

Partnerships Annual Report

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Purpose of Report

This report is to provide Members with an overview of the partnerships currently held on the Partnership Register and underline any outstanding achievements through partnership working. The report also highlights the good practice that was identified during the internal audit by Shirehall and informs the Fire Authority of future developments.

2 Recommendations

The Fire Authority is asked to note the contents of the report.

3 Background

In response to Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) 2005, where Partnerships were identified as an improvement area, a Functional Partnership Strategy was developed and a Brigade Order issued in August 2006. The Brigade Order has since been updated to reflect developments in partnership working and formatted in line with the new corporate imaging.

Partnerships are featured in detail in this year's and last year's Performance Framework and with the advent of Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) in 2009 this emphasis will increase further. In response to this, in last year's Corporate Plan, Partnership Working was recognised as an Improvement Priority for the Brigade and progress was reported upon quarterly to Officers and Members. In this year's Corporate Plan partnership working arrangements are sufficiently embedded to now be considered as Core Business. Following the review of the Brigade's aims and objectives earlier in the year, partnership working has also been included as a key objective under Aim 1 (Support the life safety agenda of our partners).

4 Partnership Assessment Group

An integral part of the Brigade Order was the establishment of a Partnership Assessment Group which initially assessed all existing and newly proposed partnerships. The group continues to meet quarterly and its role has been defined by the development of 'terms of reference'. These are to:

- Risk assess and apply appropriate control measures to partnerships identified for addition to the register on the grounds of:
 - Income and expenditure;
 - Resources;
 - Liability; and
 - Reputation.
- Ensure governance arrangements are in place
- Monitor required control measures
- Collate and communicate any income or expenditure over and above business as usual
- Confirm that partnerships support the Brigade's Aims and Objectives
- Provide an overview and direction for the Brigade's partnership portfolio
- Maintain a partnership register
- Maintain and review the Partnership Brigade Order
- Encourage dissemination of best practice.

Using an agreed definition of partnerships, joint working arrangements are assessed against this and if appropriate are added to an electronic register. There are currently 27 Partnerships recorded on the Partnership Register and can be viewed internally by all Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) staff.

All the partnerships have been risk assessed and are currently being reassessed to ensure there are no changes. Most partnerships have provided some qualitative evidence of their successes in the form of a case study. For all the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs), performance against the supporting documents produced by the Brigade in 2006 has been recorded and fed back to the CDRPs.

5 Consultation with Our Partners

A decision was taken by the Partnership Assessment Group to consult with all its partners to assess its effectiveness as a partner in all joint working. A short questionnaire was sent to all our partners requesting their opinion on the Brigade's contribution to the partnership; the success of the partnership; the Brigade's attitude to the partnership; and areas for improvement that would provide increased benefits to the community. The returned questionnaires provided good evidence of the achievements of the partnerships. This is detailed in the table of responses in the appendix along with the additional comments made by the individual partners.

A brief analysis of the results shows that just under half the responses were from statutory partners and that all those that responded feel that the Brigade contributes (where appropriate) fairly and willingly with regard to finances, time and or/other resources.

70% of partners feel the Brigade has contributed to the successes of the partnership in a 'significant way' with the remaining describing our contribution to these successes as 'proportionate'.

All partners feel that we are both an enthusiastic or willing partner and that there is a high level of trust in 80% of partnerships, with the remaining having a medium level of trust.

All partners would recommend the Brigade as a partner organisation.

All responses were extremely positive. Comments included '*EA (Environment Agency) appreciate the SFRS contribution to the equipment scheme*', '*The commitment from Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service to the WMLRF (West Midlands Local Resilience Forum) has been excellent*' '*A very supportive partner*', and '*We have been very appreciative of the commitment to our work and contributions by officers*'.

With regard to any improvements that would increase the benefits to our community, most partners encouraged the Brigade to continue the current levels of working.

In conclusion the results were very pleasing, and show the Brigade to be a good partner that contributes well to the successes of the partnerships.

