community in the early plan making process could increase the likelihood of the Neighbourhood Plan being successful at the referendum stage.

10. Planning Policy Consultations

Who we will consult

10.1 In the preparation of Planning Policy Documents, a wide range of individuals, groups, representatives and organisations will be consulted.

10.2 In line with statutory obligations, the Borough Council is required to provide a list of ‘relevant consultation bodies’ and the 'specific consultation bodies of statutory organisations who must be consulted (please see Appendix 1) and a ‘general consultation bodies’ list of those who may wish to be consulted (please see Appendix 2) on Planning Policy Documents. These lists of bodies are not definitive and the Borough Council may need to consult with other organisations at the appropriate time.

10.3 Stafford Borough Council wants to ensure that all stakeholders have every opportunity to be involved with the preparation of Planning Policy Documents and no groups/organisations and individuals, including hard to reach groups, are excluded.

10.4 Stafford Borough Council maintains a database of over 3,000 consultees, which largely consists of those who have expressed an interest in being involved in the preparation of Planning Policy Documents. These are identified as key stakeholders and are shown in the table below.

Table 1: Key Stakeholders

Local Interest Groups	Residents	Businesses	Individuals
Neighbouring Local Authorities	Statutory Organisations	Land Owners	Councillors and MPs
Voluntary and Community Groups	Parish Councils	Developers	Hard to Reach Groups

10.5 Any resident, business or interested party can be included in this database by contacting the Borough Council’s Strategic Planning and Placemaking team on 01785 619000. The Borough Council will comply with the Data Protection legislation and carry out tasks under the General Data Protection Regulations (UK GDPR) to ensure personal information is kept confidential and secure.

Maintaining Cooperation/Statement of Common Ground

10.6 The Council has previously been required, under Section 110 of the Localism Act 2011, to engage with neighbouring authorities and other statutory organisations to satisfy the ‘Duty to Cooperate’ legal requirement, including where appropriate through Statements of Common Ground. This was to ensure that neighbouring authorities and relevant organisations work together to meet development requirements and address any strategic cross boundary issues.

10.7 The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 removed the need for Duty to Cooperate to streamline the plan-making process. Nevertheless authorities

still need to collaborate across their boundaries, including on unmet development needs from neighbouring areas in line with National Planning Policy Framework policies which stipulate 'maintaining pro-active cooperation.'

10.8 Stafford Borough Council has worked closely with all relevant organisations throughout the production of the adopted Plan for Stafford Borough. The Borough Council remains committed to effective cross-boundary collaboration in the preparation of future Planning Policy Documents.

How we will consult

10.9 Stafford Borough Council will use a range of methods to involve local people and strengthen community involvement. Table 2 below describes the various methods used for consulting on Planning Policy Documents, with Table 2 listing the Engagement Tools.

Table 2: Methods for consulting on planning policy documents

Letters and Emails	Letters and emails sent out to notify relevant stakeholders about a consultation on Planning Policy Documents
Parish Forum Meetings	Attendance at Parish Forum meetings to provide Parish Councils with information on Planning Policy Documents
Display boards	Display boards are set up in the reception of Council Offices to raise awareness of consultation on Planning Policy Documents and how people can get involved
Public Exhibitions and Workshops	Exhibitions are set up in various locations across the Borough to provide information on Planning Policy Documents. Workshops are organised to gather information and feedback from members of the public and other stakeholders to help inform Planning Policy Documents
Press Release/Notice	Press releases/notices are issued to the local newspapers and local radio stations to raise awareness about consultation on Planning Policy Documents
Libraries	Hard copies of Planning Policy Documents, with response forms, are distributed to local Libraries for people to view and make comments
Council website www.staffordbc.gov.uk	Details of Planning Policy Documents are published on the website for the public to view, including details of the consultation and how to respond

What we will do with your comments

10.10 All representations will receive an automatic acknowledgement of the representation if received by email or e-consultation methods. The Borough Council will also accept comments by letter and will process them in the same manner as other representations.

10.11 All representations will be electronically recorded and then published on the Borough Council's website, or through the Neighbourhood Planning Bodies website as relevant, for the public to view. They will be considered and used to help inform the production of Planning Policy Documents.

