



Thakeham Community Hub Trial

Proposal prepared for: Thakeham Parish Council

Proposal prepared by: Chanctonbury Community Land Trust Ltd.

Date: 11th of July 2025

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1.0 CCLT vision for the delivery of remaining community assets on the Abingworth estate and Executive Summary of the CCLT bid

The pre-school building is exactly what it was built to be: a space dedicated to early years education. Chanctonbury Community Land Trust (CCLT) is committed to preserving that purpose—but enhancing it for today's needs. Rather than returning to a term-time-only model, we would operate it year-round as a nursery, making it a vital and sustainable service for Thakeham's young, working families and an attractive workplace for qualified early-years professionals.

The building, its garden, and car park are currently owned by Thakeham Parish Council. No accompanying S106 funds were provided for its ongoing maintenance, meaning all costs now fall to residents through the parish precept, supplemented only by any rental income.

CCLT is ready to take on ownership and responsibility for the building and to integrate it with other facilities on the Abingworth development. Our vision is for it to be part of a suite of community assets, managed together for long-term local benefit.

Horsham District Council has yet to transfer the final phase of community assets from the Abingworth development—namely the allotments. Bellway has not yet fulfilled their obligations regarding the Community Workshops which are the subject of ongoing discussions. CCLT is purpose-built to hold such assets: community land trusts are democratic, non-profit bodies designed to own and steward land for the lasting good of the community.

With full ownership and control of the pre-school building and the adjacent facility on the workshops plot when built, CCLT will unlock the full potential of this site—for education, employment, and community life in Thakeham. Transferring management responsibility for the Allotments removes the administrative burden from TPC and a potential allotment society.

In the short term if the Parish Council feels unable to commit to such radical change, notwithstanding the evident benefit to the Thakeham community, CCLT are willing to either run the Pre-school building as a nursery as a tenant with a long-term lease, or temporarily as a community hub with no lease and with the PC taking on all required expenditure on the building, including the employment of a cleaner.

As requested, this document outlines how the CCLT will operate community services in the Pre-school building on Abingworth Crescent. It addresses TPC's questions on operational processes, competencies, and experience, and outlines CCLT's broader service initiatives, validated through a community survey.

The proposal includes relevant survey findings, cost estimates, and outlines both deliverable and aspirational services, along with solutions where constraints exist. It also highlights the skills and networks of CCLT members crucial to successful implementation, offering a detailed, balanced alternative to the play-group/room hire model we understand to be already in front of TPC. In the time available it was not possible to undertake the detailed work we would expect to devote to any project.

We note that the PC believes it can make a rational decision based on paper bids alone, but representatives of CCLT will be present at the meeting on 15 July 2025 and are willing to answer questions.



2.0 Background to the Community Land Trust and the experience of its steering committee.

2.1 CCLT background

The CCLT was set up in August 2024 to be a voice for our local area and to empower our communities to create sustainable social, economic and environmental gains. CCLT is run by a Board of Management, drawn from different Parishes covered by the Trust's operating area, all of whom are volunteers elected to the Board by the Trust's Members.

CCLT is registered with the Financial Conduct Authority, under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 as a Community Benefit Society (registration Number 9391).

CCLT is an independent non-profit organisation owned by its Shareholding Members, that works for the benefit of our communities in developing and managing projects such as:

- Provision of affordable homes.
- Provision of flexible facilities to aid Start-up and Small businesses owned by residents in our communities.
- Facilities such as community hubs.
- Woodland and nature reserves.

Anyone resident or working in CCLT's area of beneficial interest (Thakeham and all the surrounding parishes) can apply for membership. Details on our website: www.chanctonburyclt.co.uk.

3.2 CCLT Steering Committee experience

The current Steering Committee comprises professionals with a breadth of experience, pertinent to running a Thakeham Community Hub:

- Human Resources and Personnel directorship
- UK Regulatory Body leadership
- Financial and Actuarial directorship
- Accountancy services directorship
- Commercial property management
- Chartered Governance professional
- Planning consultancy
- Sales and Marketing directorship
- Charitable Trusteeships with responsibilities including management, - Age UK; Thakeham Village Hall and Chanctonbury Leisure Centre

3.3 Potential Community Hub partnerships and grant funders to include

- Horsham District Council
- Horsham Family Hub
- Age UK West Sussex Brighton & Hove
- Sussex Green Living
- Chanctonbury Leisure Centre*



- Action in rural Sussex
- Sussex Wildlife Trust
- The Football Association
- The Co-operative Bank and Cooperative stores*
- Brighton and Hove Albion Foundation
- Thakeham Homes*
- Rotary (Pulborough and Storrington Branch)
- Horsham and Shipley Community Partnership*
- The Benefact Group

We have been in dialogue with all the above in recent months but, given time constraints, only those marked with an asterisk * have been contacted about assisting with this project to date.

3.4 List of community-based projects for which CCLT steering group members have leadership responsibilities

- Chanctonbury Leisure Centre
- Brighton Hub (Age UK WSB&H)
- Kings Weald Community Centre, Burgess Hill (Age UK WSB&H)- specifically multi-generational
- Lamb House Activity Centre, Haywards Heath (Age UK WSB&H)
- Lavinia House, Horsham (Age UK WSB&H)
- Laburnum Centre, Bognor Regis (Age UK WSB&H)
- Thakeham Village Hall

In addition, one steering group member has been involved in assisting with the Shipley Community Hub but is not a member of its organising committee.



