

Report on Children's Playground

The playground lock has now been oiled and the padlock now opens smoothly.

Manton children's playground remains closed due to government guidance. However, as the barked pit does not currently meet the regulation safety standards we would not be able to open the playground, in its entirety, if and when government regulations change.

I have pursued three avenues in the first instance, for parish councillors to consider, to address the issue of insufficient bark:

- a) Simply topping up the current level of bark to meet the required 300mm
- b) Turfing the current bark pit
- c) Laying a synthetic safety surface

Bark

The bark pit measures 12 square metres, whilst this seems a relatively large area this was designed to cover falling distances. I estimate that currently there remains a depth of 100mm of bark. To meet the required level of 300mm, a rough estimate, for supply only of playground bark, would be **£2,500 including VAT**. The spreading of the bark would then need to be undertaken by a village working party. If we wish to use the bark option further investigation would be needed to ensure we are purchasing the most economical but appropriate playground bark chippings.

Benefits:

- Easily the most economical option of the 3 options and could be undertaken quickly reducing any delay in opening the playground when government regulations allow.

Disadvantages:

- As we are all aware the bark will rot down and the PC will need to meet this cost again in the future

Turf

I met with a contractor from Farm and Garden services who undertake work for RCC. The specification I gave was to leave the current railway sleepers in place as the contractor stated that these would be costly to remove. The bark however would need to be removed because as this rots the turf will sink. The quote received for removing current bark, top soiling and turfing was a staggering **£6695.08** including VAT

Benefits

- A long -term solution (although I question how much attention the grass will need under swings without rubber matting)

Disadvantages

- We would need to check that we are meeting requirements without rubber matting under the equipment. Without such matting grass would quickly become compacted.

- If the railway sleepers were removed, at an additional cost, and turf raised to level of rest of playing field then the base of the apparatus would be sunk into the ground - issues here with checking stability of posts, swings will be too low and the first bar of the A frame will be at ground level
- If turf is sunken (with railway sleepers remaining) then area will possibly need hand mowing as sit on mower couldn't be used
- Contractor advised that a rubber matting (the hexagonal sort that grass grows through) should be considered under the play equipment resulting in further cost. His answer on use of rubber matting was not definitive and this would need checking closely before going down this route.
- The top- soil would need to go down asap, during dry weather, and then turf in October so there is a good chance of rain. The turf would need time to settle in and hence it is likely that the apparatus would not be able to be used until next spring.

Synthetic Surface

I met with a representative from Fenland Leisure Products to discuss the laying of a synthetic surface. I explained that our budget was tight and he recommended Fibrefall an all weather rubber surface constructed with resin bonded recycled rubber chips. The specification was to cover only the necessary area needed to maintain children's safety. He provided two quotes one for the specified areas around the equipment at a cost of **£11,552.40** including VAT and one to cover the entire area at **£21,082.80** including VAT.

Benefits:

- Whilst by far the most costly surface this would appear to be a long term solution.

Disadvantages:

- Initial outlay
- The quote didn't include any guarantees for the surface so I contacted the company who told me that the surface would be guaranteed for five years subject to normal wear and tear and that with the footfall we have in our playground it is likely that it will last a lot longer than 5 years.