

15 September 2010

Charity Partnership Strategy

Report by the Chief Officer

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1 Summary

- 1.1 This paper outlines a range of ways that Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service can build productive and powerful charity partnerships that are more focussed on agreed outcomes. It also introduces the Service's progress in working in partnership with the Blue Lamp Trust and summarises the plans to trial a Volunteer Services Scheme.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 A two-year charity partnership be developed from November 2010 and staff be encouraged to focus their fundraising activities and support for the chosen charity, as well as for the Fire Fighters Charity. A programme of commitment should be agreed with the charity to manage expectations and workloads.
- 2.2 That Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service make an annual donation to the agreed charity partner up to the sum of £500 as determined by the Chief Officer under Section 5(1) of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.
- 2.3 A longer term plan for wider charity partnership working be developed and agreed incorporating such areas as an employee volunteering programme, donations of gifts in kind and professional help.
- 2.4 Support be given to the proposal to trial a Volunteer Services Scheme by Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service.

3 Introduction and background

- 3.1 For many years Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service has been successful in supporting local charities and the Fire Fighters charity. On a local level, stations and watches have also identified their own causes that they would like to support. In the last two years, a charity partner has been selected by former Deputy Chief Fire Officer Alan House and some funds have been raised for this cause by the Service.

The majority of support that has been given to the charities and good causes has been in the form of fundraising and donations. On a corporate level we have no idea of how much has been raised in the past or the extent of local charitable activity. With a better knowledge of this we could annually promote the good work and it would help to identify future possibilities for the corporate charity partnerships.

- 3.2 In the past there has been little co-ordination or corporate ownership of the Service's charitable activity and no linkage to the Service's vision or objectives. The Service's charitable work has now moved into the Marketing and Communications department. This gives the Service an opportunity to look at the development of a wider charity partnership strategy, moving the Service towards a community investment approach.

This would enable a more focussed approach that looks at prioritising our charitable work towards the areas that are of most relevance to the Service's core business objectives, services, employees and communities in the short and long term.

It also enables the Service to identify opportunities to engage volunteers in its work and to work with charities that have similar priorities and objectives, such as the Blue Lamp Trust.

- 3.3 There are a number of recognised components that comprise community investment, including working in partnership with charitable organisations, employee engagement, payroll giving and donating in-kind goods to charities and good causes.

4 Charity partnerships

- 4.1 A charity partnership should focus on the joint objectives of both the charity and the Service. When the partnership is managed well, it can bring together many of the components of a community investment programme and can sometimes introduce new ways of working.
- 4.2 Just as charities will not always want to be seen as 'worthy' beneficiaries, the Service should take the opportunity to see that partnerships with charities can bring benefits beyond the positive impact on the local community, such as skills development training for our staff, particularly from an equality and diversity perspective, whilst also enhancing our reputation.
- 4.3 It is therefore recommended that the Service takes a more strategic approach to identifying a 'cause' on a two yearly basis that can be supported through the charity partnership. The cause will link in with the Services priorities and will be selected by staff to support.
- 4.4 The charity partnership will allow the Service to focus all of its fundraising activity and charitable support on the one selected charity for a two year period, which will

be of more benefit to the charity itself and the organisation. This will introduce a structured approach to the support in terms of agreeing the objectives for the partnership.

- 4.5 In addition to selecting a charity to support for two years, the importance of the Fire Fighters Charity for the majority of staff should be recognised and a formal programme of support to develop this partnership should be investigated. This will help to keep staff engaged in the charity partnership development as it is a charity that is important to them and the fire service as a whole.
- 4.6 The Service recognises the important role that it has to play in the local community and, as such, it should be recognised that fire station personnel may identify charitable causes in their local area that they would like to support. Whilst the strategy will encourage support of the chosen corporate partner and the Fire Fighters Charity, staff will not be prevented from identifying and supporting other charitable causes.

5 Longer term charitable aims

- 5.1 The Service will initially focus on developing a two-yearly charitable partnership but in the longer term, we will also investigate the opportunities for:
- Gifts in Kind whereby old and no longer used furniture and equipment can be donated to local charities
 - Professional help - offering professional help in the form of pro bono advice, expertise and support
 - Employee volunteering - Many organisations address social issues in communities by volunteering their employees' skills and time during working hours. Research has shown the positive impact volunteering has on employee engagement and it brings wide benefits for companies, employees and communities.
- 5.2 The Blue Lamp Trust is a good example of how the Service can work in partnership to achieve mutual objectives. The Blue Lamp Trust is a partnership between Hampshire Constabulary, Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service, local businesses and the community. Its main aim is to promote community safety and security in Hampshire and it is focussed on crime prevention and reducing the fear of crime in elderly and vulnerable people and businesses, the promotion of improved driving standards and road safety and education on all aspects of fire safety and fire prevention.

The Trust aims to improve road safety through the development of a Driver Training School. This will educate and train all types of drivers, particularly fleet drivers, and will also raise revenue to allow the Trust to give grants to local community projects. The trust will also provide grants of up to £5,000 for community projects that support the objectives and will also operate the Bobby Scheme in support of vulnerable people.

6 Volunteer Service Scheme

- 6.1 From 1 November 2010, the Service will be running a 12 month pilot to test how the Service can work with volunteers to enhance the services we offer.

The pilot will look at how we can engage volunteers directly or through the third sector and other statutory organisations and what roles they can play to:

- Reduce risk
- Increase public involvement and participation
- Involve volunteers from a diverse range of communities including hard to reach and vulnerable groups
- Support volunteers seeking employment opportunities with HFRS
- Develop community resilience within local communities

- 6.2 The trial will develop a set of tools, documents and processes and a framework for a volunteer infrastructure. It will also explore the volunteer roles that would be of value and enhance our services. These could include a volunteer safety team, community and protection advocates, and community self-help wardens.

