



West Wiltshire Statement of Community Involvement

June 2006



**West Wiltshire District Council
Statement of Community Involvement
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An important consultation opportunity

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Executive summary

Under new planning regulations, we have to produce a Local Development Framework (LDF), which sets out future planning policy.

Within that, we also have to produce a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), which provides a framework for how we will involve local people. Although there is a particular emphasis on how this will work in relation to the LDF and our development control functions, it is also relevant to other services.

We already have numerous systems and processes in place for involving local people in our decision-making. In particular, a number of community development initiatives, such as the community strategy and links with the Local strategic Partnership. Information is available from, and can be sent to, the website and the new Public Access system for planning, while work is advanced on developing the LAGAN customer relationship management system.

The SCI will link these together, ensuring that there is co-ordination between how we inform residents and how we gather their views.

In brief, the SCI covers:

- The benefits of active community involvement, highlighting the key principles and methods used
- The legislative and policy context, explaining the new LDF system
- The criteria for a sound and robust SCI
- Details of the consultation carried out to date
- How we will involve local people in producing LDF documents, such as development plans and supplementary planning guidance
- How the community can get involved in the development control process
- The resource and monitoring implications

The SCI is just one document within the new LDF system but it will underpin everything that we do.

The SCI flow diagram below provides detailed sign-posting information, which will help direct you to the section of the SCI most relevant to your needs.

1. Introduction

- Outlines the reasons for preparing the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).
- Explains how we have defined 'the community'.
- Sets out our corporate objectives.
- Outlines our objectives for involving the community.

2. Benefits of community involvement

- Provides details on the four key benefits of community involvement.
- Provides details on the principles and methods that we can use to achieve effective community involvement.
- This Section also contains an explanation of what can realistically be achieved through consultation with the community.

3. Background and methodology

- A brief background to the SCI's policy and legislative context.
- A detailed technical explanation of the methods used during the SCI's preparation, including a short summary of the consultation carried out to date.
- Provides details of how we have actively sought to identify hard to reach groups.

4. A model for a corporate Statement of Community Involvement

- Provides a detailed explanation of how we - as a corporate body - will involve the community.
- Sets out a detailed conceptual model that provides a framework for how we involve the community.
- Provides a detailed background to the tools, information sources, guidance and strategies that we can use to achieve effective community involvement across the Council.

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5. Community involvement in Local Development Frameworks

- Provides a concise explanation of the new Local Development Framework (LDF) system and the various documents that will make up the West Wiltshire LDF.
- Provides additional detail on the consultees that make up the community.
- Gives clear sign-posting for how and when the community can become involved during the preparation of local development documents, development plan documents and supplementary planning documents.
- Sets out the minimum standards for involving the community during the LDF preparation process.
- Provides a brief outline of sustainability appraisals, and a more detailed explanation of how the community can become involved in their preparation.
- A detailed explanation of how the community can make representations during the preparation of local development documents.

6. Community involvement in planning applications

- Explains in detail how we will involve the community when deciding planning applications.
- Provides detailed information on how the community can access information relating to planning applications.
- Gives detailed information on how we advertise, consult and involve other organisations during the planning application process.
- States how and when the community can become involved in deciding planning applications - through either the planning committee or delegated powers.
- An explanation of what happens after a decision is made and the opportunities for making an appeal.
- An explanation of how we will involve the community during any pre-application discussions.

7. Resource implications and monitoring

- Provides a detailed analysis of the immediate implications of community involvement for the Planning Policy & Conservation and Development Control services.
- Gives a brief outline of corporate resource implications, with reference to the Corporate Plan.
- Sets out a brief explanation of how the SCI will develop and evolve over time and briefly sets out our aspirations for improving it.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This document seeks to provide a clear statement of how West Wiltshire District Council will involve the community with delivering its numerous services. For example, it will show how and when local people will help prepare the Local Development Framework (LDF), and the steps that we will take to involve them throughout the process.
- 1.2 We want to provide high quality services for our residents. As a community leader, we will consult with and listen to the views of local people, while working in partnership to improve their quality of life. As a provider of local services, we will make sure that all services are accessible, customer focused and of a consistently high standard.
- 1.3 In order to achieve these objectives, we need to have a robust and comprehensive mechanism for involving the community, so that local people are able to actively participate in decisions that affect their local area.
- 1.4 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires all local planning authorities to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). This sets out our strategy for involving the community in the preparation and revision of local development documents (as part of the LDF) and in our development control decisions.
- 1.5 As a Council, we see the community as being composed of a wide range of parties and bodies. The extent of the community is much greater than simply the local residents and those with a direct interest in West Wiltshire. We want to include all individuals, organisations and interest groups, from those concerned with preserving the environment through to those interested in business and development. An inclusive definition of the community and its constituents is set out under Appendix F.
- 1.6 We are taking this opportunity to produce a SCI that is not just a planning document but also serves as a template for involving the community in all of our services and functions. This will allow us not only to meet the minimum standards required by law but will also help to develop an efficient and comprehensive mechanism for involving the community across the whole of the Council. Such an approach has considerable advantages. Notably, it will lead to more efficient consultation and the creation of a central intelligence 'hub', which will be accessible as a corporate resource. It will also allow for improved accountability and greater transparency through the decision-making process.
- 1.7 The SCI has been subject to public consultation and an independent examination. It forms an important part of the LDF. All subsequent local development documents prepared by the Council will include a statement of consultation, which must comply with the adopted SCI.

- 1.8 The SCI serves as a 'model for engagement' to be used by other services, which may be as diverse as community development or environmental health. We will seek to uniformly apply the principles set out within the SCI when involving the public with both providing services and the decision-making process.
- 1.9 We are committed to exploring new and innovative ways of involving the community more effectively, not only within the planning system but also throughout all of our services. We want to ensure that everyone with an interest in what we do understands how they can contribute to and influence the outcomes of the decision-making process.
- 1.10 There are countless methods for involving the community and what we use will vary according to the outcome sought and the issue that is under consideration. The method of consultation will also depend on any relevant statutory requirements - for example, planning consultation will need to reflect the latest legislation and guidance set out by the Planning Acts. This requires flexibility from the SCI, in order to accommodate the wide variety of statutory requirements.
- 1.11 We will consider a range of options for involving the community, including traditional methods such as public exhibitions and meetings. However, we are committed to exploring innovative approaches, particularly through using information communication technologies (ICT). If appropriate, and following consultation with the relevant communities, we will use a combination of traditional and innovative methods to achieve effective and efficient participation.

2 The benefits of community involvement

- 2.1 We recognise that effective and efficient community involvement can bring numerous benefits to how we provide our services, such as:
- 2.2 **Community commitment to the future development of an area** - local people can be encouraged to make a difference in their area, with long-term benefits.
- 2.3 **Promoting regeneration and investment** - by publicising proposals and inviting the involvement of stakeholders and local communities, councils can demonstrate their commitment to improving areas and joint working to achieve better quality outcomes.
- 2.4 **Fostering ownership and strengthening delivery** - many elements of the LDF will require joint working between local planning authorities, local communities and stakeholders. Involving communities at an early stage ('front loading') in preparing documents helps to resolve issues, thereby minimising the need for lengthy independent examinations (see Section 5 for more on front loading).
- 2.5 **Strengthening the evidence base for plans, strategies and decisions** - stakeholders and local communities can bring a different perspective to the decision-making process, and should be valued for their expertise, opinions and insight.
- 2.6 **Increasing the efficiency of the process** – providing greater transparency to the LDF process, reducing conflicts between those involved within the process. The consequential reduction in time and expense of public local inquiries. Finally, providing value for money.

Principles and models

- 2.7 We consider the following to be the main principles for community involvement:
- 2.8 **Access to information.** Documents should be available in a variety of formats, to encourage the widest possible readership. This is likely to include paper and electronic versions, and should include languages other than English where appropriate.
- 2.9 **The opportunity to contribute ideas.** Community groups and the wider public should have the opportunity to put forward their own ideas and feel confident that there is a process for considering and responding to their concerns.
- 2.10 **The opportunity to take an active part in developing proposals and options.** Where appropriate, there should be opportunities for people to actively engage with councillors and officers.

- 2.11 ***The opportunity to be consulted and make representations on formal proposals.*** This is a statutory requirement that needs to be met by many of our service areas, particularly planning. We consider this to represent the minimum in terms of community involvement. The SCI needs to be flexible in order to accommodate a range of statutory requirements for consultation.
- 2.12 ***The opportunity to get feedback and be informed about progress and outcomes.*** Keeping local communities and stakeholders informed will foster interest in planning issues. In time, this will enable us to benefit from local knowledge and experience, which will in turn result in better planning outcomes. It must be demonstrated to all sections of the community that the process of community involvement is legitimate and timely, with outcomes in the public interest. Processes should be simple to follow, and delivered in a fair, transparent and efficient manner. This will require authorities to identify the limits to community involvement as well as the forms it will take. In particular, the community should be informed of the constraints imposed by statutory requirements.
- 2.13 ***Realism.*** It is important that we ensure that the community remains realistic about what can be achieved within the constraints of the relevant legislative framework and within the context of Government policy and guidance. We do not want to raise community expectations when potential outcomes are tightly constrained by external requirements.

Models

- 2.14 We recognise that there are numerous different models that seek to enable effective community involvement. Many of these have been promoted to help deliver the Local Government Bill for community planning. Our view is that such models can bring about the efficient delivery of all of our services. The examples set out below have been selected from work carried out by the Scottish Community Development Centre (S Hashagen, 2002), which we feel are relevant to West Wiltshire because of geographic, demographic and socio-economic similarities.
- 2.15 ***Consultation/public participation models:*** These are normally used by local authorities to gain views and perspectives from a variety of community members on needs, issues or in response to proposals. This can include opinion polls, surveys, workshops, focus groups, 'planning for real' exercises and a wide range of other mechanisms. Significantly, community organisations may also use these methods.
- 2.16 ***Community democracy models:*** These seek to extend local democracy into the community, in essence establishing an informal community tier of government. We see this as a vital method for

involving the community and an example is the recently formed Wiltshire Compact.

- 2.17 **Identity based models:** These are normally developed to seek out black or ethnic minority communities, and disability groups. We view this as an important way of reaching out to the relevant 'hard to reach' groups within West Wiltshire.
- 2.18 **Service development models:** It is recognised that many community groups and organisations have grown to provide a direct response to gaps in public service provision, or to meet an identified local need. Examples can include community transport partnerships, local issue groups and many other activities.
- 2.19 **Regional and national networks:** West Wiltshire does not exist in isolation. It is important to recognise that community involvement does not exclusively take place within the locality. Regional, national and even international issues and initiatives need to be recognised at all levels, such as sustaining the regional economy and addressing global warming.

3 Background

- 3.1 The SCI will be the first point of contact that most people have with the recently introduced LDF system. It is therefore important to explain how this works and how involving the community is an essential element of it.
- 3.2 Significantly, the new planning system seeks to involve the community from the start. In particular, the concept of 'front loading' (See Appendix B Glossary) seeks more active involvement earlier in the plan process than has traditionally occurred, and the aim is to develop a consensus on essential issues early on. It also gives an opportunity to influence plan content by sharing local knowledge with the Council. There are clear benefits to applying the principles of front loading to our other services. Where establishing a consensus is difficult, for instance when controversial proposals are under consideration, front loading provides a forum for all parties to understand each other's position and attempt to negotiate.
- 3.3 The component parts of a LDF, the process and how it differs from the historic development plan system are set out in detail within Section 5.

