

BANWELL PARISH COUNCIL



Banwell Parish Council: Strategic Plan 2024 – 2029

THE PARISH COUNCIL AIMS

- **Facilities & Amenities:** To continually promote the best interests of all members of the local community by providing facilities and amenities in the parish not provided by the Unitary Authority.
- **Direct Services:** Where the Parish Council provides direct services, it will do so ethically and endeavor to maintain high professional standards and a quality service. It feels that such quality is the expectation of the parishioners and will not compromise these standards.
- **Communication:** The Parish Council aims to be a "Listening Council" and encourages you to let us know your opinions, comments and concerns. Where needed, we will act promptly to pass onto other local authorities or bodies, concerns which we cannot deal with ourselves. Problems within the powers of the Parish Council will be passed to the relevant committees.
- **Climate Emergency:** The Parish Council has declared a climate emergency. It will operate and promote positive measures impacting the environment while reducing and eliminating adverse impacts. It will use appropriate policy (principles of action) and planned activities (actions or events) to:
 - Act sustainably including adopting a reduce, reuse, recycle strategy.
 - Promote biodiversity.
 - Protect and enhance wildlife and the environment.

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Executive Summary

The nature of local government has changed significantly over the last decade and it is likely that parish councils will continue to take on more responsibilities in the future.

In 2010, a Parish Plan was published which had been derived from a complete survey delivered to every household in the Parish. This survey and subsequently the plan, identified what the parishioners valued about their Parish and identified concerns and suggestions to be addressed. Most of these aims have been successfully implemented or will be realised shortly but other issues still remain pertinent to his day.

This plan sets out the priorities the Council has set itself for the next five years (2024–2029), in order to ensure that it is best placed to meet those challenges. The aim of the Plan is to give the community an understanding of what the Parish Council is working on and what it aims to achieve. It is intended to be a working document which the Council will update regularly.

Profile of the Parish

The rural village of Banwell is located 5 miles east of the seaside town of Weston-super-Mare. It lies at the west end of the northern side of the Mendip Hills, and Mendip Hills National Landscape (formally Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty). The village is surrounded by hills on one side and moors on the other. The medieval core of the village is the centre point for the Conservation Area.

The core of the village grew up around a natural spring at the centre of the village that produces up to 7 million gallons a day in the winter season and is the source of the River Banwell. This spring powered mills from at least Domesday up until the 1920s when the spring was capped, and the water used for the ever-expanding Weston-super-Mare. At this time the village also lost the pond that made an excellent setting for the mainly 15th century parish church.

The village today is a product of building, rebuilding and adaptation over many centuries. Besides the main village it consists of the hamlets of Wint Hill, Yarborough, Whitley Head, Hill End, Knightcott, Wolvershill, Way Wick, Rolstone, Towerhead and part of West Wick.

Banwell thrived from the mid-19th century with many shops and businesses. Many families of the gentry resided here which brought trade and employment but with the rise of Weston-super-Mare and the ongoing traffic problems (due to the busy A371 which bisects the village and is narrow at the centre of the village) Banwell has declined so that at the turn of the 21st century we were down to eight shops from the 26 or so of the 1940/50s.

About 20% of the Village is part of the Mendip Hills National Landscape and contains three Sites of Special Scientific Interest (Bone Caves, North End of Banwell Woods and south of the Puxton Moors). Within the village and its surroundings there is archaeological evidence of prehistoric, Roman, medieval, and post-medieval activity with a Roman Settlement, Roman Villa, Iron Age Fort and 31 listed buildings including St Andrews Church (Grade I), Banwell Castle, the Abbey & Cloisters (Grade II*).

Nationally significant caves were found at the western end of Banwell Hill. The Stalactite Cave was found by mineral miners in 1757 and The Bone Cave containing large quantities of prehistoric animal bones was found in 1824.