6 Internal Audit

Earlier in the year the Brigade was subject to an internal audit of its partnership working arrangements by the Shirehall. The audit looked at our corporate governance arrangements for partnerships and selected three partnerships at random from the register to explore those arrangements. The three partnerships all differed in size and objectives. The Age Concern Partnership is a working arrangement with Age Concern to increase smoke alarm ownership in older people's homes; the Shropshire Equalities Forum and Telford Race, Equality and Diversity Partnerships are both concerned with the promotion of Equality and Diversity issues throughout Shropshire; and the Youth Initiatives Partnership was established to deliver the Fire Service National Strategy for Children and Young People.

The report praised the Brigade on the establishment of '*well defined and specified*' aims and objectives, and that these and additional information were communicated well through the Brigade's and partners' websites. The audit highlighted evidence to '*support the enhanced benefits from the application of economies of scales*' through Partnership working arrangements providing added value. There were also '*clear links between partnership activity and the Authority's own governance arrangements*'. It was also recognised that there were budget monitoring arrangements in place ensuring appropriate financial management of partnership projects. Evidence available provided assurance that partnership working, as a specific risk on the corporate risk register was being monitored and reviewed on a regular basis. Suitable formal termination arrangements were in place with the adoption of an exit strategy framework. Information about Partnership working is communicated to the public through press releases and through the website and opportunities for the public to question and challenge the activities of partnerships was possible via the Brigade's compliments and complaints procedure.

The overall conclusion from the audit was that working arrangements were satisfactory and that the Fire Authority were demonstrating and operating a wide range of best practices. The review concluded with the comment that no material weaknesses had been identified.

7 Future Developments

A morning session is currently being arranged to support officers working in partnerships and provide some background to partnership working. The session is intended to raise awareness of the governance arrangements that are needed in partnerships to protect Officers from the potential pitfalls of joint working.

The Partnership Assessment Group continues to meet regularly and monitors all partnerships recorded on the register.

8 Financial Implications

Resource requirements for, and any income from, partnerships are considered by the Treasurer in his budget planning. Partnership working is also taken into account when reviewing the Medium Term Financial Plan.

9 Legal Comment

Protocols exist for partnerships where appropriate and legal advice is taken to ensure partnership agreements do not disadvantage the Brigade.

10 Equality Impact Assessment

An Initial Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached to this report.

11 Appendix

Partnership Questionnaire Responses

12 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.

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.

Balanced Score Card		Integrated Risk Management Planning	
Business Continuity Planning		Legal	
Capacity		Member Involvement	
Civil Contingencies Act		National Framework	
Comprehensive Performance 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	*



Directorate	Performance Improvement Directorate	Department/Section	Programme Office
Name of officers completing (minimum of 2)	Louise Goodhead Ged Edwards	Job title	Programme Support Officer Programme manager
Name of Policy/Service/Activity to be assessed	Partnerships Annual Report	Date of assessment	3 July 2008
New or existing policy	N / E		

1) Briefly describe the aims, objectives and purpose of the policy/service/activity (referred to as policy in document) and also consider the following:

- What are the key performance indicators?
- Who is intended to benefit or be affected by it? (is this positive or negative)
- What outcomes do you want to achieve from this policy?

The report is an update on partnership working within the Brigade. It is intended to show the progress and achievements made since the introduction of formal partnership governance arrangements in 2006.

The aim of partnership working is to satisfy legal requirements, tackle hard to reach groups, take advantage of economies of scale afforded by joint working, and meet expectations from Central Government.

1 a) Who implements this policy?

Partnership Assessment Group

2) How does your current policy meet the needs around age, disability, race, religion/belief, gender, sexual orientation and caring responsibilities?

Are there any obvious barriers to accessing the service? E.g. physical or other.

The Brigade is involved with Partnership working across a range of areas, with some Partnerships (e.g. LAA, CDRPs) having several areas of focus.

