

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL

MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday 19th March 2026

Present:- **Councillors** Michael Auton, Tim Ball, Alex Beaumont, David Biddleston, Colin Blackburn, Alison Born, Anna Box, Stuart Bridge, Paul Crossley, Chris Dando, Jess David, Mark Elliott, Fiona Gourley, Kevin Guy, Alan Hale, Ian Halsall, David Harding, Liz Hardman, Gavin Heathcote, Steve Hedges, Saskia Heijltjes, Joel Hirst, Lucy Hodge, Duncan Hounsell, Shaun Hughes, Dr Eleanor Jackson, Grant Johnson, Samantha Kelly, George Leach, Hal MacFie, Ruth Malloy, Lesley Mansell, Paul May, Matt McCabe, Simon McCombe, Sarah Moore, Robin Moss, Michelle O'Doherty, Manda Rigby, Paul Roper, Sam Ross, Onkar Saini, Toby Simon, Shaun Stephenson-McGall, George Tomlin, Malcolm Treby, Karen Walker, Chris Warren, Sarah Warren, Tim Warren CBE, Andy Wait and Joanna Wright

Apologies for absence: **Councillors** Sarah Evans, Oli Henman, John Leach, Ann Morgan, Bharat Pankhania, June Player and Dine Romero

63 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure, as set out on the agenda.

64 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

65 MINUTES - 24TH FEBRUARY 2026

On a motion from Councillor Matt McCabe, seconded by Councillor Karen Walker, it was

RESOLVED that the minutes of 24th February 2026 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

66 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL OR FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Chair made the customary announcements regarding microphones and webcasting.

At the Chair's request, a video was shown about the Councillors' corporate parent role and pledge to children in care. Further information is available from the below link;

[Our pledge to children in care and care experienced young people | Bath and North East Somerset Council](#)

67 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

There were no items of urgent business.

68 QUESTIONS, STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Statements were made by the following members of the public;

Professor Penny Hay made a statement entitled “Playing outside, learning everywhere: the importance of outdoor play for children, families and communities”. A copy of which is available on the Minute book and attached to the online record. Councillor Gavin Heathcote asked Penny how these aims could be achieved. Penny explained it was a collaborative process with cultural, creative and educational input and invited Councillors to see this in action on 12th June at the Forest of Imagination event.

Alla Chaikovska read a statement from Adam Jukes who had not been able to attend. Adam’s statement was also in support of the Green Group motion on the agenda. A copy of his statement is available on the Minute book and attached to the online record.

Gillian Ford addressed Council, as a Foster Carer, expressing deep concern that the changes taking place in Children’s Services might result in reduced support structures and ultimately Foster Carers leaving the service. Councillor Joanna Wright asked if families and Foster Carers had been consulted, to which Gillian replied that they had not. Councillor Robin Moss, a member of the Fostering Panel, asked if Gillian considered it important for Foster Carers to be listened to, to which Gillian replied that it was imperative and that any change must be careful and based on views from those within the Service. Councillor Kevin Guy asked if Gillian would like to meet the Cabinet Member and relevant officers, to which Gillian replied that she would.

Jodie Brown, also a Foster Carer, made a statement expressing similar concerns and highlighting the great relationships between Foster Carers and Social Workers. A copy of the statement is available on the Minute book and attached to the online record. Jodie commented that, if staff are driven out, this will impact children and families so the proposals need to be reconsidered. Councillor Robin Moss asked Jodie if she agreed that the process should be paused and re-started in a considered manner. Jodie agreed this was vital and that children and Foster Carers need to be consulted. Councillor Joanna Wright referred to a government target for 10,000 more Foster Carers and asked if Jodie thought these proposals would encourage more Foster Carers, to which Jodie replied that she didn’t think so. Councillor Kevin Guy asked if Jodie would like to meet the Cabinet Member and relevant officers, to which Jodie replied that she would.

The Chair thanked the speakers for their statements which were referred to the relevant Cabinet Members.

69 AVON PENSION FUND - LGPS POOLING OF INVESTMENTS

The Council considered a report about Avon Pension Fund pooling of investments.

