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Dear John

I hope you are well. I see we have got another time slot booked in to meet each other in the near future so we can pick up our discussions then. I did promise you some comments on your Cultural Services Strategy.

In general there is nothing that anyone involved in Lambeth and the wider cultural sector would not either support or understand why some of these proposals are required (mainly as a result of reducing Council budgets). What is a fundamental review of the cultural block gives the authority an opportunity to not only empower the local communities as you have already started to do, but review the potential of drawing in a number of presently separately managed services under a coherent borough wide offer. As you might expect, GLL has experience in a number of these core services and the financial, managerial and customer benefits a coherent single point of contact offers a Council. As the UK's largest charitable social enterprise and an employee cooperative our values and philosophy is symbiotic with the Council and with 25 years of experience and understanding of partnering between the public and third sector, I believe that we could provide the Council as a delivery partner for the ambitions set out in the strategy. This might take the form of any number of structures / vehicles / arrangements from joint venture, to asset transfer to establishing a borough wide cultural trust. We have experience in all of these areas.

As you might expect I do have some comments and observations on the document itself.

You most probably already have this or at least intend on the 2020 ambition linking directly to being delivered by the themes which then provide 'what success looks like' by means of targets. The resourcing of the current areas is interesting in that it might be better organised under thematic budgets which talk directly to the themes. This would enable a prioritisation against the theme rather than the historical budgetary department. Whilst health is rightly a theme that runs through the document its unclear what the boroughs public health priorities are, where the public health budget sits and how it might contribute to the overall budget ambitions in meeting some of the health targets within the £6.573m 2017/18 target.

With regards to the budget and cost reductions laid out, whilst ambitious I am certain its achievable, especially under the direction of a single focused partner which could bring economies of scale, marginal cost reduction to overheads and a balanced community / commercial offer. Its clear from the commitment the strategy has in terms of commercialising elements of the service to invest and offset community priorities that this is already in the Councils mind set.

An issue that is explicit throughout the strategy is the localisation of services through volunteering and cooperation as both a means to empower local communities and as a means of making the services more sustainable. What is perhaps missing from the strategy is how this is going to be managed and coordinated to build capacity and consistency across the borough.

There are a number of minor points we can talk through when we next meet. From a leisure centre perspective the service has transformed over the last five years, both financially, operationally and in terms of service standards through a combination of investment, focused management and our partnership together. There is no reason this model can't be expanded across the cultural block meeting the financial challenges whilst enhancing the ambitions already set out.

As an optimist I think culture in Lambeth has an exciting future!

Regards

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Director of Development

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