2a) Where do you think improvements could be made?

The lead organisations within the partnerships should give formal consideration to E+D issues//impact assessment. It is impractical for the Brigade to do this in isolation.

2b) Have issues of equality been identified in this area of service delivery by SFRS?	No		
3) Have we had any specific feedback or complaints on this area? Is there evidence that this has come from any of these specific groups: race, gender, disability, religion/belief, age, sexual orientation, caring responsibilities?	No		
3a) Do we have any feedback from managers or frontline staff on this policy?	No		
3b) Is there any feedback from voluntary/community organisations?	Feedback from our partners is very positive and is available in the appendix to this report.		
3c) Is there any research / models of practice that may inform SFRS view?	No		
4) Detail the Actions / Improvement areas you have identified, or the need for further research. (These must be put onto the Action and Improvements Form FB 367 for consideration by Steering Group) If you have found considerable actions or research this will require you to proceed to a full assessment.			
5) Should the policy now proceed to a full impact assessment?	Y	N	Please detail

I am satisfied that this policy has been successfully impact assessed. I understand the Impact Assessment of this policy is a statutory obligation and that, as owners of this policy, we take responsibility for the completion and quality of this process.

Line Manager		Date	
Please note that this impact assessment will be scrutinised by the Equality and Diversity Officer.			

Appendix D

Equality Impact Assessment Actions and Improvements Form

When you have completed the Equality Impact Assessment a number of actions or improvement areas will have been identified, it is important that these are captured and put into normal work activities. In some cases there maybe a few small actions required in other cases you will need to process to a full impact assessment, you will need to complete this form for both of these situations when you identify actions that need completing, or have identified that future investigation will require specific resources that need to be put into the business planning process.

This form is to allow you to record the outcome from your impact assessments so that the actions or improvements can be carried out by your Department and monitored and in some cases approved by the Equality and Diversity Steering Group. Please ensure that this form is given to your line manager for discussion at your team or one to one meetings for incorporation into individual work plans.

Directorate:	Department:
Brigade Order/activity that has identified need, issue/objective:	EQIA No:

Action	Comments inc. Details of Consultations required/carried out	Resources / Finances allocated to this objective/target	How will this be monitored to ensure it is effective	Responsible for this action	Due Date	Progress

Head of Department		Date completed	
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This form must be sent to Management Support when completed for monitoring and/or consideration by the Equality & Diversity Steering Group

Partnership Questionnaire Responses

	Partnership	Statutory Y/N	Contribution (Comment)	Successes	Attitude	Increase Benefits
1.	Environment Agency	N	EA appreciate the SFRS contribution to the equipment scheme, which is predominantly in administration and operations.	Joint exercising, training. Reduced environmental damage, on many occasions.	Willing partner with high level of trust. Each partner understands the roles and responsibilities of the other. We have a good relationship through both Head of Operations and Resources Team.	We would like to have more communication regarding 7(2)d risk visits, perhaps to include joint visits, to help to minimise pollution risks.
2.	West Mercia Local Resilience Forum	Y	The commitment from Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service to the WMLRF has been excellent. The Service has been central to the organisation since its inception and play leading roles in the work of the group(s).	In June/July 2007 a series of floods occurred within the area and the success of the management of this incident is a good example of multi agency working that is developing in West Mercia. Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service was a central contributor to the response and success of the incident.	Enthusiastic partner with high level of trust. A simple example is the resolve from Fire Chief downwards to play a constructive part of the wider development of the partnership. An example is the willingness of the Fire Chief personally to attend LRF meetings and the leadership of his staff in areas such as risk assessment. This has been particularly helpful in the activity of review of flooding risks on the	The Brigade already considers the wider implications of emergency management particularly the issues connected to early warning and informing of the public. This topic is one of the next challenges facing the LRF particularly how the public in Shropshire can be better prepared for instances of emergency, especially

