Thanet District Council

Statement of Community Involvement Review

Consultation Draft
13th February – 26th March 2012
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1 What is a Statement of Community Involvement?

1.1 The Council is keen to involve the Community as much as possible in the planning process as the process relies on local knowledge to produce meaningful and appropriate planning policy. More comprehensive involvement of the community in the planning process has several benefits and ultimately greater ownership of the planning decisions that shape the future of the area.

1.2 The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out how the Council will involve people in the planning process. It explains how people can become involved when the Council is making planning policies, and deciding planning applications.

1.3 Appendix 1 of this document gives more information about the planning system, and Appendix 2 lists groups we may consult.

1.4 The SCI was adopted in February 2007. The key principles of the SCI remain the same, but it has been necessary to update it to reflect changes in the planning policy process:
- The requirement to submit the SCI to the Secretary of State and the formal Examination process has been removed
- The effect of Regulation 25 (amendment 2008) is that there is only one stage of consultation prior to the publication (proposed Submission document) of a Development Plan Document (DPD), removing the ‘Preferred Options’ stage
- The SCI and Supplementary Planning Documents are no longer required to be included in the Local Development Scheme
- Other updates have also been made, including the Council’s electronic consultation software, details of charges to pre-application advice and changes to how consultation is carried out on planning applications (both by the Council and by developers)

1.5 This document is available for public consultation from 13th February until 26th March 2012. Comments can be made by post, email or online using the details below:

Post: Thanet District Council – Strategic Planning section
P.O.Box 9
Cecil Street
Margate
Kent CT9 1XZ

Email: Local.plans@thanet.gov.uk
Online: http://consult.thanet.gov.uk
2 How we let people know about new planning policy

2.1 The Council will let people know about new planning policies in a number of ways:

- **Online** – we will put information on our website, and people can register on our online consultation system to receive updates at [http://consult.thanet.gov.uk](http://consult.thanet.gov.uk)
- **Mail-outs** – we will write to or email anyone who has asked to be kept informed in writing
- **Local press** – we will advertise the publication of consultation documents in local newspapers

We want to ensure that everybody has the opportunity to get involved with planning decisions and therefore we will aim to make contact with Hard to Reach Groups.

**How we aim to contact Hard to Reach Groups**

2.2 There is no clear definition of Hard to Reach groups, although some definitions include ‘those inaccessible to most traditional and conventional methods for any reason’, ‘those who have traditionally been under-represented’ or ‘people who are hard to engage with on a positive level’.

2.3 The Council would like to increase participation from all sectors of our community and pay particular regard to the needs of different race and disability groups. The Council uses a number of specialist companies who can translate documents into different languages should a need be identified or requested. Documents in braille, other languages or on audiotape can also be available on request by calling 01843 577165.

2.4 The following table identifies hard to reach groups and ways we might engage with these groups:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hard to reach group</th>
<th>Possible Solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Young people                            | Send Packs/leaflets to schools  
|                                         | Presentations to schools/student committees’ Youth Council                        |
| Ethnic Groups/Refugees                  | Contact via Migrant Helpline                                                       |
| Gypsies and Travellers                  | Via organisations/support groups                                                   |
| Those with low levels of literacy/education | Use of plain English  
|                                         | Contacts via links with external organisations Wider distribution of leaflets/publicity material in relevant |
Residents who work outside the district
Wider distribution of leaflets/publicity material
Consider evening/weekend consultation exercises

Single Parents
Wider distribution of leaflets/publicity material
Surestart projects/connections

Disabled/Elderly
Wider distribution of leaflets/publicity material – for example via meals on wheels/Help the aged
Availability of documents in large print/Braille or audiotape on request
Consider access arrangements when organising events

The Council will involve external agencies and organisations who represent the groups mentioned above wherever possible.

3 How people can become involved

3.1 Whenever there is a formal consultation stage the Council will publicise this through press releases and the Website. The Council will seek to maximise its use of email and the website to advise the public of consultation documents and encourage the use of online consultations. Anyone can register on the consultation system at http://consult.thanet.gov.uk and will be able to receive emails with the latest updates. Hard copies will also be available on request, and available for inspection at the Gateway and libraries.

