

**Shropshire Council
Covenants and Campaigns Protocol DRAFT 07112023**

Purpose

- To provide an **approval process to determine whether to** sign up to covenants and campaigns relating to the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion.

Current position

This protocol is intended to help to ensure that energies are focussed where they need to be, and that alignment is visible with the Shropshire Plan and with our obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty set out in the Equality Act 2010.

It addresses concerns and considerations around signing up to or aligning with national and local covenants and campaigns which may be described as coming under the heading of equality, diversity and inclusion.

The approval process and approach needs to be one that will demonstrate transparency and facilitate objective consideration of intersectionality across the Protected Characteristic groupings.

It is also necessary for this process to be such that it will help to ensure that there is alignment between any particular covenant and campaign proposal, the Shropshire Plan, the Strategic Equality Objectives Action Plan 2020-2024, and any associated national and partner organisation policy imperatives. It would also need to enable consideration of time commitments anticipated, by officers and by councillors, and any financial commitments, known or unknown.

Our watchwords need to be not only those which will assist us to promote intersectionality rather than to appear to give precedence to any groupings, but also those which will balance time commitments with efforts that are seen as strategic and inclusive rather than well-meaning but reactive, and that will indicate our measured and transparent approach.

Background

The consistent approach is that we should not be signing up to be part of a campaigning organisation. This has been the case whether we have sympathy for and empathy with the views of said organisation, and whether we find ourselves to be in accord with perhaps only elements of such a campaign. The Council for example has long standing and cordial relationships with the National Farmers Union (NFU) and with the Country Land and Business Association (CLA), both of whom are campaigning bodies on behalf of the food and farming sector. Whilst the Council has sympathy for and empathy with many of the views of these bodies, the Council has never been a subscribing member of these bodies or a vocal signatory to national campaigns.

Proposed approval process and approach

If the covenant or campaign is being put forward by officers:

An initial screening Equality, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessment (ESHIA) should be carried out by the lead officers for the proposal, along with a supporting document on how and why this would benefit the Council and its partners in meeting strategic and community objectives.

The document should include an indication of what would be required to implement the covenant or campaign, in terms of resources and time, and service areas involved, the communication channels envisaged or proposed, and how efforts to achieve the objectives would be monitored along with a review cycle.

The proposal should then be shared with the Rurality and Equalities Specialist for review, who will then take opportunity to bring in other officers as appropriate eg from Feedback and Insight Team eg from Public Health.

Following this appraisal step and any subsequent revisions, this should be submitted to the relevant Executive Director to take to EMT and informal Cabinet, for agreement to go into the Forward Plan with a view to seeking Cabinet approval.

If the covenant or campaign is being put forward by councillors:

Councillors are encouraged to contact relevant officers to share their proposals.

Officers will then discuss the proposal with them at a meeting, potentially involving relevant portfolio holders, before supporting on content for an ESHIA and briefing document on how and why the covenant or campaign could support the Council and partners in meeting strategic and community objectives.

Following this appraisal step and any subsequent revisions, this should be submitted to the relevant Executive Director to take to EMT and informal Cabinet, for agreement to go into the Forward Plan with a view to seeking Cabinet approval.

In this way, consideration may be objective and transparent, and focussed upon identifying clear Council and community objectives and strengthening collaboration between officers and decision-makers, so that efforts are timely and proportionate.

The attached flowcharts set out to illustrate how these approaches are anticipated to work.

If the covenant or campaign is being put forward to the Council by an external body or organisation:

The organisation should be asked to articulate in writing how they believe the covenant or campaign will assist the Council to meet strategic equality objectives

and corporate objectives, and in so doing make progress on national equality aims and the Council's overall policy aims.

The format proposed would be a standard template, inviting completion of sections with regard to the Shropshire Plan and to the three national equality aims.

Within the template, there would be a section in which the organisation would be asked to:

- indicate the obligations sought from the Council, in terms of time commitment and in terms of financial commitments;
- articulate any anticipated support in terms of time and financial commitments from partner organisations;
- name these organisations, whether these are from other public sector organisations such as local NHS Trusts or the local authorities, the business sector, or the community and voluntary sector;
- articulate how the covenant or campaign could assist the Council in meeting Social Value principles, as already used in procurement processes.

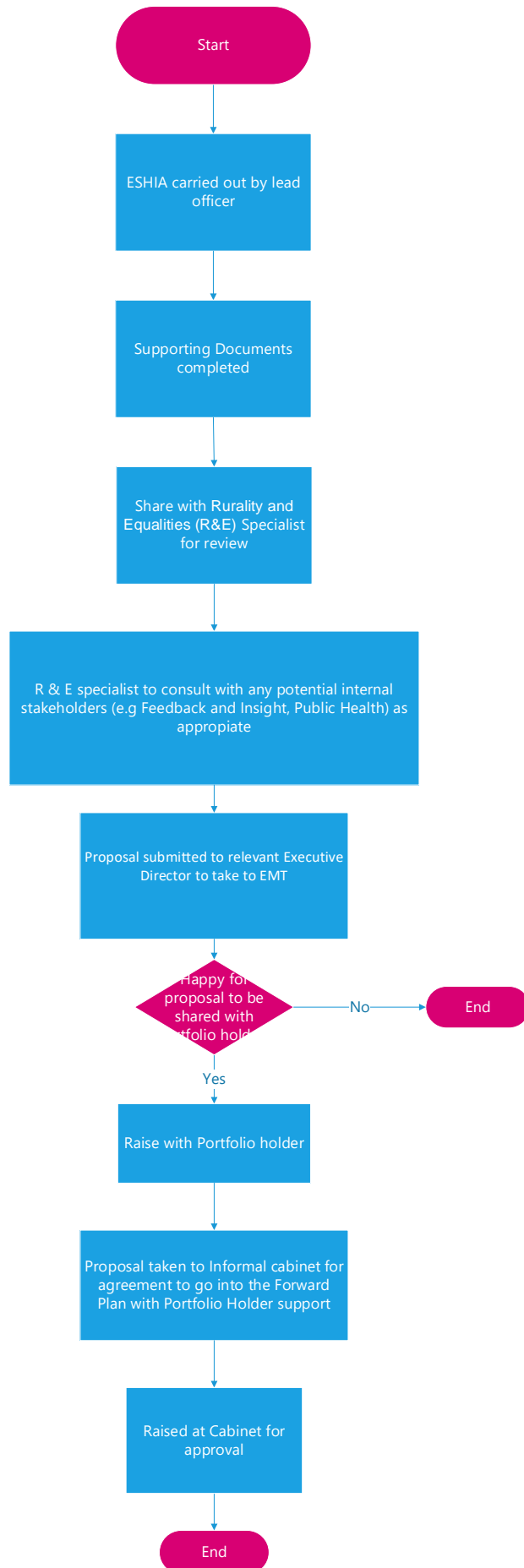
In this way, the Council will be in control of the process, better placed to save officer time through provision of a standard approach, and better able to ascertain from evidence provided by the organisation that its proposals would help the Council to meet overall strategic equality objectives.

In all scenarios:

Legal advice should be sought: *"...to be careful in respect of any accreditation where it may conflict with our public body responsibilities..."*

Support for Covenants and Campaigns Approval process

Covenant or Campaign put forward by Officers



Support for Covenants and Campaigns Approval process:
Covenant or Campaign put forward by Councillors