	Partnership	Statutory Y/N	Contribution (Comment)	Successes	Attitude	Increase Benefits
					Community Risk Register where the nature of flash flooding has been a challenge to understand and mitigate.	those connected with flooding. The genuine respect for the Brigade not only within the partnership but with the public at large mean that their voice above others will be heard when resilience messages are being delivered.
3.	Shropshire Access Partnership	N	No Comment	Improved access to work. Improved access to services DCFO is effective Chair of SAP	Enthusiastic partner with high level of trust. Good knowledge and leadership by Paul (DCFO)	No
4.	Shropshire Partnership	Y	No comment	Met most of LAA targets	Enthusiastic partner with high level of trust. Supported the LSP where needed.	More local engagement going into unitary
5.	Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership	Y	A very supportive partner	Reduction in fire related deaths and injuries Reduction in crime Good local delivery	Enthusiastic partner with high level of trust. Contributed significantly	More of the same

	Partnership	Statutory Y/N	Contribution (Comment)	Successes	Attitude	Increase Benefits
6.	West Midlands Regional Management Board	Y	SFRS provide programme, project and risk management support and expertise to WMRMB	Compliance with the statutory requirements of the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework. Because SFRS provide programme, project and risk management support and expertise to WMRMB, which is a major factor in securing the region's success.	Willing partner with medium level of trust. SFRS, as with other FRSs, have little choice in being involved in the RMB.	Continue to meet statutory requirements
7.	Telford Race Equality and Diversity Partnership	N	We have been very appreciative of the commitment to our work and contributions by officers to difference areas of work and forums. Help has been offered with accommodation for meetings and there has been regular commitment to attending our strategic groups and partner forums	A named contact person. Understanding of the partnership's aims and commitments to developing the partnership.	An enthusiastic and willing partner with a high level of trust. (The Brigade has) been a positive influence.	Nil response

	Partnership	Statutory Y/N	Contribution (Comment)	Successes	Attitude	Increase Benefits
8.	Telford and Wrekin Housing	N		Reducing injuries and death by fire Raising people's safety awareness Helping the 'hard to reach'	An enthusiastic partner with a high level of trust. A joint approach and pooling of resources creates a very positive outlook	Continue to provide smoke alarms. Increase CFS activity. Appreciated this has a resource implication.
9.	Smoke Free Alliance	N	No comment	Long history of partnership working Joint campaign on smoking in the home and fires caused by smoking materials	An enthusiastic partner with a high level of trust. Helped raise awareness of smoking issues in the county. Good reliable partner. Willing to work on a range of issues and with a range or partners	Continue to work on relevant issues with the Alliance and individual partners
10.	Shropshire Equalities Forum	N	Paul Raymond also chairs the Shropshire Access Partnership	Bringing together public, parish, business, community and voluntary sectors. Development of sustainable community strategy for Shropshire. Development of Shropshire's Local Area Agreement (LAA). Hate Crime Initiative. Equalities Forum. The fire and rescue service is an active member of the	An enthusiastic partner with a high level of trust. Helps cohesion in a time of change. Commitment to Partnership working in Shropshire	Continued improvement is underway.

	Partnership	Statutory Y/N	Contribution (Comment)	Successes	Attitude	Increase Benefits
				Leadership Board, the body overseeing the Shropshire Partnership and has been a key partner in developing the LAA and Hate Crime Initiatives		

4 out of the 10 responses were from statutory partners.

All partners feel that the Brigade contributes (where appropriate) fairly and willingly with regard to finances, time and or/other resources.

7 out of 10 partners feel the Brigade has contributed to the successes of the partnership in a 'significant way' with 3 partners describing our contribution to these successes as 'proportionate'.

All partners feel we are either an enthusiastic or willing partner and that there is a high level of trust in 8 out of 10 partnerships, with 2 having a medium level of trust.

All partners would enter into other partnership working arrangements with the Brigade or recommend the Brigade as a partner organisation.