3.2 The Council will receive comments via its online consultation system, email, fax or by post. At the formal stages of the process, those making representations will be encouraged to use the official forms (provided by the Planning Inspectorate) for making comments, although all comments submitted, where appropriate, will still be registered. Representations made by telephone cannot normally be registered as formal representations - any comments made verbally should be confirmed in writing.

3.3 There are two types of planning policy document – Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents. The diagram below shows the key stages in the production of a Development Plan Document (DPD) and how people can become involved at each stage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key</th>
<th>Informal Involvement</th>
<th>Statutory Involvement</th>
<th>No Involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Evidence gathering and early community involvement - 'front-loading':

Who? Targeted consultation with some or all of the following: Statutory Agencies, Town and Parish Councils, Mayors Offices, Business Community, Developers, Community Groups, Residents Associations, Traders Associations

How? Workshops, Focus Groups, Discussions/Meetings
**Public participation in preparation of a DPD (Regulation 25)**
Draft planning document produced - people will have an opportunity to comment on the Council's preferred strategy or consider possible alternatives

**Who?** General public consultation, specific and general consultation bodies as appropriate (Appendix 2)

**How?** Statutory adverts in newspapers and press releases – formal consultation for at least six weeks. Documents and comments forms online and at Gateway and Libraries. The Council may also hold exhibitions, workshops or meetings.

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**Publish proposed submission document (Regulation 27)**
Revised planning document produced having considered comments from previous stage. This will be the version the Council intends to submit to the Secretary of State for Examination in Public.

**Who?** General public consultation, specific and general consultation bodies as appropriate

**How?** Statutory adverts in newspapers and press releases – formal consultation for six weeks. Documents and comments forms online and at Gateway and Libraries. Highly focused consultation using comments forms prescribed by the Planning Inspectorate

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**Representations on proposed submission document (Regulation 28)**
The Council will summarise the main issues raised in the consultation, but all comments received at the Regulation 27 stage will be decided by the Secretary of State.

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**Submission to Secretary of State**
The document will be sent to the Secretary of State who will examine the document on the tests of soundness. People who commented on the consultation will be advised that the document has been submitted, either by letter or email. The submission document and other associated documents/papers will be available at the Gateway and on the Council website. The website will be kept up to date with the progress of the examination.

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**Independent Examination**
The Planning Inspector appointed on behalf of the Secretary of State will arrange hearings and/or consider written representations.
Inspectors Report
The Planning Inspector will submit a report to the Council containing recommendations for changes to be made to the document. This report is not binding and the Council will decide whether or not the changes should be made.

Adoption
The document will be reported to full Council for adoption.

Monitoring and Review
Adopted planning policies are reviewed annually in the Councils Annual Monitoring Report and may be amended as necessary depending on the findings of that report.

3.4 There are fewer stages in the process for producing Supplementary Planning Documents as there is only one formal stage of consultation, and there is no public examination. At the formal consultation stage, a draft document will be published and advertised in accordance with the Regulations. It will be made available for inspection at offices and on the website, and sent to relevant specific consultation bodies for comment.

Community involvement is a key part of:

- The Core Strategy – the spatial strategy and core policies
- Development Plan Documents (eg the Cliftonville DPD)
- The Proposals Maps
- Area Action Plans
- Supplementary Planning Documents
- Major Planning Applications

3.5 The way people and community groups become involved with a particular document will vary depending on the nature of the document being produced. For example, for an Area Action Plan, consultations would be focused to those local to the specific area, whereas a document such as the Core Strategy would involve a district-wide consultations.

3.6 The consultation and participation carried out for different documents will also be dependent on the nature of the documents being prepared. Table 1 shows the methods of consultation that could be used for the LDF. The Council will use one or more of the methods identified as being appropriate, depending on the type, nature, context and stage in the process of the document concerned.
3.7 Individuals wishing to be involved in the planning process are encouraged to form or join community groups. Groups with a constitution and elected members play an increasingly important role in planning procedures, particularly since the enactment of the Localism Bill which focuses significantly on community involvement. However, the Council will welcome comments from groups and individuals during planning policy consultations.

