

BURSTWICK PARISH COUNCIL

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Statement from Burstwick Parish Council about the play area

Burstwick Parish Council takes its responsibility in maintaining a safe playground seriously. It has a visual inspection every morning before school, it is checked regularly in the school holidays and has a quarterly operational inspection. Each year it has an independent safety check and comprehensive risk assessment report. The last quarterly operational inspection took place on 17th June 2019. The nets at this point were not severely damaged.

The council uses the information in the annual risk assessment report to help make decisions as to which pieces of equipment need repairs.

The 2018 report flagged up issues with the old damaged nets, in September 2018 the council decided to install new nets. It was agreed to not put up nets again as to purchase these from the manufacturer of the games area (who are based in France) is very costly.

A local steel fabricator, based in Burstwick, was asked to provide a quote for some heavy duty weldmesh goal nets. The quote was put before full council meeting on 27th September 2018 and it was agreed by the council as the best way forward to provide a long term solution.

It is always difficult to retro fit to an existing piece of equipment, the issue with the goal nets was, as the existing frame is made of aluminium, the weldmesh panels could not be welded onto the frame, so rivets were used instead.

The force that has been used to rip these panels off is considerable, a ball hitting the panels would not have done this damage. At the Council's request, the fabricator has revisited the play area twice, once to tighten up fixings and again to view damage, this is the response:

Words fail me, having visited the site over the weekend to look at the goal nets.

It would seem to me that it is just a challenge for whoever is doing the damage.

It would take several kids all attacking the wire mesh at the same time to achieve what they have done.

It took two people over an hour and a half to remove the damaged nets over the weekend, the fixings that hadn't been damaged were very difficult to remove.

The council sets an annual budget, 90% of its funding comes from you via a charge on your council tax bill called the precept. As its public money the council spends, we have to make decisions as to what offers the best value. The budget for the play area is £2,500 – this covers maintenance, repairs and the annual independent safety inspection. On this occasion it was decided that it is not best value to replace the damaged nets at this moment.

Copies of our meeting minutes where decisions are taken and recorded, along with the council budget is available to view on our website.

If a resident has a low cost, vandal proof solution that meets safety requirements of a play area, then please contact the parish clerk, the council may consider proposals.

If anyone has information as to who was responsible for this criminal damage, please contact the police on 101.