

Formal Proposal: North Preston Community Centre Project

Prepared by: Cllr Rob Crayford

Date: Monday, 17 June 2025

Proposal Submitted To: Faversham Town Council Community Committee

1. Executive Summary

This proposal outlines the urgent need and strategic vision for developing a community centre on the North Preston estate in Faversham. North Preston is among the top 10% most deprived areas in the country. Despite the strength of the local community, it currently lacks a hub where residents can access services, connect with one another, and participate in opportunities that enhance wellbeing and inclusion.

We propose to develop a modular community centre on land currently owned by Southern Housing. Using innovative, cost-effective methods such as repurposed shipping containers and a combination of grant and match-funding including from the National Lottery Community Fund we aim to create a safe, accessible, and empowering space for all residents.

This project will build on work previously undertaken on this issue, and a key part of the next phase will involve understanding and reviewing earlier project plans to ensure this initiative is informed by past learning and shaped effectively to meet current needs.

2. Context and Need

- High Deprivation: North Preston falls within the most deprived decile nationally. Residents face systemic barriers related to income, access to services, and youth engagement.
- Absence of Facilities: The estate lacks a single venue where social, educational, and health-related activities can take place.
- Community Safety: Longstanding issues with antisocial behaviour could be mitigated by creating a space for structured, positive community-led activities.

3. Objectives

- To provide a safe, inclusive space for the community.
- To offer structured activities and support services for all age groups.
- To tackle isolation and support health and wellbeing.
- To build skills, confidence, and employment pathways.

4. Proposed Solution

- Land Acquisition: Open negotiations with Southern Housing to acquire a suitable plot of underutilised or derelict land on the estate.
- Innovative Construction: Use modular container units for a cost-efficient, sustainable, and expandable building model.
- Community Governance: Establish a charitable organisation or Community Interest Company (CIC) to run the centre, governed by local trustees.

5. Benefits and Community Impact

Community Cohesion

- Acts as a central hub for residents to gather, share, and engage.

Youth Engagement

- Space for youth clubs, mentoring, and activities to reduce risk factors and improve outcomes.

Support and Advice Services

- Provide access to job clubs, housing advice, health workshops, and food support.

Health and Wellbeing

- Host mental health services, exercise classes, and social prescribing activities.

Volunteering and Skills Development

- Enable local people to run activities and build skills, strengthening the local economy and pathways to employment.

6. Funding Strategy

Potential sources of funding include:

- National Lottery Community Fund for capital and revenue grants focused on improving community wellbeing and inclusion.
- FCC Communities Foundation supports community infrastructure projects, especially near landfill sites.
- Kent Community Foundation offers small grants to support local community initiatives and pilot schemes.
- Members Grants from Swale Borough Council and Kent County Council elected members may allocate small discretionary grants to support local projects. We will engage ward councillors to request financial support at both borough and county levels to help with start-up costs, planning, or community engagement activities.
- Section 106 Developer Contributions where applicable, developer contributions can be requested to support community infrastructure.
- Crowdfunding and Local Sponsorships launching a community fundraising campaign will provide match-funding opportunities and demonstrate public support. Local businesses will also be approached to offer in-kind or financial support.

7. Timeline and Next Steps

1. Seek agreement in principle from Faversham Town Council and partner authorities.
2. Approach Southern Housing regarding land acquisition.
3. Form a steering group and establish governance model.
4. Review and integrate findings from previous project plans.
5. Begin early-stage funding applications and public consultation.
6. Develop architectural plans and planning permissions.
7. Secure main capital funding and begin construction.

8. Conclusion

The need for a community centre on the North Preston estate is pressing, and the benefits are far-reaching. This proposal provides a clear, achievable plan to deliver a transformative facility that will improve lives, reduce inequalities, and promote long-term resilience.

We respectfully ask for the support of elected members, local partners, and funders in taking this project forward.

Prepared by:

Cllr Rob Crayford

Faversham Town Councillor, St Anns Ward