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**Date:** 29th November 2024 **To:** All Councillors **From:** Parish Clerk

**Council Meeting date**: Wednesday 6th December 2024

**Subject: Playground Safety and Inspection: Ensuring Compliance**

**Current Situation**

* **Visual Inspections**: Conducted by our handyman to identify immediate hazards such as vandalism or visible damage.
* **Annual Inspections**: Performed by qualified third-party inspectors to assess compliance with EN1176 standards and provide a detailed safety report.

While these inspections are essential, the lack of intermediate checks (operational inspections) increases the risk of undetected wear and tear, potentially compromising user safety and exposing us to liability concerns.

**What Are Operational Inspections?**

Operational inspections involve a more thorough assessment of playground equipment than routine visual checks. They focus on:

* Detecting wear and tear or minor structural issues.
* Identifying loose components or fastenings.
* Ensuring equipment remains compliant with EN1176 standards.

These inspections are typically conducted monthly or quarterly and bridge the gap between routine visual checks and comprehensive annual reviews.

**Benefits of Operational Inspections**

1. **Enhanced Safety**
	* Detect and address emerging issues before they escalate.
	* Maintain a consistently safe environment for users.
2. **Regulatory Compliance**
	* Ensure ongoing adherence to EN1176 standards, reducing the risk of non-compliance.
3. **Reduced Liability**
	* Provide a documented paper trail demonstrating proactive maintenance, critical in the event of insurance claims or legal disputes.
4. **Cost Savings**
	* Addressing small issues early can prevent costly repairs or equipment replacements.

**Levels of Playground Inspection**

There are three key levels of playground inspection, each with its specific purpose:

1. **Routine Visual Inspections**
	* Conducted weekly (or even daily, if possible).
	* Identify recent vandalism, missing parts, and general wear and tear.
	* Address potential hazards promptly, especially in high-traffic areas such as parks and holiday sites.

Routine visual checks are essential for identifying immediate issues such as vandalism or damaged equipment. Typical checks include:

* Identifying defects or missing parts.
* Recording and reporting faults to the responsible authority.
1. **Operational Inspections**
	* Performed monthly or quarterly to assess equipment condition more thoroughly.
	* Check for structural integrity, loose fastenings, and early signs of wear and tear.

Operational checks delve deeper into the condition of the equipment and surrounding area, focusing on:

* Signs of wear and tear.
* Structural integrity and fastenings.

These inspections should also be recorded systematically to ensure all issues are addressed.

1. **Comprehensive Annual Inspections**
	* Conducted by independent, qualified inspectors.
	* Evaluate structural stability, compliance with EN1176 standards, and overall safety.
	* Includes a detailed report with recommendations for maintenance or repairs.

Annual inspections provide a comprehensive review of the playground's safety and compliance. These thorough checks should be conducted by third-party inspectors and include:

* Structural and surface integrity tests.
* Risk assessments and health and safety evaluations.

The resulting report will outline findings and recommend any necessary maintenance to keep the playground safe and up to standard.

**Clerk Recommendations**

Safety at our recreation ground must be a priority and we need to begin detailed and regular maintenance schedules and inspection checklists to ensure our play areas stay safe. Currently, we conduct visual inspections regularly and an annual comprehensive inspection. However, there is a critical gap in our maintenance process: the absence of operational inspections.

Adding operational inspections by qualified contractors to our current maintenance regime will significantly enhance the safety and usability of the recreation ground. By addressing issues early, maintaining compliance with EN1176 standards, and documenting all inspections, we can protect users, reduce liability risks, and extend the lifespan of our play equipment.