

Annual update on Fairness, Respect, Equality Shropshire (FRESH) 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, Diversity &
Inclusion Officer on 01743 260236.

1 Purpose of Report

To provide an update on the progress of Fairness, Respect, Equality
Shropshire (FRESH) Ltd, from 2019-2020, as requested by the Committee.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the report and the FRESH report
attached at the Appendix to the report.

3 Background

FRESH has been a community benefit society since 2013. The Service has
been a member of this society since its incorporation and the Equality,
Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group have endorsed the Service's
membership of this annually, and last renewed this in 2019.

4 FRESH's work during 2019-2020

FRESH Equality Forum Meetings

FRESH continue to organise and facilitate the Equality Forum, providing a
space for Shropshire organisations and people to network and explore
equality issues. Due to Covid-19 restrictions only one has been held in
December 2019, this was a successful session on equality and the benefits
systems and was facilitated by Sue Bott CBE, Head of Policy and Research
with Disability Rights UK.

Small Equality Grants and Donations

FRESH only received 1 application which they feel is due to the impact Covid-19 is having on community-level activities.

Please see the attached appendix for further detail.

Events

None this year.

Equality and Anti-Discrimination Training

Two outstanding requests which it has not been possible to progress to date.

Campaigns, Challenges and Critical Friendships

Taken part in a number of initiatives including:

- Providing a statement to the Shropshire Star supporting Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service's positive action taster days
- Correspondence to Shropshire Council regarding plans for transgender guidance
- Supporting the Humanist Society's national joint statement
- Correspondence with Shropshire Council's Statutory Safeguarding Business Partner

See appendix for further details.

Contracts and Projects

- Shropshire's Refugee families
- 'Notable' community music project

5 Capacity

There are no capacity impacts arising from this report.

6 Collaboration / Partnership Working

There may be future opportunities for collaboration or partnership working with FRESH depending on the projects that they are undertaking.

7 Community Safety

There are positive impacts on community involvement and inclusion to the Service

8 Environmental

There are no environmental impacts arising from this report.

9 Equality Impact Assessment

This is a historic report on work undertaken, therefore there are no equality or diversity implications arising from this report. However, there will be positive impacts arising from the work of FRESH.

10 Financial Implications

The annual FRESH membership subscription is currently £105 and is authorised at the EDI steering group.

11 Health and Safety

There are no health and safety impacts arising from this report.

12 Human Rights (including Data Protection)

There are no human rights impacts arising from this report.

13 ICT

There are no ICT impacts arising from this report.

14 Legal Comment

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

15 Public Value / Service Delivery

There will be positive impacts on being a member of this group as it ensures we are aware of any issues in our community that may impact on service delivery.

16 Reputation

There is a positive impact of being a member of this group as it connects us to our local communities and shows our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

17 Security

There are no security impacts arising from this report.

18 Training

There are no training impacts arising from this report.

19 Appendix

FRESh work and activities 2019-2020

20 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.



Fairness, Respect Equality Shropshire (FRESH) Ltd Work and activities 2019 – 2020

To: Strategy and Resources Committee,
Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service

From: Jonathan Hyams, FRESH Ltd

20th October 2020

1. General comments on FRESH's work during 2019 – 20

FRESH began the year with a revised Business Plan, which committed us to continue developing a range of equality-focused consultancy, advisory, training and assessment services for statutory authorities, voluntary and community sector organisations and private companies. These services would benefit organisations and their local communities in and sometimes beyond Shropshire.

Key points in the business plan included:

- Growing FRESH membership, and providing real benefits to our members
- Seeking grant funding to support the FRESH small equality grants scheme and to employ a part time worker, possibly shared with other organisations, which would enable Directors to focus on making FRESH more sustainable and able to secure further funding and income. Membership fees would continue to provide a small but important contribution to FRESH's income.
- FRESH's continuing unpaid work would include:
 - FRESH Equality Forum meetings;
 - Challenging inappropriate or/and poor equality practice;
 - Providing advice on equality, diversity and anti-discrimination issues;
 - Providing support for cultural events such as the Shrewsbury Cultural Diversity Day, Oswestry 'Culturefest, and associated projects.

In the event, in common with the majority of community and voluntary sector organisations, FRESH has had a difficult and frustrating year. This has been created by ongoing scarcity of funding opportunities, capacity limitations within FRESH in part due to sickness and accidents, and by the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020. We have been constrained in our ability to provide support and services to our usual standards, but we have been able to respond to a range of requests for support and information and have managed to sustain a significant FRESH presence as a foundation for future development and activity.

2. **FRESH Equality Forum**

We intended to organise three Forum meetings during this period. In the event, we ran only one; a very successful session on 12th December 2019. This consisted of a presentation and workshops on equality and the benefits system, facilitated by Sue Bott CBE, Head of Policy and Research with Disability Rights UK.

We considered running Forum meetings virtually but concluded that this would not be appropriate because their impact depends so much on networking and personal interchanges.

3. **FRESH Small Equality Grants and Donations**

Shropshire Inclusive Dance applied in February 2019 for a grant to support four disabled dancers travelling to a national dance event ('Surf the Wave') in Bournemouth in May 2019, where they performed and presented their experiences as disabled dancers. This grant remained unclaimed until 5th November 2019.

There have been no subsequent grant applications, which we believe reflects the impact of C-19 on community-level activities.

4. **Events**

Similarly, there have been no local events this year, so no FRESH involvement.

5. **Equality and Anti-Discrimination Training**

We have two outstanding requests to design and deliver equality training, one from Whitchurch Town Council and the other from an Oswestry school. It has not been possible to progress either of these requests and we intend to contact them again in January 2021 to explore options.

6. **Campaigns, challenges and critical friendships**

During the year FRESH taken part in a number of initiatives, including:

- Giving a statement to Nick Humphreys of the Shropshire Star, supporting Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service's positive action Taster Days
- Correspondence with the Acting Chief Executive at Shropshire Council to seek clarification over the Council's plans for transgender guidance to schools and colleges.
- Supporting the Humanist Society's national joint statement opposing any action by the UK Government to restrict human rights law or judicial review.
- Correspondence with Shropshire Council's Statutory Safeguarding Business Partner about potential FRESH involvement in the new Shropshire Safeguarding Community Partnership.

7. **Contracts and projects**

7.1 **Work with Shropshire's Refugee families**

FRESH received a grant from Refugee Action in 2018 to develop work with Shropshire's Refugee families to support their capacity to earn incomes and

support themselves financially and socially. It was originally proposed to focus on preparing and selling Syrian/ Lebanese food, using local community fairs and events as a platform. This early work proved difficult for a variety of reasons, and discussions were being started early in 2020 with local refugee support organisations about how to refocus the project. Since the Covid-19 crisis, no further progress has been possible.

7.2 'Notable' community music project

Music – whether singing, playing or listening - is widely recognised as a powerful way to reduce the impact of stress and emotional distress, and as making a significant contribution towards reducing isolation and strengthening community cohesion.

FRESh is working with an independent local musician and musicologist, developing a pilot project to work with people within the protected characteristics or/and experiencing social or economic exclusion, who have a musical interest or skill, to enable them to develop their wider skills, self-knowledge and confidence through musical and basic community development skills training and education. This development work was started pre-Covid and is now being adapted to seek funding to be run virtually.