

Bath and North East Somerset Council

Full Council meeting (19 March 2026)

Green Party Motion on Enabling outdoor play and community belonging

To be proposed by Cllr Saskia Heijltjes

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
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

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-%20Academic%20year%202024-25%20report-.pdf?VersionId=02ctNYq5CXJAG4naDr4BlmM_a406a.5y

- *Unless where specifically set out in the statute, motions approved at Council do not bind the Executive (Cabinet) but may influence their future decisions.*
- *Councillors are reminded of their public sector equality duty which requires the Council to consider or think about how their policies or decisions may affect people who are protected under the Equality Act.*

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. 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. Set up a Play Scrutiny Task Group to consider play provision, any gaps and future needs.

Its purpose is to review existing plans and strategies, identify any gaps, and ensure more children in Bath and North East Somerset are playing more of the time.

The Scrutiny Task Group would be across both the Children, Adults, Health and Wellbeing and Climate Emergency and Sustainability Policy Development and Scrutiny panels because it covers several priorities including public health, green spaces and housing.

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

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