3.0 The Community Hub Opportunity

3.1 The request

Thakeham Parish Council (TPC) decided at its 23rd June 2025 meeting to trial a Community Hub in the former Pre-school building, vacant since December 2024. Efforts made by TPC to find a new Pre-school provider had been unsuccessful. Responding to an enquiry from CCLT, the CCLT was invited

“to submit a business plan proposal to explain how you would run/use the building for the Community Benefit on our behalf. Your proposal will be evaluated by the Council along with other interested parties and the Council will be able to evaluate and score the best proposition moving forward.”

Although we were made aware TPC had received a report by an independent surveyor we have not been shown it.

3.2 The need

To align with its principle of understanding and serving community needs, CCLT launched a public consultation via an online survey, promoted on social media and through leafletting approximately 420 local homes. The aim was to engage potential users and collect feedback in time for submission of our proposal on 11th July.

The anonymous survey captured demographic data and emphasised youth needs, often overlooked in local service provision planning. Due to tight deadlines, CCLT also included its own service proposals for community comment and validation.

As Thakeham Village Hall (TVH) trustees, two CCLT members were aware of TPC's previous offer to TVH to run an early-years family-focused drop-in/playgroup facility in the building. CCLT are dubious about the estimated first year 1,200 hours of use but included this 'playgroup' in the survey for resident feedback. However, recognising the broader interpretation of “community,” CCLT proposed services for all age groups.

3.3 The CCLT design principles

Core CCLT principles for the Hub include:

- Avoiding overlap with TVH services to protect its viability
- Collaborating with local groups, provided TVH bookings remain unaffected
- Achieving financial sustainability via volunteer staffing and revenue-generating activities
- If the Hub cannot become self-sufficient and TPC decides to continue funding it, CCLT recommends seeking resident approval before increasing the precept burden
- Any building work to be “net zero” as far as is practicable
- Introduce grey water capture for watering the garden
- Activities to be suitable to be co-located within a housing development
- Green spaces to be enriched to increase biodiversity



3.4 The survey

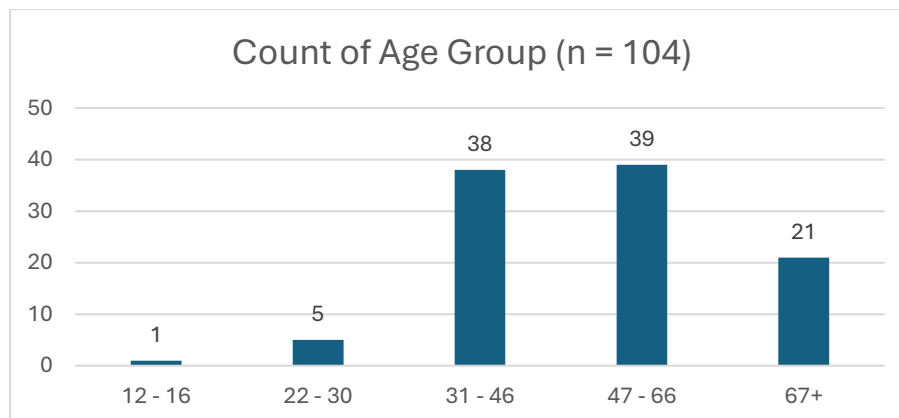
The survey was structured around five themes:

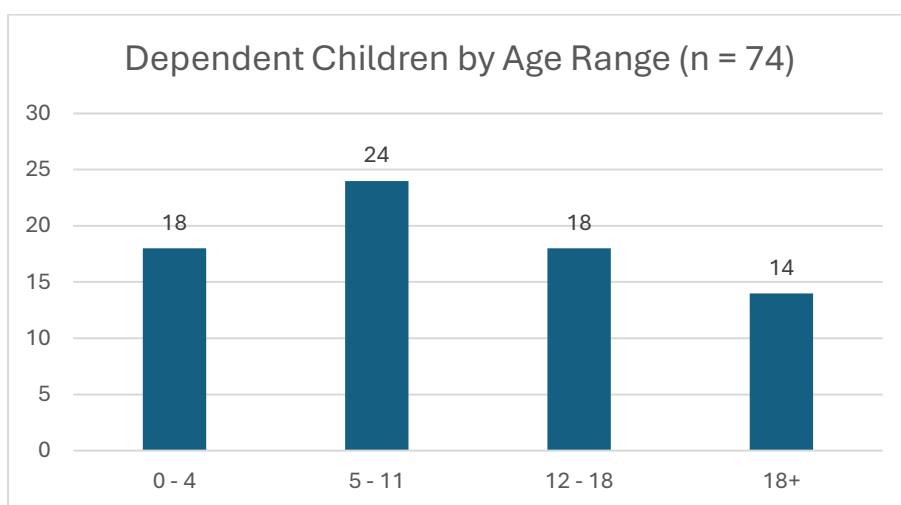
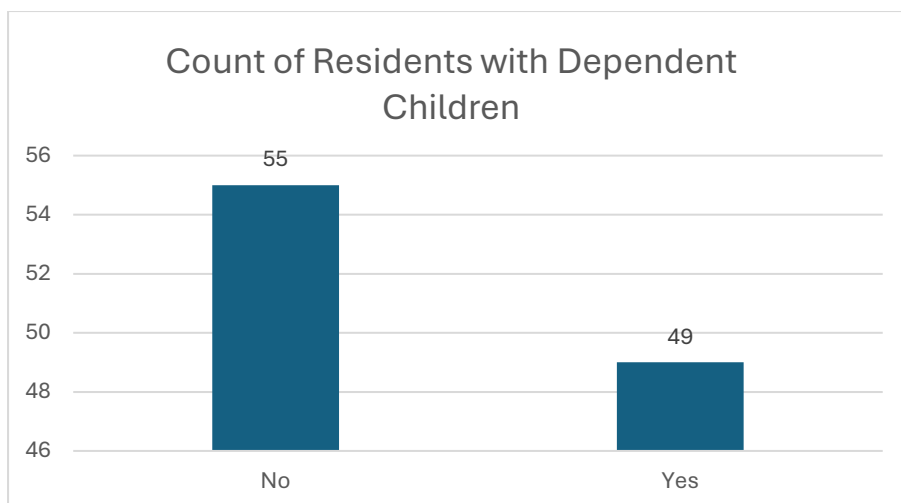
- Demographics: To understand views across different community groups.
- Parents & Pre-school Children: Explored preference for a revived Pre-school/Nursery or informal alternatives, usage frequency, and willingness to pay.
- Young People (Ages 5–18): Addressed local concerns about youth behaviour and engagement, sought input on desired facilities, and examined examples from the Horsham District.
- Home Workers/Flexible Office Space: Following trends in remote work and feedback from HDC's Enterprise Team, the survey assessed local demand for co-working options.
- Miscellaneous Services: CCLT sought feedback on potential Hub offerings such as:
 - Refill stations for household products
 - Book/DVD exchange (noting limited Village Hall access)
 - Men's Shed
 - Arts and crafts studio
 - Warm hub to support residents affected by energy costs

