

B&NES Council 8th May 2014

Connections Centre Writhlington, Radstock – Hydrotherapy pool statement

Chairman - councillors

Speaking today to ask you all to carefully consider the situation regarding the pool at the Connections Building, Writhlington in Radstock and that you support this call to refurbish it.

The building is owned by B&NES and leased to Sirona Care and Health and is used as a centre for disabled people, mainly with learning disabilities and Down's syndrome.

Until January 2013 hydrotherapy sessions were offered to people with very high physical mobility needs as a method of creating supported movement of limbs. With fantastic results.

It was available to all disabled people across North East Somerset. This affects disabled people in many of your wards. People who can't necessarily stand up for themselves at meetings like this.

This was built in the 1960's as a swimming pool, consequently heating the water has resulted in condensation and bacteria growth which caused Sirona to close it on health and safety grounds.

The next nearest facility is in the RUH. Service users now have to travel, accompanied by a physiotherapist and support staff, which is not an efficient use of time or resources as it adds to the cost.

The pool can be refurbished and upgraded and a quote was given of £125k to put a proper roof on, improve the ventilation and filtration systems and repair the condensation damage. B&NES have quoted £500k for this work. Consequently the pool has remained closed.

When I raised this at cabinet I was told that this service had not been provided by B&NES – so a further question has to be - why not?

I am told that a meeting is to look at this - but I am also told that the facility will remain closed, irrespective. Yet there was no consultation with service users or potential users. This is in contravention of the parish charter and in fact the new Connecting Communities initiative. There is also no Equality Impact Assessment of this decision when there is a clear impact on disabled people.

There is a huge risk here as the law states, quite clearly that services should not be refused to disabled people. But that is what seems to be happening.

B&NES could be looking at costs in excess of £500k if a legal case is taken for failure to provide a service.

Surely, after waiting nearly 18 months the refurbishment can be agreed and the service can be commissioned?

I am very concerned that once again a service is being removed irrespective of the cost either economically or socially. No consideration is being given to the cost of leaving it unused. This is a huge waste of resources. What a shame to let this go – another service lost in Radstock. Another facility thrown away – Is that because it is not based in Bath?

Use of this service could be increased especially if it is opened up to other people in the community, who would welcome the use of a hydrotherapy pool.

Cllr Crossley said at a meeting last night that he was most proud of the support B&NES has given to Threeways School for disabled children. Well I am asking you all now to support the call to refurbish and upgrade the pool - so you can all be proud of providing a much needed service to adult disabled people. Who don't want charity – they want services.

Lesley Mansell

Chair Radstock Town Council

8th May 2014