

Fairness, Respect, Equality Shropshire Ltd.

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact Rod Hammerton, 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 (FRESH) Ltd. from June 2015 to June 2016, 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 Ltd. will be brought to the Committee for information.

3 Background

On 28 June 2013 Fairness, Respect Equality Shropshire (FRESH) Ltd. was incorporated by the Financial Conduct Agency as a community benefit society, replacing the Shropshire Equalities Forum. The Equality Steering Group endorsed the Service's membership and payment of the annual subscription of £100 in September 2016.

At the end of September 2016 FRESH had thirty members, comprising community organisations, statutory agencies and individuals. All have made an explicit commitment to developing and improving equality and diversity practice.

Over the past year FRESH has developed and delivered a wide range of equality-focused services for, and with, statutory authorities and voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations. These have continued to benefit organisations and their local communities, enhanced the development of FRESH's reputation as a reliable and competent service provider, and contributed to financial resources.

4 FRESH's work during 2015 to 2016

a. Paid work has included:

- **Scoping research into the under-reporting of hate incidents in Shropshire**

Funded by the Shropshire Hate Crime Reporting Group, this research estimated under-reporting levels at between 50% and 70%. It produced comprehensive recommendations for improving reporting levels, increasing public awareness of hate incidents, supporting victims and training for staff in Community Reporting Centres.

- **Gypsy and Traveller cultural awareness training for Shropshire Housing Group (SHG)**

A half-day workshop exploring the cultures of different Gypsy and Traveller communities, their experience of discrimination, and the role of SHG employees in ensuring fair and inclusive treatment in social housing.

- **Shrewsbury Sixth Form College hate incident awareness workshop**

A short workshop exploring hate incidents and bullying, for students as part of the College Diversity Day

b. Unpaid work included

- **The FRESH Equality Forum**

At the time of writing there are 97 individuals and organisations on the Equality Forum mailing list, an increase of some 30% since last year. Attendance at the quarterly Forum meetings has varied between ten and thirty, depending on the topic and time of year. Forum topics are selected by the Forum members, and Forum presentations and workshops during the past year have included:

December 2015

- Findings of the FRESH research into under reporting of hate incidents in Shropshire
- Hate and sexism in Shropshire
- Hate and alternative appearance in Shropshire

March 2016

Possible responses to misogyny and everyday sexism (following the threat of a misogynist meeting in Shrewsbury)

June 2016

- Refugee Action's Shropshire Resettlement Programme
- What issues are refugees likely to face when moving to and living in Shropshire?
- What can we do individually and collectively to address these issues?

September 2016

Equality in Shropshire after the EU Referendum – what needs to happen next?

- **2016 Cultural Diversity Day**
Feedback suggested that this year's event was seen as one of the best so far, with forty one evaluations, all positive and with some helpful suggestions for the future. Comments included: "Great to see such diversity, that is often not obvious in Shropshire"; "Great event, just like every year!"; "Great event, lovely vibe, brilliant people, extremely well organised"; "Brilliant idea and execution"; "One of the most focused so far..."
- **Supporting equality and diversity**
FRESH has undertaken work with a range of organisations to address different aspects of equality and diversity. Among these have been:
 - **Work with Shrewsbury Folk Festival** to address the controversial issue of 'blackface' Morris team performances.
 - **Work with Shrewsbury Museum and Art Gallery** to ensure that their exhibition space is lit in a way that ensures good access for visually impaired people
 - **Correspondence with Shropshire CCG** seeking information about the equality impacts of changes to eligibility criteria for the Hospital Transport service
 - **Correspondence with SSS Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust** seeking information about the equality impacts of introducing mixed-sex wards at Redwoods Hospital
 - **Work with the national Hope not Hate organisation** to set up a Shropshire group to respond to the increase in community divisions and hate incidents since the EU referendum campaign

5 FRESH Directors and Officers at 31 August 2016

Name and position in FRESH	Other work and positions
Jill Bedford (Director)	Community Development freelancer, Director of Changes
Steve Cunningham (Director)	Senior Community Action Officer, Shropshire Council
Marinke Fontein (Director, Treasurer and Deputy Secretary)	Freelancer, community campaigner and volunteer at Powys Citizens Advice Bureau
Sue Gorbing (Director)	Director of Changes and Safe Ageing No Discrimination
Andrew Gough (Director and Vice Chair)	Community Safety Team Manager, Shropshire Council
Geoffrey Hardy (Director)	Community Activist, Rainbow Film Festival organiser, Director of Safe Ageing No Discrimination
Jonathan Hyams (Director and Secretary)	Freelancer, Trustee and Chair, Disability Arts in Shropshire, Director, Sostenga llp;
Ann Johnson (Director)	Managing Director, Wave-length Social Marketing plc
Peter Roscoe (Director and Chair)	Ex-solicitor, community campaigner, Rainbow Film Festival organiser

6 What FRESH wants to achieve in the next three years

FRESH has drafted its Business Plan up to 2019, which sets out a number of key priorities. These include:

- A transition from being significantly reliant on grants and donations to a more earnings-led, sustainable and secure financial position;
- Focusing FRESH's income-generating work on educational equality, research, equality impact assessment, consultancy services, training courses and workshops;
- Continuing to give priority to FRESH's not for profit activities, including the small grants scheme, the Equality Forum, the Cultural Diversity Day, and support for good equality practice
- Recruiting new Directors and providing training and personal development for our present Board to strengthen our collective financial management, charity and company law, marketing, and health and safety skills and knowledge.
- Balancing our need to generate income and the need to continue providing non-profit services to members and our wider communities;
- Raising sufficient income to support FRESH's small equality grants scheme, run its not for profit activities and employ one or two part time workers, enabling the Directors to focus on making FRESH more sustainable and ready for tendering.

FRESH's unpaid work will include:

- FRESH Equality Forum meetings;
- FRESH Human Rights strategy;
- Challenging inappropriate or/and poor equality practice;
- FRESH small equality grants scheme;
- Providing advice on equality, diversity and anti-discrimination issues;
- The annual Shrewsbury Cultural Diversity Day and associated projects;
- FRESH must provide real benefits to its members, and FRESH membership needs to grow;
- FRESH will develop and formalise relationships with a group of freelance associates to deliver some of our work;
- FRESH needs marketing approaches that:
 - Project us as the destination of choice for queries and work on equality, diversity, and challenging prejudice and discrimination;
 - Give a clear message about the wider aspects of our work, together with specific messages for different audiences and purposes;
 - Provide a core 'product list'.

7 FRESH and the Fire Service – Value of Membership

FRESH provides the Service with valuable information and networks accessible through the Equality Forum and other FRESH events and initiatives.

8 Financial Implications

The annual FRESH Ltd. membership subscription is currently £100.

9 Legal Comment

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

10 Appendix

There are no appendices attached to this report.

11 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.