

North Yorkshire Council

Executive

21 April 2026

Transfer of Ripon Town Hall to Ripon City Council

Report of the Corporate Director of Resources

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To approve in principle the transfer of Ripon Town Hall as shown on the attached plan to Ripon City Council (RCC) and to delegate the final decision to the Corporate Director of Resources in consultation with the Assistant Chief Executive of Legal and Democratic Services and Exec Member for Finance & Property if appropriate conditions are met.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Ripon Town Hall is owned by the Council and is located in the centre of Ripon, to the middle of Market Place South, overlooking the Market Place. A site plan is attached as [Appendix 1](#) and a photo below for context.



- 2.2 The property is Grade II Listed and comprises a mid-terrace, two storeys plus attic and basement building.
- 2.3 Dating from 1799 the building was originally gifted to Ripon in the 1890s by the Marquess of Granby, having previously been private assembly rooms.

- 2.4 The building provides traditional office accommodation at ground and first floor levels, with a Council Chamber on the first floor.
- 2.5 The attic/second floor provides smaller accommodation, as the Chamber below has a higher ceiling. The second-floor accommodation effectively provides two disused offices, but we understand that due to the lack of an adequate means of fire escape, these are better suited to storage.
- 2.6 The basement provides basic storerooms.
- 2.7 To the rear of the building is a small garden area including a below ground bunker.
- 2.8 Also to the rear of the building is a sloping tarmac surfaced driveway leading to a small, third party owned car park.
- 2.9 The property does not have any on site car parking, apart from a small area of grass that is let out to a house at the rear, for them to use as one parking space.
- 2.10 RCC already leases most of the ground floor and has use of the Council Chamber. Other tenants comprise Ripon and District Amateur Radio Society who use a bunker to the rear and a private individual that rents the single car parking space to the rear.
- 2.11 RCC submitted a Double Devolution proposal following a call for proposals to be considered by the new North Yorkshire Council (NYC). The closing date for submissions was 31 March 2023. RCC proposal was “the management of Ripon Town Hall, Market Place and Car Park, public toilets within the city and Wakeman’s House (listed building)”. Aspirations for Ripon Town Hall as detailed in the report can be found below:
- 2.12 “Town Hall – Ripon Town Hall lies at the centre of the market square. A listed building, occupancy of it has fallen dramatically in recent years with the departure of HMRC, Harrogate Borough Council’s (HBC) own Customer Service Centre and Tourist Information Office. Once a thriving community hub, only one office in the building is occupied by RCC. RCC’s corporate vision for the Town Hall (and the central marketplace) is that it once again becomes the focus point for the city’s residents and tourists alike and is developed as a thriving space with access for all. In addition to the office space available, the first floor includes an impressive ‘Council Chamber’, elaborately decorated with original works of art and Robert Adams fireplaces it is extremely underused. RCC’s plan include marketing the space available (the space is not currently marketed at all) and reinstating the marriage venue licence with a view to it being used for both wedding ceremonies and receptions (there is an unused catering kitchen on the same floor as the Council Chamber).”
- 2.13 When the successful Expression of Interests (EOI) were agreed in October 2023, the EOI from RCC was considered to be showing the level of ambition envisaged for the Double Devolution project, however the evaluation criteria was not sophisticated enough to manage a wide range of services within its scoring mechanisms. It was therefore agreed that individual project teams were set up to work with RCC to bring forward double devolution proposals to be considered by the Executive recognising that these may require more support.
- 2.14 Due to the complexity of the proposals it was agreed that rather than consider the proposal and assets as a whole to now consider each asset individually via a community asset transfer, the first being Ripon Town Hall. This approach was agreed by RCC and at a meeting of Full Council on 7 July 2025. RCC agreed to appoint legal representatives to negotiate the lease. Final lease and terms to be bought back to Ripon City Council to consider. Min: 110/25.