Table 3: Engagement tools

	Development Plan Documents						Supplementary Plans including Infrastructure Levy			Neighbourhood Plans			
Method	**Evidence Gathering and Early Engagement – where relevant Brownfield Land**	**Brownfield Land Register - Call for Sites**	**Development of Policy Options**	**Publication and Submission**	**Examination in Public**	**Adoption**	**Publication of Draft SP**	**Examination in Public**	**Adoption**	**Designate Neighbourhood Plan**	**Submission and Publication**	**Examination**	**Adoption**
Letters and Emails	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Parish Forum Meeting			X										
Display boards			X										
Public exhibition and workshop			X										
Press Release/Notice		X	X		X	X	X	X	X				
Libraries		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X
Council website	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Online Q and A Session			X	X			X						

11. Monitoring and Review

11.1 Stafford Borough Council is committed to strengthening local community participation and stakeholder involvement in the planning process.

11.2 Each year the Council monitors and reviews the progress and effectiveness of the Local Plan in an annual Authority Monitoring Report. In addition, and where appropriate, the Council will carry out a periodic review of the Local Plan.

11.3 In accordance with the Authority Monitoring Report, the Council will also review consultation activities that have been carried out in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement. This is to ensure the methods and techniques used to engage with all stakeholders of the community are effective and robust.

11.4 The Council will use the following indicators to measure outcomes.

- Number of people participating in consultation
- Number of people using the Council's online website to make representations

11.5 If significant changes are required to meet new circumstances or legislation changes, a review of the Communications and Engagement Strategy will be undertaken. The CES will be reviewed upon the requirement for a new Local Plan in line with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 (or subsequent updates as appropriate).

How will comments be used?

11.6 The Council will acknowledge receipt of comments and fully consider responses for the relevant stage of the plan-making process, although the Council will not engage through individual correspondence. All comments received will be published on the Council's website in accordance with Data Protection legislation and the General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR). The Council will provide the opportunity to request that any comments submitted are not processed using Artificial Intelligence (AI), otherwise digital technology will be applied as part of the plan-making process.

Protecting Your Privacy

11.7 The Council believe you should always know what data we collect from you and how we use it, and that you should have meaningful control over both. As part of our ongoing commitment to transparency, and in relation to the General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and Data Protection legislation, we have updated our Privacy Policy.

11.8 We will only use your personal information to send you information on the Local Plan and associated planning policy matters. You can find information about how we handle your personal data by visiting www.staffordbc.gov.uk/privacynotices and if you have any queries or would like to unsubscribe from receiving information please contact the Strategic Planning and Placemaking team using the details above

Appendix 1: ‘Relevant consultation bodies’ and the 'specific consultation bodies’ for Plan Making

Active Travel England

Local telecommunication providers

Canal and River Trust

Civil Aviation Authority

Coal Authority

Sport England

Environment Agency

Forestry England

National Highways

Historic England

Homes England

NHS Property Services

University Hospitals of North Midlands Trust

Public Health Commissioning Leads and Strategic Delivery Managers at Staffordshire County Council

Midlands Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent ICB

Local gas and electricity providers

Local sewerage and water providers

Marine Management Organisation

Natural England

Neighbourhood Planning Bodies (Parish Councils / Neighbourhood Forums)

Network Rail Infrastructure Limited

Transport for West Midlands

Office for Nuclear Regulation

Office of Rail and Road

Adjoining Local Planning Authorities

Town and Parish Councils within Stafford Borough as well as those adjoining the Borough

Staffordshire County Council (including Highways Authority, Lead Education Authority, Lead Local Flooding Authority and Local Nature Recovery Strategy)

Staffordshire Police, Fire and Rescue and Crime Commissioner

Appendix 2: General Consultation Bodies for Plan Making

Airport Operators' Association

Amenity groups

Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Charities

Civic Societies

Community groups and residents' associations

Countryside/conservation groups

Culture, Recreation and Faith groups

Defence Infrastructure Organisation

Disability groups

Ethnic minority groups

Members of the General Public

Health groups

Home Builders Federation

Housing interest groups and housing associations

Inland Waterways Association

Landowners and Developers

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender groups

Local business groups

Local Councillors and MPs

Local Canal Societies

Local interest groups

Local media

Local Public Transport Providers

National Association of Gypsy and Traveller Officers, The National Federation of Gypsy Liaison Groups, and the Gypsy Council

