

Dear Laura

I wanted to correct the misleading claims made in your email and set out our position.

Firstly however, I would like to say how disappointed I was that our council meeting on Wednesday was consistently interrupted by protestors, including quite shamefully, the tributes to Councillor Francis.

It was clear that they had no intention of allowing the meeting to go ahead and, as a result, we were unable to debate the future funding of our schools, Lambeth parks and other issues important to our residents.

We have heard from you at several council, cabinet and other meetings on this issue and you have met with me and other cabinet members on several different occasions. It is unfortunate therefore that you continue to feel the need to disrupt the democratic process while claiming we have not listened to you.

As you know, our financial position is enormously challenging as we face the reality of what a 56% cut in government funding means for our services. It has taken some time for

your campaign to recognise any financial challenge the Council has – and I'm glad that you now seem to do so. However, you continue to claim, falsely, that it is possible that the same service could be delivered while making a saving of £800,000 per year, and that we are spending more on changes than we are saving. I think it is important to set out why this is inaccurate.

The Culture 2020 report set out the withdrawal of £800,000 in revenue from the library service per year – and we are on course to achieve that. The figure you use below is simply not correct.

You then go on to make further claims about this figure. In your calculations, you claim that 369k minus 89k is 189k. It would actually be 280k. You continue to use that miscalculated figure throughout – I think that says a lot about the accuracy of your claims and your willingness to throw around any figure, no matter how true, to make your case.

The staff pay increase is factored into our plans as we would have to do this regardless of service changes and is covered centrally, as for all staff. We did incur security costs unfortunately as a result of your occupation of the building. It is a shame that you took this action which has had a cost impact on the council. Security has now been scaled back.

Our plans did cover many of the eventualities laid out below and the capital provided by the report covers improvements to the buildings, including the work in the basement of Carnegie. These plans are financially sound, as we will save ongoing revenue and maintenance costs for the building. The cost of the basement is reasonable given the building is a huge asset that we want to remain in use for the community - we have never intended to sell it, despite the claims of your campaign. There will be an exhibition in the next month which will give an opportunity for local people to see and comment on the plans and we will continue to work with the community on it.

We did listen to people' concerns about Tate South Lambeth and Durning and how appropriate they could be as healthy living centres and have continued to open them as normal. The funding comes from splitting the budget we proposed for the town centre library over the two libraries instead and we have been clear that the funding is only for two years, after which we will have to consider the funding.

We accept that there have been some cost implications of a slightly delayed move to Oasis in Waterloo and in the move towards the Trust at Upper Norwood Joint Library (UNJL) – this is because of our commitment to continuity of service and

we're pleased that these plans will deliver good outcomes for these sites. In the case of UNJL, we have negotiated with the Trust and with Croydon and are confident that this is a good local deal. I'm sure you welcome this continuity of service and accept that we will save ongoing revenue from both sites as a result of our plans.

Finally, you mention the alternative proposal. This proposal could not have been in place for at least 12-18 months and included some questionable claims about income generation which formed the bulk of its proposed savings (to be run by a service that has missed its income generation target for a number of years). Anyone reading the plan will see that even its proponents did not pretend it could make significant savings this year. It may be a useful line in a campaign to claim you could make more savings while providing the same (or even a better) service – but logic should tell you that it isn't possible and I think it is important that you stop misleading people that it is.