3.5 The key survey results

As at Friday 11th July 118 surveys have been completed by residents, however, to enable us to prepare this proposal we have only included data from the 104 responses received in just a week by Wednesday 9th July.

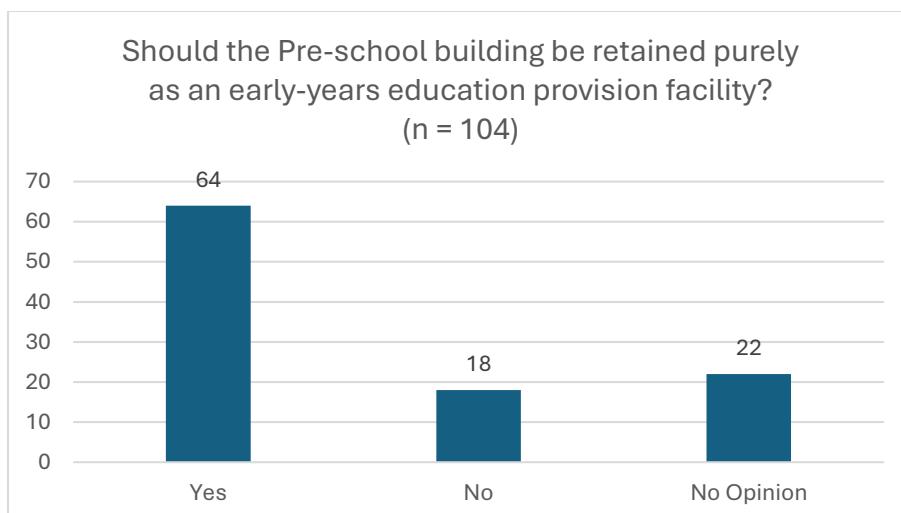
3.5.1 Demographic Data





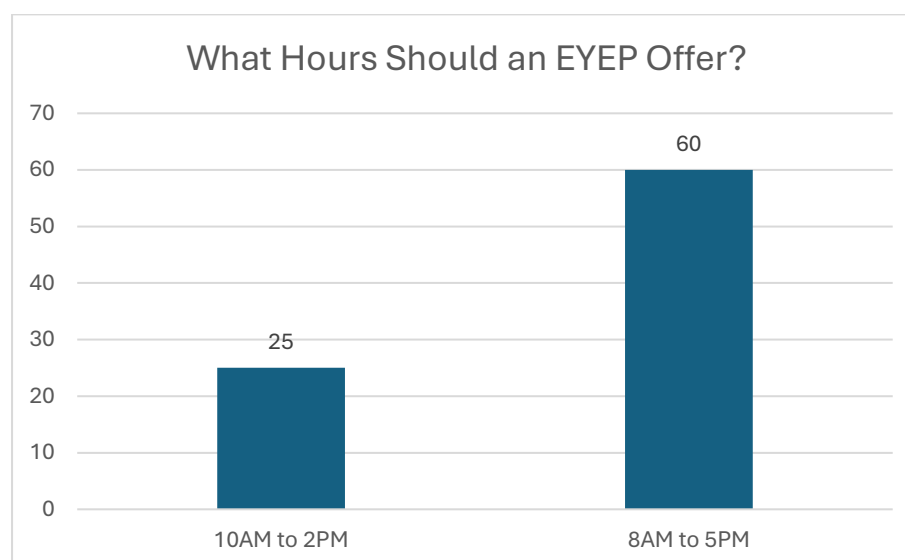
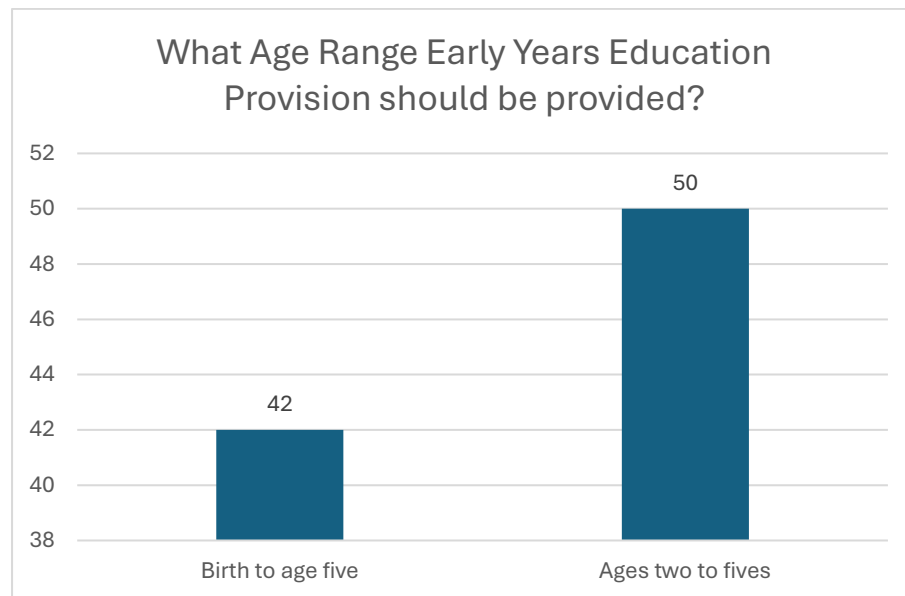
3.5.2 Early-years educational provision