3.8 Formal and informal consultations will be carried out by staff from the Planning team, in conjunction with the Councils Communications team who have relevant expertise and resources in delivering public consultation and involvement. The budgetary requirements for the consultations programmed for the current Local Development Scheme have been identified and will continue to be planned for in future years. Where landowners, developers or external organisations choose to carry out pre-application consultation exercises they will be responsible for the cost.

### Table 1: Methods of consultation to consider

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Useful for:</th>
<th>For us to consider:</th>
<th>Resources:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advert/leaflet in Local Paper</td>
<td>Raising levels of awareness and publicising specific opportunities to get involved. Reaching wide audience.</td>
<td>The timescale will need to be extended to include this</td>
<td>Costs of advertising/printing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council Website – online consultation</td>
<td>Allowing access to latest information and provide opportunities to contribute electronically</td>
<td>How to coordinate and work together with TDC Communications team, inputting resources</td>
<td>Once information is available on-line it is low cost. Will need GIS expertise for any maps to be made available – time implication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documents available for inspection at Deposit Points</td>
<td>Allowing everyone the opportunity to comment on draft documents – deposit points include all Council offices and local libraries</td>
<td>It must be clear how and when people should respond. Information should be accessible to all in terms of mobility, understanding and time available.</td>
<td>Staff time may be needed to answer questions and collate any responses. Cost of printing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibitions</td>
<td>Outlining specific plans and proposals to target audience. Accessible to broad audience.</td>
<td>Information should be accessible to all in terms of mobility, understanding and times available, how best to involve Councillors</td>
<td>Preparation costs and time needed can be significant. Additional staff time needed if exhibition is manned. Venue costs for hire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaires</td>
<td>Determining attitudes and identifying needs for improvement. Gaining views from people who may not otherwise express an opinion.</td>
<td>Surveys can reap a greater number of responses but require significant administration</td>
<td>Analysis can be time consuming and specialist skills/software may be required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Meetings</td>
<td>Gaining first hand views regarding a specific area</td>
<td>The audience, audience availability (eg daytime or evening) and any restrictions, time available for consultation</td>
<td>Costs of venue hire can be significant, staff time needed to prepare any material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>Useful for:</td>
<td>For us to consider:</td>
<td>Resources:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshops</td>
<td>Bringing together representatives from different sectors of the community to be more actively involved in scoping documents and identifying priorities.</td>
<td>Events require significant preparation and organisation. However they can be very useful for discussing important and/or difficult issues, how best to involve Ward Councillors</td>
<td>Time is needed for preparation – specialist skills may be required. High staffing levels likely for facilitating. Costs of venue hire can be considerable.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 What happens to comments that the Council receives?

4.1 Once a formal consultation has ended, the Council will analyse all comments received and either make suggested changes to the document, or explain why a suggested change would not be appropriate. (This does not apply to the proposed submission document as these responses are considered by the planning inspector). The Council recognises that it is important to report back to the community and other stakeholders on how their comments and suggestions are taken on board. The Council will therefore publish feedback to all consultations on its website and in document format (eg committee reports, newsletters). Anyone who has submitted comments will be contacted by letter or e-mail to inform them in detail of the response to their suggestions and views.

4.2 Each planning policy document requires a ‘statement of consultation’ which will outline how the SCI has been followed, how the main issues raised during consultations have been addressed and any benefits this brought to the process.

