

Rights and Fairness Telford

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 of Rights and Fairness Telford, as requested by the Fire Authority.

2

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the report.

3 Background

RAFT last received a financial contribution from the Fire Authority in 2010/11 of £5,000 for a service level agreement containing commitments to:

- Identify research activities needed to make informed decisions about the allocation of future resources to address problem areas, for example possible measures to address fires affecting people with mental health difficulties or drug-related issues
- Secure funding and resources to undertake these research activities
- Explore with the then Shropshire Equalities Forum potential areas for collaborative working, sharing resources and avoiding duplication of effort.

RAFT has not so far been able to deliver the above commitments, and hence has received no financial contribution from the Fire Authority since 2010/11. It has, however, done important work with other partners on the Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin LGB Research project, designing the research survey and overseeing the on-line research process.

4 Update from RAFT

In addition to its work on the LGB Research Project, RAFT has provided a summary of other projects and services provided during the past year. It has also provided infrastructure support for the equality and human rights voluntary and community sector in Telford & Wrekin and the surrounding area, much of which has been in partnership with public sector partners, including Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service, Telford & Wrekin Council and West Mercia Police. This includes:

Up-Start! Telford and Wrekin

This is RAFT's 'flagship' youth employment project, working for the communities of Telford & Wrekin. Funded through the Big Lottery Reaching Communities fund, RAFT has recruited three new staff members to work with young people from equality mandate communities that are not in education, employment or training (NEET) or at risk of becoming NEET. Up-Start! is a 'young person centred project'.

Volunteer service users and community-based mentors are made aware, supported and managed to enable them to 'find their voice and tell their story about who they are and what their lives are like'. The volunteers are engaged in practical skills training, such as using gardening tools, plant seed, paint brushes, ladders, scalpel knives, sprays, laptops, computers and cameras, supervised and supported by the project officers and, to a lesser extent, their mentors. Those attending on a regular basis have excelled within their respective capacities.

The project offers the following activities for young people in Telford & Wrekin:

- **Community regeneration**, involving regular volunteers and mentors in the beautification of local supported housing projects, such as internal stairwells and open spaces transformed to gardens
- **Community gardening**, involving regular volunteers and mentors in planting, propagating, team sharing and selling of food
- **Creative writing / magazine**, in which regular volunteers engaged in creative writing that filters through into RAFT publicity etc.
- **Music workshop**, where regular volunteers and mentors are engaged in forming a new band / signing groups, who propose to rehearse and perform gigs
- **Art workshop**, involving volunteers and mentors in drawing, painting and stencilling that has so far resulted in a major public art exhibition in partnership with the local authority and private sector developers
- **Life group / project management support**, where all volunteers and mentors participate in a series of life-skilling workshops, covering cooking, budgeting, debate, project planning, marketing, and enterprise

Dementia Project

RAFT has undertaken a scoping exercise covering the impact of dementia on protected characteristic communities, including accessing the barriers to diagnosis, perceptions of the condition within specific communities and planning for addressing those perceptions and barriers through targeted awareness raising.

This project is being delivered in partnership with Telford & Wrekin Council, Telford and Wrekin CCG and Telford Senior Citizens' Forum.

Early Years Intervention Project

RAFT is delivering an infrastructure project supporting voluntary and community sector agencies, engaged in early years intervention work in the Telford & Wrekin area. This includes mapping and networking the sector and creating a range of resources for agencies and Telford & Wrekin Council, focused on supporting the people from protected characteristic communities.

Arts and Cohesion Project

RAFT is working with partners to develop a new approach to promoting effective community cohesion through arts, media and culture. This project is at an early stage but it is hoped that it will develop into a new strategic arts programme for Telford, bringing together different communities to promote public and street art as a means of targeting a range of issues, including anti-social behaviour and hate crime.

Advice Partners Telford

RAFT, Telford & Wrekin Citizens' Advice Bureau, A4U and Listen Not Label were successful in attracting over £300,000 Big Lottery funding to create a two-year project within the local information, advice and guidance voluntary and community sector. The project commenced in September 2013, and is undertaking preventative work to try and reduce the burden on advice providers and create stronger more resilient community support for people in need of information, advice and guidance services.

For more information on RAFT's services, please contact Patrick Devine on 01952 916100.

RAFT is committed to work in partnership with Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service in the forthcoming years to help promote fairness and human rights within Telford, Wrekin and Shropshire. RAFT is currently developing a prospectus of community services, which it will be looking to deliver for the communities of Telford & Wrekin, as well as a catalogue of services that it will be able to deliver to the public and private sector. RAFT is firmly committed to embracing a new approach to working as a supplier of services both to, and on behalf of, RAFT's partner agencies.

5 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

6 Legal Comment

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

7 Initial Impact Assessment

This report provides purely factual information, updating Members on the work of RAFT, so an Initial Impact Assessment has not been completed.

8 Appendices

There are no appendices attached to this report.

9 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.