Methodology

- 3.4 An internal working group, made up of officers from Planning Policy & Conservation, Development Control, Community Development and Policy & Communications, was convened to develop a corporate SCI.
- 3.5 This group has prepared this draft according to the guidance set out in PPS12, 'Creating Local Development Frameworks - A Companion Guide to PPS12' and the relevant elements of the Planning Regulations. Examples of SCIs produced by other local authorities have also been consulted. Where possible, lessons learnt from these other documents have been incorporated within the draft. Other literature relating to community involvement, particularly 'hard to reach' groups, was also examined at this early stage (see bibliography for details). This part of the SCI development process established a baseline structure for the document.
- 3.6 Shortly after convening, the officer working group started a targeted consultation, which served as the informal pre-submission consultation as set out in PPS12. This focused on about 40 members of the local community, who were either statutory consultees (within the LDF process), members of the Wiltshire Compact and Local Strategic Partnership, or had been actively involved within the previous Local Plan process. This final group included a number of local and national community interest groups, and developers. We believe that the groups consulted at this early stage of the process were an inclusive representation of the local community.

- 3.7 The consultation was questionnaire-based and sought to establish the Council's perceived effectiveness in involving the community, either in terms of access to services and information, or as a consulting body. For the latter, we sought specific views on our effectiveness in achieving community involvement through the Local Plan process. As a result of this initial exercise, we were able to consider the effectiveness of different forms of involvement. This helped to shape our objectives for the future.
- 3.8 In summary initial consultation reveals that:
- a) Our commitment to producing a corporate SCI, rather than one restricted to our planning functions, is supported by the majority of respondents.
 - b) We are on the right track in how we use ITC to increase the level of accessibility to our services and information.
 - c) There is a need for greater clarity during the LDF process, particularly in terms of demonstrating what is realistically possible to those taking part.
 - d) There is a need for improved communication between the Council and other parties during the course of consultation.
- 3.9 The members of the Wiltshire Compact and Local Strategic Partnership were given an initial period of consultation, which together with the current formal (six week) consultation stage, amounted to the 12 weeks' minimum required by the Compact agreement.
- 3.10 An additional informal consultation was carried out internally, with Corporate Management Team and service managers being asked for their input. Their comments were sought on the nature of community involvement carried out by the Council, the resource implications of this, and their interpretation of what constitutes a 'hard to reach' group. This consultation also allowed an examination of different methods for involving the community.
- 3.11 Further consultation with the community, on the draft SCI, took place during the summer of 2005. This influenced the final content of the SCI before formally being adopted by the Council and submitted to the Secretary of State for examination by a Government appointed inspector. Following the examination process the SCI was amended to take account of the recommendations made by the Inspector. Council formally adopted the amended SCI on 21 June 2006.

Hard to reach groups

- 3.12 We recognise that successfully involving 'hard to reach' groups is a key element of a robust SCI. Taking a corporate approach to producing the SCI allows us to build a comprehensive picture of such groups and also enables a more efficient use of resources.

3.13 Additionally, early identification of hard to reach groups will make it easier to involve them in our activities. An initial desktop study, using census data, shows that the district is not as ethnically diverse as the national average. As a consequence, those ethnic groups present within West Wiltshire are actually quite easy to identify - such as the local Polish and Moroccan communities - and do not necessarily fall within the hard to reach category. However, the desktop examination does indicate that the district has a significant elderly demographic. Recent research has shown that the nation's growing elderly population forms a significant hard to reach group that generally feels isolated from local government bureaucracy. Clearly we will need to address this important issue.

3.14 The internal consultation exercise involving Corporate Management Team and service managers (see Paragraph 3.10) provided an ideal opportunity to identify further hard to reach groups:

- Ethnic groups
- 16 and 17 year olds (housing context)
- 16 to 30 year olds - especially men (community leadership context)
- 25 to 45 year olds - especially those in employment
- Homeless
- Owner occupiers
- Migrant workers
- Gypsies and travellers
- Small 'one-man band' businesses
- Disabled - particular those with mental health problems
- People in debt to the District Council

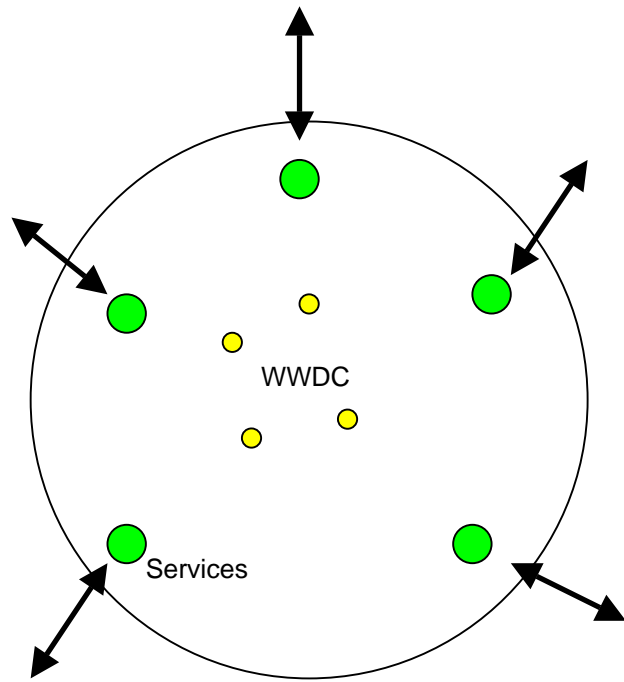
3.15 Clearly, this list is not exhaustive but it does show that different service areas have their own individual hard to reach groups. This is an evolutionary process and situations will change and yesterday's hard to reach group will become tomorrow's key members of society. However, with a corporate SCI in place, we believe that we are in an improved position to achieve the early identification of future candidate groups. In particular, the corporate framework allows communication between diverse service areas.

- 3.16 The District Council will continue to work as a corporate body to identify 'hard to reach' groups within the community as quickly as possible. We have already identified a number of hard to reach groups and have established appropriate contacts. Their details have been added to the corporate databases, including the LDF database.
- 3.17 Once contact with these groups is established we will ask them the most appropriate method for engagement. Inevitably the methods of engagement will differ between different groups and the different District Council services involved. This is part of the SCI's evolutionary process. The District Council envisages that future versions of the SCI will be better placed to identify the successful methods for engaging such groups within the District Council's various service areas.

4 A model for a corporate Statement of Community Involvement

- 4.1 This section seeks to explain how the Council - as a corporate body - will involve the community.
- 4.2 During the SCI's development, much time has been spent analysing our services and the systems and processes that exist for involving the community.
- 4.3 This has shown that effective mechanisms are already in place and working. The role of the SCI is not to reinvent these but to provide a clear framework so that they can become more effective.
- 4.4 The first model in Figure 1 shows how the District Council has traditionally engaged with the community. Information goes into and out of the District Council's various services. There is little co-ordination between services, which leads to inefficient and confusing community engagement.
- 4.5 The second model shows how the District Council intends to engage with the community in the future. Here information flows into the District Council and is managed by a series of corporate systems that sit at the heart of the District Council.
- 4.6 The model in Figure 2 shows the types of mechanisms that the District Council will use to manage community engagement at the corporate level. These mechanisms include tools, information and guidance/strategies.

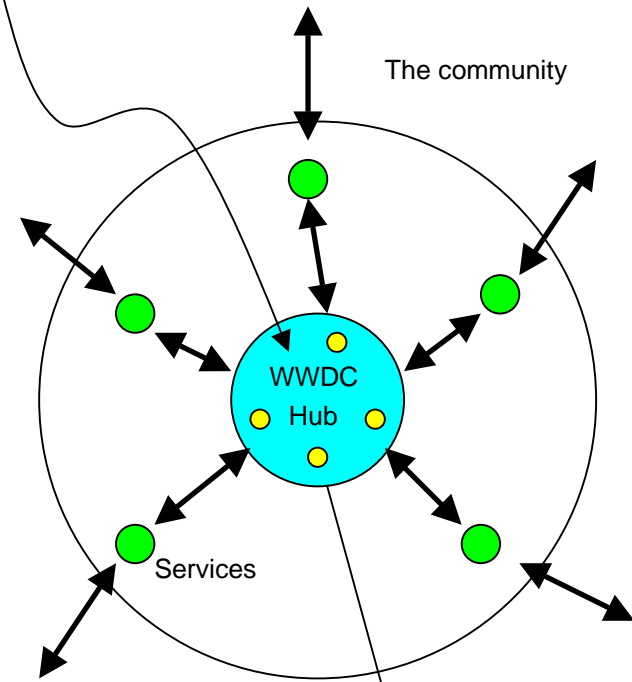
Figure 1: Models demonstrating corporate engagement



Historic Model



People's Voice, CRM, complaints database, census data, Corporate Plan, consultation guidance, BV consultation, inspections etc



Proposed Model

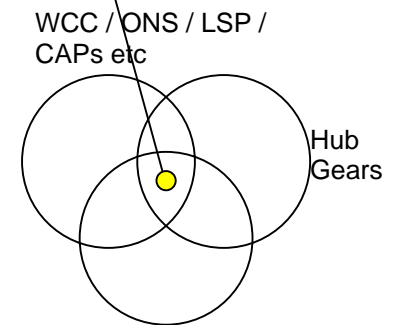
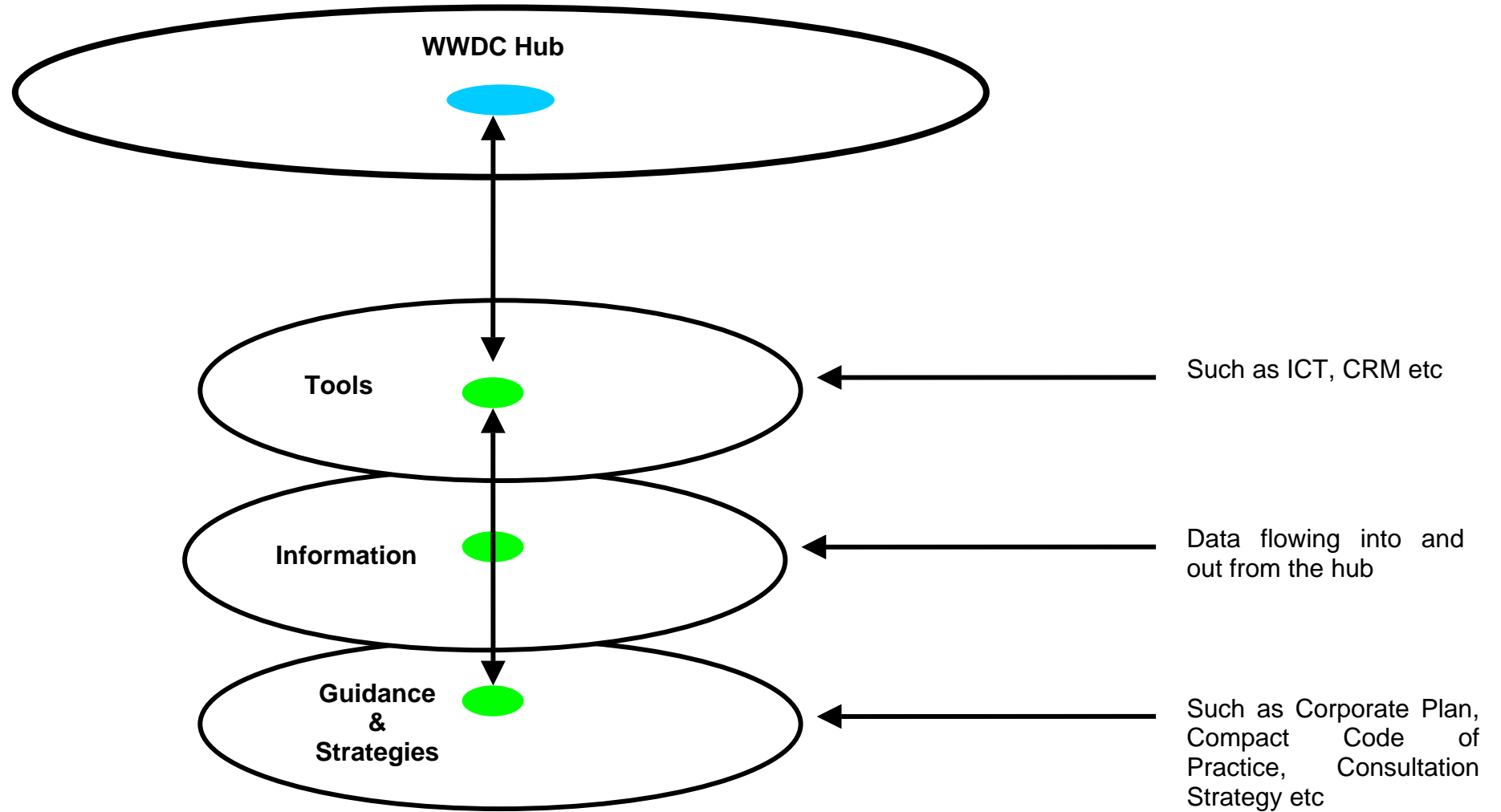


