

Shropshire Partnership Equalities Forum – Progress during 2009/10

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Purpose of Report

This report informs the Human Resources Committee of the progress on the Shropshire Equality and Diversity Forum, as requested by the Fire Authority.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the content of this report.

3 Background

In 2004, following the demise of Telford & 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 diversity and equality 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. SFRS have been involved as members of the Forum since its inception and attend and support many of the additional sub group and project meetings.

4 Forum Progress 2009/10

The Equality and Diversity Officer attends this group and is thus able to monitor progress. Despite some recent difficulties with organisation and attendance, the Equality Forum has achieved valuable work during the past year, including:

- Supporting the Hate Crimes campaign across the county;
- Supporting a growing number of public equality and diversity events which have over time become part of the cultural calendar in Shropshire;
- Continuing with its small grants award scheme which enables small equality and diversity projects to be run in the County;
- Work with Migrant Communities.

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

- Connexions,
- Crown Prosecution Service,
- Environment Agency,
- Gypsy Liaison Service,
- HM Prison Shrewsbury,
- Home Start Job Centre Plus,
- Learning & Skills Council,
- Health and Hospital Trusts,
- Housing Associations,
- Shrewsbury College of Arts & Technology,
- Shropshire Council,
- Shropshire Fire & Rescue Service,
- West Mercia Constabulary,
- West Mercia Criminal and Civil Justice Race Forum,
- West Mercia Probation Service,
- 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. SFRS use it as a way to communicate with a range of groups, organisations and individuals across the county: for example, consulting on our Single Equality Scheme.

The Forum's small grants award scheme is among its most valued initiatives among local community organisations. The scheme makes awards of up to £1,000 to support the development of locally-based equality and diversity events or projects, and its Assessment Panel meets quarterly to consider applications and award grants to suitable projects. The Equality and Diversity Officer is a member of the Panel. Some examples of grants during 2009/10 are as follows:

Name of project	Detail	Applicant
Upton Lane Group	Production of artworks, facilitated by an artist, for public display, focusing on 'living with mental illness'	Bromford Group
Multi cultural Week	A series of events that will bring together artists, performers, speakers to the school to showcase diversity	Meole Brace School
Cultural diversity day	Working in the Grange school, project will facilitate culture diversity awareness workshops and culminate in a special event with food and performers from different cultures	Sevenside Housing
Knowing Me Knowing You	A budding project, to connect pupils at Severndale and Bevidere Specialist Schools, leading to a dramatic performance	Severndale Specialist School
LGBT Youth Club	Setting up young people LGBT group through Shropshire Youth	Shropshire Youth
Life in a Box	Working with out-of-school teenagers from traveller communities, to learn about their heritage through archive film footage	Mythstories Museum
Future Roots	Project to run world music events at Wem and Shrewsbury Square	Access all Areas
Social Inclusion Project – Inside I'm Dancing	Developing a small group of disabled young people that will look at creative approaches to understanding issues around disability	Shropshire Youth

In addition, the Forum has provided funding to support a number of regular annual events, including the SAAR Cultural Diversity Day, the Rock Against Racism gig and the LGBT Rainbow Film Festival. The Forum also supported 2010 Holocaust Memorial Day events in Shropshire, with a grant for local community events and involvement in Shropshire Council's event at the Shirehall.

The Forum's work on Hate Crime has continued throughout the year: there has been an increase in reporting sites, and an extensive programme of training carried out – including Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service staff.

The April 2010 Forum meeting focused on its role, the challenges faced by Shropshire's diverse communities, and developing a Delivery Plan. It was agreed to set up three working groups to recommend changes in different aspects of the Forum's organisation and work:

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 Appendix

There are no appendices attached to this report.

8 Background Papers

- Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority 8 February 2006, Report 18 - Shropshire Partnership Equalities Forum
- Shropshire Partnership Equalities Forum: Human Resources Committee – December 2008

Implications of all of the following have been considered and, where they are significant (i.e. marked with an asterisk), the implications are detailed within the report itself.

Business Continuity Planning		Legal	*
Capacity		Member Involvement	
Civil Contingencies Act		National Framework	
Comprehensive Area Assessment		Operational Assurance	
Efficiency Savings		Retained	
Environmental		Risk and Insurance	
Financial	*	Staff	
Fire Control/Fire Link		Strategic Planning	*
Information Communications and Technology		West Midlands Regional Management Board	
Freedom of Information / Data Protection / Environmental Information		Equality Impact Assessment	
Integrated Risk Management Planning			