Banwell is a medium sized parish with a population of 3,251 (2021 census). A figure which is expected to increase dramatically with North Somersets emerging local plan (2028 – 2038) with the largest development of up to 2800 properties expected at Wolvershill.

Compared to North Somerset, the Parish has a higher percentage of residents aged 70+, which accounts for nearly one quarter of its population. Equally, there is a high proportion of adults aged between 50 and 70 years. By implication the proportion of younger adults (aged 20 to 50 years) is lower than the North Somerset average.

Banwell is one of only two villages in North Somerset which ranks within 20% of the most deprived areas in the Country for income affecting children (14.9%) and barriers to housing & services (11.29%).

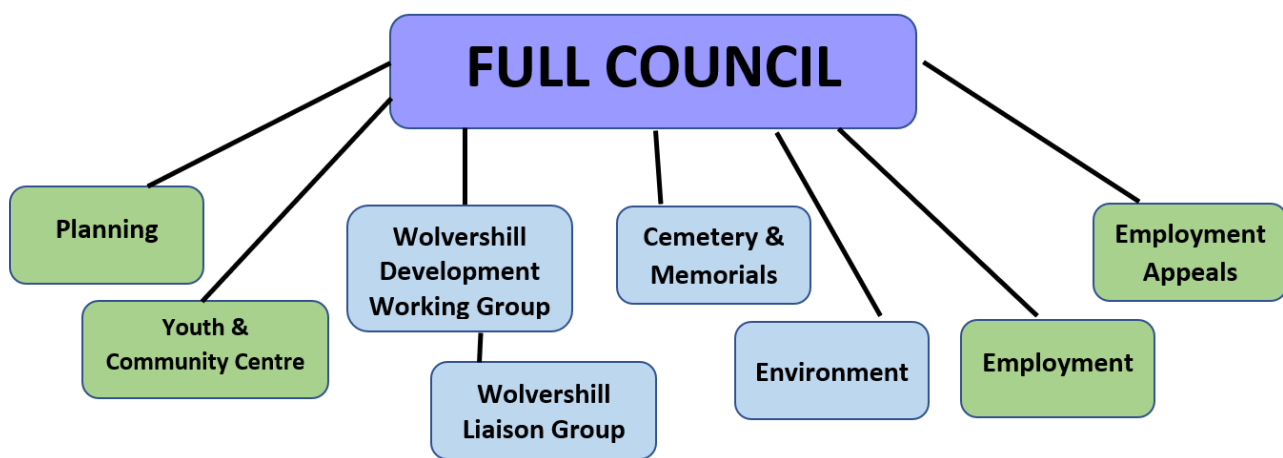
How Banwell Parish Council works

The Parish Council consists of up to 12 representatives who are democratically elected every four years (or co-opted to fill vacancies). The last full election was 2023. From the 12 councillors a chairman and vice-chairman are elected annually.

Currently the Council qualifies for the 'General Power of Competence (GPC)', which gives Parish Councils more 'power to act' – this enables the smooth running of the Council and can bring new opportunities for the Parish area in terms of providing cost-effective services and facilities to meet the needs of local people.

The Parish Council makes decisions through main council and the committees which have delegated authority.

Committee Structure



GREEN – Committee of the Council (with delegated powers)

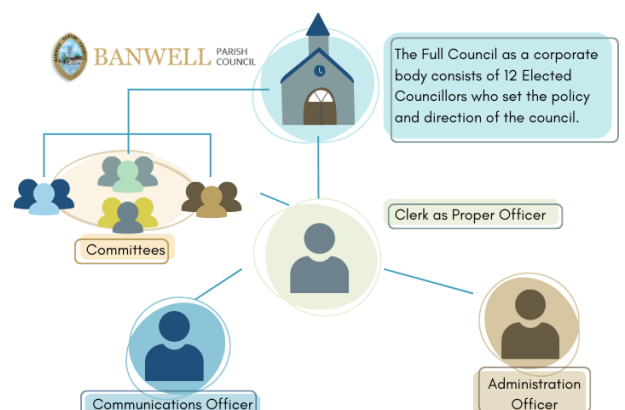
BLUE – Working Group (advisory)

The Council works to its Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, which lay down the rules by which we operate and conduct our business. We also expect Parish Councillors to adhere to the Council's Code of Conduct. Committees and working groups work to terms of reference agreed by full council.