We considered the first question which needed to be answered related to provision of formal Early-Years Educational Provision in Thakeham, so we asked residents for their views regarding the use of the building. In addition to many making statements expressing the wish for the building to be used for its original purpose, residents quantitatively favour retention.





CCLT took on board comments made to members during the period the Pre-school operated, and we asked what provision was preferred.





4.0 The CCLT Solution

4.1 Nursery services

Our survey results show significant support for reinstating early-years education at the site, but with extended service provision hours and a wider age-range for attendance than the Pre-school previously provided. There are clearly working parents in Thakeham who are taking their children to facilities outside the Village, who would prefer not to.

While acknowledging TPC's earlier decisions, taking account of the preferences of residents, CCLT suggest Councillors reconsideration of its decision. CCLT is very willing to assist with further consultation with parents and residents.

A qualified Thakeham resident (to protect their identity, details will be shared confidentially with TPC), currently operating a pre-school elsewhere would be interested in managing the facility. Should TPC approve CCLT's proposal as outlined in the Executive Summary, to manage the entire site, CCLT would collaborate with this professional (and/or others) to deliver the Nursery service the community supports.

Although CCLT recommends the reinstatement of a formal Nursery and Pre-school we respect that TPC wanted us to address how we would offer additional services, and we provide the following outlines. Some options could share the facility out of Nursery hours to generate additional income and mitigate the rental fees TPC would charge a provider, especially if a community member.

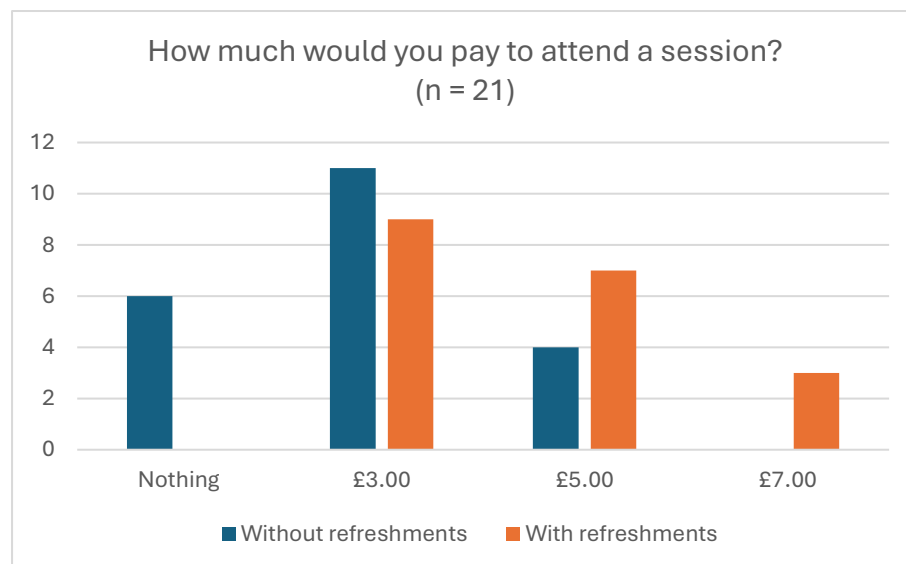
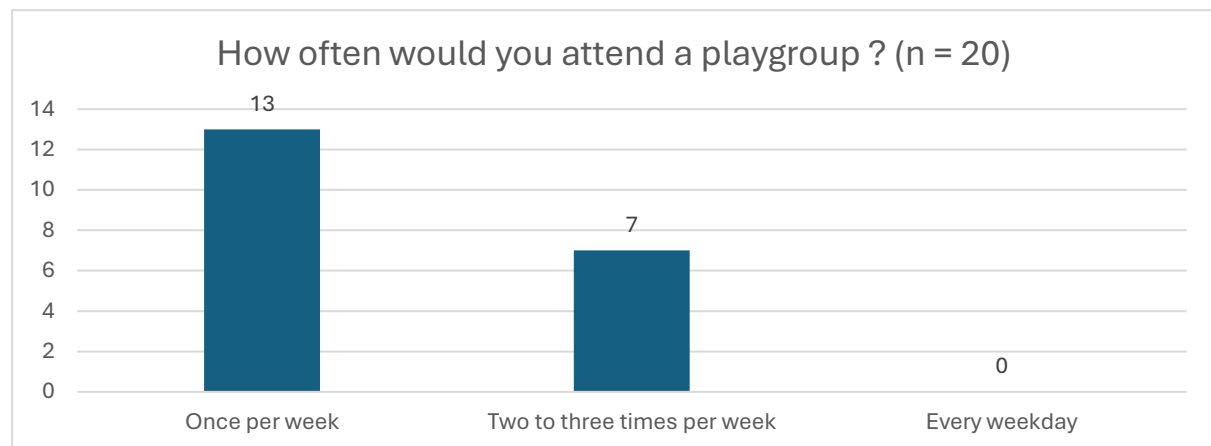
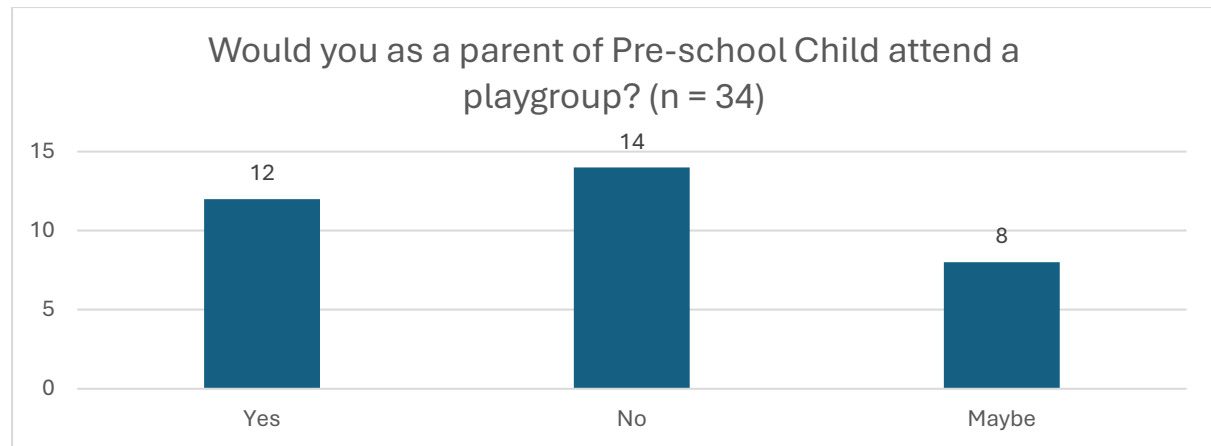
We also recognise that it may take some time to recruit all the required staff and obtain OFSTED approval, and we would make maximum use of the building in the meantime.