On a motion from Councillor Toby Simon, seconded by Councillor George Leach, it was unanimously

RESOLVED that the Council in its capacity as Administering Authority for APF, the Council agrees to:

1. Implement required changes to investment pooling through the following arrangements;
 - i. APF becoming a shareholder in the new LPPI Holdings Ltd;
 - ii. APF's assets will be transferred to LPPI Holdings' subsidiary, LPPI Ltd, an FCA regulated investment company which will be operated in accordance with the shareholder agreement.
2. Delegate to the Director of Assurance, Risk and Pensions, in consultation with the Chair of the Avon Pension Fund Committee, the powers to undertake tasks to progress these required changes to investment pooling, and to take such decisions deemed necessary to promote the interests of the Council and the Avon Pension Fund with respect to pooling. This will, without limitation, include agreeing and authorising financial expenditure or investment that may be required consequential upon the Council's participation in LPPI and agreeing, authorising, and signing documentation and contracts on behalf of the Council in its role as Administering Authority of the Avon Pension Fund. This delegation is valid for 6 months and remains in force until 19 September 2026.
3. That subject to the above, all such matters shall be carried out with the aim of achieving the target date for APF joining LPPI and moving its assets of 1 April 2026, and subject to such intermediate steps and timescales as may be considered appropriate and necessary by the Director of Assurance, Risk & Pensions, in consultation with the Chair of the Avon Pension Fund Committee.

70 CHARITABLE TRUST BOARD ANNUAL REPORT

The Council considered a report updating them on activity of the Charitable Trust Board for 2025/25.

On a motion from Councillor Sarah Warren, seconded by Councillor Samantha Kelly, it was unanimously

RESOLVED to note the Annual Report of the Charitable Trust Board for 2024/25.

71 DESIGNATION OF CHAIR & VICE CHAIR DESIGNATE

The purpose of this report was to invite the Council to indicate a Councillor as Chair of the Council (Designate) and Vice-Chair (Designate) for the next Council Year beginning in May 2026. The Council, at its Annual Meeting in May 2026, will still be required formally to elect Councillors to these roles for the forthcoming Council Year.

On a motion from Councillor Kevin Guy, seconded by Councillor Robin Moss, it was unanimously

RESOLVED

1. That, for forward planning purposes, the Council names Councillor Shaun Stephenson McGall to be treated as Chair of the Council (Designate) and Councillor Dine Romero as Vice Chair of the Council (Designate) for the 2026/27 Council Year.

72 MOTION FROM THE GREEN GROUP - ENABLING OUTDOOR PLAY AND COMMUNITY BELONGING

The Council considered a motion from the Green Group calling for measures to enable outdoor play and community belonging.

On a motion from Councillor Saskia Heijltjes, seconded by Councillor Joanna Wright, it was

RESOLVED that

Council:

1. Recognises the vital role that physical activity and outdoor play have in supporting the health, wellbeing, and development of children and young people across Bath and North East Somerset.¹
2. Notes the work undertaken by the charity Playing Out. Play streets (or 'playing out' sessions) are neighbour-led temporary road closures on quiet, residential streets, creating a safe space for children to play freely together on their doorstep. Playing Out also champions School Streets, to provide children with more opportunities for outdoor play at the beginning and end of school days.²
3. Notes research published in the British Medical Journal identified a mental health crisis in young people before COVID19, with the pandemic exacerbating these issues and widening inequalities. Playing out can help children and young people build emotional resilience by creating strong ties to their local community and developing both social skills and a sense of belonging.³
4. Is concerned that 2022/2023 data from Sport England reveals that 39% of BANES' children are failing to meet the Chief Medical Officers' recommended 60 minutes of daily exercise. Council notes that outdoor play in England has declined by 50% in a generation, with traffic, fear of crime, and unwelcoming public spaces contributing to this drop.⁴

¹ <https://www.pediatricnursing.org/article/S0882-5963%2817%2930185-9/abstract>

² <https://playingout.net/play-streets/impact-overview/>

³ <https://acamh.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/jcv2.12008>

⁴ <https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2025-12/Active%20Lives%20Children%20and%20Young%20People%20Survey%20->

5. Acknowledges that the BANES Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2023-2030) aims to put in place the best conditions for people of all ages to live healthy and fulfilling lives including enabling and encouraging proactive engagement in health promoting activity at all ages for good quality of life.⁵
6. Believes play sufficiency is an important part of supporting Bath and North East Somerset's children, leading to better outcomes for their health, wellbeing and education.
7. Notes that play provision within Bath and North East Somerset sits across departments and there is no one or team responsible for play provision.

