

Fairness, Respect, Equality Shropshire Ltd.

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact John Redmond, Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260201 or Natalie Parkinson, Equality and Diversity Officer, on 01743 260236.

1 Purpose of Report

This report sets out the progress made by Fairness, Respect, Equality Shropshire Ltd. (FRESH) since its inauguration on 28 June 2013, as requested by the Fire Authority.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the report and that an annual report on the progress of FRESH will be brought to the Committee for information.

3 Background

Shropshire Equalities Forum was established in March 2005, and worked and held open meetings throughout Shropshire until its formal dissolution on 27 June 2013.

On 28 June 2013 (FRESH) was incorporated by the Financial Conduct Agency as a community benefit society. The Equality and Diversity Steering Group endorsed the Service's membership and payment of the annual subscription of £100.00 at its meeting on 10 September 2013.

4 FRESH Progress 2013/14

Since its inaugural Annual General Meeting on 18 July 2013 FRESH has been steadily developing and consolidating its reputation, work and capacity, including:

- Developing a comprehensive policy framework and a Business Plan

- Holding a highly successful formal launch event – attended by several Shropshire Council elected Members
- Raising income through membership subscriptions, commissioned training and consultancy work
- Engaging constructively with private and public sector organisations to challenge and improve poor equality and diversity practice
- Re-launching, funding and supporting the Small Grants programme, with grants so far to six groups
- Re-launching and facilitating the Equality Forum, with a new focus and energy
- Developing networks and partnerships with other groups and organisations

FRESh has achieved all this without the benefit of paid workers, relying on the considerable commitment and enthusiasm of its Board and members.

Examples of specific work include:

- Setting up FRESh's website (<http://www.freshshropshire.org.uk/>)
- Working with a private sector service organisation to ensure appropriate cultural awareness among its employees and volunteers
- Designing and facilitating a number of equality impact assessment engagement sessions with people from protected characteristic communities for Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group
- Advising Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) on accessible language on an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) consultation document (no charge - part of FRESh membership service)
- Planning and running a series of mini-workshops at Equality Forum meetings in response to Forum members' information needs
- Responding to wider consultations, for example Police and Crime Commissioner consultation on Hate Crime Strategy
- Winning, organising and hosting a British Institute of Human Rights one-day workshop, which will take place in Shrewsbury on 22 October 2014

5 FRESh Meetings

FRESh is managed by a Board of Directors elected by, and from its Members at its Annual General Meeting (AGM). SFRS does not have representation on the Board.

The Service is represented at two other FRESh meetings. The FRESh Equality Forum meets quarterly. Its meetings are widely publicised, open to all and very well attended (some 25 people attended each of the last two meetings). They comprise a mixture of workshops, discussions, presentations and networking, focused on equality and diversity practice in Shropshire. Participants' feedback highlights the value of these meetings, both for equality and diversity workers and for lay participants. The Service is represented at Forum meetings by Neil Griffiths, Group Commander Prevention.

FRESh holds occasional Members' meetings, to support accountability of the Board for policy and practice. The Service is represented at these meetings; again by Neil Griffiths.

Since its re-launch the Equality Forum has met five times. Issues raised and discussed have included:

- The ReACT approach to dealing with reports of anti-social behaviour
- Medical and social models of body size - reasonable adjustments for larger people
- Shropshire and Warwickshire Police Draft Hate Crime Strategy consultation
- The impact of austerity on marginalised communities
- South Staffordshire and Shropshire Healthcare Trust Community Engagement Project
- Introduction to Safer Ageing, No Discrimination (SAND)
- Challenging skills

Other than the first AGM, there has been one Members' meeting, held in September 2014, which was attended by around 56% of the FRESH membership. The next FRESH AGM is scheduled for 4 December 2014.

6 FRESH and SFRS – Value of Membership

As well as the value of the information and networks accessible through the Equality Forum and other FRESH events and initiatives, the Service has been able to access direct free support from FRESH for its IRMP consultation.

In April 2014 FRESH provided advice on the accessibility of language used in a set of draft IRMP consultation questions. The Service found this advice helpful in framing the final consultation document, especially in questions intended for the general public.

Photos taken at the FRESH launch event



7 Rights and Fairness Telford

A separate report has not been included for this group, as the Service has not been working with them over the past year or had any updates from them.

8 Financial Implications

The annual FRESH Ltd membership subscription is currently £100.00.

9 Legal Comment

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

10 Appendices

There are no appendices attached to this report.

11 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.