Figure 2: The Hub Gear Concept



- 4.7 Figure Two expands on the hub concept set out in the corporate model and introduces 'hub gears', which manage effective community involvement.
- 4.8 Within the District Council hub there are three 'gears'. The first of these is 'tools', the physical things used to support community involvement. At one extreme, they can include simple notices used to inform the community, either through the local press or at a site being proposed for development. There is a steady progression of sophistication, through public meetings, workshops, and 'planning for real' exercises. At the opposite extreme are those tools that utilise ICT, which progress from the telephone or fax machine through to extremely sophisticated systems that enable interaction with the community via our website. Equally, computer systems enable increased accessibility to the Council and allow more efficient delivery of these services.
- 4.9 The second gear is "information" that flows into and out of the Council. It is important that this information is managed centrally, for example, there are a number of computer databases, which allow direct community interaction, which again increases overall accessibility to the Council.
- 4.10 Information coming into the hub will be subject to the Data Protection Act and will be available, on request, for public inspection unless marked confidential.
- 4.11 The final gear mechanism shown under Figure Two relates to the guidance and strategies that control community involvement. This is a key element as it governs how the other two gears - tools and information - are used. The key elements of this gear are guidance documents, such as the Corporate Plan, the Consultation Strategy and Charter, and the Wiltshire Compact Code of Practice. "

Links to other strategies

- 4.12 The District Council is one of the key members of the West Wiltshire Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), and there are strong links between the SCI and the work of the LSP. The partnership provides a means for the Council to access the views and opinions of the local community, while the SCI sets out the mechanisms that allow the partnership to influence how the Council delivers its services.
- 4.13 The West Wiltshire Community Strategy sets out the aspirations of the local community. Once again the SCI sets out the mechanisms for engagement which the community can use as they seek the delivery of their aspirations in partnership with the District Council. Conversely, we can feed information through to the community to explain to them how we are delivering their aspirations.

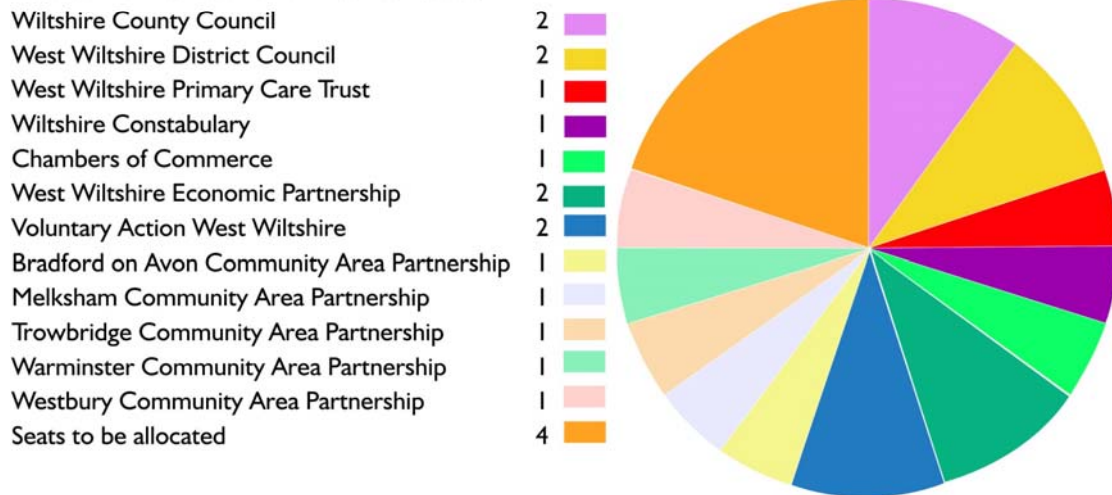
- 4.14 The Wiltshire COMPACT is a formal agreement between the local public sector and local voluntary sector. This is reinforced up by an agreed Code of Practice (Appendix G), which sets out how the two sectors will work with each other. The COMPACT has a very close relationship with the SCI as both documents set out the rules of engagement. For instance the COMPACT sets out the minimum time periods that will be allowed for consultation. These have been incorporated within the SCI and will be applied to those consultation exercises not constrained by statutory time limits.

Corporate Plan 2005 - 2010

- 4.15 The Corporate Plan sets out our intentions, direction and focus for the period up to 2010. It is much more than just a document, in that it forms the basis for everything that we do.
- 4.16 We have identified six spotlight areas where particular improvement is needed. In order to achieve these improvements, a series of guiding principles have been established that seek to 'get the job done'. Strong community leadership, accessible decision-making, and high quality communication with the public are essential. These will, through the Corporate Plan, ensure that we make the best possible use of the resources we have available whilst remaining open, transparent and accessible in all that we do.
- 4.17 The Plan itself is used by staff and elected councillors to help deliver our services. It is also used to help partner organisations understand our aims and objectives and help improve our working relationship.
- 4.18 It has drawn heavily on local consultation and clearly shows how we will work in partnership with the Local Strategic Partnership to achieve its aims and objectives. This is a key mechanism for successfully involving the community.
- 4.19 Figure Three illustrates the composition of the Local Strategic Partnership. The array of members illustrates our commitment towards proactive community involvement.

Figure 3: The LSP

Board members and number of seats



Community Strategy 2004 - 2014

- 4.20 All local authorities were required by the Local Development Act 2000 to produce a Community Strategy. Wiltshire County Council’s version was approved in December 2003 - ours has now been adopted by the Local Strategic Partnership and an action plan is under development.
- 4.21 These documents have informed the preparation of this SCI and will have to be taken into account when preparing the LDF. There should be a clear relationship between the policies in local development documents and the community strategies. This will ensure that the planning framework is consistent with, and helps to deliver, the spatial aspects of the community strategies. Further consultation on the strategies will be used to inform the LDF and consultation on the LDF will be used to inform the review of the community strategies. Wherever possible, joint consultation will be undertaken.

Community Strategies

- 4.22 The Local Government Act of 2000 established a new duty for local authorities to ‘promote and improve the economic, environmental and social well being of the area’, through the development of a Community Strategy.
- 4.23 The level at which community involvement should occur was left open; however, developing Local Strategic Partnerships, particularly at district and county levels, has subsequently become a requirement for meeting this duty.

4.24 It is widely recognised that if these partnerships are to develop Community Strategies that reflect local needs and aspirations, a mechanism is needed to bring ideas together at a 'neighbourhood' level that local people feel they can relate to. In response, the District Council - in partnership with Wiltshire County Council - drew upon a piece of research commissioned by the County in 1998 called 'A Sense of Belonging'. This suggested that the main building blocks for community planning in Wiltshire should be the creation of 19 Community Areas.

4.25 West Wiltshire has five Community Area Partnerships (CAPs):

- Bradford on Avon Community Area
- Melksham 1st
- Trowbridge Community Area Future
- Warminster and Villages
- Westbury Area Action Group

Each of these has either published or has a draft Community Area Plan in the public domain. All have undertaken extensive consultation to bring together a community view on developing local services and paint a picture of the community's priorities and aspirations.

The Wiltshire Compact

4.26 The Wiltshire Compact is an agreement between the voluntary & community and statutory sectors that outlines how the two should work together for mutual advantage.

4.27 All councils were required to be a partner in the creation, adoption and implementation of a local Compact by April 2004.

4.28 We signed up to the Wiltshire Compact in the summer of 2004 and committed to support its aims to strengthen the relationship between statutory agencies in Wiltshire and the voluntary and community sector.

The Wiltshire Compact founding principles

4.29 "In working together for our community, we will promote the mutual need for respect, integrity, accountability, openness, transparency, objectivity, honesty and positive leadership. We also recognise that voluntary action is an essential component of a democratic society and that an independent and diverse voluntary and community sector is fundamental to the well-being of society."

4.30 Extensive work and consultation has been undertaken on four Codes of Practice since that time. The result has been the creation of a robust set of codes that are due to be formally launched on 13 September 2005.

Code of Practice on communication and consultation

- 4.31 How we communicate and consult with one another - be it public, private or voluntary & community sector organisations - is a vital part of how we work together effectively.
- 4.32 Good communication and consultation will lead to better partnership working, which helps to ensure the delivery of high quality services and improved planning that meets the needs and aspirations of the communities we serve.
- 4.33 The public sector consults with officers to ensure that, in developing its policies, it is informed by a wide range of experience and takes into account the impact of its proposals on different parts of society.
- 4.34 For voluntary and community organisations, consultation presents an opportunity to bring their knowledge, experience and expertise to bear on Government policy on behalf of the people and causes they work for.
- 4.35 This Code sets out the commitments from those public and voluntary & community sector bodies that have signed up to the Wiltshire Compact. It has done this in two sections - the first describes the benefit of good communication and consultation, and the second sets out our commitments.

