

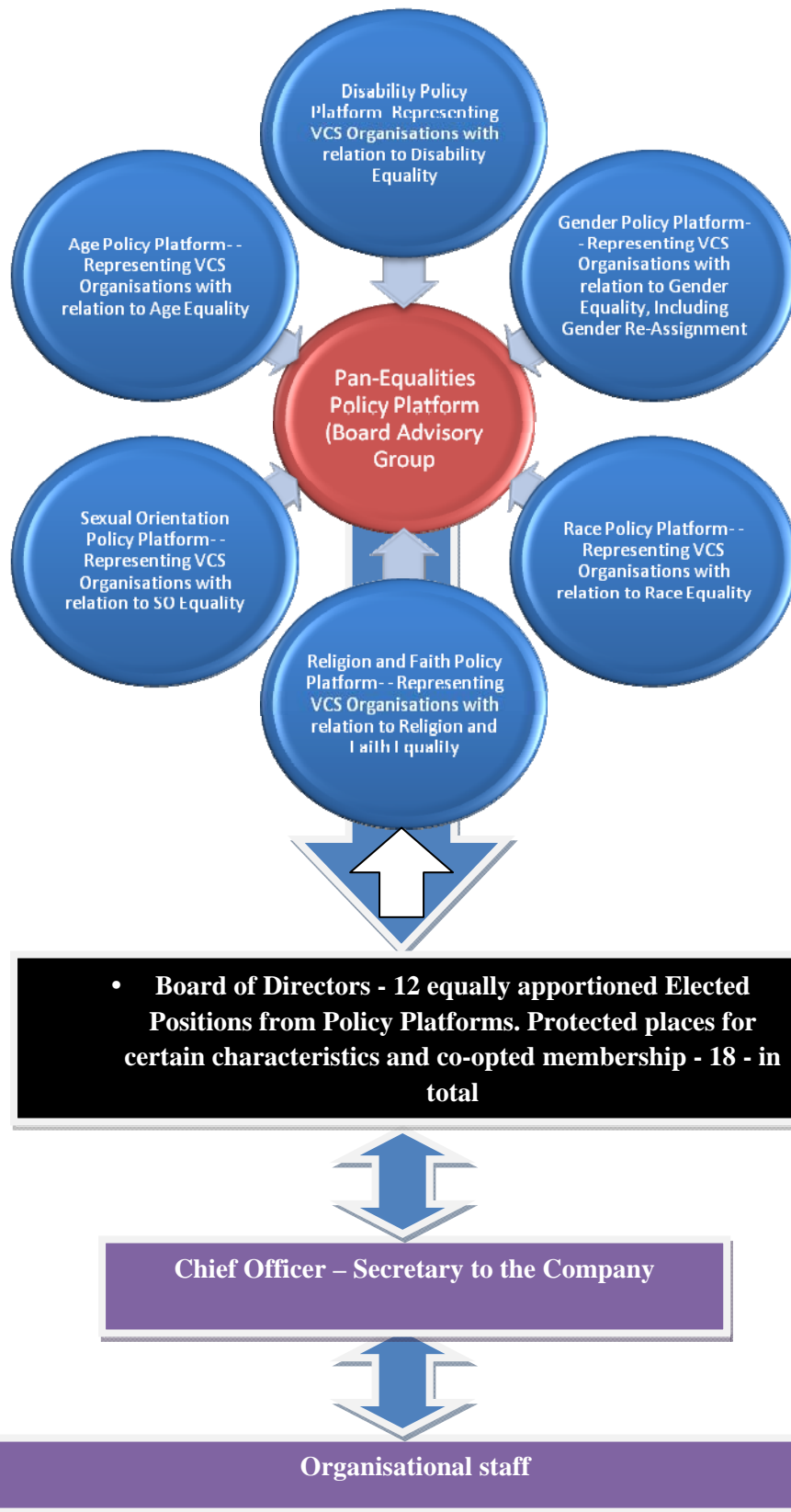
Rights and Fairness Telford – Review of Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service Grant Funding Specification 2010-2011

Telford Race, Equality and Diversity Partnership (TREDP) were provided funding by Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service for the financial year 2010/2011 as part of a partnership agreement with Telford and Wrekin Local Strategic Partnership. One of the key purposes of the funding was to contribute to the development of TREDP into a more comprehensive equality and human rights infrastructure organisation that could better represent the needs of those individuals falling within the provisions of the protected characteristics as detailed in The Equality Act 2010. The aim was also to move to a more holistic vision of equality, diversity and human rights that recognised that all members of the population of Telford and Wrekin contribute to the diversity of the Borough and should all be offered protection and support in terms of securing fair outcomes in all aspects of their life.

