



ArtHouse Jersey
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St Mary
JE3 3AA

Connétable Karen Shenton-Stone,
Vice-Chair, Public Accounts Committee
Scrutiny Office
States Greffe
Morier House
St Helier
JE1 1DD

14 Feb 2022

Dear Connétable,

Thank you for your letter of 2 February in which you outline the Public Accounts Committee's intent to review the Government of Jersey's response to COVID-19. We are grateful that the PAC have noted the significant impact that the Pandemic has had on the Island's arts, heritage, and culture sector.

ArtHouse Jersey is a charity that serves our Island community by working with artists from Jersey and across the world to create ambitious work. We produce large-scale exhibitions, theatre pieces, concerts and community-focused workshops and projects and work with artists from every discipline and all backgrounds. We want to enable artists who have ambition and talent to create inspiring, high-quality work that can change lives. Crucially, we provide Jersey-based artists with financial investment, free advice and artist-led development opportunities, ranging from facilitated workshops and projects, guided residencies, and industry networking, to drop-in sessions with our team.

We're a helping hand at critical moments in an artist's journey; from young people choosing to pursue a career in the arts, to established professionals looking for residency opportunities. Overall, we seek to create an environment that brings people together. We understand the ability of the arts to deliver transformational change that serves our community. Our core values are based around being ambitious, authentic, collaborative, nurturing and community focused. This approach guides and influences our decisions at every level at ArtHouse Jersey.

We are pleased to provide our response to your questions.

1. What support did you receive from the Government of Jersey during the COVID-19 pandemic, including from support schemes such as the Co-Funded Payroll?

- a. How was this support made available? Were you required to make an application?*
- b. Were you satisfied with the support provided?*

ArtHouse Jersey is a registered charity that operates on a blended funding model, raising its own income, but receives a significant public grant that enables us to serve our Island community. At the time, whilst we were aware of the support potentially available, such as the Co-Funded Payroll scheme, it was unclear to us whether we were in-scope and difficult to gain a clear understanding as to whether, being in receipt of a public grant, such an application would be welcomed. The pandemic hit ArtHouse Jersey very hard, greatly limiting our ability to self-generate income. Fortunately, we were in a position to cut costs whilst maintaining our team. We did not make an application for support.

2. What conversations have you had with the Government of Jersey over the course of the pandemic to identify your concerns and needs?

- a. How did this influence decisions made on resourcing and staffing?*

The new policy lead in Government for the arts has always made themselves available to discuss concerns and needs, as has the Assistant Minister with responsibility for the arts. We are glad that they are in post and were receptive, which was of great assistance in enabling us to plan effectively. We see ourselves as a strategic partner to the government and our discussions with representatives took place within this context.

3. What support did you receive from the Government of Jersey in facilitating events during the Pandemic, such as virtual workshops or productions?

- a. How could this have been improved?*

We did not require such assistance as we had moved our operations to be mostly online pre-pandemic, which was incredibly helpful as we grappled with the pandemic and the flexibility it necessitated. Although we didn't know it at the time, as many businesses have learnt, online working and the lack of face-to-face meetings throws up a great many challenges, and this certainly had an impact across our team, creating stress and at a time that was stressful enough already. In retrospect, if the government were able to provide workshops from experts on how organisations should deal with such a situation to support employees it would have been very helpful, but of course this is easy to say now with the benefit of hindsight.

In terms of our events, we did try and plan live opportunities for the public to enjoy whilst observing the restrictions in place. There was some confusion about what sorts of activities might be permitted and it would have been helpful to have had clearer, consistent guidelines that wasn't just a blanket 'no' to anything involving in-person activities. We are aware that there was particular sensitivity around singing, compared to other pursuits, which were allowed. In saying this, we are aware of the huge pressure that decision makers were under at a time of great uncertainty so are not critical of their efforts, but we feel that some helpful insights might be gained from reflecting on the issues that arose.

4. How could the Government of Jersey have improved the support you received/applied for?

a. What key learnings have you taken away from this?

We are proud of our team's dedicated response to the pandemic, perhaps most of all the flexibility we were able to demonstrate in completely adapting our programme to a lockdown context whilst all working remotely. We are satisfied with the support of the government. Our key learning is that the pandemic was an accelerant for online content and that flexibility is a skill that can be applied to a non-pandemic context that improves results. We are emphasising flexibility across our programming for 2022 and 2023.

5. Do you have an organisational 'back to normal' plan?

a. Have you received assistance from the Government of Jersey in developing this plan?

b. Has this identified any funding requirements that you have sought (or intend to seek) support from the Government of Jersey?

We do and we did from the policy lead. It did include our funding requirements, these being discussed with the government.

6. Were you satisfied with the clarity and communications provided to you by the Government of Jersey?

a. How could this have been improved?

Overall, yes. Understandably, at the outset things were very difficult for everyone as we tried to find a way through extremely challenging circumstances.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'T. Dingle'.

Tom Dingle
Director of ArtHouse Jersey