

Partnership Working

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact Paul Raymond, Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260203 or Martin Timmis, Head of 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 the contents of the 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 Partnership Scrutiny. This Group maintains a partnership register and monitors the outcome and productivity of each of the partnerships.

In 2012/13 the Service has 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

Sevenside Housing and Other Housing Organisations

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

SH 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 has, therefore, embedded a home fire safety specialist into the SH team for three days each week, resulting in around 250 home fire safety checks in homes occupied by our most vulnerable residents since the scheme began. The partnership also provides a unique opportunity to gain access to homeless people in voluntary / emergency support accommodation on the back of other SH contracts.

The success of the SH partnership, including evidence of the real difference we are making to people's lives and the influence we have on SH staff, has resulted in our beginning to roll out partnerships with other social landlords. This month we start similar work with Wrekin Housing Trust, Meres & Mosses and South Shropshire Housing. Sevenside has been key to this, as it has encouraged uptake by the other providers.

The Women's Institute

The Service has recently come 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 begun. 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 British Red Cross

In May 2013 the Service in partnership with British Red Cross (BRC) took ownership of a new Fire Emergency Support Service vehicle, operated by a cadre of BRC volunteers. Volunteers provide support to victims of fire and other emergency, whilst fire crews are still on scene. The service is in its infancy in Shropshire but initial reports are that it provides a significant improvement in our customer focus, when victims are at their most distressed.

The Institute of Advanced Motoring and Safer Roads Partnership

We continue to work with the Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM), targeting young drivers with more advanced tuition immediately after passing their driving test. The Chief Fire Officer, who has been actively engaged in this partnership for a number of years, has been installed as president for a further term. We are also partners in the Safer Roads Partnership in West Mercia which directs road safety education across the County.

Clinical Commissioning Group and North Shrewsbury Friendly Neighbours

We also actively engage with a range of other delivery partners without the requirements of formal arrangements. For example, during 2012 we have 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 our operational crews being aware of the location of medical oxygen cylinders throughout the County, providing improved safety for firefighters; at the same time, our 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 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 the Local Joint Committees, to provide information to the local population on matters of interest from Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service. Meetings are normally attended by local station personnel, demonstrating our commitment to local issues.

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 the Fire Service gave the casualty.

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, we are doing everything we 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. Opportunities exist to extend the partnership into 2014.

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 (LGB) Group, the Rainbow Film Festival and, until its recent winding up, Shropshire Equalities Forum. 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 (which has until recently been attended by our Fire Crime Officer) and Rights and Fairness Telford (RAFT).

Potential developments include membership of the new independent Fairness, Respect, Equality Shropshire Ltd, a Community Benefit Society established to take over and develop the role and functions of Shropshire Equalities Forum, and 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.

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 in the Service's Partnership Scrutiny Group and a report is taken to the Senior 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.