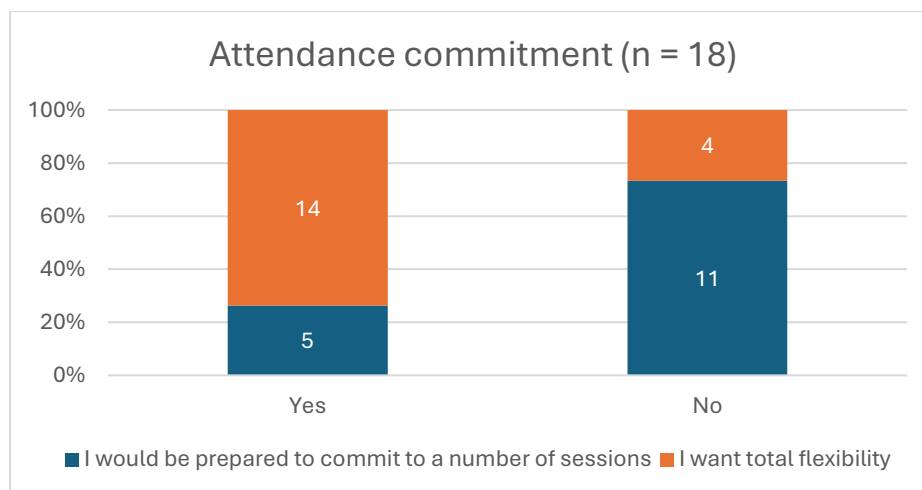
4.2 Parent and pre-school children drop-in facility/playgroup

Given the building's suitability for young children, the TPC vision for the Hub includes use as a playgroup type facility. To assess demand and financial viability our survey sought the views of parents who would be likely to attend a drop-in facility/playgroup.

The findings make us seriously question the viability of a Community Hub, purely focussed on this offering. Our survey was promoted by a leaflet drop to residents living close to the Pre-school building, and thus most likely to attend a playgroup. As Councillors will see below, demand is lukewarm with likely revenues from attendance fees being between £1,500 and £3,000 a year with between two- and four-hours weekly usage. Although one person expressed a willingness to run a playgroup, would they seriously commit in the face of so little confirmed demand?

These findings predict a significantly lower building utilisation than envisaged in the model presented to TVH.





Assuming TPC still want a drop-in/playgroup provision, CCLT are more than capable of offering this. CCLT is mindful of the following Regulatory considerations:

- Ofsted Registration: Not required if parents remain responsible and sessions are under two hours.
- Health & Safety: Safety equipment and first aid kits will be maintained by CCLT.
- Supervision: As parents will be required to stay with children, staffing is not an issue.
- Insurance: Estimated budget of £200 annually; quotes pending.
- Data Protection: Confidential records of attendees will be kept.
- Equality: Group will be inclusive and non-discriminatory.
- Safeguarding: Policies will be in place and signed by all attending parents.
- Record Keeping: Attendance registers will be maintained.

The CCLT is also willing to work with the those involved in “the other party” in the bidding process, which if we understand correctly would be offering their services in a voluntary capacity.

