

Comments from Otley Town Council –5th December 2018, submitted by Suzanne Kidger, Executive Officer, Otley Town Council

Submission to Scrutiny Board (Infrastructure, Investment and Inclusive Growth) for meeting 12th December 2018.

The Town Council would like to express its concern at the loss of the Civic Centre.

For over one hundred years the Civic Centre has been an integral part of the social/community life of the town and its residents. Its loss is felt strongly by a great number of Otley residents as evidenced by the responses to the development of the Otley Neighbourhood Plan. In all consultation stages its closure and the loss to the community has been highlighted.

Both the Town Council and Otley residents would like to see the building back in community use (in the emerging Neighbourhood Plan it is identified as a community facility that should be protected and enhanced – Policy CF1).

However, we appreciate that as the owners of the building the City Council can dispose of it as they see fit. As it is, the Town council feel that the current proposals do not provide the maximum benefit to the community (or the City Council).

If it is to be disposed of for housing then the Town Council feel that, given the local housing market, the site is undervalued.

It also feels that the City Council are not returning the value of the building to the community (they like the current MP feel that the entirety of the receipts should be reinvested in Otley).

In the past the Town Council have expressed support for the Courthouses' aims but feel that the City Councils offer is somewhat limited in assisting with their aspirations. They are simply being offered the option on a piece of land which they have to develop,

This is at North Parade, part of a larger site recognised within the Neighbourhood Plan as an important local asset. It has been allowed to fall into disrepair and as a derelict site is detrimental to the town.

The Town Council feel that the City Council is missing an opportunity to both assist the community, clear a derelict site, make a positive contribution and show greater commitment to the Town. They feel that there should be a holistic approach to providing community facilities for the town with money from the Civic reinvested at North Parade into a community hall, a museum (who were displaced when the Civic closed) and the provision of affordable town centre housing.