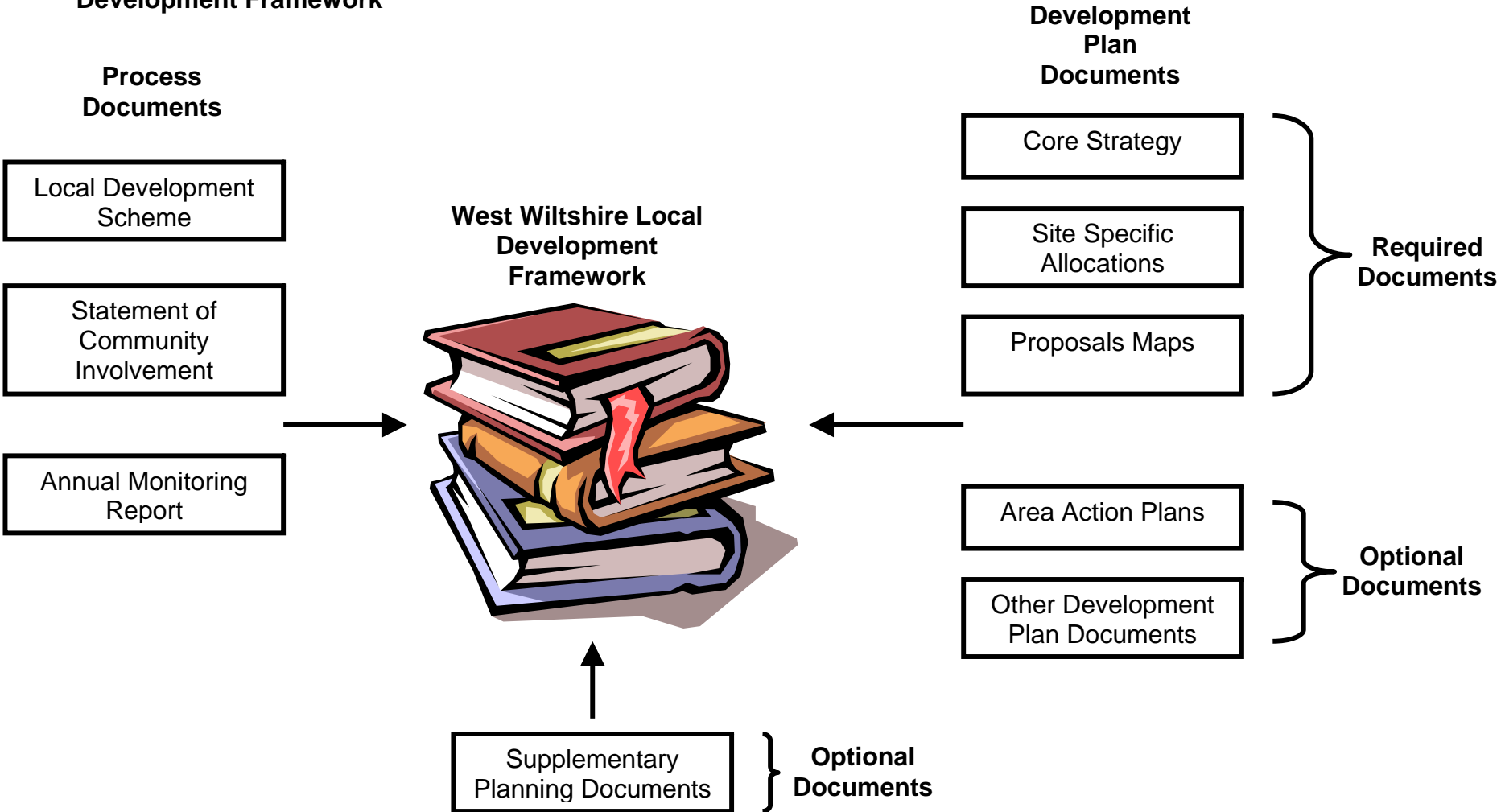
5 Community involvement in Local Development Frameworks

- 5.1 This section seeks to explain how we will involve the community in preparing documents that, brought together, will form the West Wiltshire LDF.
- 5.2 Previously, we were responsible for producing the West Wiltshire District Plan, which together with the Wiltshire County Structure Plan, the County Minerals Plan and the County Waste Plan, formed the development plan for West Wiltshire. Under the new planning system, the structure plan layer has gone and many of its former functions have been taken up by an enhanced Regional Spatial Strategy and, at the district level, by the LDF. The Minerals and Waste Plans remain solely the responsibility of Wiltshire County Council and Swindon Borough Council. The Regional Spatial Strategy is prepared by the South West Regional Assembly.
- 5.3 The West Wiltshire LDF exists only as a concept and in reality is a collection of documents that address discrete issues. Figure Three provides an illustrative model of a LDF and shows that it is composed essentially of three types of document. On the left hand side are the process documents that set out how we will go about producing the LDF. Both the local development scheme and the SCI are examples of these. On the right hand side are the development plan documents. These are key as they set out our overall spatial strategy, generic planning policies and site-specific policies for development within the district.
- 5.4 Finally, the model shows supplementary planning documents, which are optional additions to the LDF. These sit below the development plan documents and provide further information how a specific spatial policy is to be implemented.

Consultees

- 5.5 We aspire to actively involving all sections of the community throughout our many services. The production of a corporate SCI is key to attaining this objective. However, proactive community involvement is considered particularly important in terms of preparing the LDF.

Figure 3: Composition of the Local Development Framework



- 5.6 The first step towards successfully involving the community is identifying the various groups that together make up the community. Clearly it is not possible to produce a definitive list so, in order to be inclusive, we have sought to produce a list of key consultees, which incorporates all statutory consultees and a generic list of consultee groups. This is reproduced at Appendix D. We consider this approach to be comprehensive and more efficient than reproducing a historic list of constituent groups.
- 5.7 It is recognised that different groups within the community have greater resources than others and operate differently. In particular, we are acutely aware that certain groups, for instance parish councils and meetings, operate to timetables that may not coincide with the timetables used for consultation. We are determined to accommodate such special needs by being flexible and consider the Wiltshire Compact Code of Practice (Appendix G) to be key in achieving this.
- 5.8 We have carefully considered the composition of hard to reach groups. Again, the application of a corporate SCI provides clear advantages to identifying and involving such groups at an early stage in the process.

Opportunities for community involvement

- 5.9 The regulations that govern the preparation of development plan documents and supplementary planning documents set out five broad opportunities for community involvement. These are:
- Gathering evidence
 - Initial community involvement
 - Issues and options
 - Preferred options
 - Submission of documents to the Secretary of State
- 5.10 It is acknowledged that different development plan documents and supplementary planning documents will require different methods and approaches to successfully involve the community. The following section outlines how we will overcome this throughout the preparation stages of both documents.

Minimum consultation standards

- 5.11 In preparing local development documents, the District Council will apply a minimum consultation standard. This means that consultation periods will last for six weeks. Consultation documents, appropriate background papers and response forms will be available from our offices, website and all public libraries. When appropriate, this documentation will also be available from Town Council offices. Consultation periods will be advertised in the local press and on our website. All those who become involved in the consultation process

will be entered onto our LDF database and kept informed of the future stages of the process.

- 5.12 When possible, the District Council will use other methods of engaging the community during consultation. The suitability of these other methods will be governed by constraints such as time, finances and the overall appropriateness of the method for delivering the desired output. These other methods could include workshops for elected members, presentations to local Community Area Partnerships, targeted workshops with relevant local town and parish councils or relevant local interest groups, exhibitions (either at the District Council offices or appropriate local venues) and individual interviews that could utilize ICT.

Gathering evidence

- 5.13 In the past, we have started the Local Plan process by collating evidence. This information is either gathered from internal sources or through the involvement of key stakeholders, such as the County Council or the Environment Agency.
- 5.14 We will continue to work in this way, but will also ensure that there are more opportunities for the wider community to become involved, both in evidence collation and analysing the opportunities and constraints facing the LDF's development. The intention is that such early involvement will allow a consensus to develop.
- 5.15 We will ensure that the outputs from any evidence gathering exercise are available to the community. We will also make sure that the conclusion of these technical exercises is summarised and made available, in order to increase access to the data. We will ensure that any published technical evidence complies with the provisions of the Data Protection Act.
- 5.16 In relation to the general work carried out during technical evidence gathering, we acknowledge the scope for an increased community involvement. Where appropriate, we will actively involve the community in the process of data collection, for example during the early stages of a future urban capacity study, or during the survey stages of a conservation area review.

Initial community involvement

- 5.17 We consider that a 'bottom up' approach, where the community is provided with an opportunity for setting the agenda, is a worthy aspiration. We believe that there is merit to early community involvement in the preparation of development plan documents.
- 5.18 The first stage of initial community involvement will be the publication of baseline data in an accessible format, which will give details of the

relevant primary issues, opportunities and constraints. We will publicise this through the usual mediums such as our website and the local press. However, the District Council is aware that there are limitations to all forms of publicity exercise and as a consequence the message may not get through to all members of the community. Where appropriate, we will target key stakeholders or community groups that have been corporately identified for direct consultation.

- 5.19 The second stage will involve more open and widely based consultation, which will seek to gather the community's views and opinions on wider planning issues. We will, where appropriate, use methods such as planning workshops, 'planning for real' exercises and public exhibitions.

Issues and options

- 5.20 We anticipate that by this stage of preparing the development plan document, a wide variety of issues and options will have emerged. These will be brought together for discussion at the issues and options stage. Historically, we have launched this through a planning conference but this may not be appropriate for all development plan documents. Consequently, other methods, such as town centre displays, presentations to key community stakeholders and groups and through the District Council's website will be used where appropriate.

- 5.21 The purpose of this consultation period is to provide the community with a clear series of issues and options, complete with relevant background and supporting information, through which they can make comments in an informed manner.

- 5.22 It is not our intention to lead the community on particular issues or options. Rather, it is intended to provide a clear focus for them to be discussed and explored meaningfully.

- 5.23 This is also the first stage in the preparation process that allows consultation on sustainability appraisals. Consultation on sustainability appraisals will be carried out at the same time as consultation on the documents.

Preferred options

- 5.24 At this stage in the preparation process, a preferred option for moving forward should have been identified, and we will have worked this up into a series of proposals. As part of this, we will show the alternative options and set out reasons why we have not chosen to pursue them.

- 5.25 Nevertheless, the community will be given the opportunity to make representations on these other options, or indeed any additional alternatives. We will consider these, providing that they meet the

objectives of the development plan document in question and are compatible with other planning policy guidance.

- 5.26 We will utilise similar consultation methods as those used during the issues and options stage. This will allow the community the opportunity to become involved in events and activities where their views on the preferred option can be expressed.
- 5.27 Unlike the previous stages of the preparation process, the preferred option stage is the first formal consultation period, which is covered by specific Government regulations.

Submission of development plan document to the Secretary of State

- 5.28 This is the final consultation during the preparation process and is the only stage that representations will be considered by the Planning Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State.
- 5.29 One of the key objectives of this SCI is to signpost the community towards the earlier stages of the preparation process, where conflict can be more easily resolved. This stage will focus on the formal consultation methods, set out as minimum standards above, and the consultation period is six weeks, as specified in the planning regulations.
- 5.30 At the end of the six weeks, if representations are made that propose new alternative developments or sites, the planning regulations state that there must be a further six weeks' of additional consultation. We will invite further representations at this stage. This will be the final formal consultation stage. The process for this stage will be the same as earlier formal consultation stages.

Preparation of supplementary planning documents

- 5.31 During the preparation of supplementary planning documents, there are a minimum of two opportunities for community involvement, although there may be more.
- 5.32 In terms of the evidence collation and preferred option stages, community involvement will normally follow the same processes used during the preparation of development plan documents as set out above. We will use an appropriate array of consultation methods to do this.
- 5.33 Historically, large development proposals have required a comprehensive brief for the site in question, and these have been produced in cooperation with the site developers. We believe that this remains an appropriate mechanism for producing such documents.

However, they will now have to meet the requirements for consultation set out by the SCI.

Community involvement in sustainability appraisals

5.33 Sustainability appraisals are key elements in the preparation of local development documents; the sustainability appraisal process and the plan production process run in tandem. The purpose of sustainability appraisals is to ensure that the documents are prepared with the objective of contributing towards sustainable development. The process of appraising LDDs is now mandatory both in terms of compliance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the European Directive on Strategic Environmental Appraisal (SEA). The staged process set out in the government guidance on carrying out sustainability appraisals should be followed to ensure that the documents are sound and meet the requirements of SA/SEA. In the case of development plan documents, the sustainability appraisal has to be submitted to the Secretary of State at the same time as the main document itself. Supplementary Planning Documents and their appraisals are not subject to this examination.

5.34 There are four stages of community involvement during the preparation of sustainability appraisals. These are:

- Setting the context, objectives and baseline (district wide)
- Scoping report (district wide)
- Assessing alternative strategies (individual development plan documents)
- Assessing the preferred option (individual development plan documents)

5.35 The first two stages of preparing sustainability appraisals occur only once and relate specifically to the production of the scoping report, which will provide the basis for preparing development plan documents.