CCLT does not believe the plan envisaged in the proposal made to TVH to use a Paxton-style door entry system, is necessary as bookings would not be managed by the TVH staff. The cost is high (c£900 - £950), equivalent to thirty percent of the potential first year revenue. Instead, CCLT would use a combination of its own steering committee members and additional volunteers (who would all have enhanced DBS checks) to manage access and ensure readiness between sessions. Additionally, if the trial ends and a new Pre-school provider is appointed, the door system would likely need to be reversed to meet safeguarding requirements.

If chosen to operate the Community Hub and to include a playgroup type activity CCLT will consult with applicable community members to determine the equipment required for internal activity use and present a budget to TPC for approval.

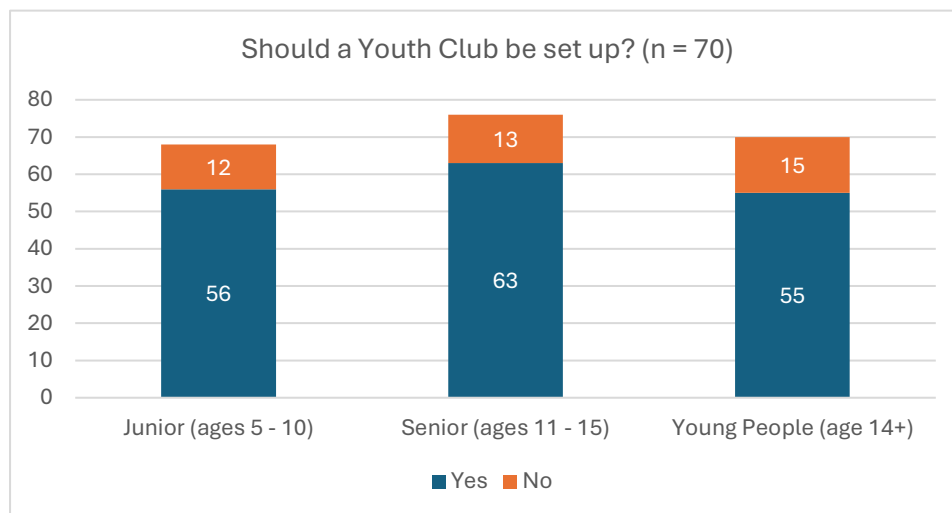
CCLT is also currently exploring options with the Horsham Family Hub to ascertain if it is feasible for them to hold outreach sessions in Thakeham, to make it more convenient for parents, rather than having to travel to The Needles for support.



4.3 Young persons activities

A playgroup would operate during the day, and not necessarily every day, leaving the Community Hub free for evening use. We know there are few if any facilities for young people in Thakeham, and although the Purple Bus was experimented with previously, there are currently few organised activities (We note the excellent services offered like the 'Messy Church', but these are an exception).

CCLT therefore asked residents for their views regarding youth clubs. The findings show strong feelings, and we believe this is something TPC and CCLT should jointly address.



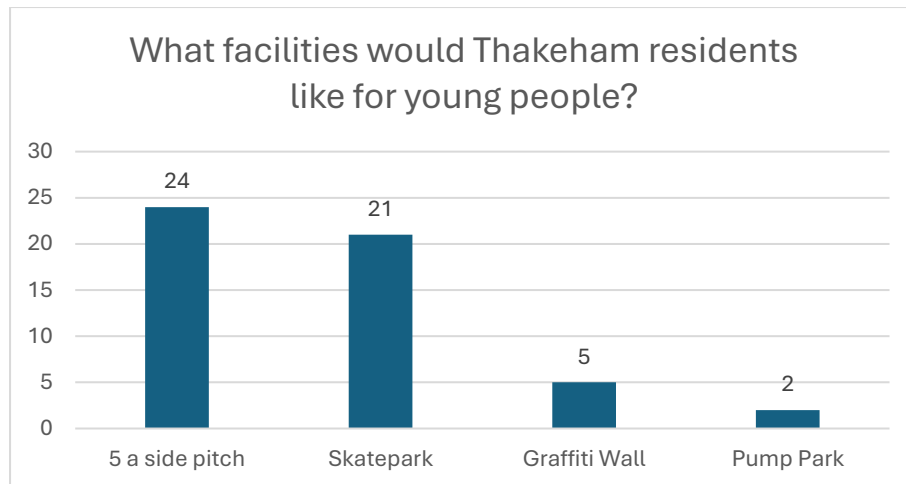
CCLT would plan to establish a Youth Club for Years 6–9, drawing on guidance from Horsham District Council's (HDC) Youth Development Officer and support from the relevant HDC Cabinet Member, with whom we have already engaged.

The charity 4TheYouth, already active in other villages, would be involved. Planned activities include pool (with a fold-away table), Xbox gaming, arts and crafts, and a tuck shop. Community survey feedback shows residents with relevant skills are willing to assist.

Given the nature of desired activities, CCLT believes a Youth Club is more suited to operating out of TVH rather than the Pre-school building.

CCLT acknowledges that focusing on Years 6–9 may further alienate older teenagers who already feel excluded and that they are unfairly blamed for antisocial behaviour. So, it is important to understand their wishes and motivations. While our young people seek different activities to what would be provided inside a Community Hub, such as a skatepark or a 3G five-a-side football pitch, these aspirations align with past community feedback and local development proposals.

Although few young people appear to have completed our survey, their parents are clearly aware of the facilities they would like to have available.



