



STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Agenda Item 12 Audit and Standards Committee

Member Questions

Questions from Councillor Norman Kay	Questions to Councillor Nigel Studdert-Kennedy
<p>1. "Financial figures for the cost of the Stroud Subscription Rooms has been shown to be seriously deficient and this among other issues has compromised its validity. The Chair of committee is a member of the T&F group. The misleading figures were used in last weekend's consultation meeting but the committee chair did not ensure that they were corrected. Does the chair wish to explain why, and perhaps apologise?"</p>	<p>Financial figures for the period 2011/12 to 2015/16 were made available to the Task and Finish Group in December 2016. A detailed analysis was undertaken by the group which helped form the basis of the report to Strategy and Resources Committee in January 2017. The analysis showed a clear trend of a rising cost to the Council of operating and maintaining the Subscription Rooms.</p> <p>The restated 2016/17 figures, as included in the published report to Strategy and Resources committee do show a reduced cost to the Council last year. However, this is not seen as a typical financial year given staff vacancies and reduced operational capacity, and these figures need to be viewed in the context of the historic financial position.</p>
<p>2. "This is not the first serious error by committee. In April 2016 it failed to notice an erroneous gap of over £900,000 in the housing revenue account. This seriously compromised the authority's housing programme. Yet in its April annual report it said: <i>'The purpose of the Audit and Standards Committee is to provide to those charged with Governance independent assurance on the adequacy of the risk management framework, the internal control environment and the integrity of the financial reporting and annual governance process. By overseeing internal and external audit it makes an important contribution to ensuring that effective assurance arrangements are in place'</i>. What comment does the Chair make on these persistent failings?"</p>	<p>The issue concerning HRA Balances was first reported to the Audit and Standards Committee at their meeting in July 2016, not April 2016 as the question states. An initial investigation report was produced in June 2016 and considered by the committee in July 2016. There were 4 subsequent follow-up reports to the committee in September 2016, November 2016, April 2017 and September 2017. These updated members of the committee on the Action Plan agreed by management and audit.</p>