

## Partnership Working

### Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact John Redmond, Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260203 or Neil Griffiths, Group Commander Prevention, on 01743 260285.

#### 1 Purpose of Report

This report provides Members with an overview of the partnership working being undertaken by the Fire Authority and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (the Service).

#### 2 Recommendation

The Fire Authority is asked to note this report.

#### 3 Background

Partnership working is a key element in the Service strategy to meet its vision of "Putting Shropshire's Safety First". It is also a key theme of the Fire Service National Framework. The Fire Authority and the Service are actively involved in a number of partnerships, which are risk assessed for liability and reputation and scrutinised by the Service's Risk Management Group. This Group maintains a partnership register and monitors the outcome and productivity of each of the partnerships.

In 2012/13 the Service developed several new partnerships, which primarily support its prevention activities, in particular, providing a means to target some of the most vulnerable people in the community. All partnerships have been risk assessed and measurable objectives set.

Existing partnership arrangements, reported to the Fire Authority at this time last year, have been reviewed. Some continue, and others have been removed from the partnership register, where they no longer meet the partnership criteria, or where the input is considered disproportionate to the outcomes achieved.

## **4 Prevention Partnerships**

### **Current Ongoing Projects**

#### **Telford & Wrekin Council**

In 2014 the Service embarked on an ambitious new partnership project by embedding a supervisory officer within Telford & Wrekin Council. The purpose of the partnership is to produce a data-sharing protocol to enable the passing of data sets held by the Council to the Service. Much work is being undertaken by both organisations to ensure that the protocol meets the requirements of the Data Protection Act.

The data sets relate to one of the Service's most vulnerable groups, the over 75's, living alone. The vision is that by the end of the six months' project a robust data-sharing protocol will exist to enable important data, held by the Council, to be sent securely each month to the Service. This will be used primarily by the wholetime watches to carry out community fire safety work.

The protocol will then be used as a template to create and service other partnerships with bodies, such as Shropshire Council, with the assurance that the agreements comply with legislation and essentially provide a robust number of referrals to the Service.

#### **Health Visitor Groups**

In order to target the opposite end of our vulnerable groups spectrum (those aged 5 and under) work is currently being undertaken to re-energise the partner agency referral form used by Health Visitors and Community Midwives to identify those most at need of intervention from the Service.

#### **Safeguarding Adults Board**

Membership of the Board gives the Service access to other agency members to identify and address any individuals or groups and explore the best way in which to intervene and protect them from fire or other emergencies.

### **Existing Partnerships**

#### **Sevenside Housing and Other Housing Organisations**

In 2012 the Service entered into a risk reduction partnership agreement with Sevenside Housing, who own and manage in excess of 5,300 homes in Shrewsbury and its surrounding villages. Whilst most of these homes are located within areas previously targeted for home safety advice, many of the harder-to-reach tenants have never received fire safety advice.

Sevenside Housing operates a team of specialist housing officers, who deal exclusively with these people and who can gain access, through the terms of the tenancy agreement. The Service had previously embedded a home fire safety specialist into the team for three days each week, resulting in around 250 home fire safety checks in homes occupied by the most vulnerable residents, including known hoarders, since the scheme began.

This officer has now left the Service but the lessons learned will be utilised by the team as a whole and relationships formed will be regularly revitalised.

The success of the partnership, including evidence of the real difference they can make to people's lives and the influence we have on Severnside Housing staff, has resulted in the roll-out of partnerships with other social landlords. Similar work with Wrekin Housing Trust, Meres and Mosses and South Shropshire Housing is in progress. The Severnside Housing relationship has been key to this, as it has encouraged uptake by the other providers. The Service's new "hub" based approach with a safety in the home team member geographically located in all corners of the County will continue to service this and other partnerships.

