

Officer Report to Full Council

Play in the Park 2026

What this report is about

Full Council is asked to agree which weeks to book for Play in the Park this summer, where the sessions should take place, and whether they should be in the morning or afternoon.

What is Play in the Park

Play in the Park are free outdoor play sessions for local families run by the Epping Forest District Council Communities Team. They bring activities, arts and crafts, sports equipment and organised games to local parks during the Easter and Summer holidays. The sessions are free to attend because Town and Parish Councils make a contribution towards the costs.

What support comes with it

Posters can be provided with the Town Council logo alongside Play in the Park branding. Epping Forest District Council also promote the full programme across the district, and the Town Council is asked to share the publicity locally. In 2025, many sessions also included a Dr Bike service at no extra cost, offering free bike safety checks and repairs where possible. The Communities Team is looking to secure extra activities again for 2026.

Dates being offered

Sessions are available in the weeks beginning Monday 27 July, 3 August, 10 August and 17 August. Other available weeks are 20 July and 24 August. Easter weeks are also available, beginning 30 March and 7 April, but these are outdoor sessions and the weather at that time of year may be less reliable.

What is being recommended

It is recommended that Full Council books one session per day, Monday to Friday, for each of the four weeks beginning 27 July, 3 August, 10 August and 17 August. This would give five sessions per week. It is also recommended that the location alternates each week between Station Green and Limes Farm Green so provision is shared across both sites.

Council needs to choose morning or afternoon

Each daily session is either in the morning or in the afternoon. Full Council needs to decide whether it wants the sessions to be in the morning or the afternoon.

Costs and budget

Each daily session costs £86. Booking one session per day, Monday to Friday, means five sessions per week, costing £430 per week. The budget allows for 20 sessions in total. The recommended four weeks, with one session per day, would be 20 sessions altogether and would cost £1,720, using the full budget. If Full Council wanted to add any other weeks, such as 20 July, 24 August, or the Easter weeks, it would only be possible by swapping out one of the recommended weeks, reducing the number of sessions, or finding additional budget.

Recommendations to Full Council

Full Council is asked to agree to book Play in the Park for one session per day, Monday to Friday, in the weeks beginning Monday 27 July, 3 August, 10 August and 17 August and to agree that the venue alternates between Station Green and Limes Farm Green each week. Full Council is also asked to decide whether the sessions should be held in the morning or the afternoon.



What is Play in the Park?

Play in the Park are free outdoor play sessions for local families with the EFDC Communities Team bringing outdoor activities, arts and crafts, sports equipment and fun and games to parks across the district during the Easter and Summer holidays.

How is it funded?

We ask Town and Parish Councils to make a contribution to enable the sessions to be delivered free to local families.

What's included?

Publicity posters with your logo and the Play in the Park branding can be provided and EFDC deliver a dedicated campaign about the entire programme, highlighting to residents what's happening when throughout the holidays. We ask Town Councils to share this publicity with their local contacts.

During 2025 we were able to secure Dr Bike as an additional service at many of the sessions, for no extra charge. The Dr Bike team carried out "bike MOT's" on adult and children's bikes, carrying out repairs for free, to ensure families can get out and enjoy a bike ride during the holidays. We are currently talking to partners with the aim of securing additional activities for the 2026 programme as well.

Feedback

Summer 2025 was a huge success with over 1,700 attendees over the 47 events during the 6 weeks. This is just some of the feedback we received:

"Great for my kid! Really interactive and engaging. Great proactive staff!"

"Brilliant for meeting and taking to other parents whilst the children are playing. The range of activities are fantastic."

"Brilliant session. Kept all 3 of mine engaged ages 2, 6 and 9"