

PLAYGROUND INSPECTION AND MAINTENANCE POLICY

Head of Service:	Ian Dyer, Head of Operational Services
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Wards affected:	(All Wards);
Urgent Decision?(yes/no)	No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	
Appendices (attached):	Appendix 1 – Playground Inspection and Maintenance Policy

Summary

This report presents the Playground Inspection and Maintenance Policy for approval. If approved, this policy will replace and supersede the previous Playground Risk Management Policy originally adopted in 2014 and reviewed in 2018. The policy sets out the Council's formal approach to the inspection, maintenance and safety management of all Council owned and maintained playgrounds and associated facilities.

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- (1) Approve the adoption of the Playground Inspection and Maintenance Policy

1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 The Council has a statutory and common law duty of care to ensure that playgrounds and play equipment are safe, well-maintained, and managed in a proportionate and defensible manner.
- 1.2 The adoption of this updated policy, which replaces and supersedes the previous Playground Risk Management Policy and reflects internal audit recommendations, provides a consistent corporate framework for inspection, maintenance, risk management, and legal compliance.
- 1.3 The policy strengthens governance, improves clarity, and supports resilient service delivery across all Council-managed playgrounds.

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2 Background

- 2.1 The Council owns and maintains a wide range of playgrounds and associated play infrastructure across the borough, providing accessible play opportunities for children and families.
- 2.2 Historically, inspection and maintenance arrangements have operated through a combination of operational procedures, contractor arrangements and professional guidance and the Playground Risk Management Policy originally adopted in 2014 and reviewed in 2018.
- 2.3 The next scheduled review of the Playground Risk Management Policy was due in 2021 but did not take place as it coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent organisational restructure (Build Back Better). This restructure included the reconfiguration of the former Ranger Service into Environmental Response Officers and a Maintenance Team.
- 2.4 Following a recent review conducted by Southern Internal Audit Partnership, the review recommended consolidation of the existing arrangements within a single, cohesive policy framework.
- 2.5 This policy brings together inspection and maintenance requirements into a clear, consistent, and auditable framework aligned with:
 - BS EN1176 and BS EN1177
 - Health & Safety legislation
 - RoSPA guidance
- 2.6 It also formalises the Council's approach by setting out defined inspection frequencies, risk-based response times, record retention standards, and competency requirements to ensure a consistent and proportionate approach across all playground sites.

3 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

- 3.1 Equality Impact Assessment
 - 3.1.1 Not required. The policy applies equally to all playground users and promotes inclusive access to safe and well-maintained facilities.
- 3.2 Crime & Disorder
 - 3.2.1 No negative impact identified. The policy supports the timely identification and repair of vandalism and safety defects which may reduce anti-social behaviour.
- 3.3 Safeguarding

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3.3.1 Children and families primarily use playgrounds. This policy strengthens safeguarding through structured inspection, prompt defect response, and formal safety auditing.

3.4 Dependencies

3.4.1 Availability of trained staff, contractors, and external inspectors to deliver the inspection regime.

3.5 Other

3.5.1 None

4 Financial Implications

4.1 The Council will undertake all inspection, maintenance and repair works arising from this policy from within existing approved revenue budgets.

4.2 No additional financial implications arise from the adoption of this policy.

4.3 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** None for the purposes of this report.

5 Legal Implications

5.1 This policy supports compliance with statutory and common law duties of care and recognised industry standards.

5.2 It enhances the Council's ability to demonstrate reasonable, proportionate, and defensible management of playground risk.

5.3 **Legal Officer's comments:** None other than as stated above.

6 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

6.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged:

- Effective Council
- Safe and Well

6.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is not included within the current Service Delivery Plan.

6.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:** None arising from this report.

6.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:** The policy supports sustainable asset management and enhances public safety across all playground sites.

6.5 **Partnerships:** Delivery involves partnership working with:

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- External playground inspectors
- Maintenance contractors
- Equipment suppliers and installers

6.6 **Local Government Reorganisation Implications:** None arising from this report.

7 Background papers

7.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

Previous reports: None

Other papers:

- Playground Inspection Internal Audit Report 2025
- Playground Risk Management Policy (2014, reviewed in 2018)