3.0 PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The proposal is to grant RCC a 99-year lease of the whole building, with option to renew subject to the existing tenancies, at a rent of £1 pa and with a tenant's break option on 12 months' notice. A draft head of terms has been endorsed by RCC at a meeting of Full Council on 9 February 2026 Minute ref: 32/26.
- 3.2 As part of the terms RCC is responsible for internal and external maintenance and must keep the property in no worse condition than at the commencement of the lease, as documented by the Schedule of Condition.
- 3.3 RCC can request the freehold of the property at any time, however this will supersede the lease arrangements, and any transfer of the freehold will be at nil value.
- 3.4 An NYC employee in the Workplace and Facilities team spends 20/30 contracted hours as a caretaker for both Ripon Town Hall and Hugh Ripley Hall. Hugh Ripley Hall will also be considered as a community asset transfer to RCC and TUPE implications may need to be considered as part of the proposed asset transfer. Further information is given later in the legal implications section of this report.
- 3.5 NYC would reserve some rights in the lease, for instance, to use a section of the building rent free, for Tourist Information Office. We would also need to retain an existing server in the building, some CCTV equipment, etc, and would retain the ability to grant rights over the rear driveway.

4.0 DETAILED PRESENTATION OF THE SUBSTANTIVE ISSUE

- 4.1 RCC has expressed an interest in taking over control of the Town Hall, so that it can invest time and money into this to create a central hub for both the local community and visitors contributing to the revitalisation of the city centre. The proposals would also help preserve and regenerate a heritage asset to bring it back into a better condition and use for the benefit of the local community.
- 4.2 RCC intend to conduct feasibility work including an options appraisal on the Town Hall. Following the receipt of the options appraisal, further consideration will be given by NYC as to how we could potentially support the redevelopment proposals.
- 4.3 Incentives NYC will also provide:
- £55k broken down between, one off monies from a grant of rights once received, and funding from the localities reserve.
 - Support to access other appropriate funding sources.
 - NYC will continue to pay the business rates on Ripon Town Hall for 2026/27 until an options appraisal for the Town Hall is expected that explores options for RCC.

5.0 CONTRIBUTION TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES

- 5.1 The proposed transfer is in line with NYC's aspirations for the building and has been developed to be in line with NYC's Double Devolution approach. Whilst this letting does not follow NYC's current Community Asset Transfer Policy – currently being reviewed – officers have had regard to the Policy and are content that the proposal would be acceptable.

6.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 6.1 No other options are currently being pursued in relation to this property at this stage. Should the letting to RCC not proceed then NYC will continue to hold the asset.

7.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The market value of the property has been assessed at £652,000 on the assumption that the upper and basement floors could be converted to residential, with a commercial use on the ground floor. On the basis of a refurbishment and use as offices the value was assessed at £440,000. The annual rental value of the property for a hypothetical short term lease and the landlord retaining responsibility for external and structural repairs has been assessed at approx. £39,500 per annum, assuming vacant possession and that some initial works would be required.
- 7.2 The value of the property for National Non-Domestic Rating purposes, as identified on the Valuation Office Agency website, is the sum of £24,750 (effective 1st April 2023). The total floor area of the building adopted for rating purposes, excluding toilets and circulation space, is 662.55 square metres.
- 7.3 Once the lease of the site has taken place the Council will benefit from annual revenue savings associated holding and managing the property e.g. insurance, maintenance and utilities. Savings on the business rates may be realised once the options appraisal has been completed.

8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Section 123 of the Local Government Act provides the general rule that councils must not dispose of land for consideration less than the best that can be reasonably be obtained, unless they have obtained consent from the Secretary of State. However, the General Disposal Consent 2003 gives specific consent to a local authority to dispose of land without needing specific consent from the Secretary of State if it is of the opinion that the disposal will contribute to the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of the area and the undervalue is not above £2m.
- 8.2 Based on the valuation report (figures referred to above) the lease and then subsequent transfer of the property is likely to be at an undervalue. The report identifies that the potential disposal will contribute to the improvement of the economic and social wellbeing of the area by allowing RCC to access additional funding and is therefore permissible under the General Disposal Consent 2003. The proposal is one which seeks to preserve a heritage asset and support the growth of the local economy by providing a new central hub for the city. The Executive has authority under the Council's constitution at paragraph 6.9 of the Property Procedure Rules to approve an undervalue transaction of up to £2m.
- 8.3 The Council must also consider the requirements of the Subsidy Control Act 2022 before making awards of financial assistance, including the transfer of assets of nil consideration. The proposed letting constitutes a below market value asset transfer to an organisation that plan to generate income from the asset in due course, and therefore the transfer should be treated as a subsidy
- 8.4 The Subsidy Control Act 2022 requires that any subsidy granted must comply with the control principles outlined in Schedule 1 of the Act. These provide seven broad principles which the subsidy must be demonstrated to meet in order to be lawfully awarded, namely:
- a. Subsidies should pursue a specific public policy objective in order to (a) remedy an identified market failure or (b) to address an equity rationale such as regional disadvantage, social difficulties or distributional concerns.
 - b. Subsidies should be proportionate to their specific public policy objective and limited to what is necessary to achieve it.
 - c. Subsidies should be designed to bring about a change of economic behaviour of the beneficiary. That change, in relation to a subsidy, should be (a) conducive to achieving

