

## Shropshire Partnership Equalities Forum – progress during 2010/11

### Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact Paul Raymond, Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260205 or Natalie Parkinson, Equality and Diversity Officer on 01743 260236.

#### 1 Purpose of Report

To inform the Human Resources Committee of the progress of the Shropshire Equality and Diversity Forum, as requested by the Fire Authority.

#### 2 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report

#### 3 Background

In 2004, following the demise of Telford and Shropshire Race Equality Council, Shropshire Partnership commissioned Sushel Ohri Associates to produce a report entitled 'Step Change for Diversity Equality in Shropshire'.

The report highlighted a growing recognition that equality and diversity was a growing national, regional and local issue, and made a number of recommendations including the formation of a Shropshire Equality Forum. The Forum had its first meeting in March 2005. The Forum has been meeting and working across Shropshire since then, and has a number of important achievements in progressing the equality and diversity agenda in Shropshire.

In February 2006 the Fire Authority authorised a one-off grant to the Forum of £5,000 for the 2006/07 financial year. There have been no subsequent requests for further funding. The Service has been involved as members of the Forum since its inception, attending and supporting many of the additional sub group and project meetings.

The Equality Forum undertook a tender process for the running of the Forum. Shrewsbury College were successful with their application and took over the running of the Forum on 1 April 2011.

#### **4 Forum Progress 2010/11**

Progress until the end of August 2011:

- restructuring and refreshing the role of the Equalities Forum
- agreed to hold 4 meetings annually
- they have increased membership by over 5%
- continued with its small grants' award scheme, which enables small equality and diversity projects to be run in the County, and have agreed funding for events and allocated £300 to each event, these include SAAR Cultural Diversity Day, LGBT Rainbow Film Festival, and Holocaust Memorial Day events in Shropshire
- using the Forum to get members involved in the LGB Survey
- a Cultural Diversity Day was organised and held in The Square in Shrewsbury in July
- Shrewsbury College invited Michael Keating, Tower Hamlets' Members, as a guest speaker, who offered the forum an objective view, and also his experience, of what issues of equality actually mean and how they can be coordinated within the forum
- the objective agreed for this year is 'hate crime'
- Anne Shaw from West Mercia Constabulary has joined the Forum and introduced her role and responsibilities at the last meeting on the 6 July. Anne also provides the group with hate crime figures
- supporting a growing number of public equality and diversity events, which have, over time become part of the cultural calendar in Shropshire

The Forum brings together individuals and representatives from a wide range of statutory, voluntary and community groups and agencies across Shropshire, including:

Connexions, the Crown Prosecution Service, the Environment Agency, the Gypsy Liaison Service, HM Prison Shrewsbury, HomeStart, Job Centre Plus, Learning and Skills Council, health and hospital trusts, housing associations, Shrewsbury College, Shropshire Council, Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority, West Mercia Constabulary, West Mercia Criminal and Civil Justice Race Forum, West Mercia Probation Service, and West Midlands CESTC.

Voluntary and community organisations include: A4U, Age Concern, Asian Parents' Group, Bangladeshi Welfare Association, Bridges Project, Citizens' Advice Shropshire, Community Council of Shropshire, Fruit Bowl/ Rainbow Film Festival, Gender Matters, Headway Shropshire, Impact Alcohol Advisory Services, QUBE Oswestry, Samaritans Shropshire, Shrewsbury Unite Against Fascism, Shrewsbury Action Against Racism, Shropshire Buddies & Body Positive, Shropshire LGB Network, Shropshire MIND, Shropshire Senior Citizens Forum, Shropshire Youth Association

The Forum is used as an effective communication network by its members. The Service use it as a way to communicate with a range of groups, organisations and individuals across the County.

## **5 Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

## **6 Legal Comment**

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

## **7 Equality Impact Assessment**

An Initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required as this report is an update report looking at historical information.

## **8 Appendix**

There are no appendices attached to this report.

## **9 Background Papers**

- Shropshire Partnership Equalities Forum: Human Resources Committee agenda item 9 – 27 May 2010
- Shropshire Partnership Equalities Forum: Human Resources Committee – December 2008
- Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority, 8 February 2006, agenda item 18 - Shropshire Partnership Equalities Forum