Older groups

Railway Infrastructure Managers including HS2

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

Transport for London

Voluntary and Community Infrastructure Organisation (VAST)

Woodland Trust

Young Persons group

Ministry of Defence

Support Staffordshire

Equalities Impact Assessment

Stafford Borough Communication and Engagement Strategy 2026 - Adoption

1. Introduction

1.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty, introduced under the Equality Act 2010, requires all public bodies, including local authorities, to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not

1.2 Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) allow the Council to:

- Show that we are meeting this legal duty by demonstrating due regard for the provisions of the Public Sector Equality Duty
- Identify possible negative impacts on individuals and groups with protected characteristics, plan mitigating action and seek to maximise opportunities to advance equality within our activities.

1.3 The Equality Act 2010 identifies nine ‘protected characteristics’ and seeks to protect people from discrimination on the basis of these characteristics. They are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

2. Identifying Details

Officer Completing EqIA	Alex Yendole Planning Policy Manager
Team and Service	Strategic Planning and Placemaking Economic Development and Planning Stafford Borough Council
Title of Proposal	Stafford Borough Communication and Engagement Strategy 2026
EqIA Completion Date	9 October 2026
Proposal Implementation Date	2 December 2026
Who will be responsible for implementing this proposal	Stafford Borough Council

3. Assessment

Stage 1: Scoping and Defining

What are the aims and objectives of Plan/Strategy/Service/Policy

3.1 The purpose of the Communication and Engagement Strategy (CES) is to set out how the Council intends to engage with communities through the planning process, in particular regarding the Local Plan and Supplementary Plans.

3.2 The CES is structured into separate sections and this EqIA relates to the following:

- Section 1: Introduction
- Section 2: Legal and Policy Requirements
- Section 3: Vision and Our Commitment to You
- Section 4: The Planning System
- Section 5: The Local Plan and Supplementary Plans
- Section 6: Engage in the Local Plan
- Section 7: The Local Plan process

- Section 8: Supplementary Plans
- Section 9: Neighbourhood Plans
- Section 10: Planning Policy Consultations
- Section 11: Monitoring and Review

How does it fit within Stafford Borough Council's wider objectives?

3.3 The Council's Corporate Plan 2025-2028 identifies the Council's long-term objectives serving the residents and communities of the Borough. The CES is consistent with the following objective of the Corporate Plan:

"Being an effective Council is crucial for meeting the needs of the local community, providing value for money, and ensuring good governance."

What are the expected outcomes?

3.4 The CES provides certainty to stakeholders including the local community by setting out how consultation and engagement on the Local Plan and Supplementary Plans will be undertaken with stakeholders across the Borough. Ultimately, the application of the CES should lead to better development outcomes for local communities and the Borough as a whole by setting out how engagement in the plan-making process can be undertaken.

- Section 1: Introduction - introduces the CES and the Council's continued commitment to engage communities in plan-making
- Section 2: Legal and Policy Introduction - provides an overview of the legislative and national policy context
- Section 3: Vision and Our Commitment to You - sets out the Council's vision, commitment and an overview on community involvement applying to different groups and their engagement within the plan-making process
- Section 4: The Planning System - provides a general overview of plan-making
- Section 5: The Local Plan and Supplementary Plans - sets out an overview of the plan-making stages including the evidence base and Strategic Environmental Assessment. The legislative process for consultations includes Local Plans, Supplementary Plans as well as the mechanisms for Neighbourhood Planning and the role undertaken by the Council

- Section 6: Engage in the Local Plan - details information above being involved in the process including reference to legislation, the role of different stakeholders and key requirements.