Council resolves to:

1. Invite the appropriate Policy Development and Scrutiny panel(s) to consider adding the issue of play provision to their workplan(s).
2. Suggest that PDS work could include reviewing existing plans and strategies, identifying any gaps, and considering how Council could enable more children in Bath and North East Somerset to play more of the time.

[Notes;

1. *Councillors in favour (48); - Councillors Michael Auton, Tim Ball, Alex Beaumont, David Biddleston, Colin Blackburn, Alison Born, Anna Box, Stuart Bridge, Paul Crossley, Chris Dando, Jess David, Mark Elliott, Fiona Gourley, Kevin Guy, Alan Hale, Ian Halsall, Dave Harding, Liz Hardman, Steve Hedges, Saskia Heijltjes, Joel Hirst, Lucy Hodge, Duncan Hounsell, Shaun Hughes, Eleanor Jackson, Grant Johnson, Samantha Kelly, George Leach, Hal MacFie, Ruth Malloy, Lesley Mansell, Paul May, Matt McCabe, Simon McCombe, Sarah Moore, Robin Moss, Michelle O'Doherty, Manda Rigby, Sam Ross, Onkar Saini, Toby Simon, Shaun Stephenson-McGall, George Tomlin, Malcolm Treby, Andy Wait, Sarah Warren, Tim Warren, Joanna Wright.*

Councillors against (2); - Councillors Chris Warren, Gavin Heathcote

Councillors abstaining (1): - Councillor Karen Walker]

73 MOTION FROM THE LABOUR GROUP - EVOLVING DISCOVERY CARDS - MODERNISATION AND EFFICIENCY FOR RESIDENTS AND TOURISTS

This motion was ruled out of order so not taken.

74 MOTION FROM THE LIBERAL DEMOCRAT GROUP - NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Council considered a motion from the Liberal Democrat Group on the National Planning Policy Framework.

On a motion from Councillor Sarah Warren, seconded by Councillor Matt McCabe, it was

[%20academic%20year%202024-25%20report-.pdf?VersionId=02ctNYq5CXJAG4naDr4BlmM_a406a.5y](#)

⁵ <https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/document-and-policy-library/joint-health-and-wellbeing-strategy>

RESOLVED that

Council notes:

1. The recent Government consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which are intended to support the Government's growth and house building targets.
2. These reforms will limit local planning authorities' ability to set high environmental standards for new homes, banning councils from setting policies that go further than national building regulations, particularly in the areas of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and Net Zero Construction policy.
3. B&NES Council has been an ambitious early adopter of BNG and Net Zero Construction policies via the Local Plan Partial Update of 2023 and is already achieving 'Net Zero in operation' and 10% BNG standards for new build.
4. B&NES has recently consulted on increasing our ambition for climate and nature through updated local development management policies as part of the Local Plan Options consultation.

Council believes:

5. The proposed NPPF changes will be a step backwards and will downgrade recently established standards to support nature recovery and tackle climate change.
6. Government should not prevent councils from going further and faster in response to the Climate and Nature Emergency.
7. Building to higher standards has been shown to be technically, legally and financially viable.
8. New homes must be fit for the future. If 1.5m homes are to be built in England, these must be energy-efficient homes, which deliver lower energy bills for residents and which contribute to statutory, national Net Zero targets.
9. Sustainable, climate resilient homes are good for public health by addressing air quality, over-heating, damp and cold, energy efficiency (tackling fuel poverty), and supporting active lifestyles.
10. Measures to embed nature-friendly design features, such as 'swift bricks' and sustainable drainage systems, stronger protections for habitats of high environmental value and integration of Local Nature Recovery Strategies into planning decisions, are welcome.
11. Local knowledge, local policy-making and local decision-making are essential to a robust and fair planning system.

Council therefore:

12. Objects to the proposed NPPF changes regarding BNG and Net Zero Construction.
13. Calls on the Government to empower councils to protect and restore nature and to set ambitious energy and sustainability standards for new developments, through local plans processes.
14. Endorses the letter, coordinated by the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) and signed by over 60 local authorities, businesses and NGOs including B&NES, on this issue.
15. Requests that the Leader write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on this matter.

