Spooner Row, Suton & Wattlefield
Community Council
Where community matters

# Community Space Maintenance Policy

## Introduction

This Policy sets out how the Council manages its community space and the accompanying trees, hedges and play equipment placed on Council owned or maintained land.

Spooner Row Community Council currently manages the following open space areas:

Playing Field (Spooner Row)
Playing Field Car Park (Spooner Row)

The Council aims to manage its open space resources safely and sustainably for the enjoyment of its residents and the general public. This is achieved by regular maintenance, surveying, and monitoring.

## Facilities

The current facilities at the Playing Field in Spooner Row consists of approximately 4 acres of general amenity area laid to grass, with 3 items of standard play equipment.

- Twin Person Swing situated on its tarmac area.
- Multi-Use Basketball/Football Goal Unit situated on its tarmac area.
- Cornilleau Table Tennis Table situated on its tarmac area.
- Pair of Mini Soccer goals (various locations)
- Covered Seating Unit.
- 2x Wooden Picnic Benches.

In addition, we have a fenced young persons' play area containing 3 items of play equipment standing on a mix of tarmac and soft surfacing, along with a bench for parents.

## Council Contacts

Whilst all Councillors will take a proactive position towards upholding the provisions stated within this policy, Council has decided to appoint the Clerk for its direct implementation.

The Clerk – 07393 488350 clerk@spoonerrow-cc.gov.uk

## Play Equipment Inspections

The Council through its policy of continued management will provide a high-quality inspection regime. Along with correct maintenance, we will maintain safe opportunities for children to play creatively in our community. Inspections will cover the whole of the specified site and not just the play equipment. Pathways, fences, seats etc will also be checked.

## Hierarchy

A defined system of inspections is conducted, namely:

**Routine inspection –** An informal weekly inspection looking at the play equipment's basic condition, especially faults due to recent vandalism. Such inspections may be carried out by any member of the Council and any issue to be recorded via WhatsApp to the SRCC Council Group.

**Operational inspection** - A monthly inspection looking in more detail at the equipment with a view to vandalism and certain types of minor wear. Such inspections will be carried out by the Clerk who is trained and will be recorded in the Inspection Log.

**Annual inspection** – An annual inspection to be carried out by a specialist (preferably RoSPA trained). Essentially it will look at vandalism, minor and major wear, long-term structural problems, changes in Standard compliance and design practice, risk assessment etc.
Organisations will be checked to ensure their inspections are acceptable to insurance companies and suitable professional indemnity (at least £5 million) is carried.

## Training

Councillors or Council employees carrying out operational inspections will have undertaken basic training in playground inspections, and this will be reviewed annually. Contractors will be asked to provide evidence of training.

## Play Equipment Maintenance

The repairing of faults or the replacement of parts will be recorded in the Inspection Log. Consideration will be given to the use of the manufacturer's original parts when available or items of an equivalent standard.

## Manufacturer's instructions/ post-installation inspections

No playground equipment will be purchased without details of inspection and maintenance requirements. A log will be kept of the age of the equipment and a special inspection carried out before the expiry of the warranty. New equipment will be carefully checked for compliance with claims, specifications and installation procedures before being accepted. Where a new item is placed on a site then this item will fall within the normal inspection process, whilst special consideration will be given the warranty period pertaining to that item.

## Play Equipment Surfacing

Surfacing will be carefully checked for its soundness.

## Green Space Management Plan

The trees, hedges and green space within the ownership of the Council contribute to amenity provision. Amongst other things, trees and hedges screen eyesores, reduce noise, frame views and form landmarks. Our green space has significant environmental value as it provides habitat for wildlife, help to clean and filter air, and our trees and hedges provide shade in the summertime and warmth in the wintertime.

The Council will generally only undertake remedial works to trees where the trees pose a direct threat to public safety or property, i.e. if a tree is dead, dying or dangerous or if the tree is causing direct property damage. It is not reasonable to prune or remove healthy trees simply because of their size and proximity to buildings, roads or other infrastructure. The Council will manage any risks through tree inspections and undertake any necessary works to abate hazards, diseases or fungal infections and other conditions relating to tree health.

We recognise that the bird nesting season is between 1st March and 30th July (RSPB) and the advice issued by DEFRA regarding hedge trimming is not to trim between 28th February to 1st September therefore Council will only carry out tree/hedge maintenance works during these periods. Please note that safety considerations may demand immediate attention.

The Council will undertake hedge management outside of the birds nesting season and will only undertake remedial works to hedges when a direct threat to public safety or property exists.

The Council will cut the grass twice a month commencing the third week of April, subject to weather and contractor advice. It will be cut 11 times a year. Intermediate cuts for specific events can be requested but may be subject to charge. A wildlife buffer of 3 meters will be maintained at the north, south and west boundaries.