- Section 7: The Local Plan process - sets out the different stages of the Local Plan process including on what, and where communities and stakeholders will be invited to participate

- Section 8: Supplementary Plans - sets out the different stages of the Supplementary Plan process including on what, and where communities and stakeholders will be invited to participate

- Section 9: Neighbourhood Plans - sets out the different stages of the Neighbourhood Plan process including on what, and where communities and stakeholders will be invited to participate

- Section 10: Planning Policy Consultations - sets out who will be consulted and how they will be consulted and what will be done with any representations received

- Section 11: Monitoring and Review - provides the monitoring approach and engagement tools to be used, together with the review timescales and Data Protection legislative information.

Which of the groups with protected characteristics is this intended to benefit?

3.5 The CES is not intended to benefit any one particular group. As such, the CES is relevant to everyone who will live, work and visit the Borough.

Stage 2: Information Gathering

What type and range of evidence or information have you used to help you make a judgement about the plan/strategy/service/policy?

3.6 The updated CES is informed by legislation and national guidance, along with good practice guidance on consultation techniques and methods.

Have you consulted on the plan/strategy/service/policy and if so with whom?

3.7 The CES has been consulted upon in June and July 2026 as part of the Local Plan Scoping and Participation consultation, to provide for the significant changes to the approach to plan-making as required by the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026.

Which of the groups with protected characteristics have you consulted with?

3.8 Not applicable as all groups in the Borough engaged in consultation.

Stage 3: Analysis of Impact

From your data and consultations is there any adverse or negative impact identified for any particular group which could amount to discrimination? If yes, identify the groups and how they are affected.

RACE The CES is inclusive of all equality groups.	**DISABILITY** The CES sets out how the consultation and engagement will be undertaken using a variety of remote and in person methods. This approach enables all groups to be able to engage in the plan-making process.	**SEX** The CES is inclusive of all gender groups.
MARRIAGE/CIVIL PARTNERSHIP The legislative requirements relating to this group are only relevant in the context of the Borough Council's role as an employer and are not therefore relevant to the EqIA for the CES.	**AGE** The CES sets out how consultation and engagement will be undertaken using a variety of methods including digital and physical copies of appropriate documents being made available. This approach enables all groups to be able to engage in the process.	**GENDER REASSIGNMENT** The CES is inclusive of all gender groups.
RELIGION/BELIEF The CES is inclusive of all religions and faiths.	**PREGNANCY/MATERNITY** The CES sets out how the consultation and engagement will be undertaken using a variety of methods including remote and in person. This approach enables all groups to be able to engage in the plan-making process.	**SEXUAL ORIENTATION** The CES is inclusive of all sexual orientations.

If there is an adverse impact, can this be justified.

3.9 No adverse impacts in relation to the identified groups are anticipated.

What actions are going to be taken to reduce or eliminate negative or adverse impact? (This should form part of your action plan under Stage 4)

3.10 No negative or adverse impacts are anticipated; therefore, no actions are needed.

How does the plan/strategy/service/policy contribute to promotion of equality? If no what can be done?

3.11 The CES sets out how consultation and engagement will be undertaken with communities across the Borough and therefore contributes to equality by enabling all people to be aware of how they are able to engage with the various aspects of the planning process.

How does the plan/strategy/service/policy promote good relations between groups? If not, what can be done?

3.12 The CES sets out how the community can be involved in the planning process through a variety of methods, including in person events, thus continuing to develop better relationships between different groups.

Are there any obvious barriers to accessing the service? If yes, how can they be overcome?

3.13 The CES sets out how consultation and engagement will be undertaken using a variety of methods including in person, at libraries and using social media methods. This approach enables all groups to be able to engage in the plan-making process thus reducing barriers to engaging with the planning process.

Stage 4: Action Planning, Review and Monitoring

Action Planning - Specify any changes or improvements which can be made to the service or policy to mitigate or eradicate negative or adverse impact on specific groups, including resource implications. If No Further Action is required, then go to - Review and Monitoring

3.14 No Further Action is required

Review and Monitoring - State how and when you will monitor policy and Action Plan

3.15 An Authority Monitoring Report is produced by the Borough Council on an annual basis to review the effectiveness of policies and proposals in the Development Plan. The CES will be reviewed upon the requirement for a new

Local Plan in line with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 (or subsequent updates as appropriate).