[Notes;

1. *The above successful resolution was carried with the following votes;*

Councillors in favour (46): Michael Auton, Tim Ball, Alex Beaumont, Dave Biddleston, Colin Blackburn, Anna Box, Stuart Bridge, Paul Crossley, Chris Dando, Jess David, Mark Elliott, Fiona Gourley, Kevin Guy, Ian Halsall, Dave Harding, Steve Hedges, Saskia Heijltjes, Joel Hirst, Lucy Hodge, Duncan Hounsell, Shaun Hughes, Eleanor Jackson, Grant Johnson, Samantha Kelly, George Leach, Hal MacFie, Ruth Malloy, Lesley Mansell, Paul May, Matt McCabe, Simon McCombe, Sarah Moore, Robin Moss, Michelle O'Doherty, Paul Roper, Sam Ross, Onkar Saini, Toby Simon, Shaun Stephenson-McGall, George Tomlin, Malcolm Treby, Andy Wait, Karen Walker, Sarah Warren, Tim Warren, Joanna Wright

Councillors against (2): - Gavin Heathcote, Chris Warren

Councillors abstaining (1): - Liz Hardman]

75 MOTION FROM THE INDEPENDENT & CONSERVATIVE GROUPS - ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE CAMPAIGN PRACTICES

The Council considered a motion from the Independent and Conservative groups regarding environmentally responsible campaign leafletting, moved by Councillor Shaun Hughes and seconded by Councillor Tim Warren.

Following a vote, this motion was

NOT CARRIED

Council believes:

- Bath & North East Somerset has declared a Climate Emergency and adopted a Climate Emergency Strategy, committing the Local Authority to reducing avoidable paper consumption and minimising environmental impact.
- During the run-up to Local Elections, there is significant investment in printed campaign materials. This can lead to the production of large quantities of

leaflets, contributing to substantial paper use and associated environmental impacts.

- Traditional campaign models are reliant on large-scale paper distribution and do not align with the Council's agreed environmental priorities or the commitments outlined in the Climate Emergency Strategy.
- Although hybrid communication approaches have been adopted, the use of printed leaflets remains high within current campaigning practices.
- The distribution of large volumes of printed leaflets also generates additional recycling waste, increases the workload for waste collection crews, and contributes to avoidable litter-picking pressures across the area.
- Reducing unnecessary printed material is consistent with the Council's wider objective of supporting and creating sustainable communities.

Council notes that:

- Digital communication is an essential and effective tool for modern political campaigning, offering targeted, cost-efficient, and rapid engagement with residents.
- Printed materials may still play a role in reaching residents who are digitally excluded or for whom physical communication is more accessible.
- Recycled paper still requires substantial energy and processing resources to produce printed leaflets.
- Environmental guidance consistently identifies reduction as the most important stage in the reduce–reuse–recycle hierarchy, as preventing waste is more effective than managing it after production.
- Campaigning strategies that rely heavily on paper leafleting are outdated and inconsistent with the Council's climate objectives.

Council therefore:

1. Reaffirms its commitment to the Bath & North East Somerset Climate Emergency Policy by actively encouraging reductions in unnecessary paper consumption.
2. Agrees that all political Group Leaders should write to their Local Party requesting that it minimise paper use in party-political campaigning and limit the total number of physical leaflets they distribute to no more than two per year.

[Notes;

1. *The above resolution was lost on a named vote;*

Councillors in favour (5): - Alex Beaumont, Colin Blackburn, Alan Hale, Shaun Hughes, Tim Warren

Councillors against (45): - Councillors Michael Auton, Tim Ball, Dave Biddleston, Alison Born, Anna Box, Stuart Bridge, Paul Crossley, Chris Dando, Jess David, Mark Elliott, Fiona Gourley, Kevin Guy, Ian Halsall, Dave Harding, Liz Hardman, Steve Hedges, Saskia Heijltjes, Joel Hirst, Lucy Hodge, Duncan Hounsell, Eleanor Jackson, Grant Johnson, Samantha Kelly, George Leach, Hal MacFie, Ruth Malloy, Paul May, Matt McCabe, Simon McCombe, Sarah Moore, Robin Moss, Michelle O'Doherty, Manda Rigby, Dine Romero, Paul Roper, Sam Ross, Onkar Saini, Toby Simon, Shaun Stephenson-McGall, George Tomlin, Malcolm Treby, Andy Wait, Karen Walker, Sarah Warren, Joanna Wright.

