

**COMMENTS FROM THE LOCAL MEMBER, COUNCILLOR BYWATER**

I am not in favour of the sale of the Sawtry Youth and Community Centre (SYCC) on an open market and would kindly ask you to consider the recommendations before you today.

In this time of austerity we are currently being reminded that we need to engage the community and encourage them to fill the gaps when services are going to be cut in the years ahead. SYCC is situated in the centre of the Village and is used by community groups, i.e. the youth club and Scouts. It is also the focal point of the locality team which gives it a great link to the college and children alike.

Being a large isolated village Sawtry needs facilities. The young people in Sawtry need things to do and the community centre gets young people into the youth club which incidentally is supported by the Parish Council. I'm especially concerned when the World Health Organisation is worried about the level of young people self-harming. Make no mistake it does happen in Sawtry and by selling assets we risk isolating children and users of the community centre even further. This could potentially create many more issues for the county going forward.

If we don't grant a decent length lease and the premises are going to be considered for sale in another 2yrs, what signal are we sending the community to engage?

Yet in the next breath I'm sitting in the CYP committee listening to how important it is to engage the local community and encourage them to step forward and volunteer. How can we (I) engage the community with this policy if we sell the focal points of the community.

I would also have to ask a number of questions.

Who would buy a site of this nature? Will it end up vacant and not used for months while the CCC tries to find a buyer? This could then encourage vandalism as we often see in vacant premises.

Sawtry College is an integral part of the community which helps to site the library and sport centre. It is a sad reality that the College cannot afford to buy the SYCC outright as it had originally been planned, due to the challenging years ahead. A plus point on the rental is that it still allows the locality team to remain in situ in what could be seen as "rent free".

I want to make it clear that I don't agree with the proposal to consider a 2yr short lease. I believe this will be ineffective and prevent the college from raising capital funding. The College would like to develop the interior layout for the 6<sup>th</sup> Form as their current mobile units are falling into disrepair and they haven't been able to secure funding to repair/replace these.

If a 2 year lease is granted, why would the college want to invest crucial funding in developing the interior for the benefits of students and ultimately the community only for the CCC to take it back after 2 years? For it to work effectively the lease term should be longer. I would also raise questions on 2.2. of the report. From my understanding the 24k fee could be waived by HDC with the good consultation?

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my local views. I would ask that this committee support the peppercorn lease rental option to Sawtry College but over 5yrs as the initial term with a view to extend and have a clause to offer it for market value to the college if circumstances change in the years ahead.

Cllr Simon Bywater  
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