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Dear All

Thank you for your letter regarding Free Theatre's use of The Gym facilities at the Arts Centre. While Trustees appreciate that so many of you have taken time to respond to Free Theatre's request for support, we think it is important that you have a more complete understanding of the current situation regarding Free Theatres tenancy.

For many months, Free Theatre has been unable to meet its rental commitment to the Arts Centre and the Arts Centre can no longer sustain this situation. As a result, Trustees and the Arts Centre management team have been working closely with Free Theatre management to find a mutually agreeable solution. The Arts Centre has offered several concessions to Free Theatre during this negotiation process, but Free Theatre has chosen not to accept any of these options.

As an independent charity, the Arts Centre relies on income from tenants to maintain the site on behalf of the Canterbury community. We must be consistent in the way in which we manage all our tenants, and all our tenancies, and to deliver on our obligations to the community we serve. The solutions that we have offered Free Theatre are aligned with the requirement to deal with all our tenants in an equitable way.

Despite significant efforts, Trustees have been left with no other option than to end the Free Theatre lease and ask them to remove their chattels. This decision is about ending the Free Theatre lease, it is not a decision that reflects in any way on the Arts Centre view of the arts nor is it a restriction on future use of the Gym as a performance space. We have made it clear to Free Theatre management that The Gym will continue to operate as a venue for performance, music, arts and culture for a broad section of the community. We have also made it clear that Free Theatre are welcome to use the space for development and presentation of their cutting edge productions. They will however be required to meet rental costs, just like any other group wishing to access and use the space.

We hope this letter provides you with a more complete picture of the situation and an understanding of the very difficult decision that Trustees were forced to make in the face of a lack of flexibility from Free Theatre about the negotiation process.

Regards

Jane Parfitt
Acting Chief Executive