Councillors abstaining (2): - Councillors Gavin Heathcote, Chris Warren]

76 QUESTIONS, STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

Statements were made by the following Councillors;

Councillor Shaun Hughes made a statement to Council about parking charges in Midsomer Norton. A full copy of the statement is available online and on the Minute book. He presented data from the last year which he maintained demonstrated that the parking service was running at a loss. He also described the negative effect on local businesses. He called for public feedback to be taken on board and a common-sense approach to now be taken. Councillor Eleanor Jackson asked if the same parallel could be made in Radstock and Keynsham, to which Councillor Hughes replied that he wasn't sure about the situation in Keynsham, but it was definitely a similar situation in Radstock. Councillor Karen Walker asked if Councillor Hughes had consulted residents, to which he responded that he regularly spoke with business owners and residents on this topic.

Councillor Joanna Wright made a statement about Councillors' corporate parenting responsibilities in relation to the staff restructure in Children's Services. A full copy of the statement is available online and on the Minute book. Councillor Kevin Guy asked Councillor Wright what she considered fairer consultation looked like, to which she replied with an account of a staff member of 35 years facing redundancy who had not been offered training for the qualification she now needed to fill the new role.

Councillor Sam Ross made a statement about rural bus services, a copy of which is available online and on the Minute book. She drew attention to various services that were being cut and the impact of this. Councillor Kevin Guy asked if Councillor Ross was aware that buses were the responsibility of WECA, to which she replied that she was aware, but it seemed that these issues were never taken up with WECA and as Councillor Guy was WECA Deputy Mayor, there was perhaps an opportunity to do so. Councillor Eleanor Jackson asked what could be done to preserve cross border community bus services and Councillor Ross replied that it would be good if there was cross-party consideration of these issues.

Councillor Gavin Heathcote spoke to Council about Sunday 15th March being Mother's Day and also the date for the Bath Half Marathon. He highlighted the serious travel disruption this had caused and queried why the Half Marathon had been held on this day. He explained that there were no clear diversion routes and traffic management was inadequate, creating chaos, and called for these issues to be considered in scheduling future events.

The Chair thanked the Councillors for their statements which were referred to the relevant Cabinet Members.

The meeting ended at 8.35 pm

Chair

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services

COUNCIL MEETING 19TH MARCH 2026

**STATEMENTS FROM PUBLIC
& COUNCILLORS**

Public (item 7)

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| 1. Penny Hay | Playing outside, learning everywhere |
| 2. Adam Jukes | Enabling outdoor play and community belonging |
| 3. Gillian Ford | Support to Foster Carers |
| 4. Jodie Brown | Support to Foster Carers |

Councillors (item 15)

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Cllr Hughes | Parking charges |
| 2. Cllr Wright | Being a corporate parent |
| 3. Cllr Ross | Rural bus services |
| 4. Cllr Heathcote | Bath Half Marathon |

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Green Party Motion on Enabling outdoor play and community belonging

'Playing outside, learning everywhere: the importance of outdoor play for children, families and communities'

Dr. Penny Hay, Professor of Imagination at Bath Spa University

I'm speaking today about the vital role that outdoor play has in supporting the physical and mental health and wellbeing of children and young people in Bath and North-East Somerset - those moments when children's eyes light up because they are so engaged in playing and learning, following their fascinations.

Play is fundamental to children's healthy development. Welcoming, safe public places to play are essential for every child.

Extensive research shows that outdoor play strengthens children's physical health, emotional resilience and social development. Creative, cultural and nature-based activities also improve mental health, reduce stress and anxiety, and build confidence. Yet outdoor play has declined by 50% in just one generation. This is happening alongside a growing crisis in young people's mental health - a profound change we cannot afford to overlook. If we create better opportunities for children to play in real life, they will likely spend less time online.

Playing outside in nature is not an optional extra; it is a foundation for children's wellbeing and learning. The recent report *Everything to Play For*, from the Centre for Young Lives, reminds us that play is how much of children's development takes place - how they understand the world, solve problems, build motor skills and stay healthy and happy. Enabling children to play outdoors is both a public health priority and a community priority.

Outdoor play also nurtures imagination - a vital human capability - giving children the freedom to invent, explore and create their own possibilities in relationship with the natural world. Imagine if we co-created the conditions for curious, creative learners across generations.

Our approach in Forest of Imagination is rights-based and child-led. We treat outdoor play as a core entitlement, placing children's voice and agency at the centre. Through creativity and ecological thinking, we transform public spaces into welcoming, nature-rich, multi-sensory environments - places where children can explore, belong, and where their eyes are shining.

