



# Ilminster Town Council

## Annual Playground Safety Inspection Report

### **Introduction:**

In compliance with European Standards EN 1176 & 1177 it is recommended that public playground equipment should be inspected annually to ensure that safety standards are upheld. The Open Spaces team carry out weekly visual safety checks as a matter of routine, however this is only a visual inspection to report on and mitigate immediate health & safety concerns.

While the annual inspection is not currently a legal requirement, it is strongly recommended that they are carried out, by a trained inspector, with recommendations made to be actioned by Ilminster Town Council. This is to ensure reasonable safety to all persons using play equipment and to satisfy public liability requirements.

It is advisable to use a company or persons separate from Ilminster Town Council to carry out the annual inspection to ensure impartiality and to also receive an independent view of our play areas.

### **Aim:**

For the years 2010 to 2015, the Play Inspection Company has been used for the annual playground safety inspections. This report aims to identify a range of providers to carry out the inspection for 2016 and make a recommendation based on value to the council, highlighting the cost and service provided.

The areas and equipment requiring inspection are as follows:

West Crescent play park.

- Swings - 2x flat, 2x cradle.
- Free standing slide.
- 1x bench, 1x bin.

Wharf Lane play park.

- Balance beam.
- Cable runway (zip line).

- Activity trail.
- Space net (climber).
- Roundabout.
- Swings - 4x flat.
- Swings - 4x cradle.
- See saw.
- Small free standing slide.
- Rocking equipment - 1x spring frog, 1x spring hippo.
- BMX area.
- Skate park - 2x quarter pipe, 1x spine ramp, 1x fun box.
- 4x benches, 1x picnic table, 3x bins.
- 2x small football goals.
- Toilet block - closed due to arson.

Winterhay Lane play park.

- Swings - 1x basket, 2x flat.
- Rocking equipment - 1x spring hippo.
- Free standing slide.
- 2x small football goals.
- 1x picnic table, 1x bin, 1x dog foul bin.

Brittens Field play area.

- 2x small football goals.

### **Method:**

In total, 7 companies were contacted and asked to supply a quotation for carrying out an inspection during the month of September, along with a request for information on the type of service they provide. It should be noted that there are no playground inspection companies currently operating out of Somerset.

The companies contacted were as follows:

- Active Risk Management Services Ltd (Berkshire).
- Engineering Design Services (Hampshire).

- Playforce (Wiltshire).
- Playground-Safety (Hampshire).
- The Play Inspection Company (Dorset).
- Radman Ltd (Dorset).
- RoSPA Play Safety (Oxfordshire).

Of these companies, The Play Inspection Company, Engineering Design Services and Active Risk Management Services supplied me with the information required. Playground-Safety and Radman Ltd were unable or unwilling to provide us with their services, while I had no reply from Playforce nor RoSPA Play Safety.

### **Quotations:**

Company 1 provided a price of £368, of which VAT will not be charged as this company operates below the tax threshold.

The example safety report was comprehensive with detailed descriptions of hazards, which included images of each item inspected as well as images highlighting potential hazards.

The levels of risk are graded as Immediate, High (action within 3 months), Medium (action once funding is available), Low (no action necessary).

Company 2 provided a price of £233, not including VAT (total price £279.60).

This company did not provide an example report but listed their supplied service as including a full report which lists hazards identified in priority of severity of risk. The report supplied by company 2 is paperless and emailed to the council, with an additional charge of £14.50 per hard copy. If a council member or worker would like to meet with the inspector during their service a further charge of £25 is applicable.

Company 3 provided a price of £375, not including VAT (total price £450).

The example safety report provided was comprehensive, easy to interpret and included a detailed risk matrix of hazards, including images to highlight each potential hazard. The example report also considered access for disabled users and concluded with a summary and graph to illustrate the level of overall risk.

The risk matrix used grades for both the probability of occurrence and the severity of injury that could occur in the event of an accident.

**Conclusion:**

Based on the information supplied from each company following my initial contact, it is my recommendation that the council choose company 3 to carry out the annual playground safety inspection.

While the total cost is higher, I believe it to be of better value to Ilminster Town Council. The example report provided shows the highest level of detail, while remaining easy to interpret. The risk matrix provides an accurate assessment of both the level of risk and the likely injuries which could occur in the event of an accident. The additional information regarding disabled access and an overall summary of risk is also a useful addition.

While company 1 did provide a good amount of information at a fair price, it is my opinion that the level of service would not match that of company 3.

I could not recommend company 2 despite the cost being the lowest. This is due to the limited information being provided to me on request. Also the additional charges required for hard copies and to liaise with the inspector led me to doubt the value of their service.

This information is true to the best of my knowledge and my correspondence with these companies has been forwarded to the Town Clerk for transparency.

Adam Willis

Open Spaces Warden

Ilminster Town Council