### **The Women's Institute**

The Service came to an agreement with the Women's Institute (WI) in Shropshire for their members to carry out home fire safety checks in remote areas on a voluntary basis. Each local WI is encouraged to provide volunteers. To date 15 groups (more than 300 members in total) have offered their services and training has been given. Some groups will carry out home fire safety checks and fit smoke alarms; others have offered to report derelict properties, action removal of fly tipping, or just be more aware of home safety, when visiting friends and family, signposting to the Service, if necessary. The partnership is particularly productive in Cleobury Mortimer, which is especially pleasing due to its rural nature.

### **The British Red Cross**

In May 2013 the Service, in partnership with the British Red Cross (BRC) took ownership of a new Fire Emergency Support Service (FESS) vehicle, operated by a cadre of BRC volunteers. Volunteers provide support to victims of fire and other emergencies, either whilst fire crews are still on scene or when they have left. This service, although still in its infancy has developed exponentially in the first year and call outs are well over 30 for that period. This is testament to how the service is valued by staff and embedded into the organisation through regular updates, visits, officer-in-charge meetings and reports on FESS call outs via the Service's weekly newsletter, The Pink. The BRC is pleased with the results and is now trying to re energise similar services in Hereford and Worcester, based on the successes they have had in Shropshire. In recognition of the contribution of Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service to FESS the lead officer attended a Royal Garden Party to celebrate 150 years of BRC's contribution to humanitarian services.

### **The Institute of Advanced Motoring and Safer Roads Partnership**

The Service continues to work with the Institute of Advanced Motorists, targeting young drivers with more advanced tuition immediately after they have passed their driving test. The Service's Chief Fire Officers have been actively engaged in this partnership for a number of years and John Redmond has been installed as President for a further term. The Service is also a member of the Safer Roads Partnership in West Mercia, which directs road safety education across the County. Although the lead officer has recently left, this area of work will become a key part of the role of the successor to the position.

## **Clinical Commissioning Group and North Shrewsbury Friendly Neighbours**

The Service also actively engages with a range of other delivery partners without the requirements of formal arrangements. For example, during 2012 the Service provided fire safety awareness training for forty care co-ordinators as part of an agreement with the newly constituted Clinical Commissioning Group. A further ten co-ordinators from the North Shrewsbury Friendly Neighbours group have received similar training; these people work with predominantly elderly people in Harlescott and Sundorne.

### **Air Products**

A new agreement with Air Products has resulted in operational crews being aware of the location of medical oxygen cylinders throughout the County, providing improved safety for firefighters. At the same time, the Prevention Team is able to direct resources to carry out home safety visits with oxygen users, who tend to be suffering long-term or chronic illness.

## **5 Local Strategic Partnerships, Bronze Level Tasking and Local Joint Committees**

The Service continues to maintain strong links with the statutory partnerships, such as the Safer and Stronger Communities Board (Shropshire) and the Safer Cohesive Communities Partnership (Telford & Wrekin) and a number of sub-groups focussing on specific areas.

The Service also attends Local Joint Committee meetings, to provide information to the local population on matters of interest from the Service. Meetings are normally attended by local station personnel, demonstrating commitment to local issues.

The Bronze Level Tasking groups operate both centrally as well as specifically in Shrewsbury town centre and are well attended by multi-agency partners, co-operating in joint initiatives. The “Harlescott Day of Action” provided a joined-up approach from partners for a specific 24 hour timeframe, which benefitted both the community and targeted groups with a shared vision and resources. The statistics demonstrate that the rubbish removed by the Council, the visits to the schools by the Fire Service and the increased Police presence all contribute to a reduction in calls and an improvement in people’s lives.

The Service provides support to these partnerships via direct assistance or by working with them to cascade the safety messages via their own trained staff.

## **6 The Burns Extrication Partnership**

The primary aim of this partnership, started by West Midlands Fire Service, is the gathering and sharing of casualty history information between fire and rescue services and the NHS Burns and Trauma Units across our region and, it is hoped, wider across the country.

