

## **SUBSCRIPTION ROOMS CAFÉ/BAR BRIEFING**

### **Background**

The financial viability of the café/bar operation has been a concern for some time. We have looked at the income and expenditure and there was around a £30k deficit for 2015/16 and no sign of a significant improvement 2016/17. We are looking at options to reduce the deficit and one of these options could be to reduce the customer opening hours during the day but still have the option to provide catering for events on request.

### **Staff consultation**

Officers have undertaken a potential redundancy consultation with staff which ended on 24 March in relation to the café. There are two part time café staff who are potentially at risk of redundancy. As part of the consultation staff were asked to put forward any ideas that could help reduce the deficit. I am pleased to say that we have had a staff proposal submitted on 23 March. We are considering this proposal which puts forward reduced opening hours and the offer to provide an outside catering service.

### **Press/ social media**

No decision has been made to close the café from April 1<sup>st</sup> as appears to have been misreported in the local press and social media. An incorrect and unauthorised statement was issued by staff working at the Subscriptions Rooms stating that the café was closing on 1 April. This incorrect statement has caused confusion and alarm, during the staff consultation period, and we have had to address this and take appropriate action with the individuals concerned.

### **Future action**

A Task and Finish group made up of cross political party councilors and officers are looking at the long term future of the Subscription Rooms whilst staff are responsible for the day to day management and operations. The financial and operational implications of staff proposal will be considered by the Task and Finish group before any decision is made on the future opening hours of the café. As such no changes will be made to the café opening hours before June 2017.

The long term future of the Subscription Rooms has NOT been decided the Task and Finish Group will make recommendations on the future of the Sub Rooms at the end of this year. Currently there is a 6 week community consultation taking place where all and any interested parties are being asked to 'express an interest' in running the Sub Rooms, this consultation finishes on 12 April. We have already received 6 expressions of interest. The next stage then starts and we will be inviting formal bids which will need to be submitted by end of August.

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**COMMUNITY SERVICES AND LICENSING COMMITTEE  
INFORMATION SHEET C-2016/17-009  
29 MARCH 2017**

SDC is under enormous financial pressure like many other Councils, in 2019/20 we will be due to pay back to Government £549,000 and we will no longer have any direct Government funding for the services we provide. It has been agreed by full Council to set a balanced budget. We are committed to protect front line services and unlike many other councils we have continued to support the community and voluntary sector through grants. The Council is committed to having a vibrant District and we trust that the Subscription Rooms will continue to play its part in supporting that.

For any further information please contact Cllr Doina Cornell, Chair of the Task and Finish Group, or Joanne Jordan, Strategic Head Customer Services.

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