



PLAY AREAS INSPECTION POLICY

Date Ratified:	For consideration at F&GP meeting on 11 June 2024
Meeting:	Finance & General Purpose Committee
Next review date:	June 2027 (3 yearly review)

1. Introduction and Policy Aim

Thornbury Town Council aims to offer play areas which are stimulating and challenging environments, enabling children to explore and develop their abilities. In providing these environments, the Town Council will manage the level of risk so that users of the play areas and its equipment are not exposed to unacceptable risks and hazards. This policy sets out formally the maintenance and inspection regime of the Town Council's play areas. It will outline the legal responsibilities of the Town Council and how it will meet these responsibilities through a system of inspections and responses to faults and risks.

2. Legal Requirements

There is no specific legislation on play area safety, however the key legislation is:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and appropriate updates
- Occupiers Liability Act 1957 and 1984
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (Management Regulations)
- Consumer Protection Act 1987
- Children Act 1989
- RIDDOR 2013
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1992
- Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986
- Environmental Protection Act 1990

The Town Council has a duty to take actions that will ensure the safety of people at work and members of the public who may be affected by the facilities that are provided by it. The Town Council will be governed by the rules of "reasonable practicability" and will seek to correct major hazards. Minor faults where risk is negligible and potential injury minor, will sometimes just be monitored unless the fault or hazard changes status.

3. Play Areas for which Thornbury Town Council is Responsible

Thornbury Town Council is responsible for managing and maintaining play equipment in the following areas:

- Mundy Playing Fields Play Area (including adult gym equipment)
- Streamleaze Play Area
- Osprey Park Play Area
- Eastland Avenue Play Area
- Chantry Road Play Area
- Thornbury Skatepark

4. Inspection Type and Frequency, Recording and Repairs

Thornbury Town Council carries out and arranges the inspection and maintenance of its play areas to ensure they are safe for people using them. The Town Council also carries out and

arranges maintenance in a timely manner to minimise the cost of any repairs and reduce the need for unplanned replacement of equipment.

In summary, the following recorded inspections are carried out:

- (a) Daily (where possible) visual inspections by Town Council staff.
- (b) Weekly more thorough inspections by trained Town Council staff.
- (c) Annual inspections by an independent accredited play area inspector.
- (d) Reactive inspections following reports of damage or other concerns, by members of the public, Councillors, etc.

Daily Inspections

These are carried out daily, the only exceptions being Bank Holidays, some days during the Christmas, New Year and Easter periods, or during exceptional periods of staff sickness absence, the latter being very exceptional. Where daily inspections are not possible, the Town Council will aim to keep missed days to an absolute minimum. The daily inspections will be recorded by staff who carrying them out and the completed forms supplied to the Deputy Clerk who will keep them for an appropriate amount of time. The inspections will include identification of obvious hazards resulting from misuse, bad weather, vandalism, broken parts, litter, graffiti, broken glass, damage to surfacing, etc. The hazards will be dealt with promptly by staff identifying them and reported to the Deputy Clerk. Cordoning off, hazard taping, etc, will be used where appropriate, particularly if a hazard cannot be rectified immediately. A plan to rectify any issues that cannot be dealt with immediately will be formulated by the Deputy Clerk or Clerk and implemented in line with the associated risk.

Weekly Inspections

These are carried out weekly, with the only rare exceptions being during Bank Holiday periods or period of staff sickness. Where weekly inspections are not possible, the Town Council will aim to keep these to an absolute minimum. The weekly inspections will be recorded by staff carrying out the inspections and the forms saved electronically, and any concerns raised with the Deputy Clerk. These more thorough inspections will be carried out by appropriately trained Town Council staff. They inspections will be of a more detailed nature to the daily inspections and will involve a thorough inspection of the operation of each item of equipment and safety surfacing, as well as recording and reporting any general concerns about wear and tear or life expectancy. Any essential maintenance will be carried out by Town Council staff as soon as practically possible or reported to the Deputy Clerk if a more specialist contractor is needed.

Annual Inspections

The Town Council will arrange for full independent inspection to be carried out of its play areas annually by an accredited play area inspector. (Inspections of green spaces for which the Town Council is responsible, but do not contain play equipment, will be carried out every four years.) The reports from the independent inspection will be analysed promptly and all high risk actions dealt with as soon as practically possible and in line with

recommendations from the inspector. The Town Council will then address all medium and low risk actions, in that order, as quickly as resources allow. Very low risk actions will then be addressed, should resources allow. Progress against the identified actions will be regularly reported to the Open Spaces Committee for their scrutiny.

Reactive Inspections

From time to time, the Town Council receives reports of damage or other concerns from members of the public or Councillors in relation to its play equipment. The level of risk will be assessed by the Clerk or Deputy Clerk on receipt of the report and, where possible, a member of staff will be promptly sent to the site to assess. Relevant repairs will be made immediately by Town Council staff, if possible. If not, a plan will be made to rectify the situation (which may involve the use of external contractors), with the timeframe being in line with the assessment of risk. Areas and/or equipment will be cordoned off, removed or the hazard made obvious, in line with the assessment of risk. Town Council staff will only carry out repairs in which they are competent, and which are considered safe for them to carry out e.g. repairs at height will be carried out by external contractors, even if they are relatively straightforward. Any reports of accidents or incidents relating to Town Council play areas will be recorded and investigated, and appropriate action taken.