Trauma clinicians believe that “the mechanism of injury is 80% of the diagnosis of their patients”. Traditionally, casualties rescued from fires arrive in the NHS Trauma and Burns Units with very limited information about the circumstances surrounding how they received their injuries. Paramedics would normally simply state that they had been rescued by the Fire Service. This would lead to doctors having to make assumptions about how the injuries were sustained, which could not guarantee that they were able to provide the most effective treatments for their patients.

The Burns Extrication Partnership has been developed to improve on this situation. Now, whenever a casualty is rescued from a fire, once the incident has been stabilised, the Incident Commander completes a Casualty Form, which gives details about the fire and how the casualty was found, rescued and the first aid treatment, which the Fire Service gave to the casualty. Laminated forms have now been issued to all Incident Commanders in the Service to prompt this action at the scene.

This information is relayed to Fire Control, who then email the form through to the specialist Trauma and Burns Units in the Region. This ensures that important information is available to the trauma teams in time to inform their decision making about treatment for the casualty. Whilst fire injuries are thankfully rare in Shropshire, this partnership will help to ensure that, when they do occur, the Service is doing everything it can to give the casualty the best chance of survival. Following his involvement in such a rescue, Watch Manager Phil Davies has led on the implementation of this partnership for Shropshire.

## **7 The Mihai Eminescu Trust**

Other partnerships have different aims and objectives, such as the Mihai Eminescu Trust (of which HRH Prince of Wales is patron). Originally at the invitation of Shropshire Council, Members of the Fire Authority and staff from the Service worked in partnership with the Trust during 2012. They arranged the transportation and donation of redundant fire appliances and equipment to remote areas of Transylvania to support charitable conservation work, aimed at preserving the heritage and culture and the region's Saxon communities.

The partnership was extended into 2013 with additional appliances and equipment donated, together with activities undertaken with the Trust and local Romanian firefighters to paint and decorate an old persons' home. The partnership offers unique personal development opportunities and those involved from the Authority / Service do so on an entirely voluntary basis with all activities carried out in their own free time. Participants have raised approximately £20,000 to purchase the redundant appliances that have been donated to date and cake sales are held regularly to keep the contributions coming in. The 2014 visit left the UK on 30 June to take a fleet of fire appliances over to Romania for what promises to be a stimulating and rewarding trip for all and one that will make a huge difference to people's lives.

## **8 Equality and Diversity Partnerships**

The Service's Equality and Diversity section deals with a number of partnerships and groups, including Shropshire Disability Network, Shrewsbury Action against Racism, the Shropshire Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Group and the Rainbow Film Festival. Some of these groups also provide small funding grants to a diverse range of groups and events, running projects that support equality and diversity criteria, including Hate Crime Shropshire and Rights and Fairness Telford (RAFT).

The new independent Fairness, Respect, Equality Shropshire Ltd (FRESH), a Community Benefit Society established to take over and develop the role and functions of Shropshire Equalities Forum is a task-and-finish partnership group to align equality and diversity policy and practice more closely across the Fire Authority, Shropshire Council, West Mercia Police and the Clinical Commissioning Group. Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service is committed to this group and the most recent meeting was held at Service Headquarters, chaired by the Service's Equality and Diversity Officer and attended by other senior officers.

## **9 Financial Implications**

Information on income and expenditure within partnerships is collected and updated in line with the frequency of monitoring, which takes place on each partnership and is recorded on the partnership register.

Any changes to income and expenditure are logged and discussed at meetings of the Risk Management Group and a report is taken to the Service Management Team annually. Income and expenditure also form part of the risk assessment of the partnerships.

## **10 Legal Comment**

The functions exercised within the partnership working arrangements fall within the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and the aims and objectives of the Fire Authority.

## **11 Initial Impact Assessment**

An Initial Impact Assessment has been completed.

## **12 Appendices**

There are no appendices attached to this report.

## **13 Background Papers**

There are no background papers associated with this report.