its specific public policy objective, and (b) something that would not happen without the subsidy.

- d. Subsidies should not normally compensate for the costs the beneficiary would have funded in the absence of any subsidy.
- e. Subsidies should be an appropriate policy instrument for achieving their specific public policy objective and that objective cannot be achieved through other, less distortive, means.
- f. Subsidies should be designed to achieve their specific policy objective while minimising any negative effects on competition or investment within the United Kingdom.
- g. Subsidies' beneficial effects (in terms of achieving their public policy objective) should outweigh any negative effects, including in particular negative effects on (a) competition or investment within the United Kingdom; (b) international trade or investment.

Transparency obligations apply for all individual awards based on Principles.

8.5 Officers are working with RCC to obtain a suitable subsidy control assessment to ensure that the proposal complies with the above-mentioned common principles. Members are asked to give their approval in principle to the disposal and delegate the final decision to ensure that a full Subsidy Control Assessment can be made and there is evidence to show that the common principles have been met, particularly to show that the subsidy is proportionate to the policy objective. The proposed delegation to proceed with the transfer would only take place if the appropriate assessment has been completed.

8.6 A member of NYC staff (as part of a wider role) is currently delivering services under lease arrangements originally established with Harrogate Borough Council. Considering the proposed changes, it is anticipated that the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE) may apply. Further HR and Legal advice would need to be sought with regard to this issue.

9.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The proposal will ultimately benefit the local community and there is the intention to make the building fully accessible. An Equalities Impact Screening is attached as [Appendix 2](#).

10.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The matters subject to this decision, being a property transfer, do not give rise to Climate Change implications.

10.2 The re-development of the site by RCC may give rise to climate change implications, however, this will be assessed through the Planning process and addressed in accordance with the Planning Policy that is in place. Climate Change Impact Assessment attached as [Appendix 3](#).

11.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1 To utilise a prominent Grade II listed building to provide the community benefits as described in the report.

12.0 RECOMMENDATION

- a) That the Executive approve in principle the transfer of the site at undervalue to Ripon City Council on terms to be agreed with the Corporate Director of Resources in consultation with the Assistant Chief Executive of Legal and Democratic Services and Executive Member for Finance and Property if appropriate conditions are met.

Rachel Joyce
Assistant Chief Executive – Local Engagement

Report authors/Presenters of report – Andrew Whelan, Sharon Hudson and Wendy Cordery