- 6.3 The Volunteer Service Scheme will also enable the service to support our charitable partnership, and there is also potential for future charity partnership volunteers to become part of and enhance our scheme.

7 Legal Implications

- 7.1 There is no specific power to make donations to a charity in either the Fire Authority's Combination Order or the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. However, S.5(1) of the 2004 Act gives a broadly worded power "to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of its functions."

- 7.2 For this to provide a legal basis for charity donation, it should be clear how the donation is incidental to and in support of the discharge of other Service functions. Further, the Authority would need to be satisfied that this was an appropriate use of public funds, given other demands upon the Service that are required to be met from the Service budget, and be able to defend that decision if challenged. Action is more likely to be defensible if the spend is modest and if the donation is made to a charity that has objectives related to those of the Fire Service. This is made clear in the following paragraph.

8 Supporting our corporate aims and objectives

- 8.1 Taking a more strategic approach to charitable partnerships will help ensure that our support of specific charities and charitable activities can be better aligned with our corporate aims whilst assisting us in complying with Section 5 (1) of the 2004 Act.

9 Risk analysis

- 9.1 This approach to charitable partnerships has the potential for positive impacts on staff engagement and will help to reduce the impacts outlined on the new corporate risk on staff engagement.
- 9.2 There is a risk that we could alienate some staff if they do not relate to the chosen charity and restrict their support of local charities.
- 9.3 With appropriate procedures and support in place, risks of the Volunteer Service Scheme are perceived to be low. Potential risks could include:
- Staff and representative bodies perceiving volunteers as a threat.
 - Financial constraints limiting our ability to support volunteering
 - Service not remaining compliant with laws on Health and Safety, Equality and Diversity, Data Protection and Child Protection.
 - Reputational damage due to a volunteer bringing the Service in to disrepute

10 People Impact Assessment

- 10.1 A People Impact Assessment has been undertaken and has highlighted the need for greater research into charities that will provide wider engagement of our diverse communities. The selection of a 'cause' on an annual basis will undoubtedly bring benefits from an equality and diversity perspective as it will open up opportunities for greater integration with our communities through charitable working.
- 10.2 The proposals in this report are considered compatible with the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights, the Human Rights Act 1998, and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

11 Environmental and Sustainability impact assessment

- 11.1 As identified above, there are several areas where a strategic charitable partnership can help the Service to have a positive impact on the environment. Through a structured gifts in kind programme the Service could dispose of unwanted items in a more productive and beneficial way for the community and environment.

12 Resource implications

- 12.1 The planning and setting up of the charity partnership will be undertaken by the Marketing and Communications department. If the Service is to progress the concept of wider charitable support in the form of professional help and employee volunteering there would be some impact on staff time, but the time spent can bring wider benefits for the Service in the form of development and engagement. This approach would need to be supported by HR and Training.

13 Financial Implications

- 13.1 An annual Christmas donation, in lieu of the cost for printing Christmas cards is currently donated to a charity in the region of £500. It is recommended that this be continued under S.5 (1) of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. S.5(1) which broadly allows the Service "to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of its functions."

A method for recording our fundraising activity should be developed so that we are able to calculate how much money has been raised for the charity.

- 13.2 The financial implications of our involvement in the Blue Lamp Trust were presented and agreed through a previous paper to the HFRA.
- 13.3 The 12-month Volunteer Service Scheme will be funded through existing Service budgets.

14 Consultation

- 14.1 All staff would be given the opportunity to vote on the charity they would like to see the Service support for the two year period, in addition to the Fire Fighters Charity. This will bring much greater engagement and ownership of the charity partnership and greater benefit for the charity and the community.

Ongoing consultation is being undertaken with the representative bodies concerning our charitable partnership develop and they have been issued with a briefing note on the Volunteer Service Scheme and they will be invited to monitor and inform the development of the trial through regular project team meetings.

15 Conclusion

- 15.1 A structured charity and volunteer programme and strategy will help the Service capitalise on a lot of good community work that is already being undertaken by staff across the county whilst bringing it all together to build a powerful engagement tool whilst helping to achieve the corporate aims.

16 Background papers

- 16.1 The following documents disclose the facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and has been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of the report:

Cheshire FRS Volunteer documentation and Scheme
<http://www.cheshirefire.gov.uk/jobs.asp?menuid=956>
Hertfordshire FRS 2009/10 Volunteer Annual Report
Building a fairer Hampshire presentation given 24/06/09
Volunteering England Good Practice Book
<http://www.volunteering.org.uk/resources/goodpracticebank>

Volunteering England – Volunteers and the law

<http://www.volunteering.org.uk/resources/publications/volunteersandthelaw>

Volunteering England - Risk Toolkit – How to take care of risk in volunteering

http://www.volunteering.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/2B108CBD-0BBD-4DB3-A4D2-D987B885D1F3/0/Risk_toolkit.pdf

Community First New Forest LSP - Volunteering Briefing Note

Hampshire Constabulary - Police Support Volunteer Scheme Report Jan 2010

Alan House Discussion Paper – Food for Thought – Fire Wardens

Cabinet Office Paper – Building the Big Society

<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/407789/building-big-society.pdf>

Community Action Hampshire – Draft 2010 one Compact for Hampshire

<http://www.action.hants.org.uk/index.php?id=605#c1083>

Blue Lamp Trust SMT Report

SMT Paper - Charity Partnership Strategy 2011/12

Note: The list excludes: (1) published works; and (2) documents that disclose exempt or confidential information defined in the Act.