

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 Muhammad Younis, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer, on 01743 260236.

1 Purpose of Report

This report sets out the progress made by Fairness, Respect Equality Shropshire (FRESH) Ltd. from September 2016 to September 2017, 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

Fairness, Respect Equality Shropshire (FRESH) Ltd. was incorporated by the Financial Conduct Agency on 28 June 2013 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 and subsequently in September 2017.

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 2016 – 17

FRESH has continued to develop its core paid and unpaid work against a background which has seen a national increase in discrimination and hate incidents which has been echoed in Shropshire. The focus of FRESH Equality Forum meetings has reflected this changed environment, with Forum members wishing to explore the experience of refugees coming to live in Shropshire, the impact of sexism in Shropshire following the threat of a local misogynistic rally, and an exploration of equality in Shropshire following the EU referendum campaigns.

FRESH is being asked more frequently by schools to support their work on diversity, and has worked with arts and cultural organisations to explore aspects of diversity in their public performances.

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 and supporting staff in Community Reporting Centres.

FRESH was also commissioned to prepare a plan for implementation of a new Community Hate Crime Reporting Centre county network, together with an appropriate training and support programme.

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

Unpaid work has included:

FRESH Equality Forum

Currently there are 120 individuals and organisations on the Equality Forum mailing list, an increase of some 24% since last year. Attendance at the quarterly Forum meetings has again varied between 10 and 32, depending on the topic and time of year.

Forum topics are selected by the Forum members, and Forum topics during the year included:

- March - Sexism in Shropshire following the “Roosh V” demonstration threat 2016
- June – the experience of refugees in Shropshire
- September - Equality in Shropshire after the EU referendum
- December - Pregnancy and parenting rights

2017 Cultural Diversity Day.

Cultural Diversity Day attracted large number of people again this year. Feedback suggested that everyone who took part enjoyed the event.

Comments included: “... fantastic choice of music, and participation with the Bhangra dancing”, “... vibrant and colourful; attracted a crowd..”, “... excellent and diverse talent...”, “Participative and very inclusive”, “... diversity, creativity and talent extremely inclusive...”, “Allowed us to see new items...”, “... a great event – thank you!”

Oswestry Culture Fest.

Oswestry Culture Fest attracted widespread press and media coverage and similar enthusiastic endorsement from people who attended:

Comments included“... we live in a multicultural society... please can we have another next year, so it becomes an annual event here – thank you!”, “Well done!”, “It made me so happy! This was a huge success – can we have more like it?”, “It’s important to talk about and enjoy cultural issues and identity. Really great that you engaged and made them visible!”, “Good to have (such a) positive event”

Supporting Equality and Diversity.

FRESh has undertaken work with a range of organisations to address different aspects of equality and diversity, which have included:

- **Work with Shrewsbury Folk Festival** to address the controversial issue of ‘blackface’ Morris team performances, resulting in national debate about the issue and the Folk Festival’s decision not to book such acts in future.
- **Work with British Institute of Human Rights** to organise the return of the British Institute of Human Rights annual roadshow to Shropshire.
- **Co-ordinating and leading a wide partnership** with support from the Arts Councils in England and Wales, England-wide performance arts organisations, Chester and Birmingham Universities and West Mercia PCC to develop a three year Marches-wide project (Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin, Herefordshire and Powys) using ‘pop-up’ street theatre, puppetry and visual art at local community events to raise public awareness of hate incidents and crimes and how to report them.

FRESh Members, Directors and Officers at 31 August 2017

FRESh's membership now stands at 28 full members and 4 associate members.

Name and position in FRESh	Other work and positions
Alice Cruttwell (Director)	Public Health Curriculum Advisor, Shropshire Council
Marinke Fontein (Director and Treasurer)	Freelancer, community campaigner and volunteer at Powys Citizens Advice Bureau
Andrew Gough (Director and acting 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, DASH, Director, Sostenga llp
Russell Millhouse (Director)	Head of Secretariat & Student Support, University Centre Shrewsbury, Special Projects Adviser, Vice-Chancellor's Office, University of Chester

5 FRESh and the Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service – Value of Membership.

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

6 Financial Implications

The Annual FRESh Ltd. Membership subscription is currently £100

7 Legal Comment

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

8 Appendices

There are no appendices attached to this report.

9 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report