5 Where to get help with a planning issue

5.1 Communities can choose to take up free advice and guidance, depending on their needs, through The Princes Foundation, Locality, The Royal Town Planning Institute (Planning Aid) and the National Association of Local Councils in partnership with the Campaign to Protect Rural England. Each organisation will use its expertise, skills and track record advising on development to empower communities to reach the full potential of producing a neighbourhood plan from start to finish. Advice is available on issues such as understanding the planning process and finding local solutions through to developing clear documents and building community support. This will include free impartial advice, practical workshops with local authorities and community groups, tailored on-line resources, networking tools and telephone advice lines

The Princes Foundation

http://www.princes-foundation.org/  
Email: enquiry@princes-foundation.org

Phone: +44 (0) 20 7613 8500

Assistance available: Workshops to help resolve disputes with developers/the Council, preparing recommendations for community led change, preparing neighbourhood led proposals
6 How we tell people about Planning Applications

6.1 The Council deals with a variety of applications for planning permission. It carries out notification and publicity in accordance with the relevant statutory requirements as specified in legislation in force at the time using some or all of the following:

- Site notices
- Letters to local residents/businesses
- Press advertisements – including adverts for applications which are a departure from the development plan, require an Environmental Impact Assessment or involve a listed building or conservation area
- Weekly list of applications and details of planning applications on the Councils website
- Applications and plans published on the website
- Specific consultation or notification with statutory and non-statutory consultees
- Notification to Parish and Town Councils
6.2 To consult neighbouring residents and businesses, the Council is required to either send letters, or display site notices detailing the proposed development. However as the Council places a high priority on getting peoples views, it uses both of these methods. Letters are sent to the most immediate neighbours and, for larger proposals, a wider area, depending on the scale of the proposed development. Consultation letters invite responses to be made within 21 days of the date of the letter. Site notices are displayed near the application site inviting comments within 21 days of the date of the site notice being put up. The results of any such consultation will be reported and taken into account in decisions made by, and on behalf of, the Council.

6.3 Where a press notice is required or thought to be appropriate, the Council will place this in one of the local newspapers.

6.4 If an application is significantly amended during its consideration, the Council will send a further round of consultation letters to nearby residents and to any additional people who have already written in with comments. A copy of the revised plans will also be made available on the website.

6.5 Draft Section 106 Agreements will be made available to the public.

6.6 The Council has copies of applications and accompanying plans available at Thanet’s Gateway Plus in Cecil Street, Margate and online at www.thanet.gov.uk.

6.7 The Council receives and handles comments sent by post, fax, e-mail and electronically.

6.8 The Council’s planning committee (attended by 15 Members) determines some planning applications and allows public speaking in respect of those applications. Further information on how people can apply to speak at planning committee can be found on the council’s website at www.thanet.gov.uk.

6.9 At the time a decision is issued on any application, the Council sends letters to all those who have submitted written comments on the application, advising whether the application has been approved or refused.

7 Review of the SCI

7.1 The consultation procedures used by the Council detailed in this SCI will be kept under review and monitored to determine where procedures have proven unsuccessful or where revisions may be necessary to meet new circumstances. Some of this information will become apparent via the Statement of Consultation. In addition, we will assess each method of consultation we have used to see if it:

• Gave you the information you needed
• Gave us the type of feedback we needed
• Actively encouraged more people to be involved
• Involved different and appropriate types of people and organisations
• Allowed participants the opportunity to have their views heard and recorded
7.2 The SCI has been reviewed at this time to incorporate recent changes in the planning system. However, the SCI will be reviewed again in the near future to reflect the forthcoming implementation of the following:

- The Council’s new Corporate Plan
- The Localism Bill – how developers will consult on planning applications, pre-application advice from the Council
- National Policy Framework
Appendices
Appendix 1 – Planning and Corporate Background

The Planning System

The Legal Context
The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced a major programme to reform the planning system in England to make it more flexible and responsive to the needs of the community. Strengthening community involvement in the planning process was a key part of that programme.

The Localism Act provides the legislative foundations for decentralization (giving local councils more power), proposes the abolition of the Regional Strategies, and introduces the ability for communities to produce Neighbourhood Development Orders and Plans. The Act also proposes a compulsory pre application consultation with the community for developments of a certain type and scale and makes alterations to remove the potential to submit a retrospective planning application once an enforcement notice has been served.

The proposed abolition of Regional Strategies will return decision making powers on housing and planning to local councils. Local planning authorities, along with the community, will be responsible for developing their own policies without the framework of regional plans.

