

## Shropshire Equalities Forum and Inauguration of 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 Jonathan Hyams, Equality and Diversity Officer, on 01743 260236.

### 1 Purpose of Report

This report sets out the progress made by the Shropshire Equalities Forum, as requested by the Fire Authority, and advises of the inauguration of Fairness, Respect Equality Shropshire (FRESH) Ltd.

### 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

Shropshire Equalities Forum was established in March 2005, and worked and held open meetings throughout Shropshire until its formal dissolution on 27 June 2013. During this time the Forum had been sustained by several people and organisations remaining at the centre of its work, the Service being one of these.

The Forum had a number of important achievements in progressing the wider equality and diversity agenda in Shropshire, including:

- Establishing a small equality grants scheme for community groups;
- Supporting the establishment and continuance of events, including the annual Holocaust Memorial Day events in Shropshire;
- Providing a safe discussion forum for controversial equality issues and problems in the County;
- Supporting its members in developing good equality and diversity practice; and
- Providing critical support to organisations in developing their equality policy and action plans.

With funding support from Shropshire Council ending as a consequence of the present financial constraints, the Forum felt that a new independent organisation should be set up to take over and develop the Forum's values and work in Shropshire. In September 2012 it set up its own 'Futures' Group to take this agenda forward.

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

## **4 Forum Progress 2012/13**

In the period 1 October 2012 to 27 June 2013 the Forum had:

- Agreed to set up a Community Benefit Society to take over the functions of the Forum
- Played an active role in progressing the Shropshire Hate crime Reporting campaign
- Responded to several consultations, including the draft CCG Inequalities Strategy for Shropshire
- Actively supported the Marriage for All campaign
- Kept its members updated with information on national equality and diversity policy news and on local equality and diversity activities and events
- Continued to administer the small equality grants programme
- Assembled and edited an equality and diversity events and festivals calendar

Since its inauguration on 28 June 2013 FRESH Ltd has:

- Confirmed initial funding for launch and development;
- Been registered as a community benefit society (community co-operative); and
- Responded to issues and consultations (silver tasking group on its progress on hate crime, response to consultation on Police and Crime Commissioner draft community engagement strategy).

Amongst other aims, the immediate plans include running a formal launch event (wider public, organisations, press, etc.) in February or March 2014 to include:

- A press launch for FRESH, with a 'story' on which to focus the event
- A forum (stalls, marketplace, or similar) for FRESH members
- Information about FRESH itself
- Short 'drop-in' workshops on equality, diversity and anti-discrimination themes

## **5 Financial Implications**

The annual FRESH Ltd membership subscription is currently £100.00.

## **6 Legal Comment**

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

## **7 Appendix**

There are no appendices attached to this report.

## **8 Background Papers**

There are no background papers associated with this report.