Sustainability Appraisals: Setting the context, objectives and baseline

5.36 We will work in cooperation with key stakeholders, adjacent local authorities and other established groups - including the Local Strategic Partnership and Community Area Partnerships - to identify and develop a series of sustainable development objectives for West Wiltshire.

5.37 In terms of collating baseline data, we will work with these key stakeholders to establish a baseline description of the environment from social, economic and environmental perspectives. Where possible, this part of the process will coincide with the evidence gathering for individual development plan documents.

5.38 To establish the context for the LDF involves identifying all relevant plans, programmes and environmental objectives.

Sustainability Appraisals: Scoping report

5.39 This sets out the conclusions of the first stage of the sustainability appraisal process, and it will:

- Establish the sustainability objectives for West Wiltshire;
- Draw together baseline information relevant to the district and establish indicators to measure changes in the environment;
- Define the context provided by existing programmes and plans, and identify the correct local development document to carry forward these objectives;
- Provide a framework for considering all development plan documents;
- Provide an outline methodology for the remainder of the sustainability appraisal; and
- Include a proposed structure for the final environmental report.

5.40 The environmental authorities that have to be consulted on the scope of the sustainability appraisal are the Environment Agency, the Countryside Agency, English Nature and English Heritage.

5.41 To ensure the widest access to this critical stage of the sustainability appraisal process, we will seek to raise general interest and awareness through appropriate publicity and other initiatives where necessary. Like all other exercises these will be subject to the minimum standards already outlined.

Sustainability Appraisals: Assessing alternative strategies

5.42 We will seek to integrate consultation on the assessment of alternatives for the sustainability appraisal with consultation on issues and options for individual development plan documents.

Sustainability Appraisals: Assessing the preferred option

5.43 The community will have an opportunity to make representations on the assessment of alternatives and the preferred option at this stage of the sustainability appraisal process. Consultation on the draft environmental report will follow the same pattern set out above for development plan documents during the preferred options stage.

5.44 We will consider and respond to each representation made in relation to the draft Sustainability Appraisal Report. If appropriate amendments will be made. Following amendments the SPD will proceed to adoption.

- 5.45 In the case of development plan documents the final Sustainability Appraisal report will be submitted with its related document to the Secretary of State. Although the sustainability appraisal is not subject to independent examination at this stage, the inspector (appointed by the Secretary of State) will test its compliance with relevant current guidance as part of testing the soundness of the individual development plan document.

Making representations

- 5.46 The community will be given the opportunity to make representations through the various consultation exercises outlined above. This will include contacting relevant officers and elected councillors. We will also examine the opportunities for allowing the community to make representations through new mediums. In particular, we will examine the potential for utilising developments in ICT to enable the community to express themselves. We are eager to explore new and flexible channels of communication in order to engage the community more inclusively.
- 5.47 Written representations, submitted either in paper 'hard-copy' or electronically, remain the standard medium for making formal representations. Ideally, these will be made to the Council using a standard format that we make available in paper form during the course of the consultation, with additional copies being made available at our offices and West Wiltshire's public libraries. The representation format will also be available electronically via our website. All representations will be made public. Representations cannot be made anonymously.
- 5.47a Other methods for making representations will be adopted where they are considered appropriate. For example, workshop sessions have been used to gain the views of a targeted group, such as students or members of the local chamber of commerce, in the past. However, methods for engaging the community are constantly changing. Rather than provide a lengthy list of various potential methods of engagement, we consider a flexible approach to be more useful. We believe that such an approach will help us to successfully engage 'hard to reach' groups.
- 5.48 All representations made about local development documents prepared by us, or by external consultants on our behalf, must be sent in either electronic or paper 'hard-copy' form. The representations must clearly identify both the local development document that they relate to and who is making the representation. This ensures that we retain a copy of all representations received and enables them to be viewed by other members of the community. All representations received will be made available in our offices, the libraries and our webpages and will be subject to the Data Protection Act.

- 5.49 Representations will be acknowledged using the same medium by which they were received. Ultimately, the representations that we receive will be published within a report document, which will be available for inspection at our offices, at public libraries throughout the district and on our website. It will be published as soon as possible after the close of the consultation period, subject to available resources. The report document will identify each representation by name and reference number, the latter being a cross-reference to the relevant part of the LDD. The report document will include a summary of the representation, a summary of our response and an explanation of what changes will be made to the relevant LDD. We will use bold, italic and strikethrough text to demonstrate where changes have been made to the relevant LDD.
- 5.50 All those who contribute to any document that makes up the West Wiltshire LDF, either through formal representations or by attending a consultation event, will automatically be added to a corporate database, which will be used to manage the preparation of local development documents. This will contain name and address details, in addition to an accurate summary of any representation made. This database will be subject to the Data Protection Act.
- 5.51 At the close of each consultation stage, we will contact every group and individual member of the community that has made a representation, by whatever means and inform them of the validity of their representations.
- 5.52 Following each individual consultation stage, we will prepare a report summarising the issues that have been raised during the course of consultation and a recommendation for response. This report will take into account the representations made, relevant national and regional policy, and other relevant considerations including local policies and strategies.
- 5.53 The report will be initially considered by a specially convened Policy Project Group, which will be led by the planning & development portfolio holder. This group will discuss the issues raised through consultation and the portfolio holder will feed back this discussion to the Cabinet with a recommendation on how to proceed. Following on from this, the report will be considered by an appropriate body of the District Council, which will make a decision on our formal response. Both the Cabinet and Full Council meetings are open to the public, and opportunities will be available for representations from the community to be made at both meetings.
- 5.54 Development plan documents will be submitted to the Secretary of State, who will consider their soundness at a public examination (Appendix C). Only those members of the community who submit representations within the six week period following submission to the Secretary of State will have their comments considered by the

examination. The Council will provide guidance regarding the making of representations. This guidance will be based on the December 2005 document from the Planning Inspectorate entitled Development Plans Examination – A Guide to the Process of Assessing the Soundness of Development Plan Documents.

- 5.55 The findings of the Inspector presiding over the examination will be binding, and we will be encouraged to make appropriate changes before formally adopting the development plan document.
- 5.56 In relation to supplementary planning documents, following the close of the final consultation stage, we will consider all representations and make any changes that are considered appropriate before formal adoption.

6 Community involvement in planning applications

- 6.1 As the local planning authority, we are responsible for development control. We receive more than 2,300 planning and associated applications every year. These include applications for householder development, major residential and commercial schemes, listed building consent and works to protected trees.
- 6.2 We recognise the need and our statutory duty to ensure that the community is informed of and involved in the consideration of these planning applications. The degree of involvement will vary depending on the different nature of individual applications.
- 6.3 We remain concerned about our ability to involve 'hard to reach groups' in the planning application process and will undertake to establish who these groups might be and put in place measures to involve them.
- 6.4 The planning application process offers the community its final opportunity to influence planning generally. In making this comment, we recognise that clause 38(6) of the Planning and Compensation Act 2004 states that "if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the planning acts, the determination must be in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise."
- 6.5 The following sets out the principles for community involvement that we will implement for consultation and publicity upon receipt of an application for planning permission, listed building consent, conservation area consent, certificates of lawful use, advertisement or tree preservation orders.

Public Access

- 6.6 Public Access is an on-line website service that enables our customers to view details of current and some historic planning applications. It allows the site visitor to:
- view weekly lists of planning applications received
 - view weekly lists of planning applications determined
 - view the details of individual applications
 - follow the progress of individual applications
 - submit comments on current applications on-line
- 6.7 Information can be accessed in a number of ways including via the weekly lists, by application number, by address or part address, by parish or for specified time periods.
- 6.8 In addition, customers can view property details and some policies that apply to the property and related planning applications.

- 6.9 Public Access continues to be developed and at present the information is not comprehensive. Our programme for the future includes making available listed building information, appeal information and associated documents and plans.
- 6.10 We will continue to make available hard copies of weekly planning application lists for those who do not have access to the internet.

Access to application documents

- 6.11 Copies of all current planning applications are available for public inspection at the planning department. The Council are working towards a long term goal of making all current planning application documents available on the Council website.
- 6.12 The working planning application file can also be viewed - however, this is a working file and may not always be available at short notice. Anybody wishing to inspect this is recommended to make arrangements in advance.
- 6.13 The Public Access service will enable the progress of individual applications to be followed.

Town and parish councils

- 6.14 Town and parish councils are sent details of all planning applications in their areas and are given 21 days in which to respond.
- 6.15 Where significant amendments are made to a planning application, a further consultation will be made with the town or parish council, with a 14 day period in which to respond.

Advertisements/site notices

- 6.16 In accordance with statutory requirements, applications falling within the following categories are advertised in the weekly local press (the Wiltshire Times) and by notice displayed on site:
- ❖ Major developments - 10 or more houses, 1,000 square metres or more floor area, or outline proposals on sites of one hectare or more
 - ❖ Listed building consent or development that affect the setting of a listed building
 - ❖ Conservation area consent or development that would affect the character of a designated conservation area
 - ❖ Development that affects a public right of way
 - ❖ In addition, at the discretion of the District Council, development that may be of wider public interest.

The period for responding to the Council is 21 days.

Involvement of other organisations

- 6.17 We recognise the need to involve other organisations at local, regional and national level in the planning application process.
- 6.18 Statutory consultations will be carried out with organisations such as Wiltshire County Council (highways, education, waste, archaeology and minerals), the English Nature Area Team (for protected sites, species and nature conservation) and the regional office of English Heritage (some listed buildings, conservation areas, ancient monuments).
- 6.19 Consultation will also take place with non-statutory bodies that can have a valuable input into the planning process. These include:
- ❖ Local organisations – e.g. Wiltshire Wildlife Trust
 - ❖ Local civic societies, preservation trusts and conservation trusts
 - ❖ Local branches of national organisations – e.g. the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, the Ramblers Association

Who will be consulted will vary with the nature and location of the proposals.

- 6.20 Consultees will have 21 days to respond.
- 6.21 Where significant amendments are made to a planning application, and a further consultation is made, a 14 day period in which to respond is given.

Assisting the community in the decision-making process

- 6.22 We will prepare and provide advice to town and parish councils and community groups and organisations to advise on what issues are or are not relevant in deciding a planning application.

Neighbour notifications

- 6.23 We recognise that many people are most interested in applications that directly affect them. Occupiers of premises likely to be materially affected by a proposal will be notified individually by letter that an application has been received and they will be invited to inspect the plans and make any written observation within 21 days.
- 6.24 Neighbours will be notified where their property has a common boundary with or is directly opposite the application site.

- 6.25 In assessing whether to notify further nearby residents, the District Council, as local planning authority, will make a judgement based on the proposal's impact on the amenities of their property. Factors taken into account will include:
- ❖ The scale of the proposed development - larger development is likely to impact on a wider area
 - ❖ Potential loss of privacy from overlooking
 - ❖ Overshadowing/overbearing development
 - ❖ Possible disturbance from additional noise and increased activity in the area
 - ❖ Possible pollution from fumes, dust and light affecting their property
 - ❖ Increased traffic generation.
- 6.26 The letter to adjoining and nearby residents will give an explanation of how the planning application process operates in respect of neighbours' involvement, including guidance as to what constitutes relevant planning issues that can be taken into account and matters that are not material planning considerations and cannot be considered.
- 6.27 Where significant amendments are made to a planning application, a further notification will be sent to those consulted on the original scheme with a 14 day period in which to respond.
- 6.28 In all cases where an individual has taken the trouble to comment on an application, their comments will be acknowledged within one, or two working days. When the application has been determined, they will be sent details of the decision including the reasons for granting or refusing permission/consent/approval and any conditions attached to the permission/consent/approval.