This motion is asking for BANES to take a first step towards a thoughtful, coordinated, cross-council approach to play, shaped by the voices of children and developed in partnership with local organisations. What we're asking for is simple: to ensure more children are playing outside, more often, in places that feel safe, welcoming and alive with possibility.

We have already seen, through Forest of Imagination and Playful Green Planet, how creative, ecological, community-led experiences can transform public spaces and support children's wellbeing and connection with nature. This motion allows us to embed that work within our wider place-making, climate and wellbeing ambitions.

This motion asks us to take this responsibility seriously, and to act. By supporting it, Councillors can help ensure that Bath and North-East Somerset becomes a place where every child has the time, space and genuine freedom to play, explore and flourish.

Thank you.

References

[Forest of Imagination](#)

[Playful Green Planet](#)

[Everything to Play For, Centre for Young Lives](#)

Prepared for B&NES Council Meeting 19 March 2026

Dr. Penny Hay NTF SFHEA FCCT FRSA (Pronouns: she/her)

Professor of Imagination, Bath Spa University

<https://www.bathspa.ac.uk/our-people/penny-hay/>

Good evening

I am Adam Jukes, a resident of Fairfield Park and I am here today to offer my support for this Green Party motion on enabling outdoor play and community belonging across Bath and North East Somerset.

My 8 year old daughter attends St Stephens Primary School and benefits from play equipment close to the school on Richmond Green. She also benefits from parent community efforts to enable safer walking, cycling and playing spaces close to the school. She has also benefited from having a greenspace with play equipment close to where we live.

We are fortunate to live on a no-through road. Low traffic levels on our road make the street environment safer and more pleasant for all residents. Wren and other children on Hampton View play together outside on the street – something I enjoyed in my childhood. Many families sit out in their front gardens and children's play is often free flowing between houses up and down the road. Higher traffic levels would likely mean my daughter would spend more time indoors and be less active. How do the traffic levels on other roads impact children's ability to play outside where they live?

Outside St Stephens Primary School parents, including myself have organised play streets to create a safe, traffic free environment outside the school for everyone. These enable children to pause and play before school and after. It enables parents and guardians to pause and chat helping maintain community cohesion. We've run them in June and most recently at the beginning of January. Despite the cooler wetter weather children played with skipping ropes and drew chalk pictures on the road.

Parents and teachers at St Stephens are also preparing for the implementation of a school street, this is something we've asked the council to install as we have seen the benefits of a safer environment at drop off and pick up by running these play streets.

How are play streets benefiting communities across Bath and North East Somerset? What further support could be provided to enable more communities to run them?

I support this motion. I don't believe that the access to greenspace, play streets and play equipment that Wren benefits from is available by all children in Bath & North East Somerset. I would welcome and champion work to understand this provision and its corresponding impacts.

Thank you very much

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Jodie Brown statement

I am here today to explain why the proposed changes are causing such serious concern amongst foster carers.

I've been fostering for just under four years. In that time, I've had four different supervising social workers. The child in my care has been with me for just under three years—he has had five.

We keep a light-hearted tally. But recently, he said something that has really stayed with me when he met his newest social worker, he said:

“Please don't leave me. The others have abandoned me.”

Of course, we reassure him, we explain that people change roles, move on, or go on leave. When reality a few were agency workers whose contracts came to an end.

But no amount of explanation stops a vulnerable child from feeling abandoned when the adults in their life keep changing.

Every time a new social worker comes in, trust has to be rebuilt. Relationships start again. And that takes time.

But the reality of caring for vulnerable children continues every single day. There are good days—but there are never easy days.

Yes, the system needs change. Many of us recognise that the system is under pressure and improvements are needed. But change must be done carefully and in a way that actually benefits the children and the people caring for them.

I have been incredibly fortunate to be supported by a team that truly knows us. They don't just care about the child—they care about me, my family, and the wider support network.

That kind of relationship takes time. It takes trust. And it depends on stability.

I've had social workers call me on Sundays, apologising for disturbing me. But I tell them—it's not my time they should worry about. I don't have working hours. They do.

I've spoken to them while they're driving home, I can hear them unlocking their front door, putting the kettle on, then heating their dinner—and still, they stay on the phone to support me.

They know us well. In fact, many members of the team know me so well they can see when I'm struggling before I even recognise it myself. That kind of relationship doesn't happen overnight. It takes time, trust, and stability.

