

APPENDIX 5

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Community Engagement

Division

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Dear Clarence,

RE: Southwark Human Rights Race Equality Bureau

Thank you for your responses of Friday 2nd October 2009. As you know the council is fully appraised of the background to the current set of circumstances and the reasons why this set of circumstances pertains. This was made explicit in the letter of 21st September 2009 and summarised in the paragraph below:

“Taking into account both the recent governance and service delivery problems at SHRREB, and a longer term context of additional support having been provided over a number of years, the Council’s current position is that SHRREB is not fit for purpose. It has not demonstrated an ability to deliver the services it is funded to provide, and is unable to attract trustees who have the right skills to contribute to the management and governance of the organisation”.

In requesting a response to the concerns raised the council was seeking strong evidence that the organisation recognised this. I was keen to see that you could put in place a clear recovery strategy which would address these ongoing issues and demonstrate that the organisation had an understanding of how these problems might be ameliorated and substantive action taken to move the organisation forward. The problems generally that the organisation is undergoing, for example in terms of governance, is further illustrated by the confusion demonstrated where the council has received two somewhat different responses to the letter dated 21st September. I do appreciate that after the deadline you withdrew one response and asked us to consider the second as your official response. However the situation clearly remains problematic and serious weaknesses prevail.

I note that you have provided a work plan for the period October to December. However there are minimal achievements listed and the key deliverables to be achieved by the end of December 2009, whilst in some aspects are aspirational, do not address how the organisation will actually increase membership, sustain and improve service delivery, nor list any outcomes for beneficiaries using the services. In addition there is no information regarding what resources, financial, human or other are to be allocated to these actions.

In terms of financial probity I am sure you are aware that the council itself is subject to audit and has a responsibility to residents of the borough to ensure that it achieves positive outcomes for local residents and value for money in the delivery of services. At this stage the council cannot be satisfied that the organisation either recognises or has the ability to address the ongoing problems and rebuild the membership base and reputation of SHRREB.

As a result, it is my intention to proceed with a report to Members setting out options for the future delivery of Race Equality and Human's Rights functions in the borough. In addition in the interim, no further commitment of funding can be made for the current financial year pending a decision on the way forward. Due to lead in times for receipt of council reports by the Executive it is anticipated that this report will be presented within the next 2 months. In the meantime officers will continue to liaise with your organisation closely monitoring the situation and reporting back on the outcome of the AGM.

You will be notified of the date that the report will be presented to the Executive or Individual Member for decision. You will also be afforded the right to make written and/or personal representation subject to approval by the Executive or Individual Member. In the meantime please keep me informed of key dates for the period October to December.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Douglass
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CC. Ruth Mordi