Appendices

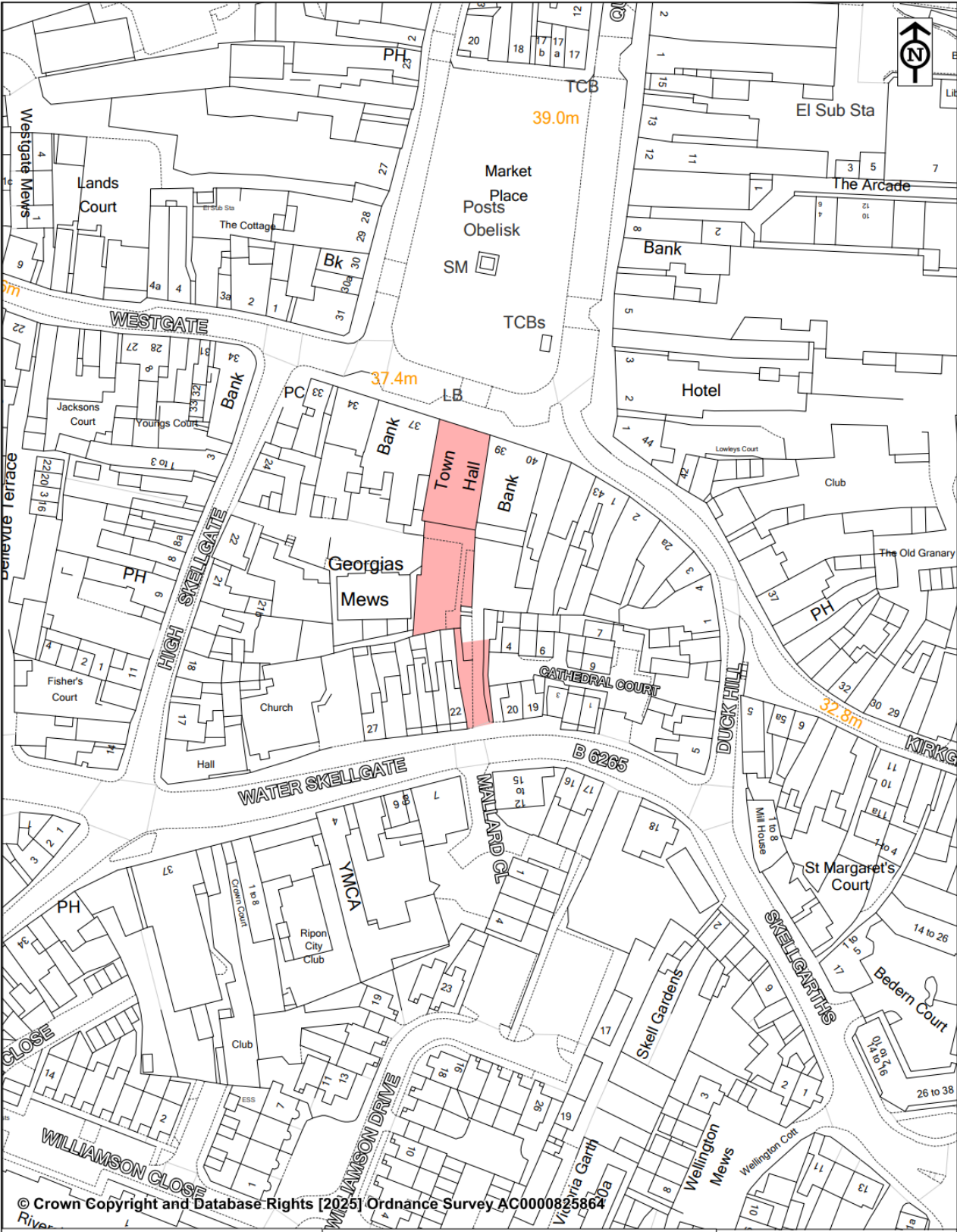
[Appendix 1](#) – Ripon Town Hall – site plan

[Appendix 2](#) – Equalities Impact Screening

[Appendix 3](#) – Climate Change Impact Assessment

Note: Members are invited to contact the author in advance of the meeting with any detailed queries or questions.

Ripon Town Hall – Site Plan



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Ripon Town Hall Lease Plan

Scale: 1:1250
 Drawn: AS
 Date: March 2026
 Dwg No: 10009
 OS Grid: 431210 471224

Initial equality impact assessment screening form This form records an equality screening process to determine the relevance of equality to a proposal, and a decision whether or not a full EIA would be appropriate or proportionate.			
Directorate	Resources and Central Services		
Service area	Property and Local Engagement		
Proposal being screened	Transfer of Ripon Town Hall		
Officer(s) carrying out screening	Sharon Hudson		
What are you proposing to do?	Transfer the asset to Ripon City Council at under value		
Why are you proposing this? What are the desired outcomes?	To preserve a heritage (Grade 2 listed) asset, which has been under-used for a number of years and provide a community facility for Ripon		
Does the proposal involve a significant commitment or removal of resources? Please give details.	Asset is valued at £652k		
Impact on people with any of the following protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010, or NYC's additional agreed characteristics. As part of this assessment, please consider the following questions:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent is this service used by particular groups of people with protected characteristics? Does the proposal relate to functions that previous consultation has identified as important? Do different groups have different needs or experiences in the area the proposal relates to? 			
If for any characteristic it is considered that there is likely to be an adverse impact or you have ticked 'Don't know/no info available', then a full EIA should be carried out where this is proportionate. You are advised to speak to your directorate representative for advice if you are in any doubt.			
Protected characteristic	Potential for adverse impact		Don't know/No info available
	Yes	No	
Age		✓	
Disability		✓	
Sex		✓	
Race		✓	
Sexual orientation		✓	
Gender reassignment		✓	
Religion or belief		✓	
Pregnancy or maternity		✓	
Marriage or civil partnership		✓	
People in rural areas		✓	
People on a low income		✓	
Carer (unpaid family or friend)		✓	
Are from the Armed Forces Community		✓	
Does the proposal relate to an area where there are known inequalities/probable impacts (for example, disabled people's access to public transport)? Please give details.	No, the asset is in a town centre location with parking available adjacent to the building including disabled parking.		