## In the event of an Emergency

The Council will respond to an emergency with a site inspection. Where the report comes from a resident the notification of what action is considered appropriate will be made in 14 days to that resident. A site inspection is not deemed necessary unless damage has been caused.

**The Council's and its Responsibilities**

The Council is proud of its trees and hedges and favours possible. The purpose of this policy is to provide residents with clear and concise information concerning what they can reasonably expect from the Council in terms of:

- Council trees that are dead, dying, dangerous or contain significant dead or broken limbs.
- Council trees overhanging a property.
- Council trees restricting light or view.

**Work the Council *Will* Do**

If a Council owned tree is in such a condition that it poses a very high risk to people or property and is considered to be an emergency situation, urgent action will be taken to make the tree safe.

If a tree's condition could be described as any of the following, it may warrant urgent attention: -

- Snapped or blown over.
- Rocking at its base – roots are damaged.
- Uprooted but held up by another tree or building.
- Large branch has broken off, is hanging off or hung up within

the tree The Council will maintain its trees in a safe condition and will: -

- Remove dead, dying, or dangerous trees.
- Remove major deadwood (over 75mm in diameter) which overhangs private/Council property.
- Remove dangerous or damaged limbs.
- Prune branches where an actionable legal nuisance is being caused e.g., damage to structures, phone lines etc.

Spooner Row Community Council will endeavour to achieve its stated core principle of *"value formoney"* when conducting necessary works and where practicable obtain 3 quotes where works exceed £300.00.

**Tree & Hedge Inspections -** A defined system of inspections are conducted, namely:

**Routine inspection –** A monthly inspection looking at the basic condition of the trees and hedging at the Playing Field. Such inspections may be carried out by the Clerk at the same time as the equipment inspection. Any member of the Council may check the trees and be recorded on the inspection sheet.

**Storm inspection** - Inspections after a significant storm will be conducted to check the basic condition of the trees and hedges. Such inspections may be carried out by any member of the Council and be recorded by a text *"Storm Inspection"* and then it's status *"OK"* or *"Problem"* to be sent to the Clerk.

**Lustrum inspection** – Every 18 months unless directed by the Arborist to monitor tree health more closely, the Council will call upon an Arborist to carry out a Condition Survey and for a report to be prepared for Council. Organisations will be checked to ensure their inspections are acceptable to insurance companies and suitable professional indemnity is carried. There may be a requirement to monitor specific trees, this advice will be scheduled.

**Resident Requests**

If you would like the Council to carry out any work, please contact the Clerk. You will receive a notification that your request has been registered and is being assessed. The Council aims to assess the work and may instruct a contractor as soon as practicable. If, after assessment, the Council decides that the work proposed is not appropriate, the applicant will be notified in writing.

The Council has NO obligation to:

- Prune or fell a tree in the Council's ownership to alleviate overhanging branches other than to abate an actionable legal nuisance
- Prune or fell trees to improve natural light in a property,
- Prune or fell trees to improve the view from private property,
- Systematically, crown reduce or 'top' trees.
- Prune or fell a council-owned tree because it is considered 'too big' or 'too tall'.

In common law, a property owner can cut back overhanging branches to the boundary of their property. The Council will normally have no objection to property owners carrying out tree work or engaging a contractor at their own expense, providing that:

- You can only consider removing those parts of the tree from the point where they cross the boundary of your property. You have no legal right to cut or remove any part of a tree that does not overhang your property.
- Access is not gained onto the neighbouring land and/or into a tree within that land. If access to Council land or into a tree on that land is required, the Council's permission must be sought in advance of any works being undertaken.
- The tree is not situated in a Conservation Area or protected by a Tree Preservation Order. For further guidance please contact South Norfolk District Council.
- Any work that is done to a tree is not detrimental to its health or stability.
- Any tree work undertaken is carried out in accordance with current best practice.
- The Council is to be notified of the proposed work and the commencement date.

**The Carpark**

The carpark is owned by the community council. By agreement the school may use the facility to ease congestion in he village. The school has no right or responsibility.

The condition of the carpark shall be monitored by the clerk monthly and any notes be included in the inspection sheet. Holes will be monitored.

**Sand Bags / Bin & Sand**

This area will be kept free of debris and topped up as required, Clerk to monitor monthly.

**Ditches and Watercourses.**

Where there are ditches or watercourses on Council property the maintenance will be scheduled when the council determines need. The playing field ditch will be monitored by the clerk monthly and it's condition noted on the inspection sheet.

**Our Key Principles**

The actions of the Community Council are governed by 4 key principles.

- Grow Community Spirit.
- Preserve Rural nature.
- Increase Safety and Security
- Ensure value for money.

In managing your community space the Community Council will abide by these principles and maintain the green space for the enjoyment of all.

Author: RF
Published: 17th May 2021
Adopted: 23rd September2021
Reviewed/edited DC 9 2024
Reviewed/edited May 2025
Review date: May 2027