In August 2010, TREDP recruited a new Chief Officer for the organisation who was tasked with the redesign and establishment of a new Equality and Human Rights organisation for Telford and Wrekin. Throughout August and September 2010, the organisation continued to deliver against its historic funding and project commitments, whilst developing a new proposal on how equality, diversity and human rights should be addressed within the voluntary and community sector within Telford and Wrekin. In September 2010 a draft proposal was published detailing the new aims and objectives for the organisation and the redesign and establishment of a new governance and management structure that would deliver best practice in terms of fair and effective representation for all minority groups and would make the organisation unique within the United Kingdom. The redesign was focused around transparency, accountability and guaranteeing fair and equal representation for all minority and disadvantaged communities within the Borough. A significant consideration within the redesign was the proposed role of the new organisation. This was mainly in terms of the balance between directly providing services and acting as an infrastructure body that worked to further develop the existing voluntary and community work being undertaken with the target beneficiaries.

It was agreed, in partnership with user groups, partner agencies and community members, that the new organisation would fulfil a hybrid purpose of hosting services in the absence of another more suitable service provider, whilst seeking to help develop an organisation or organisations that could then take on delivery of that service. The new organisation would only deliver services to the community directly where it covered a number of beneficiary groups that would not be reached otherwise, or where it led a consortium funding arrangement and provided overall co-ordination of a project for the benefit of all groups. It was agreed that it was imperative to have a clear purpose for the new organisation and not to threaten or impinge upon the work already being undertaken in the sector or 'compete' with its membership organisations. The model of infrastructure adopted was one that was as minimal as possible whilst providing the flexibility to respond to need quickly.

A key part of achieving this aim was to design the governance structures appropriately to ensure user participation and democratic accountability within the organisation. The following diagram shows a simplified version of the final governance structure the organisation adopted.



In December 2010, the Management Board of Telford race, Equality and Diversity Partnership passed a resolution to formally begin the process of establishing the new company, including the dissolution of the management Board and transfer of assets to the new company. The work needed to achieve this was undertaken between January and April 2011 with the final TREDP Board meeting taking place in April 2011. The new Board, drawn from all equality communities within Telford formally met on 10 May 2011 and voted to call the new Charitable Company, Rights and Fairness Telford (RAFT). The name was chosen to reflect the new emphasis on protecting rights for all community members and to champion the causes of fairness and equity.

The new company was officially incorporated on 1 June 2011 and began the process of establishing a new way of approaching equality, fairness and human rights in Telford and Wrekin. The aims and objectives of the new company were agreed as:

- to promote the principles of Equality, Diversity and Human Rights and good relations between persons of diverse and disadvantaged groups without distinction of gender, faith or religion, age, race or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender identity and disability especially in the borough of Telford and Wrekin
- to work towards the elimination of all forms of discrimination and harassment perpetrated against individuals based upon their membership of a diverse, disadvantaged or minority group
- to engage in strategic, policy, campaigning and lobbying activities to promote the objects of the company. Including public education and awareness raising campaigns
- to act as the Equality and Human Rights infrastructure body for Telford and Wrekin, representing the needs of the sector in strategic, policy, campaigning and lobbying activities
- to undertake community development initiatives aimed at developing a vibrant and effective Equality and Human Rights voluntary and community sector
- where appropriate to engage in operational activities to provide services to members of minority and disadvantaged groups in the absence of a more appropriate service provider
- to create strategic partnerships with public, private and voluntary sector organisations in the furtherance of the objects of the Company:
- In the Borough of Telford and Wrekin; constituted by the geographical and where applicable political boundaries of the borough of Telford and Wrekin and County of Shropshire.

To ensure compliance with all contractual obligations that TREDP had entered into prior to the establishment of RAFT the new organisation has continued to deliver services and support organisations and individuals as agreed with funders. The following contractual requirements were established under the historic funding agreement with Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service for the period 2010-2011. A brief update on work undertaken is provided for each specified work area (in red) where appropriate.

