

31st October 2017

David Hagg
Stroud District Council

By email



Dear David

Subscription Rooms

The Town Council is concerned about a number of aspects of the bidding process for the Subscription Rooms. I would like to draw to your attention the following issues, in particular the timetable and process for consideration of the bids.

In the original timetable published earlier this year a public consultation was due to take place before the Task and Finish group met to decide on their recommendation. See attached copies of relevant documents:

- S&R Committee Meeting 26/1/2017 – item 8 Appendix F
- Timetable handed out at Sub Rooms consultation event

We are aware that the Task and Finish group has already met and made a decision, which calls into question the validity of the consultation event due to take place on 18th November.

As you may be aware the Task and Finish group's recommendation has been widely leaked, which again casts a shadow over the process. There has been considerable misinformation and speculation on social media and in the press about the relative merits of the bids. The Town Council has therefore taken the decision to make a full disclosure of their joint bid with the Stroud Trust in the interests of transparency and open government. We would urge you to publish the other bids in full as soon as possible to enable the public to express their views to their district councillors in time for the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting.

A concern has also been raised about the status and transparency of the Task and Finish group. We would be grateful if you could publish the terms of reference for the group and explain how they fit in to the Council's delegation arrangements. We understand that a Freedom of Information request for copies of the group's minutes and reports has been refused. We believe that this is harmful to the transparency of the process and would urge you to review this decision.

Stroud residents have questioned the inclusion of the forecourt in the bids so we would like clarification of whether a sale to a commercial bidder would include covenants to ensure that this valuable space remains freely available for public use or whether it could be omitted from a transfer of the freehold.

Finally, a concern has been raised with us about the lack of clarity about the criteria used for evaluating the bids. The minutes of the S&R Committee Meeting 26/1/2017, item 8, refer to a:

“need to improve cost effectiveness. Expressed as:
For preference, any solution should not only improve cost effectiveness for the public, but also seek to retain its availability to the public for cultural use”.

There is no mention in this, or the bid pack of a need to secure a capital receipt for the building.

Again in the spirit of transparency we will be making this letter available to the public and we would invite you to do the same with your response.

We remain committed to working with all interested parties to explore all potential options to secure the future of the Sub Rooms.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Helen', written over a light grey grid background.

Helen Bojaniwska
Town Clerk