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Dear Councillor Green

Thank you for your letter of 28 March and for allowing me to attend the Scrutiny Committee on 1 April to put forward my case.

Both your letter and your comments at the meeting emphasised that there is basic agreement about the intention of the report's recommendations. I feel there would be no constructive purpose in more detailed examination of additional information. I agree that we need to move forward. However I feel that some of the criticisms included in the report are not substantiated and these need to be brought to Cabinet's attention in view of the negative publicity that the report has brought to Home and the Rayners Lane regeneration scheme. Indeed members of the Scrutiny Committee also raised this point.

As you are aware details of contributors were not attached to the report. Having now received this list, I note that the Chair of RLETRA was the "only" community representative contributor. Whilst the report acknowledges that RLETRA's view may not be reflective of the wider community the report accepts them as such. The tone of the report in this respect is I feel, misleading. Furthermore Tammara Mattingley, Light and Sound Workshop has had no involvement with the Beacon and I am unclear in what context she was asked to contribute to the Beacon review. I raise this issue because witness evidence has been taken at face value and no test has been made to substantiate this. Once again, misleading.

The witness who claimed that "most activities are "private" – that most activities are not "for" the local community" is incorrect (page 13). There were 1103 lettings last year. Of this total, 899 (82%) bookings received 50% discount which means that they were either booked by Rayners Lane residents or were activities that were in some way targeted at Rayners Lane residents. The private parties that took place were bookings made by Rayners Lane residents to celebrate family events, which is what you would expect from most community centres. A further 197 bookings were made by Home staff for meetings, the majority of which were related to the Rayners Lane project. In effect there were only 2 bookings that did not receive some form of rental subsidy. I think you will agree that this picture of bookings is distorted in the report.

The report refers to Council officers being "dissatisfied with many aspects of the centre's first year of operation" (page 13) however it does not detail these. Moreover Home has not received any communications to this effect from Council officers. The

report quotes Council officers as holding the view that 'input from Home in terms of 'engaging young people particularly has not been particularly effective'. This view is not explained but is substantiated by reference to an article in Harrow Observer. In reality Home has invested a considerable amount of resources in providing youth activities following the Council's withdrawal of a youth worker at Rayners Lane. Our work with IFA (now known as Beyond Empowerment) delivering football coaching expanded to develop school holiday play schemes and a youth club operating four times per week. Funding was secured from the Children's' Fund and Connections because they were impressed by the standard of work carried out. Unfortunately for a number of reasons Beyond Empowerment are withdrawing from the scheme. However this provides an opportunity to build again in partnership with the Council and RLETRA. New partners are already on board. The KICKZ project providing football coaching operates from the Beacon two evenings per week and there is also a weekly Futsal session provided by Middlesex FA.

Similarly Home has worked with the Council to engage with local residents. A Celebrating Change Event took place in March 2007 with a wide variety of sports and arts taster sessions. A number of activities currently being undertaken at the Beacon are in direct response to feedback from the event. A follow up event is planned for this year. Activities operating at the Beacon include: basketball, Tae Kwando, Roller Disco, yoga, Indian dancing as well as IT and ESOL classes. Discussions are taking place about providing karate, trampolining and bowling. RLETRA are also putting together a programme of activity that they would like to carry out subject to funding availability. Harrow College are also putting together a programme of training in response to the door to door that was undertaken.

Whilst I agree that we need to build on the achievements of the 'first year' I feel that that real effort has been made to engage with the local community and this is not reflected in the report.

My letter of 27 March and my comments at the meeting have clarified our position regarding the report's recommendations. I believe that the Council has an important strategic role to play at Rayners Lane if the regeneration scheme is to be successful and sustainable. The Beacon is very much part of the regeneration process and we welcome the Council's support in ensuring that it is developed to benefit the community. Clarifying the Council's role in this process will be critical to the success of extending the wider dialogue that has been proposed.

Yours sincerely



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