Advice and information

TREDP/RAFT has continued to work in existing partnership arrangements with the private, public and voluntary sector as well as developing new working partnerships to reflect the increased scope of the new organisation. In terms of providing advice and guidance to victims of discrimination and harassment, the organisation has developed stronger links with the Citizen's Advice Bureau and has made and received referrals from that organisation throughout the period covered. Details of cases undertaken can be found below. RAFT has also brokered close working relationships with the Equality and Human Rights Commission for the provision of advice and guidance regarding casework covered by The Equality Act 2010. Further partnership working has been undertaken with the Police Service including the attendance at their LGB Independent Advisory Group meetings. In terms of information provided to enquiries regarding sources of support and guidance TREDP/RAFT has dealt with 265 direct enquiries from members of the public and organisations within the Borough.

TREDP/RAFT has supported 56 people with face to face support regarding issues of discrimination or harassment. This has ranged from people dropping into the offices and being signposted effectively, through to 26 case files being worked upon with 6 of those cases progressing to a full Employment Tribunal hearing

TREDP has worked closely in partnership with Telford and Wrekin Borough Council, West Mercia Police and other partners to address cases of discrimination and harassment. From the partnership working that has been undertaken, particularly within the voluntary and community setting, it has become apparent that a co-ordinated response to reporting and recording of hate crimes and incidents of discrimination and harassment needs to be developed. RAFT is currently preparing a funding proposal for establishing a third party reporting network within Telford and Wrekin and appropriate structures to enable victims of hate incidents to report in an effective manner, whilst being guaranteed an effective and good quality resolution to their incident.

Community development and engagement

TREDP/RAFT has continued to undertake community development and engagement work across the Borough of Telford and Wrekin throughout 2010/2011. In addition to delivering community grants programmes for both NHS Telford and Wrekin and Telford and Wrekin Council (Joint Commissioning Team), the organisation has also delivered a Vulnerable Communities' Project for Telford and Wrekin Council, aimed at supporting organisations through the economic downturn.

In addition to the funding granted to TREDP/RAFT to run these programmes, the organisation has been active in helping organisations to gain access to other funding pots whilst developing their own governance and management structures. TREDP/RAFT has worked intensively with over 30 organisations to help them develop and deliver services to their communities in a more effective and accountable manner. The organisation has also contributed to a Black Country Wide community enablement project seeking to help professionalise and develop the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) voluntary sector.

The funding provided through Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service has enabled TREDP/RAFT to engage directly in community engagement and development activities whilst providing the management resources to develop further funding applications and proposals that take the lessons learned and apply them to benefit more groups and individuals at need.

RAFT is currently working to develop and establish a new model of community engagement and capacity building that places more emphasis on community based responses and activities. It has been recognised that community and voluntary groups have been fearful of taking responsibility for running medium sized projects and services, and RAFT's new approach will seek to provide a helping hand in achieving this, whilst ensuring that those organisations and individuals are aware of, and able to comply with the responsibilities of managing publicly funded projects.

RAFT is currently working with Telford and Wrekin Council in establishing a Citizen's Panel that will provide a further level of engagement from vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in the process of transitioning to the new Co-operative Council model.

Public information and education

RAFT has continued to develop and deliver the extensive programme of raising public awareness and information about equality, diversity and human rights. The organisation has distributed information regarding the new Equality Act 2010 and the requirements placed upon public bodies to both employers and organisations, whilst helping local communities to understand the legislation from a user's perspective.

In the forthcoming year RAFT is planning to further develop this work and target training and information sources for the public and private sector providers, whilst also providing information in easy to understand formats to services users and community members.

Policy development

RAFT has worked extensively in consultation with the public sector to provide policy initiatives aimed at targeting a range of equality, diversity and human rights concerns and work areas.

One of the key pieces of work that RAFT has engaged in with the Fire Service has been the development and delivery of a LGB Survey that looks to plug the information gap that statutory agencies have regarding the needs, aspirations and experiences of the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual community. The project is currently due to go live following the Shropshire Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Film Festival in October 2011.

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 it will be looking to deliver for the communities of Telford and 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 with partner agencies, both as a supplier of services to and on their behalf.