And it makes me ask: when are **their** needs being met?

If our social worker isn't available, we often go to a manager who also knows us and understands the child. If we disagree on something, we can talk it through with people who know our situation. That level of knowledge and continuity is incredibly important.

Reducing those management roles is deeply worrying, because those managers pick up a huge amount of the workload and provide vital support to both carers and social workers. Many of them have taken calls from me late into the evening, well beyond the official out-of-hours period.

So what happens if those roles are reduced or centralised?

Will it become like the emergency duty team—where you speak to whoever is on shift?

Because when people don't know the child, you feel like just another case number. And children feel that too.

If staff are forced to apply for jobs that they don't understand or want, many will leave. They will go to agencies where they can earn more money and work in roles they do want.

If that happens, we will lose experienced, dedicated professionals. And when those professionals leave, it is the children who feel the impact.

Resulting in more children saying exactly what my child has said: "I've been abandoned again."

That will not be because people stopped caring. It will be because the system pushed them out.

So I ask you to reconsider these proposed job cuts. I ask you to reconsider making staff reapply for jobs that are still unclear.

Please think carefully about how overworked social workers and other professionals already are. These are people who care deeply about the children and families they work with, and who are already working far beyond their official hours.

If experienced staff leave because of these changes, it is the children and carers who will feel it most.

We will hear more children say:

“I’ve been abandoned again.”

You will have foster carers leaving

Not because people stopped caring—but because the system pushed them out.

So I ask the local authority to pause.

To think carefully about these decisions.

Because for you, this may be a restructure or a budget decision.

But for the children in our care, this is about trust.

It’s about whether the adults in their lives stay—or disappear.

The child in my care already believes people keep leaving him.

Please don’t make decisions that prove him right.

Because stability is not a luxury.

It is the foundation of their recovery.

And once it’s lost, it is incredibly hard to rebuild.

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Councillor Shaun Hughes statement

I wish to speak to you today regarding the parking charges in **South Road car park, Midsomer Norton that were introduced in 2024**. We now have more than a year's worth of data and experience, and it is clear that this project has failed on every possible metric.

Financially, In the whole of 2025, the car park generated a paltry **£8,435 in parking fees**, while a significantly higher sum of **£12,675 was generated through penalty notices**. This means your revenue is primarily derived from penalising our own residents—often while they are attempting to use the "free" parking period.

Furthermore, despite formal requests for information, this council claims it "does not hold data" regarding the initial cost of works, or even the ongoing running costs however It is safe to conclude that once enforcement and infrastructure costs are factored in, this scheme is running at a **significant financial loss**.

The economic and social costs are even more severe. Since these charges were introduced:

- **High Street footfall has dropped**, visit times have reduced, and local businesses have been forced to close, citing these charges as a primary factor.
- Surrounding residential roads and cul-de-sacs are now plagued by **vehicle displacement**, creating access problems for residents and emergency services.
- Air quality in residential areas has been negatively affected as pollution is pushed away from the car park and into the streets where people live.
- Major local employers and amenities, like the **sports centre and supermarkets**, are now being forced to implement their own private enforcement to protect themselves from the displacement of vehicles.

To compound these failures, the council has even prevented its own business tenants in Midsomer Norton from using their own parking bays.

To be clear, when we look at the core objectives of this policy, the result is a total failure:

- **Income generation – Failed**
- **Support high street economy – Failed**
- **Encourage economic growth – Failed**
- **Protect and increase footfall – Failed**
- **Support for low paid staff – Failed**
- **Improve air quality – Failed**

This experiment is losing this council tens of thousands of pounds that could be better spent on more important issues - **tackling isolation in our elderly, better youth provision, or a novel idea - improving bus services to reduce car dependency**.

It's time for common sense. A U-turn would demonstrate a willingness to listen to public feedback and adapt to new evidence. I urge you to do the right thing and **bring back free community car parking**.

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Statement from Cllr Joanna Wright

In the Department for Education's Statutory Guidance for local authorities on Applying corporate parenting principles to looked after children and care leavers it states:

1.1 The role that councils play in looking after children is one of the most important things they do. the critical question that local authorities should ask in adopting such an approach is:

'would this be good enough for my child?'.

1.2 A strong ethos of corporate parenting means that a sense of vision and responsibility towards the children they look after and their care leavers is a priority for everyone.