Despite initial doubts regarding how realistic meeting such aspirations would be, CCLT found a five-a-side 3G pitch—with goals and floodlighting—can be delivered for approximately £37,000. With up to £25,000 in grants available from the Football Association, the required Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding could be significantly reduced. A CCLT Steering Group member, also a Trustee of Chanctonbury Leisure Centre, confirmed strong demand for such facilities, noting that their all-weather pitch is used by nearly 100 groups.

CCLT envisions constructing a pitch on the current football ground with TVH management and made available free of charge at designated times to the young people who have driven this initiative. HDC's Parks and Leisure team, experienced in similar projects (most recently in Roffey), would assist with planning and delivery.

A five-a-side football pitch or skatepark is we are sure a significant departure from what TPC envisaged being included in this proposal. CCLT will enthusiastically join with TPC to work up a proposal if TPC are interested. The recent National Lottery grant success to provide new AV equipment for the Chesswood Room achieved by two TVH trustees who are also CCLT Directors demonstrates our ability to write compelling fundraising applications. The CCLT Chairman has previously worked with two charities to obtain successful grants. Furthermore, CCLT recommends involving the young people in making grant applications so the sincerity of their wishes can be heard by funding-decision makers, and to get their buy-in to responsibly use any potential facilities.

Though CCLT does not plan to run a Youth Club for 15–18-year-olds, it aims to engage them through other means. Inspired by Foundation Futures in Newcastle, CCLT proposes coaching-style group sessions to address life challenges and improve employability. With appropriate expertise within its Steering Group, CCLT would partner with the Brighton & Hove Albion Foundation, whose programmes include opportunities to meet players—an initiative likely to appeal to local youth, many of whom are keen supporters.

We would like to work with the Horsham Family Hub team at The Needles, to explore how their 'Find it out' offer can be leveraged to help our young people as they take their next steps in life.



4.4 Home working and flexible office space

Over the past year CCLT has engaged with HDC's Enterprise Team to understand what they perceive the District needs to stimulate economic growth and encourage enterprise. One requirement is for flexible office space for home workers.

The findings from our survey, indicate there are a small number of people who would like to utilise such service provision. The numbers and likely revenues are not sufficient to warrant the modifications that would be required to make the Pre-school building suitable. Thus, we will not consider them further in this proposal, but the information from the survey will be useful when considering potential facilities to go on to the 'workshops' site next to the Pre-school building.

4.5 Temporary office space for the Chanctonbury Community Land Trust itself

During the time that the building is operating as Community Hub, CCLT will use it as its base. It will hold its meetings there and if it employs any administrative staff they will work from there. Volunteers will be able to undertake their own work alongside the requirement of overseeing the building.

4.6 Miscellaneous services

In addition to asking residents to comment on specific Community Hub activity proposals we used our survey to quantify interest in other services.

Initiative	Interested	Maybe	Not Interested
Physiotherapist/massage therapist	43	13	17
Counselling services	47	11	19
'Men's Shed'	39	16	21
Refill services for household consumables	45	13	19
Warm space for the winter	32	14	24
Book/DVD exchange (longer access hours than TVH)	34	12	22
Arts and crafts Studio	46	17	16

There are some ideas which will need further exploration, for example there was little take up from the refill service when this was offered as a part of the Thrive programme and this has been suspended, but there appears to be a demand, so alternatives access times and increased publicity are required. Sussex Green Living have already been approached as part of Thrive – it offers a mobile service which might prove move flexible.

The interest in the idea of a 'Men's Shed' is not surprising, but a different location to the Pre-school building should be pursued. We can also link this with young person engagement with skills being taught as part of 'shed' activities. Two steering committee members are also part of Horsham and Shipley Community Partnership



which run successful Sheds in Shipley and Billingshurst, they are willing to assist in its set up.

Counselling services could be run in the evenings in the Pre-school building, as well as utilising the skills of CCLT members we would liaise with appropriate bodies. A need raised by several survey respondents was for assistance with CV preparation and interview techniques, again these are core skills of CCLT members.

Some services would be chargeable and thus contribute to reducing the costs of running a Nursery, but others would be offered as an FOC benefit to the Community (especially our young people).

Chanctonbury Leisure Centre are currently exploring running some of their services in locations other than their base in Storrington. TPC gave a small start-up grant to the Trust in its current form, as many Thakeham residents use the facility. We have yet to have discussions as to what might be practical for Thakeham as part of their outreach programme.

Age UK West Sussex Brighton & Hove are in future moving to a new community-based model which rather than running services from our own centres gives assistance to the development of services in local communities as best suit rural West Sussex. We have not yet had any discussions with the team covering Thakeham to explore what they may wish to deliver as part of a community hub.

The final activity complimentary to running a Nursery during 'working hours' which the Pre-school building could be used for is an Arts and Crafts workshop. The in-room sinks give this an advantage over the Village Hall and would not be in competition.

CCLT needs further time to quantify demand for these miscellaneous services and to estimate revenue contributions.



5.0 Implementation Plan

CCLT plans depend on which service the Council asks us to provide:

5.1 Community Hub only for two years with TPC meeting all expenditure

- Arrange installation of Trooli fibre to the premises broadband (with a wired access point in the main room), this service would provide faster speeds and be cheaper than a comparable service utilising Openreach fibre to the cabinet.
- Arrange for alteration of the toilets so that there are more adult ones with appropriate cubicles, a building specialist estimates the costs to be in the order of £8k. (A grant request to deliver this work has already been made to Thakeham Homes)

5.1.1 Arts and crafts studio

Identify an interested party/s from the residents and their contacts and contract to utilise the facility. This activity could start immediately subject to working around any building modifications. It can also, with planning, be progressed as part of the Nursery option, and could be started before the Nursery was open for children.