Planning committee/delegation

- 6.29 We have an extensive scheme of delegation that helps us in trying to meet the Government's requirements for planning applications to be determined efficiently and in line with targets. However, those applications of most interest to the local community are considered by the planning committee. An application is sent to the committee when:
- ❖ a local member requests it
 - ❖ the town or parish council for the site recommends refusal but the planning officer recommends consent
 - ❖ the application for any planning function is submitted by an elected councillor or officer
 - ❖ an officer has come to a point of view that a proposal under any planning function should be decided against the relevant written policy or policies of the Council

- 6.30 Anyone who attends a planning meeting has the opportunity to speak at planning committee meetings. Applicants, their agents, town and parish councillors, representatives of other organisations and local residents are all given up to three minutes in which to make a spoken presentation of their views about an application to the committee.
- 6.31 The agenda, which includes copies of the planning officers' reports, is published by the Council and is posted on our website, with hard copies sent to the press, all local libraries and those town and parish councils relevant to particular items.
- 6.32 All other third parties - other organisations and members of the public who have made representations about an application are advised in writing that the application is to be considered by the committee, within one or two working days. This will include details of the venue, date and time of the meeting. They will be invited to attend and to speak if they wish.
- 6.33 At the committee meeting, officers are available to advise those attending and wishing to speak.
- 6.34 Where a planning application is decided under delegated powers, full consideration is given to all representations that are relevant planning considerations.

Notification of decision

- 6.35 Once a planning application has been decided, all those who made representations are sent a copy of the decision notice. The applicant being notified immediately, other parties being informed within two working days of the decision being posted. This gives detail of the decision, the reasons for it and any conditions attached to the permission/consent/approval.
- 6.36 Town and parish councils receive copies of the all decision notices relevant to their area.
- 6.37 Copies of planning committee minutes are posted on our website.
- 6.38 A list of all delegated decisions made in the period leading up to a planning committee meeting is included in the agenda papers.
- 6.39 Weekly lists of planning decisions are posted on the on-line Public Access service.

What happens when permission is granted?

- 6.40 We will respond to all correspondence about the implementation of planning permission within ten working days.
- 6.41 In respect of major development schemes, we will be prepared for planning officers to attend meetings of local groups to discuss the implementation of the development and any problems/ difficulties, which may arise.

Planning appeals

- 6.42 An applicant can exercise the right of appeal in the following circumstances:

Refusal of a planning application

- ❖ Conditions attached to planning permission
 - ❖ Our failure to determine the application within the specified period
- 6.43 Appeals can also be made where the First Secretary of State has decided to call in the application.
 - 6.44 We will notify the relevant town or parish council and all those consulted on or notified about the planning application, and anyone else making representations, within 14 days of receiving the appeal.
 - 6.45 All parties will be advised of the form of the appeal (written representations, informal hearing, public inquiry) within one or two working days, how and to whom to make representations, and the relevant dates for making such representations.
 - 6.46 In the event of the appeal being decided at an informal hearing or public inquiry, all those written to about the appeal will be further advised of the venue, date and time of the hearing or inquiry at least 14 days beforehand.
 - 6.47 Details of appeals received and decided, and of the time and dates of forthcoming hearings and inquiries, are reported to the planning committee and are available as part of the agenda (see section 6.11 above).
 - 6.48 Appeal decisions are posted on the on-line Public Access service.

Major applications - pre-application discussions

- 6.49 Many people and community groups have an interest in major applications, which affect a wide area. About 3% of the applications that we determine fall within the categories of major development as defined by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (10 or more houses, 1,000 square metres or more floor area or outline proposals on sites of

one hectare or more). Many applications where the floorspace is 1,000 square metres or more are for commercial buildings on existing industrial estates or for agricultural buildings on established farms and do not raise significant public interest. Those that generate the greatest interest tend to be for residential development, new roads and new employment areas.

- 6.50 As a result of this, we consider that there should be greater public involvement at an early stage in the decision-making process on applications for 10 or more houses, where floor areas exceed 1,000 square metres or the site area exceeds one hectare. Applications of this scale will be considered to have met a SCI threshold. There is also considerable public interest in proposals for renewable energy (greater than domestic scale) and significant new roads. These will be considered to also meet this threshold.
- 6.51 The aim of this process is to encourage, as best practise, pre-application consultation with the community on proposals meeting the thresholds set out in Paragraph 6.50. The benefits of this process will be to identify and resolve issues early in the planning process thereby making the progress of a subsequent planning application more straightforward.
- 6.52 We already require such an approach on major housing schemes. For example, the West Wiltshire District Plan 1st Alteration identifies the need for development briefs or revised development briefs to be prepared in respect of three strategic housing allocations put forward in that plan.
- 6.53 For sites where we have a requirement for development briefs to be prepared, details of how the community will be involved should be discussed with planning officers before work is started. The preparation of site-specific development briefs can be a lengthy process, which will need careful co-ordination between the District Council and the developer(s). The process will require consultation with the community prior to the District Council formally adopting the brief.
- 6.54 Before planning applications are submitted on all other sites that meet the SCI threshold, we will expect the applicant to discuss with planning officers how the community should be involved in pre-application consultation. The purpose of these discussions will be to identify the groups/individuals that should be involved, to agree the form their involvement will take and to agree a timetable for their involvement.
- 6.55 With the application's submission, we will expect the applicants to provide evidence of how the community have been involved in pre-application discussions concerning the proposed development. This should take the form of a consultation statement outlining what has taken place and how the results of consultation have been taken into

account in the submitted plans, or where it has not been possible to meet community aspirations, why this is the case.

- 6.56 Failure to provide a consultation statement cannot be a reason for not validating and registering a planning application that meets the threshold. However, the absence of a consultation statement may disadvantage an applicant as issues emerging during the application process could delay a decision being made or result in the proposal being refused permission.

Local planning aid initiative

- 6.57 West Wiltshire is within the area covered by South West Planning Aid, which provides independent planning advice for individuals and community groups in the South West of England.

- 6.58 South West Planning Aid may be contacted at The Architecture Centre, Narrow Quay, Bristol, BS1 4QA

- ❖ Tel: 0117 929 7292
- ❖ Fax: 0117 922 1541
- ❖ E-mail: swco@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk
- ❖ Website: www.rtpi.org.uk

Advice leaflets about South West Planning Aid are available from the planning department.

7 Resource implications

- 7.1 The LDF elements of the SCI will be implemented by staff from the Planning Policy & Conservation Team, which consists of a Planning Policy & Conservation Manager, a Senior Planning Policy Officer, a Planning Officer, an Urban Designer, a Conservation Officer and a Planning Technician. In addition, we will utilise internal corporate partners in the production of local development documents:
- Corporate Management Team
 - Development Control Manager
 - Housing Services Manager
 - Economic Development Manager
 - Community Initiatives Manager
 - Technical Services Manager
 - Legal Services Manager
- 7.2 Specialist consultants will be used to provide parts of the evidence base used in the preparation of local development documents, and to advise on community involvement issues.
- 7.3 The development control elements of the SCI will be implemented by staff from the Development Control team. This currently consists of a Development Control Manager, three Principal Planning Officers, two Senior Planning Officers, seven Planning Officers, two Planning Information Officers, two Planning Enforcement Officers, two Compliance Officers, one Heritage Development Officer and one Tree and Landscape Officer. There is also an Admin Support Team of one team leader and eight clerks. We will utilise internal corporate partners in delivering the development control function.
- 7.4 We consider that the main risk and constraints to the planning services delivery of the SCI objectives, will be the loss of staff or reduction in budget at the Council. Currently, the recruitment and retention of experienced and able staff is difficult for planning departments in general. We will consider innovative recruitment techniques and the potential use of recruitment consultants to speedily resolve staffing issues. Meeting the objectives for the preparation of local development documents is dependent on revenue derived from Planning Delivery Grant. We will carefully monitor the progress of LDDs to ensure that the potential revenue from the PDG is maximised.
- 7.5 We identify our corporate resource management - both financial and human - through the Corporate Plan. This shows the key funding sources available to the Council, the risks that are present and the strategies that are in place to mitigate risk.

- 7.6 The financial implications of the SCI will be identified for inclusion in the District Council's services budget.

Monitoring

- 7.7 We believe that the methods and tools used for community involvement should be subject to evolution and development as and when circumstances develop. The SCI will be subject to regular review.
- 7.8 The primary responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the SCI will rest with the Planning Policy & Conservation Team. However, as the SCI is a corporate document, any future review of the corporate elements will actively involve the Community Initiatives and Policy & Communications teams. Other corporate stakeholders, in particular members of Corporate Management Team and service managers, will also be involved in the future review of the SCI.
- 7.9 As the success of community involvement techniques is monitored, results will be fed back into the preparation of development plan documents, development control decisions and into the numerous other service areas that we deliver.
- 7.10 We recognise that the current SCI, although comprehensive, may prove intimidating to certain members of the community. We have sought to address this issue by using careful sign posting, which enables readers to easily identify those sections of the SCI that will be of greatest interest to them. We have sought to ensure that the SCI is an accessible document and future reviews will seek to improve on this.
- 7.11 The performance of the SCI will be monitored through the LDF Annual Monitoring Review (AMR) document. We will seek to identify monitoring targets to demonstrate how successful we have been in involving the community throughout the LDF process. These targets will be set out within the AMR document. Our performance against these targets will be the trigger for future reviews of the SCI. The timetable for any future review will be set out within the LDS.

Appendices

Appendix A

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9. **West Wiltshire District Council Corporate Plan 2005 – 2010**, West Wiltshire District Council, 2004
10. **West Wiltshire Local Development Framework Local Development Scheme 2004 to 2007**, West Wiltshire District Council, March 2005
11. **Wiltshire County Council Draft Statement of Community Involvement**, Wiltshire County Council, September 2004
12. **Wiltshire County Council Statement of Community Involvement**, Wiltshire County Council, May 2005

Appendix B

Glossary

AAP: Area Action Plan

These Plans will focus upon implementation, providing an important mechanism for ensuring development of an appropriate, scale, mix and quality for key areas of opportunity, change or conservation.

AMR: Annual Monitoring Report

Authorities are required to produce AMRs to assess the implementation of the LDS and the extent to which policies in LDDs are being achieved.

CRM: Customer Relationship Management

The term Customer Relationship Management is used by business to describe a combination of strategy, processes, skills and technology that can be used by the commercial sector to optimise customer satisfaction and profits. The Council is seeking to implement a CRM system that will improve the way that it works with its customers ("Moving forward with CRM" I&DeA, September 2004). We believe that CRM will help to deliver a high quality customer service that will significantly improve community engagement. See Appendix for a description of what the CRM will comprise and the roadmap for its delivery.

DPD: Development Plan Document

A collective name for the documents that a local planning authority must prepare which have to be subject to rigorous procedures of community involvement, consultation and independent examination.

Engagement

Engagement is achieved when the community is and feels part of the overall governance of that community. It is formed, connected and feels it has a role to play. Activities that can be part of engagement are gathering and provision of information, consultation and participation.

Front loading

Local planning authorities are required, under PPS12, to 'front load' the preparation of development plan documents by facilitating early involvement and securing inputs from the community and all stakeholders. Key decisions on the spatial strategy should be taken at the earliest possible stage to allow for full community involvement and sustainability appraisal.

ICT: Information Communication Technology

The technology that sits behind the delivery of information using an electronic medium IE: the delivery of information by telephone, fax or computer.

LDF: Local Development Framework

The LDF will contain a portfolio of LDDs, which will provide the local planning authority's spatial policies for meeting the community's economic,

environmental and social aims for the future of their area where this affects the development or use of land.

LDD: Local Development Document

A generic term for all the documents, which are sub-components of the LDF. LDDs comprise DPDs, SPDs, the SCI, and the SEA/SA.

