**Councillors unite to oppose sale of Subscription rooms.**

A cross party alliance of District Councillors have come together against the plans to dispose of the Stroud Subscription Rooms. They have signed a requisition for an extra ordinary meeting of Stroud District Council and as many councillors again from all parties have committed their support. It is aimed at halting and starting a review of the secretive group which is due to report on December 5th.

Cllr, Norman Kay explained “We are concerned with several aspects of this, not least the proposal to sell off the forecourt of the Sub. Rooms. This has served as Stroud’s town square for over a hundred years. We have questions over the secrecy attached to the deliberations and the absence of recorded minutes which are contrary to good government. There has also been a lack of genuine consultation with the public in the District. Even more important, the discussion and decision should be held at a meeting of the full Council where transparency prevails.”

Cllr. Martin Baxendale added “"I have been concerned from the beginning that the task and finish group on the future of the Sub Rooms, of which I have been a member, could turn out to be just a bit of public relations window dressing on the way to a sell-off of the building.

“Recent events - the way the recommendation on the Sub Room's future was reached, the unnecessary secrecy surrounding it and the heavy handed attempts to enforce that - have only reinforced that concern.

“Stroud District council now needs to step back from that process, which in the eyes of many people is now seen as tainted and compromised by, among other things, insufficient public scrutiny and consultation. All councillors need to meet at a full council meeting to find the best way forward in seeking the most sustainable future for the Sub Rooms as a public venue and keeping its forecourt as an open public space.

With all of the controversy swirling around it, this issue can no longer be left to a small group of councillors on a committee. We all have to put ourselves on the line and be a part of this vital decision."

The councillors have called for the meeting to be held after the council’s report has been published – it is expected in the next fortnight- and before the planned meeting of its Strategy & Resources Committee that would make the decision.

For further information please contact:

Cllr. Norman Kay Cllr. Martin Baxendale

01453 833458 01453 764746

The text of the motion reads:

The following members requisition an extraordinary meeting of Council under section 1.4 of the Constitution, to be held after to publication of the report of the T&F group and before the next meeting of the Strategy & Resource Committee . The motion before Council shall read:

This Council

1. Confirms its commitment to the Principles of Public Life known as the Nolan Principles, and in particular the expectation that public bodies will conduct their business in an open and transparent manner and not withhold information from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing, and that because of their accountability to the public must submit themselves therefore to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

2. Notes that members must at all times stay within their delegated powers as set out in the Constitution of the Council.

3. Notes the assurances given at the Strategy & Resources Committee meeting on 27 January 2017 that in the event of a possible decision in favour of a non-council bidder the decision will be made at a meeting of full Council

4. Resolves that in the light of paras 1, 2 and 3 that the current Strategy and Resources review of the Stroud Sub-Rooms be stayed and ;-

A. Strategy & Resources Committee shall immediately review all the background papers that the T&F group have considered concerning the review of the Stroud Subscription Rooms, including the bid pack, guidance to bidders, the matrix used to assess the bids and the bid documents, minutes and reports and agree to place them in the public domain, save the few which can properly be considered as exempt under section 12A of the 1972 LG Act.

B. Strategy and Resources Committee shall arrange to complete the consultation process that was agreed at its meeting 26th January 2017. It will follow Best Practice guidelines as set out in Cabinet Office advice. Such consultation shall allow time for all interested members of the public and stakeholders to consider any proposals and make a meaningful response.

C. A further report, including the outcome of any consultation, shall be presented to both the Strategy and Resources Committee and the Communities and Licensing Committee, and they shall jointly submit a recommendation to full council in due course concerning the future of the Stroud Subscription Rooms.

D. That in any event the forecourt of the Subscription Rooms shall be removed from the review process and shall remain in public ownership, whether by SDC or STC.

E. Officers and named members in the intervening period shall commence negotiations with all three existing bidders proactively to explore whether there is room for a joint solution to the future management of the Sub-Rooms and shall encourage the bidders to this end.

Signed:

Cllr. Martin Baxendale

Cllr.C. Braun

Cllr. G. Butcher

Cllr. Jim Dewey

Cllr. Jonathan Edmunds

Cllr. Norman Kay

Cllr. Sue Reed