In January's Children's, Adults Health and Well being PDS I asked questions on how the ACAS discussions would impact the morale of Officers working in Children's Services. The Director of Children's Services & Education replied that the majority of staff would benefit through the "Being Our Best" process, but she was aware that some colleagues were unhappy and that they were working to find solutions to the issues raised. Today we have strike action on this matter.

In March's Children's, Adults Health and Wellbeing PDS, many Officers from Children's Services demonstrated outside the Guildhall before, during and after the meeting because a further new "consultation" to restructure Children's Services was being undertaken. This "restructure" is due to the government's new directive on improving services for looked after children, which requires a new approach to supporting our Looked After Children.

How this Council decides to implement that new directive is up to all of us. We are all Corporate Parents. Clearly the 350 front-line children services experts are deeply unhappy about the process that this council is currently pursuing.

These Officers have LOST TRUST with this Council. They are saying that they now "feel undervalued, deskilled and frustrated."

Before the restructuring there was an incredible amount of good will from these officers. Take that good will away and they say you will have major capacity issues. They do not understand how their caseloads, which they believe are already at unsafe levels, will be managed after this restructure.

We must ask ourselves the basic question: is this restructure going to deliver a service that **'would be good enough for my child?'**.

Presently it appears to me, as a Corporate Parent, that the front-line staff delivering for us are completely demoralized and disillusioned by the way B&NES Senior Management has decided to implement culture change. There needs to be real and meaningful consultation. All parties need to rebuild trust before any new systems are considered and implemented. It is our statutory duty as Corporate Parents to

ensure that stability for those most vulnerable is in place, and this restructuring process must be stopped and started in a fairer way.

Statement to Full Council — Cllr Sam Ross, Clutton & Farmborough

Councillors, I want to speak today about the managed decline of rural bus services — and what it means for the communities we are here to represent.

In 2023, the withdrawal of the 179 service removed a direct link from Farmborough into Bath — a journey that once took around 30 minutes. The 522, introduced with WECA Bus Service Improvement Plan funding, was presented as a replacement, but routing via the Somer Valley turned that journey into one of up to 90 minutes. The 522 also serves only one part of Farmborough — the other end of the village is over a mile from the nearest stop, not walkable for older residents, people with disabilities, or parents with small children. WESTlink, promoted as the solution, does not serve Farmborough because the 522 is deemed sufficient. It is a no-win situation and a degradation of service dressed up as progress.

In the recent timetable adjustments, both the 522 and the 172, which serves Clutton, have faced significant cuts. On the 522, following my open letter and a student-led petition, the morning services have been partially reinstated — and I want to acknowledge the role residents played in making that happen. But evening services remain reduced, and the 172 now faces similar cuts — pushing the first departure from Clutton towards Bath from 07:56 to 08:59, and moving the evening return from Bath over an hour earlier. Care workers, sixth formers, students with additional needs, and people with health conditions have told me these are not timetable adjustments. They are the removal of services that people depend upon entirely.

This is what managed decline looks like. Remove the most-used journeys, reduce passenger numbers, cite those numbers as justification for further cuts, and eventually withdraw the service altogether. It is a self-fulfilling prophecy — and in teaching the next generation that public transport is not worth depending on, we store up decades of car dependency and carbon emissions that we can ill afford.

I must also raise the issue of engagement — or rather, the lack of it. For three years I have been told by the Cabinet Project Lead responsible for Sustainable Rural Transport that "we need to have a conversation about buses." I am still waiting. Not once have there been meaningful discussions with local councillors before services have been cut. We find out when our residents do — after the decision has already been made.

The Forgotten Valley Bus Campaign, spearheaded by Dunkerton and Tunley Parish Council and supported by neighbouring parish councils, has put forward a detailed proposal to reinstate a revised 179 route, running hourly, seven days a week. It is a thoughtful, community-led solution, and I would urge the Cabinet Member not only to support it but to make clear to WECA the vital importance of restoring meaningful bus services to these communities.

Finally, the Leader of the Council currently holds the deputy mayoral position at WECA and also chairs the new Transport Advisory Board. I would urge the administration to use these positions of influence — to engage with fellow councillors

(regardless of political affiliation), demand meaningful consultation before services are cut, and ensure that communities to the south and west of Bath are not systematically deprioritised in favour of Bristol. The evidence is there in the timetables. The question is whether we have the will to act on it.

Thank you.