



Parish Office,
Banwell Village Hall,
Westfield Road, Banwell,
North Somerset. BS29 6BS

MEETING: Proposed closure of Banwell Children's Centre

DATE & TIME: Thursday 15th March 2018 at 7:30pm

LOCATION: Banwell Children's Centre, at the bottom of West Street Car-Park, West Street.

Present: Parish Cllrs Phil Adams, Paul Blatchford, Angela Haden, Phil Hale, Maggie McCarthy, Jim Weston, District Cllr Ann Harley, North Somerset Officers Sheila French, Jenie Eastham, Nicky Stead, Maxine Christian, Nicky King, Nicki Bobbette, Members of the public Brian Peat and Lisa Griffiths.

Notes

Apologies: Cllrs Paul Harding, Dawn Parry, District Cllr Jerry O'Brien, Maddie Williams, Emma Allen

Welcome by Jim Weston Chairman of Banwell Parish Council.

Cllr Weston opened the meeting welcoming everyone and gave some housekeeping notes. He then introduced Cllr Paul Blatchford a member of the Children's Centre Working Party who would be chairing the meeting.

North Somerset Children's Services, Jenie Eastman presentation on North Somerset's Rationalisation of Children's Centres report and the proposed closure of Banwell Children's Centre.

Jenie Eastman gave a presentation on the Rationalisation of Children's Centres report. Over the last few years they have already had to make savings of £250,000. However, in the next two years they have to make further savings. This year the proposal is to save £135,000 with a further £40,000 in the following year equating to 10% of their budget.

At present there are 14 children's centres in North Somerset, with previous budget cuts North Somerset have reduced the services in each of these Centres however this is no longer practical. Therefore, they have taken the difficult decision to recommend the closure of four; Banwell, Long Aston, Pill and Yatton.

Of all 14 Children's Centre Banwell has the smallest numbers of children under the age of 5 and has the smallest footfall.

It was felt important that front line services were preserved. The initial proposal was to totally close Banwell Children's Centre removing the entire service. However, after the feedback received from the public and the Parish Council the hope is now that Children's Services can work with the Parish Council to continue to provide the services currently offered whilst the management of the building (and the ongoing costs) is handed back over to the Parish Council. The workers would be based in other centres but would offer satellite services in Banwell.

It was recognised that it is difficult for Banwell residents to attend another children's centre if they don't drive.

The implementation of the new arrangement is aimed to start on the 2nd July. It was acknowledged that the next break clause in the lease with the Parish Council is in 2020 (Banwell Parish Council own the Children's Centre building and currently lease it to North Somerset). With the withdrawal of Children's Services the lease will be broken. North Somerset were pleased that Banwell Parish Council were prepared to discuss how they can work together to keep services going.

District Cllr Ann Harley – views from our North Somerset local councillor.

Cllr Harley said she supported Children's services and had been fighting for 15 years for this Children's Centre. However, she now recognised that North Somerset must look at their statutory duties only. She was therefore saddened to learn about the proposed closure but wanted to support the Parish Council and Children's Services to safeguard the services which are presently offered. It was recognised that with the proposed increase of housing in the Parish that perhaps in future the centre might be workable again. She wanted to thank the Parish Council for working with North Somerset to find a way forward as clearly a need had been identified in the Parish.

Banwell Parish Council's Children's Centre Working Party

Cllr Blatchford introduced the Children's Centre Working Party which consisted of himself Cllr Hale and Cllr Harding. At present they are listening to North Somerset and suggestions from other community groups in regards to use of the building but these are very tentative discussions and would be taken to full Council in due course. The Working Party felt their remit was to attempt to continue as many children's services as possible and protect the Youth Club. They felt that other uses for the building beyond this would be considered as long as they did not impact on these two priorities.

It was recognised that there is a division between the legal aspect of the closure, in particular the lease of the building, and the continuation of the children's services. There would be cost to the Parish which had not been budgeted for as it was unexpected. However the Parish Council are working to mitigate these. The impact on the Parish Council is unknown and it is important that the Council does not commit itself to something it might not be able to fund in the future.

The floor is open to the public for questions.

Why do people access other Children's Centre?

North Somerset offer a rolling programme across the four children centre in the area (Banwell, Castle Batch, Locking Castle and Milton/Old Worle). Families are able to access any of the services in any of the Childrens Centre. They use a group model so that different services are offered at different times in different Childrens Centre's, families then chose which to access. At present Forest School is very popular and people from outside Banwell and Winscombe are accessing this services. The administrator advises families of the services available across the centres.

Will evidence from the consultation change North Somerset's mind about the closure?

Unlikely. Children's services have to find £135,000 but want to retain frontline staff. By ending the lease there will be a significant saving. If North Somerset are able to run services from the centre they would expect to pay rent. North Somerset will present to the Parish Council a phased financial settlement along with a plan for the continuation of services for negotiation.

The Public and Staff Consultation goes back to North Somerset Council's Executive in June. Sheila French would like to engage in conversation with the Parish Council before a report is produced for the June meeting.

Date of consultations;

- 26 February-23 April public consultation www.n-somerset.gov.uk/bwsconsult
- 28 February-25 April staff consultation