The Council is fully committed to extending the scope and opportunities for community engagement in the planning process which is essential to delivering its objective of creating inclusive, accessible, safe and sustainable communities.

The Council will produce all LDF documents involving a cross-party working group called the Local Development Framework Cabinet Advisory Group. Documents are discussed with the group at all stages through the process. The group meetings are public and anyone can attend by contacting the Councils Democratic Services department (tel: 01843 577500 or email committee@thanet.gov.uk). Meeting agendas and Minutes are also available on the Councils website (www.thanet.gov.uk). All documents are reported to Cabinet for agreement at major stages in the planning process, and the final version of a document (once it has been through the Examination) will be reported to Cabinet, and Council to be formally adopted.
Planning Policy

The documents produced by Thanet Council that will make up the Local Development Framework are described briefly below:

Local Development Framework (LDF)
The LDF is like a ‘folder’ containing all the documents that form Thanet Council’s part of the statutory development plan.

Local Development Scheme (LDS)
This sets out the programme for preparing the documents which will form the Local Development Framework.

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)
This sets out how and when public participation will be carried out and how this will apply to different documents.

Development Plan Document (DPD)
These are documents that the local planning authority must prepare and which have to be subject to community involvement, consultation and independent examination. These include general policies applicable to the whole district, allocations of land, site/area specific policies and the proposals map. The main DPD is the Core
Strategy which sets general proposals and overall planning strategy for the district. Thanet also has an adopted DPD for Cliftonville West.

**Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)**

SPD’s are intended to elaborate upon a policy or proposal in a DPD, but do not have their full statutory status as they are not required to go through the Examination process.

**Sustainability Appraisal (SA) & Strategic Environmental Appraisal (SEA)**

Assessment of the social, economic and environmental impacts of the policies and proposals contained within the Local Development Framework

**Local Development Framework Structure**

The Local Development Framework will be formed by the new planning policy documents being produced, and the policies from the Thanet Local Plan that have been ‘saved’. The local plan policies will eventually be replaced or superseded by new policies.

Kent County Council produce a Minerals and Waste Local Development Framework which also forms part of the Development Plan for the District.

More information about the saved policies and new planning policies can be found on the Councils website at [www.thanet.gov.uk](http://www.thanet.gov.uk).

**Links with other Community Involvement Initiatives**

**The Council’s Corporate Plan and Community Strategy**

The Statement of Community Involvement, and all other documents within the LDF, will reflect the aims and objectives of the Council’s Corporate Plan.

The East Kent Sustainable Community Strategy 2009 identifies the Vision for East Kent as follows:

‘By 2030, East Kent will have blended the best of its coastal location, landscape, culture and heritage to build a lasting beacon of success for the benefit of all its communities’. It aims to achieve this by six different work themes:

- Education – Breaking down barriers to learning, Responding to demand, Lifelong learning
- Economic – Building on well established enterprise, exploiting new business opportunities, a coordinated agenda for growth
- Communities – Coastal Regenerations, Public services for the 21st Century
- Transport – Integrating the High Speed One Service, Investment in Strategic transport developments, improving travel choice
- Visitor Destination – Improving and integrating visitor attractions, harnessing opportunities for employment and skills, protecting and promoting the environment
- Environment – develop an integrated plan for environmental protection and enhancement, improve and enhance East Kent’s landscape and wildlife

The LDF will be prepared to ensure consistency and close integration with both the Corporate Plan and Sustainable Community Strategy and will also have regard to other County and District level strategies.

**Pre-submission consultation and wider community involvement**

**How developers consult on planning applications**

The Localism Bill proposes that developers will be required to consult with local communities before submitting certain planning applications. They are required to consider any responses they receive before finalising proposals and submitting an application, and account for how consultation has been carried out, what comments were received and how those comments have been taken into account. This will provide an opportunity for issues to be raised for the developer to consider, and make suggestions which could improve the development and reduce any impact on the neighbourhood.