The Parish Council is funded predominately through raising a precept on the council tax charge but also by generating income through services delivered (such as hire of the YCC) and grants.

The 2023/2024 Council budget set a precept of £122,646.03 which equates to a council tax charge of £85.95 p.a. per council tax band D household. For 2024/2025 The Parish Council anticipates the council tax charge to remain the same at £85.95 p.a. per council tax band D. Supporting the Parish Council and its Committees are officers who allow the Parish Council to deliver services and to ensure that all decisions are made appropriately.

The structure is headed by the Clerk, who is also the Council's statutory Responsible Financial Officer.



In receipt of the precept charge per household, the Council provides a wide range of locally managed services, which include:

- Banwell Youth & Community Centre
- Riverside Green and the Recreation Ground which include play equipment and multi-use games area.
- Youth provision
- Maintaining a cemetery
- Providing various community events such as Window Trails, Remembrance Service and Christmas Market,
- Providing various community initiatives such as outreach Citizens Advice, Food Bank, Digital Inclusion Sessions, public living room with soup and a roll and walking buddies
- War memorial, Flag Poles, other memorials, benches and bus shelters.
- Landscaping improvement projects
- Litter picking through the centre of the village with annual spring / summer clean days.

Parish Council Objectives

1. Facilities & Amenities

To continually promote the best interests of all members of the local community by providing facilities and amenities in the parish not provided by the Unitary Authority.

Continue to develop improve & enhance local facilities & amenities.

- In conjunction with the North Somerset Council's Local Plan and Bypass Teams to support improvements through the centre of the village (e.g. further information boards and streetlight mounted Christmas lights).
- To continue to investigate a Cemetery extension within the Parish boundaries.

Wellbeing

- To continue to ensure all open spaces are well cared for and enhanced (for example resurfacing of lines in the MUGA, all weather path, outdoor gym equipment & additional toddler equipment at the Rec).
- To run events and activities to support mental & physical wellbeing across all sections of the community (e.g. public living room, digital inclusion sessions, Men's Shed).
- Promote positive planning and influencing local development (e.g. proactively engaging with major planning applications, promoting the Parish in the Local Plan development).
- Seeking to safeguard the separate identities of Banwell and the new Village and their environs (e.g. protecting green corridors / strategic gap to prevent coalescence, promoting / creating distinctive characteristics and features of the individual villages).
- Creation of Parish wide emergency plan

Inclusivity

- Ensure the type and frequency of Parish Council events reflects a wide range of community interests.
- Promote and support local voluntary groups and events held.
- Ensure that the Parish Council continues to provide diverse and inclusive facilities.

- Encourage the use of the YCC for community services / activities (e.g. clinics, information café's, counselling, Citizens Advice, local clubs)

2. Direct Services

Where the Parish Council provides direct services, it will do so ethically and endeavours to maintain high professional standards and a quality service. It feels that such quality is the expectation of the parishioners and will not compromise these standards.

Improve the organisational management and efficiency of the Parish Council, for example by:

- Reviewing the staffing structure and objectives to ensure they reflect changing legislative and community needs.
- Continuing to provide induction and training programme for new staff and council members.
- To apply for the quality local council award.

Develop and implement a fixed assets strategy including, for example:

- Developing a fixed assets map to include contract information for public rights of way around the Parish.
- Developing a formal fixed assets maintenance programme
- Evaluating the Youth & Community Centre as a community and office space in the short, medium and long term.
- To seek provision of a Community Centre which includes a Parish Council presence in the new Wolvershill Development.
- Continue to evaluate cost v benefit analyses associated with the provision of playgrounds and open spaces.