LDS: Local Development Scheme

The LDS sets out the programme for preparing the LDDs.

LSP: Local Strategic Partnership

This is a group of key people from a wide range of organisations, who come together to make sure that the most is made of opportunities for joint working and to tackle the big issues like community safety, health and the local economy.

PPS: Planning Policy Statements

Government statements of national planning policy, being phased in to supersede Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPGs)

RSS: Regional Spatial Strategy

The RSS, incorporating a regional transport strategy, provides a spatial framework to inform the preparation of local development documents, local transport plans and regional and sub-regional strategies and programmes that have a bearing on land-use activities. It is prepared by the South West Regional Assembly, the Regional Planning Body.

SA: Sustainability Appraisal

Assessment of the social, economic, and environmental impacts of the policies and proposals contained within the LDF

SCI: Statement of Community Involvement

Document explaining to stakeholders and the community, how and when they will be involved in the preparation of the LDF, and the steps that will be taken to facilitate this involvement.

SEA: Strategic Environmental Assessment

Assessment of the environmental impacts of the policies and proposals contained within the LDF (in line with SEA Directive 2002).

SPD: Supplementary Planning Document

SPDs are intended to elaborate upon the policy and proposals in DPDs but do not have their status.

Stakeholder:

An individual person or an organisation that have an interest in the community, and therefore has responsibilities towards it and an interest in its success.

Wiltshire Compact

This is a set of principles within which the statutory, voluntary and community sectors active in West Wiltshire have agreed to work within.

Appendix C

Criteria for testing the Soundness of the SCI

At the SCI examination, the Inspector will consider whether this SCI 'document' is 'sound' by determining whether the:

- District Council has complied with the minimum requirements for consultation as set out in the Regulations;
- District Council's strategy for community involvement links in with other community involvement initiatives (IE the District Council's Community Strategy);
- SCI identifies in general terms which local community groups and other bodies will be consulted;
- SCI identifies how the community and other bodies can be involved in a timely and accessible manner;
- Methods of consultation to be employed are suitable for the intended audience and for the different stages in the preparation of local development documents;
- Resources are available to manage community involvement effectively; SCI shows how the results of community involvement will be fed into the preparation of development plan documents and supplementary planning documents;
- SCI shows how the results of community involvement will be fed into the preparation of development plan document and supplementary planning documents;
- District Council has mechanisms for reviewing the SCI; and the
- SCI clearly describes the District Council's policy for consultation on planning applications.

Source: PPS12: Local Development Frameworks

Appendix D

Key Consultees

Wiltshire County Council
The Five West Wiltshire Town Councils
The West Wiltshire Parish Councils
West Wiltshire LSP
Bradford on Avon Community Partnership
Melksham First
Trowbridge Future
Warminster & Villages Community Partnership
Westbury Community Area Partnership
Kennet District Council
Mendip District Council
North Wiltshire District Council
Salisbury Borough Council
Somerset County Council
Adjoining Parish Councils
South West Regional Planning Body
The Countryside Agency
English Heritage
English Nature
Environment Agency
Highways Agency
The Department of Transport
The South West RDA
Wiltshire PCT
Wessex Water

British Gas
British Telecom
British Waterways
CPRE
Defence Estates Organisation (Lands) (SW) (Ministry of Defence)
Department of Farming and Rural Affairs
Friends of the Earth/ Transport 2000
Home Builders Federation
National Farmers Union
Network Rail
Orange Communications UK
RSPB (SW)
Southern Electric
South West RSL Planning Consortium
SUSTRANS
Vodafone
Cotswolds Conservation Board
Cranbourne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB
Wiltshire Biological Records Office
Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

Generic list of bodies and organisations to be consulted

Rather than produce a long list of bodies, organisations and individuals that we seek to involve in our decision-making processes, a generic approach has been taken. This allows for a greater level of inclusion. The face of the community is constantly changing; as a consequence, no single list could ever be completely comprehensive or definitive. In comparison, the approach we have taken provides flexibility.

- **Government bodies, agencies and quangos**
Such as the GOSW or English Heritage
- **Regional Government bodies and agencies**
Such as the South West Regional Assembly or the Regional Development Agency
- **Wiltshire local authorities**
- **Adjoining local authorities outside of Wiltshire**
- **West Wiltshire town and parish councils**
- **Adjoining town and parish councils outside of West Wiltshire**
- **Statutory undertakers**
Such as the Strategic Rail Authority, or Wessex Water
- **Local Strategic Partnership**
- **National interest groups**
Such as Age Concern, CPRE or Friends of the Earth
- **Local interest groups**
Such as the K & A Canal Partnership, or Wessex Association of Chambers of Commerce. Also issue specific groups such as the Friends of the Hilperton Gap, or Westbury Bypass Alliance.
- **The planning and development community**
Such as landowners, developers and planning consultants.
- **Residents of West Wiltshire/members of the general public**

We will co-ordinate with other District Council services and maintain a comprehensive database of consultees that are either statutorily involved, or who wish to be involved in the preparation of LDDs. Access to the information contained within the database will be subject to the Freedom of Information Act.

Appendix E

Consultation Strategy and Charter

We have produced and adopted our own Consultation Strategy and Charter (Appendices E and F). These set out how we will consult and involve the community in local decision-making.

The Charter sets out and establishes what local people can expect from the Council when it consults its communities.

The Strategy is split over five main sections:

- Who we will consult;
- What we will consult on;
- How we will consult;
- Other considerations; and
- The Consultation Charter

We consider that there will be a need to change and adapt our approaches towards consultation with local communities. We have set ourselves the objective to develop a local approach to consultation through the Strategy and Charter.

Consequently, we will keep the Strategy under constant review. As part of the process of developing a two-way dialogue with local communities, we will seek feedback on the methods and mechanisms used for consultation in order to improve and develop.

CONSULTATION STRATEGY

Introduction

West Wiltshire District Council is committed to working in partnership to meet the needs and requirements of our residents and businesses.

In order to do this we need to consult and involve our community in local decision making.

This strategy sets out the way in which the Council will do this, the principles it will adopt and the methods it will use.

The Council realises that continuing to give people the chance to have their say will ensure that Council policies and proposals reflect needs and have real support. It also knows that the community has much to offer in terms of ideas for the services we deliver and the way in which we deliver them.

To support these aims the Council has formally adopted a '**Consultation Charter**', which sets out and establishes what can be expected from the Council when it consults its communities. The Consultation Charter can be found at the end of this document.

This strategy is split into five main sections and considers:

- Who we will consult
- What we will consult on
- How we will consult
- Other considerations
- Consultation Charter

Who We Will Consult

The Council will consult its local communities including:

- Users and non-users of services
- Residents and stakeholders including other statutory bodies and the voluntary sector
- Businesses
- Staff and Unions

Our consultation will be inclusive and will allow as many people as possible to give their views and opinions and express their ideas first hand. We will hold public consultation events and encourage people to attend. We will publish important consultation details in the Council's newspaper, West Wilts Matters, to enable everyone to participate.

We know that there will be some issues that are very important to the whole district and we will ensure that everyone is given the opportunity to give us their views and ideas. We also know that typically there are some groups in the community that are "harder" to contact than others, for example elderly people, young people, the disabled, carers or minority ethnic groups. We want to ensure that no one is denied access to services and an opportunity to comment on proposals or ideas for service provision. We will be establishing links with local voluntary organisations who represent "harder to reach" members of our community and can assist us in contacting these groups and obtaining their views. We will also use our existing networks to consult within the community.

We will make use of existing business networks and our own information to ensure that all businesses are provided with an opportunity to give their views on areas of policy which, directly or indirectly, concern the business community. We also recognise that the business community is a very broad group and we will make efforts to constantly ensure that we are consulting with them in a meaningful way and on issues that really concern them.

However we do not want consultation to be just a one way process. We want to develop a dialogue with our local communities so that we are constantly in

touch and aware of their needs and requirements. The Council recognises the role of Town and Parish Councils in maintaining and developing this contact. Over the next few years we will continue to make the Council an open and welcome place where individuals and groups can come and give us their views.

What We Will Consult On

Each year the Council goes through a corporate planning process to establish its priorities in key areas for the following year. We will continue to seek the views of our local communities during this process to ensure that our future plans meet with the needs of our local community as well as other agencies and partners we work with.

These annual planning activities include the preparation of:

- Community Plan
- Best Value Performance Plan
- Annual Budget Plans

The Council is also required by the Government to review and assess the performance of every service it provides, once every 5 years (or more often if they are under-performing). An essential part of this review process will be to consult with a wide range of individuals, including users and non-users of our services.

There may well of course be other issues throughout the year that the Council will wish to consult on and these may include:

- the ending of a service in whole or in part
- the transfer of a service to another provider
- the creation of a public private partnership or joint venture company
- other changes to a service which may have an effect on the service that the public receive

Prior to undertaking any of these actions the Council will carry out detailed consultation with relevant communities and stakeholders.

Details of the full range of events, proposals and plans that the Council will wish to consult on during the course of any year will be contained in the Best Value Performance Plan along with information about how to get involved. Details will also be published in West Wilts Matters where possible.

How Will We Consult

How we consult is as important as what the we consult on. The Council realises that there are many different ways in which we can consult people and organisations.

There is constant change within the field of consultation, with good practice being developed all the time. The Council is committed to keeping up to date with this good practice and using the most appropriate method of consultation.

One of the key features of the way in which we consult will be the priority given to 'real consultation'. The Council wants to talk first hand to people that receive the services we deliver. We want to understand the needs of our local communities, the way people see the Council and how we can constantly and consistently improve the services that the Council provides.

We will continue to arrange consultation events where Councillors and Officers will meet with the public to discuss topics and choices, allowing the Council to make informed decisions. This will not be the only method of consultation, but it will be an important feature of what we do.

The Council understands that it will have to utilise a range of other methods and techniques to suit the variety of issues and choices that we face. The Council is also required by the Government to consult on some specific issues and in order to demonstrate this we will have to use more traditional questionnaires and surveys.

In order to help do this effectively and efficiently the Council will maintain its People's Voice and Tomorrow's Voice panels. The People's Voice panel consists of 1,350 people drawn from the population of the District who are as representative as possible. The Tomorrow's Voice panel consists of 2,000 young people aged 13 to 18 years from across Wiltshire.

West Wilts Matters will be used to both inform residents and businesses about consultation involvement opportunities and to feedback the results of consultation exercises and the actions the Council will be taking as a result.

Other Considerations

There are further issues, which the Council has considered.

This strategy will be supported by good practice guidance and a checklist, which will be issued to all Council officers. It will contain best practice and also an analysis of consultation techniques, against the relative merits and costs. This will help to ensure that the Council's consultation is efficient and effective, and will be constantly updated as we learn more about consulting and involving our local communities.

Whilst the Council recognises the potential benefits of consultation, it wishes to keep the costs of consulting the community at an acceptable level by:-

- Entering into joint consultation activities with other agencies and councils where appropriate, and where the objectives of our consultation are fully met.

- Continuing to be part of the County Council's People's Voice panel which has 1,350 panellists from West Wiltshire, drawn from across the district who are broadly representative of the community in terms of age and gender. The current panel is well established but there is a need to constantly maintain and keep the panel up to date. We will use People's Voice to assist the Council in seeking the views of the community.

The Council will also ensure that the views of our staff be included in consultation exercises and will seek their views through Corridors, paper and electronic questionnaires, focus groups and the Team Brief System.

It is also important to ensure that Members are involved in consultation and that all results of consultation are disseminated to Members to assist in their decision making.