The types of development this requirement will apply to are:

- Residential developments of 200 or more new residential units, or (where the number of residential units to be constructed is not specified) with a site area of four hectares or more
- Any non-residential developments providing 10,000 square meters or more of new floorspace, or with a site area of two hectares or more

This requirement will be applied to the following types of planning application:

- Full applications for planning permission
- Outline applications for planning permission
- Applications for Minerals consent

It will not apply to:

- Householder planning applications
- Lawful Development Certificates
- Prior notification applications
- Listed Building & Conservation Area consents
- Section 73 applications
Pre-application advice

The Council will provide advice before a planning application is submitted – this helps people understand how a proposal is affected by planning law and policies, what information will be required when a planning application is submitted and identify any specialist surveys/reports that will be needed (eg about listed buildings, trees, noise etc)

Advice will be given in writing, and a meeting can be arranged if required, and should be provided within 20 days.

Costs for pre-application advice are available on the Councils website at www.thanet.gov.uk.
Appendix 2 – Consultation Bodies

Where appropriate, the following agencies and organisations will be consulted in the preparation of local development documents. Please note, this list is not exhaustive and also relates to successor bodies where re-organisations occur.

Specific Consultation Bodies
The ‘specific consultation bodies’ comprise statutory consultees including:
- A relevant authority whose area is in or adjoins the Thanet District, such as:
  - A local planning authority (ie Canterbury City and Dover District Councils)
  - Kent County Council
  - Town and Parish Councils (within the Thanet District, and in the Canterbury and Dover Districts)
  - A Police Authority
- The Coal Authority
- The Environment Agency
- English Heritage
- Natural England
- The Secretary of State for Transport (The Highways Agency)
- Owners/ controllers of telecommunications apparatus situated in the District
- Primary Care Trust
- Organisations providing gas and electricity
- Sewerage undertaker
- Water undertaker

General Consultation Bodies
The “general consultation bodies” include community groups and other stakeholders such as:
- Voluntary groups
- Bodies representing the interests of different racial, ethnic or national groups in the area
- Bodies representing the interests of different religious groups in the area
- Bodies representing the interests of the business community in the area
- Bodies which represent the interests of disabled persons in the authority’s area

Other Agencies
Age Concern/Help the Aged
Campaign for the Protection of Rural England
Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment
Environmental, Heritage and Wildlife Organisations
Equal Opportunities Commission
Health and Safety Executive
Housing Corporations
Kent Association of Parish Councils
Kent Rural Community Council
Learning & Skills Councils
National Playing Fields Associations
Network Rail
Port Operators
Sport England
Sure Start
Voluntary Organisations/Council for Voluntary Services

**Service Providers**
- Education Establishments
- Health Services
- Health Trusts
- Kent Ambulance NHS Trust
- Kent County Constabulary
- Kent Fire & Rescue Service
- Sports Organisations
- Transport Providers (air, road, rail, water)

**Business Sector**
- Business, Trade and Industry Associations/Federations
- Chambers of Commerce
- Economic Development Organisations
- Employment Organisations
- Larger and multi national businesses
- Retail outlets
- Small and medium sized businesses
- Tourism Organisations
- Town & Shopping Centre Management

**Local Communities**
- Community Development Organisations
- Community Groups
- Individual Residents
- Local Agenda 21
- Local Strategic Partnership
- NFU
- Residents Associations/Forums
- Citizens Panel
- Wardens Service

**Developers and Landowners**
- Crown Estates
- Defence Estates
- Developers
- Development and Building Companies
- National Trust
- Post Office Property Holdings
- Regeneration Organisations
- The House Builders Federation
- The Housing Corporation/Associations
Individuals, groups and organisations

Individuals, groups and organisations are encouraged to register on the Councils online consultation system at http://consult.thanet.gov.uk. This will ensure you are kept up to date with news of consultations, and enable you to respond to a consultation online. Anyone wishing to be kept informed of planning consultations by post can contact the Strategic Planning team at local.plans@thanet.gov.uk, tel 01843 577591, and your details will be added so you will receive letters from us.
If you would like a copy of this document in a different format such as Braille, audio or large print, or in another language please call 01843 577165