



8th April 2016

Dear Ms Duffy

Carnegie Library

My attention has been drawn to your blog piece about the Carnegie Library. I would take issue with you on several parts of it but agree on others.

However, I take the greatest exception to you describing those of us on the Community Trust as not part of the community.

I have lived in Herne Hill for 35 years. I have been active in community affairs for all of that time, including four years as a councillor; school governor of Jessop School, Willowfield School (now Michael Tippett, but you may not have been here long enough to know that), Dick Sheppard School; and member of the Governing Bodies of Brixton College and South London College; and Board member of a local Housing Association and 30 years on the Board of the Brixton Advice Centre. I am a Friend of Carnegie Library and a member of the Herne Hill Society. You have considerable nerve to say I am not part of the community.

My colleagues are also long-term residents of Herne Hill and have strong records of local service, varying from school governor, chair of the Friends of Carnegie Library, councillor and local housing campaigner.

There is room for more than one point of view on the future of the Carnegie and because I do not agree with you does not exclude me from "the community". Anyone who lives in Herne Hill from whatever background they come and regardless of their views, regardless of how long they have lived here or whether or not they meet the standards of Acceptability of Stella Duffy, are members of the community. All are included and all are welcome. You need to learn that. It is very wrong of you to publicly demonise people who hold a view different from yours. I don't demonise the people occupying the Carnegie. I think they are mistaken but respect their right to protest. I support "inclusion" and reject "exclusion"

I have worked with the Carnegie Project Group, and now the Community Trust, for three years to get the Carnegie transferred into community ownership and with a library at its heart. Not an ignoble objective. If you read our website you would know that. The present library campaign cannot succeed in the present financial climate. Making impossibilist demands on the Council is just not a strategy for success and public breast-beating is just posturing by attention seekers. The personal demonisation of our councillors is reminiscent of totalitarian regimes and is not acceptable in a liberal democracy governed under the rule of law. Law-breaking in Lambeth was tried during rate-capping and much good did it do anyone.

Rather, we needed a strategy that would acquire ownership of the building and keep it open to all, and that is much more difficult. But I think we can do it. Once this background noise dies down we can see what can be achieved.

I recognise and understand your passion about the importance of libraries but that is not enough. I hope that you will stay engaged. There is work to be done and people like you need to be part of it. You are part of our community too.

I have not had the privilege of meeting you but hope that might be possible in happier times. Certainly, my colleagues and I would be glad to talk you through the issues as we see them and the possible way ahead.

Yours sincerely