Improve our forward-planning, for example by:

- Developing succession planning for and flexibility in staff and members.
- Developing succession planning for and flexibility for Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the full council and its committees.
- To identify Parish Council projects.
- Considering future opportunities and challenges, including anticipated increases in powers and responsibilities.

Improving our financial control, for example by:

- Reviewing internal controls quarterly as well as the annual independent inspections.
- Reviewing the investment strategy and undertaking ongoing management of investments.
- Reviewing supplier performance to ensure continued value-for-money.

Pursue all possible appropriate forms of alternative revenue and funding, including maximising Section 106 or Community Infrastructure Levy monies available,

- Advancing project planning to facilitate timely release of funds.

3. Communication

The Parish Council aims to be a "Listening Council" and encourages you to let us know your opinions, comments and concerns. Where needed, we will act promptly to pass onto other local authorities or bodies, concerns which we cannot deal with ourselves, problems within the powers of the Parish Council will be passed to the relevant committees.

Understanding our community

- Conduct Parish surveys and consultation exercises with residents and community groups, to better understand their needs and aspirations.

Engaging with our community

- To support a thriving Banwell Business community (e.g. create and maintain a database of business contacts, annual Christmas market).
- Identify new opportunities for community engagement, for example by establishing a Youth Forum or similar.
- Improve the accessibility, relevance, ease of use and immediacy of our communication channels, including social media.

Involving our community

- Work with North Somerset & the Wolvershill Developers to create a Wolvershill Master Plan.
- Increase involvement of the community in Parish Council activities, (e.g. supporting and encouraging local organisations to adopt and run community events, working with local sports groups, clubs and societies to improve the quality of facilities and activities available, increasing public input into the volunteer of the year award).
- To review the creation of neighbourhood plan after the local plan has been adopted.

4. Climate emergency

The Parish Council has declared a climate emergency. It will operate and promote positive measures impacting the environment while reducing and eliminating adverse impacts. It will use appropriate policy (principles of action) and planned activities (actions or events) to:

Act sustainably including adopting a reduce, reuse, recycle strategy.

- Promote and provide opportunities for the reduction of waste and increase of recycling (e.g. 'paperless' office, upgrading litter bins to recycling bins, monthly litter picks linked with spring / summer clean, promoting the use of more sustainable materials, Recycling bins at community events, continue to support teracycle at the YCC, community composting)
- New / increased allotment provision in the new Wolvershill development.
- Raise environmental awareness amongst employees and the community, for example by: environmental communications via social media and the enewsletter.
- Review & reduce energy costs and associated emissions Parish Council wide (e.g. installing solar panels at YCC, promote and support a Community Energy Scheme).

Protect and enhance wildlife and the environment and promote biodiversity.

- Protect green spaces and promote and instigate environmental enhancement schemes (e.g. new tree & shrub planting, environmental and habitat management)
- Develop a green space works programme.
- Environmental communications relating to wildlife and biodiversity.
- To investigate ways of enhancing the quarry by improving biodiversity
- To investigate the creation of a Community Orchard

Environment and the decision-making process

- To work with North Somerset's Local Plan team to make it as green as possible (e.g. support the introduction of safe walking and cycle routes, the creation of a strategic green gap between the Bypass and Banwell Village).
- Ensuring money is invested wisely by researching the eco status of banks used / use of green utilities.
- Research funding possibilities for climate projects.
- To create a "Sustainable Banwell" Facebook page.
- To continue climate communications plan and regularly update with latest news and advice for residents (e.g. promotion of citizen science schemes including river monitoring with Bristol Avon River Trust, BioBlitz and U.W.E bat monitoring projects and any green homes grants).
- Compile and maintain an Environmental Policy Statement. The statement should represent a high level, but comprehensive, commitment to minimising environmental impacts of day-to-day Parish Council Operations within its own estate.
- Planning Committee to consider green measures in all recommendations when supporting a planning application.