

**Cabinet 13 June 2012 Item 21 Radstock Nursery Provision.**

First, I must declare a personal interest. Not because I am a grandmother yet, but because I am an LEA governor at St Nicholas CE Primary School, and I am delighted to be able to inform you that on 28 May the governors and head enthusiastically welcomed the proposal to locate the new nursery centre on the area vacated by our own nursery school after the school roof was repaired. We feel it will complement our own provision and help create a 'children's campus' with the families benefitting from the old glebeland location by the Kilmersdon river. Trinity's loss will be our gain.

However, it will be a loss which I feel most keenly because of the levels of deprivation in the Tynning area, with a steep hill for mums and dads to push a pushchair up and down, and dangerous narrow pavements or no pavement at all in places between Walnut buildings and the centre of Radstock. I note in the Equalities Assessment no appreciation of the problems of these families, the original beneficiaries of the former Labour government's scheme. Although there will still be parenting classes, I gather, a reduced availability is not a good idea, especially for families with children close together of an age, so that one could be in St Nicholas' centre, and the other in Tynning.

The council is of course to be commended for maintaining the centre, when far too many across the country have been closed, leaving only about 144 still supported by unitary authorities. There is a dreadful dearth of nursery provision in Radstock ward – indeed although there are play schemes, a Playbus and 'tots and toddlers groups' run by the NCT, there is no private provision at all except for a few child minders, which is not the same thing Yet Radstock ward has an exceptionally young population compared with B&NES statistics generally, and a high birth rate.

It is deplorable that we should be in this situation at all, created as it is by the Academies Act. Indeed, you might ask, what if St Nicholas School were to be become an academy, as the Diocese seems to want, not to mention the previous administration. As a governor since 2006, I can say with confidence that nothing short of a personal visit from Michael Gove himself, and blackmail on the scale seen in London and Birmingham, would induce the governors to vote for this, so you can be confident that the re-location will be a success.

Cllr Dr Eleanor Jackson.