5.1.2 Playgroup

There are two options, reach out via social media to identify the parent willing to run a playgroup and contract with them to accept responsibility for paying facility hire fees. Alternatively, CCLT would accept responsibility for running the activity. In both cases CCLT would need to play an active role in promotion. Logically such an activity should be ready to open its doors to align with the start of the new school year.

5.1.3 Birthday parties

TVH will be asked to handle bookings for under-five's birthday parties, which will be offered at weekends only. Hire charges will be dynamically aligned to Chesswood Room fees, and revenues would be equally shared between TVH who will incur administration costs and TPC, to contribute to subsidies for other activities. Even if a Nursery provider is contracted, they would be required to allow for this use to increase TPC returns on the asset.

5.2 Youth clubs and other activities

These are not pertinent to Councillors when assessing this proposal for utilisation of the Pre-school building, so implementation plans will be separately discussed if TPC are interested in exploring relevant proposals. CCLT will liaise directly with TVH regarding potential programmes.

5.3 Nursery “plus”

Whilst providing a service from the beginning of the next school year in September 2025 may seem the logical time to start, it is likely to prove impracticable. CCLT would be guided by the provider's experience. Many parents may already have contractual obligations, to which they would need to give notice. It is more likely to have a slow build up.



Steps:

- Identify and contract with a provider
- Specify and obtain competitive quotations for necessary modifications to the building to make it suitable for use as a Nursery as well as a pre-school.
Implement within the agreed opening timescale with the Nursery provider

We may need to request a grant on start up to cover employment costs before an income stream is established.



6.0 Finances

6.1 Nursery

Should TPC reconsider their position regarding Nursery provision and engage with a third-party provider, CCLT would expect TPC to negotiate commercial rental and contractual terms.

In this scenario, as the landlord TPC would need to budget for appropriate building modifications to make the Pre-school suitable for use as a Nursery, but in all other respects the project would be revenue generative for the Parish.

6.2 Playgroup and additional activities

If TPC solely wish to pursue a playgroup activity rather than contracting with a Nursery provider, building modification costs would not be necessary.

CCLT would seek fiscal equanimity with alternative proposals and have based assumptions upon the offer made to TVH.

We have outlined above the potential revenues that we believe non-Nursery activities will generate, i.e. significantly less than £5,000 in the first year. From those revenues agreed operating expenses would need to be deducted, but CCLT makes a commitment that no labour (other than cleaning), or management/administration charges would be levied by CCLT. All such activities would be provided on a voluntary basis by CCLT members as a service to the Community, thus mitigating TPC grant costs.

6.3 Detailed income assumptions

We consider that the income in the interim period before the building reverts to a nursery/educational facility for pre-school children will be minimal.

The Village Hall already provides a high-quality modern space for local clubs, classes and meetings at very competitive prices, allowing community users to hire the Chesswood room, a similar size to the main room in the pre-school, at well under £10 per hour.

	Hall	Chesswood Room
Weekday rate per hour for community groups	£10.80	£7.05
Weekend rate per hour for community groups	£14.85	£9.00
For bookings exceeding three hours there is a further 20% discount		
Commercial users pay a surcharge of 67% on these rates		

The Pre-school building has good facilities for the under-fives but lacks facilities for older children and adults. There is, for example, only one toilet for adults. This will restrict demand.

There is as our survey found limited potential for a parents and toddlers play group and parties for under-fives.

The Village Hall has only hosted two parties for under-fives in the first six months of 2025, but we appreciate the facilities at the Pre-school building make that a more



appealing venue which would generate slightly more demand as revealed by the survey

The survey indicates that there may also be demand to use the space for arts and craft workshops. The Hall already provides a space for a weekly arts and craft group and hosted a commercial art class for a short period earlier this year.

Our proposal assumes a limited income from such hires of between £200 and £400 a month.

6.4 Operating expenditure assumptions

On the other hand, expenditure to keep the space in good condition even for occasional use is likely to be in excess of £10,000 in the first twelve months, despite CCLT volunteers providing administrative/management support.

	£
Employment costs*	4,400
Telecoms/internet	650
Licenses	200
Other running costs	600
Insurance	425
Electricity	600
Gas	1,900
Water	750
Repairs & Maintenance	1,000
Refuse Collection	250
Non-domestic rates	not known
Total	10,775

The building needs to be kept clean, and we assume that will mean employing a cleaner* for an hour a day five days a week. The labour charge is based upon rates paid by TVH.

We have assumed that it will be necessary to provide an internet service and licenses will be needed to play music and operate any computer equipment.

Other running costs and insurance costs have been assumed to be one third of those incurred in running the Village Hall.

The building will need to be kept heated and lit. While it has solar panels and income will be generated for any excess electricity the panels generate it is expected that there will be a shortfall in the winter months.

Experience at the Village Hall is that things break and need repairing or replacing. It is also a requirement to maintain safety equipment in good working order.

Refuse collection assumes two bin collections a month.

We have no information on the Business Rates for the property so are unable to estimate the likely annual cost.



6.5 Building modification costs

When we first began to consider utilisation of the Pre-school building as a whole community facility, we reviewed the required building modifications. The CCLT Steering Committee member with experience of owning and managing commercially rented property prepared a budget of approximately £8,000. These costs would not be incurred with the CCLT proposal to operate the building as a Nursery, but the estimate is included to provide Councillors with an indication of potential expenses if a future decision is taken to modify the building.