<p>Will the proposal have a significant effect on how other organisations operate? (for example, partners, funding criteria, etc.). Do any of these organisations support people with protected characteristics? Please explain why you have reached this conclusion.</p>	<p>No, the provision will be complementary to existing facilities.</p>			
<p>Decision (Please tick one option)</p>	<p>EIA not relevant or proportionate:</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>Continue to full EIA:</p>	
<p>Reason for decision</p>	<p>No adverse impacts identified.</p>			
<p>Signed (Assistant Director or equivalent)</p>	<p>Rachel Joyce</p>			
<p>Date</p>	<p>07/08/25</p>			

Initial Climate Change Impact Assessment

The intention of this document is to help the council to gain an initial understanding of the impact of a project or decision on the environment. This document should be completed in consultation with the supporting guidance. Dependent on this initial assessment you may need to go on to complete a full Climate Change Impact Assessment. The final document will be published as part of the decision-making process.

If you have any additional queries, which are not covered by the guidance please email climatechange@northyorks.gov.uk

Title of proposal	Transfer of Ripon Town Hall to Ripon City Council
Brief description of proposal	NYC will be transferring the building to Ripon City Council, subject to Executive Approval, to be used as a community facility in order to preserve the building.
Directorate	Resources
Service area	Property Service
Lead officer	Jonathan Dunk
Names and roles of other people involved in carrying out the impact assessment	Sharon Hudson

The chart below contains the main environmental factors to consider in your initial assessment – choose the appropriate option from the drop-down list for each one.

Remember to think about the following;

- Travel
- Construction
- Data storage
- Use of buildings
- Change of land use
- Opportunities for recycling and reuse

Environmental factor to consider	For the Council	For the county	Overall
Greenhouse gas emissions	Decreases emissions	No Effect on emissions	No effect on emissions
Waste	No effect on waste	No effect on waste	No effect on waste

Environmental factor to consider	For the Council	For the county	Overall
Water use	No effect on water usage	No effect on water usage	No effect on water usage
Pollution (air, land, water, noise, light)	No effect on pollution	No effect on pollution	No effect on pollution
Resilience to adverse weather/climate events (flooding, drought etc)	No effect on resilience	No effect on resilience	No effect on resilience
Ecological effects (biodiversity, loss of habitat etc)	No effect on ecology	No effect on ecology	No effect on ecology
Heritage and landscape	No effect on heritage and landscape	Increases protection of heritage and landscape	Increases protection of heritage and landscape

If any of these factors are likely to result in a negative or positive environmental impact, then a full climate change impact assessment will be required. It is important that we capture information about both positive and negative impacts to aid the council in calculating its carbon footprint and environmental impact.

Decision (Please tick one option)	Full CCIA not relevant or proportionate:	✓	Continue to full CCIA:
Reason for decision	<p>This proposal is simply to transfer an asset out of NYC's portfolio to Ripon City Council to be used as a community facility.</p> <p>It is considered that the proposal will have a positive effect on NYC's Greenhouse Gas emissions and the local heritage and landscape, but only because the responsibility will transfer over to Ripon City Council.</p> <p>The proposed transaction itself will have no overall impact from the point of view of the County. However, once improvement works are implemented the building becomes operational there may be some efficiencies that benefit the wider County due to the investment from Ripon City Council These are not yet known and cannot be quantified for the purpose of this assessment.</p>		
Signed (Assistant Director or equivalent)	Rachel Joyce, Assistant Chief Executive – Local Engagement		
Date	23/03/2026		