The involvement of Members in the process raises the profile of the Council and their input ensures that:

- representative views are incorporated into policy making based upon the Council's core objectives
- the role and knowledge of the local Member is utilised to its best advantage

The Council will ensure that the results of consultation exercises are fed into the decision making process and given proper consideration. We will be transparent in reporting back to the local community consultation results and their influence on the decisions made.

Conclusion

The Council realises that it will need to change and adapt its approaches towards consulting with its local communities as it learns and progresses initiatives. The objective for the Council is to develop a local approach to consultation.

This strategy and the approaches to consultation that the Council adopts will be kept under constant review. As part of the overall process of developing a two-way dialogue with our local communities, we will ensure that we seek feedback on the way in which we are consulting in order to improve and develop.

Appendix F

CONSULTATION CHARTER

The Consultation Charter lists the key principles and values that need to be adopted by the Council.

Preparing for consultation

- Consultation will be regarded as a two way process.
- Careful consideration will be made to matching the most appropriate technique of consultation to that of the population being surveyed and the policy/service area being discussed.
- Detailed analysis must be made when preparing the exercise on who to consult, how, why and when.
- Every effort should be made to obtain the views of hard to reach groups within our communities.
- Consultation and participation will be undertaken when decisions are likely to be made that affect the public in line with relevant legislation.
- The limits of consultation will be explained to the public to avoid over-expectation and disappointment.
- Consultation will be timely; proper planning should be undertaken to allow for consultation and consideration of results prior to any resulting decisions.
- We will also consider issues of access and ensure that no one is prevented from taking part in consultation exercises.
- The Communications Unit will provide advice on the most appropriate consultation techniques and will maintain a database of all consultation activity to avoid duplication.

Actual consultation

- All data and information from consultation participants will be incorporated and considered in the decision making process.
- Policy outcomes should reflect consultation results – where practicable and a reason given if not.
- Feedback will be given to participants once an exercise has been completed through the most appropriate means.

- A full record of the exercise, including all arrangements, must be maintained and kept on record.
- Consultation will not contain bias in either the way the questions are asked or the data collected

Data protection

- The use and management of participant records must conform to the requirement of the Data Protection Act and related statutory instruments.
- Advice on these issues will be provided by the Council's Legal Section.

Member involvement

- Members will be provided with full details on how the consultation exercise was set up, progress and the results.
- Members will also have the opportunity to be involved in consultation exercises where appropriate

Staff involvement

- We will consult staff at all levels and value their views.
- Training should be provided so staff understand the most appropriate methods of consultation.
- All staff will be consulted equally and provided with every opportunity to contribute their thoughts and views. Equal opportunities will be observed.

Appendix G

THE WILTSHIRE COMPACT

CODE OF PRACTICE ON COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION

1. INTRODUCTION

The Wiltshire Compact is a set of principles within which the Statutory, Voluntary and Community sectors agree to work.

This Code is one of the four Codes that describe how the Compact will work in practice. It is based on the national Code that was developed by Central Government together with the voluntary and community sector.

How we communicate and how we consult with one another be it Public, Private or Voluntary and Community sector organisations is a vital part to how we work effectively together.

Good communication and consultation will lead to better partnership working which helps to ensure the delivery of high quality services and improved planning that meets the needs and aspirations of the communities we serve.

The Public sector consults with officers to ensure that in developing its policies it is informed by a wide range of experience and takes into account the impact of its proposals on different sectors of society;

For voluntary and community organisations, consultation presents an opportunity to bring their knowledge, experience and expertise to bear on Government policy on behalf of the people and causes they work for.

This Code sets out the commitments from those Public and Voluntary and Community sector bodies that have signed up to The Wiltshire Compact. It has set out those commitments in two sections. The first section describes the benefit of good Communication and Consultation and the second section sets out our Commitments.

2. THE BENEFITS OF GOOD COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION

2.1 Effective Communication:

- strengthens relationships between organisations so that they understand the roles and responsibilities of each other;
- recognises that a two-way process means receiving as well as giving messages, listening as well as talking;
- means sharing significant changes or progress so that partner agencies are not taken by surprise;
- is the sharing of information in a language and formats that are accessible to all;
- enables partners to have reasonable expectations of each other;
- allows you to understand roles and boundaries to reduce duplication and make better use of resources;
- reduces the potential for misunderstandings, disagreements and disputes;
- prevents a problem from turning into a crisis;
- provides a means of sharing best practice, innovative ideas and experience in specialist fields;
- enables you to develop a shared vision where everyone has clear targets towards a common goal.

2.2 Effective Consultation:

- enables others to contribute to the policy making process;
- values the input from participants;
- enables others to contribute to the policy making process;
- values the input from participants;
- leads to more realistic and robust policy that better reflects people's needs and wishes;
- helps to plan, prioritise and deliver better services;

- can create a working partnership and mutual understanding with those consulted;
- identifies problems quickly, enabling matters to be put right early on;
- helps to avoid incorrect assumptions and misunderstanding at later stages;
- helps to keep organisations involved in and informed about policy developments and avoids unnecessary surprises.

3. COMMUNICATION

3.1 Our Commitments on Communication

The Public, Voluntary and Community sectors commit to:

- making clear the purpose of the communication;
- informing each other of significant developments that may affect the relationship between them, and consulting on them where appropriate;
- listening as well as talking;
- sending the right information to the right person, at the right time in a clear, concise and accessible format;
- creating and maintaining a database of key contacts to whom information should be sent;
- informing partners of changes within their own organisation which necessitate a change to the database;
- identifying resources who can act as effective channels for onward distribution of information;
- avoiding information overload by cutting out duplication and making sure communications are clear, concise and relevant;
- checking format and language to improve accessibility;
- marking every piece of information with “for information” or “for action” – with a clear response date if appropriate;
- making it clear whether or not information is confidential. (However the code recognises that information requested under the Freedom of Information Act will be made available within that framework);

- recognising the different requirements of one to one communication e.g. letter, email, phone, face to face etc compared with 'high volume' communication e.g. leaflets, websites, media relations;
- adopting professional approaches, wherever possible, when using volume communication, including the use of a communication strategy, clearly defined objectives, audience assessments, action plans, budgets and evaluation;
- using the right mix of communication methods to reach the right people in the right way e.g. printed literature, websites, media relations, events, branding etc;
- take account of religious, faith, cultural and rural needs when organising meetings and consultation initiatives.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 Our Commitments on Consultation

The Public sector undertakes to:

- build consultation into its regular planning cycle and be clear about the purpose of consultations;
- ensure that any consultation should be announced in advance to maximise opportunities for responding; and sufficient time allowed for responses;
- consult the sector on issues that are likely to affect the Voluntary sector at a sufficiently early stage of policy development;
- give consultees enough time to respond – a standard period of 12 weeks and a minimum of 8 weeks in normal circumstances. Shorter periods may be required by statute or in emergency situations but, wherever possible, these will be kept to an absolute minimum;
- ensure that where the standard consultation period cannot be met, all documents should specify why a shorter time has been set;
- explore with relevant partnerships e.g. Local Strategic Partnerships, the establishment and maintenance of a central consultation database/calendar, enabling organisations to register their interest in forthcoming consultations, showing actual or anticipated start and closing dates and contacts points for further information. This database will allow organisations to register their interest in particular policy areas and help them plan and prioritise their consultation work;
- explain where decisions have already been made – make clear what can and cannot be changed as a result of the consultation;

- be sensitive to resource implications e.g. in keeping databases of contacts which meet the Data Protection Act 1998, for the sector in disseminating consultations and seek their views on the best way to carry out the consultation;
- consider carefully the right mix of consultation methods in order to get the best spread of views from those most likely to be affected. The methods used will take into account the aim of the consultation and the nature of those being consulted. Consideration will be given to undertaking consultations in partnership with voluntary sector where appropriate;
- take a positive account of the specific needs, interests and contributions of those parts of the sector which represent the diversity of users;
- prepare consultation documents that are concise, clearly laid out and written in simple language that will be understood by the intended audience. Make consultation materials available in accessible formats, when requested – e.g. Braille, large print or audio;
- encourage those consulted to give honest views by assuring confidentiality to individuals and respecting the confidentiality of information provided by the sector;
- analyse carefully the results of the consultation and report back on the views that are received and feedback on what has been done as a result;
- evaluate consultations with a view to developing and spreading best practice and achieving better policy outcomes.

4.2 Community and Voluntary Sector Commitments on Consultation

In responding to Public sector consultations, the Voluntary and Community sectors undertake to:

- pursue recognised good practice in its representational work;
- use their infrastructure to encourage participation in public sector consultations (commensurate with available resources), including co-operating with each other through intermediary bodies and local networks to streamline the consultation process;
- define and demonstrate how they represent their stated constituency, by stating who they are, what groups or causes in society they represent and how they involved those interests in forming their policies and positions, and in responding to the consultation itself;
- consult with their constituency directly, including service users, volunteers, members and supporters wherever possible. Where this is not practicable, or appropriate, to indicate that they are

responding on the basis of their accumulated knowledge and experience of working with the groups concerned;

- take account positively of the specific needs, interests, contributions and diversity of users;
- ensure that the information they present is accurate and that any research has been conducted in an objective and unbiased manner;
- respect the confidentiality of information supplied in association with the consultation, when given access to it on that basis;
- give their constituency feedback on the outcome of consultation;
- when representing their constituents have regard to the regulatory framework that governs their organisation when representing their constituents;
- promote good practice among their members (in the case of intermediary bodies) by issuing guidance on effective representation for Voluntary and Community organisations, and include consultation performance in quality systems and self-evaluation reports;
- recognise that as representatives of organisations they are not always able to respond and, as a result, decisions may well be made that do not reflect their views.

USEFUL INFORMATION

- ‘Promoting Partnerships’ protocol held on Wiltshire County Council’s website www.wiltshire.gov.uk
- Extensive communication toolkits and case studies available at www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk
- Advice on compact agreements: www.thecompact.org.uk/
- Freedom of Information Act ...
<http://www.hmsso.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/20000036.htm>....
- The Wiltshire Compact Code of Practice on Volunteering
- The Wiltshire Compact Code of Practice on Funding and Procurement
- The Wiltshire Compact Code of Practice on Equality and Diversity

Appendix H

Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

In addition to the above mechanisms, which all fall within the guidance and strategy hub gear, it is worthwhile highlighting the importance of the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.

We are developing a comprehensive CRM that will incorporate improvements to standards, work processes, staff skills and ICT. This will sit as a higher level corporate system that will have wider implications for the way that the whole authority delivers its services.

CRM seeks to separate 'front office' functions, such as addressing common questions and requests, from the 'back office' functions that deliver our services. Once separated, the CRM system seeks to deal with those common questions and requests that make up the majority of contacts with the Council. There are significant advantages to this:

- a) Case officers can get on with their primary function
- b) Customers are given a standard, consistent response
- c) Customers are dealt with seamlessly
- d) The ICT element of CRM integrates with other applications

We have developed our CRM system in partnership with the County Council and other Wiltshire district authorities. This has the advantage of providing a uniform response across the county. In addition, common questions or requests can be resolved efficiently without necessarily contacting the correct geographic authority.

We are phasing the introduction of CRM - initially we will begin by implementing the ICT elements of the system, known as LAGAN. This will encourage the speedy adoption of other improvements, such as the review of business processes and efficiency of staffing. This first phase will begin the roll out of CRM to our main reception and planning reception areas. At the same time, our Commercial Services team, which is based on a separate site, will adopt CRM for telephone enquiries. Future phases will gradually roll out these processes and ICT developments across the whole Council.

It is envisaged that, by 2006, we will have developed the CRM system to enable the creation of a centralised customer services unit, which will be able to field the majority of questions and requests generated by the community. This is seen as an achievable and desirable objective.