**INFORMATION FOR SEPTEMBER MEETING**

**CLIMATE AND NATURE (CAN) CHAMPION**

A new role exists for a local Climate champion – details are here. <https://northantscalc.gov.uk/can-champions?utm_source=Friday+mini+eUpdate+-+22%2F08%2F25&utm_medium=Email>

**The Close play area swings**

**REPORT ON THE SWINGS AT THE CLOSE PLAY AREA**

Background on situation.

* The swings were inspected by RoSPA in June 2025 (the play safety inspectors the council pays for their report and advice).
* The report states that they are “not able to gauge the structural integrity of the unit and they recommend an internal inspection of all parts or replacement of the unit”.
* Also, as the swings are aged 1979, they do not meet current specifications regarding distances between seat to frame and seat to seat, but no retrospective changes are deemed necessary.
* I have asked Wicksteed, the manufacturer, to look at them and an external inspection was carried out. They felt the unit looked ok but thought the frame would need replacing soon due to the age. They said this;

*“We wouldn’t recommend dismantling old swing frames for a few reasons:*

1. *Structural integrity risk – Older frames may have weakened fixings, foundations, or joints. Dismantling can disturb these and actually create instability or damage that wasn’t there before.*
2. *Not a reliable inspection method – Dismantling isn’t a standard ROSPA/EN1176 inspection practice. Visual inspections and non-invasive checks are usually sufficient to assess safety and condition.*
3. *Reassembly concerns – Once dismantled, there’s no guarantee the frame can be safely reassembled to its original standard. This can compromise compliance with EN1176 standards.*
4. *Cost & practicality – It’s often more cost-effective and reliable to replace older swing frames with new, compliant ones rather than invest time and money in dismantling, inspecting, and potentially reassembling outdated equipment.*

*Instead, the safer recommendation would usually be to carry out a thorough on-site inspection (checking for rust, movement in the foundations, wear on joints, alignment, etc.) and, if the frame is significantly aged, consider replacement.*

*I hope this helps? The swings did look ok when I visited the site but they are of an age where they will very soon need replacing ☹”*

* I have asked for clarification on its safety and **when** they might need replacing.
* I also asked the Rospa company and they replied this;

*“We are not able to verify the integrity of this equipment and it has a significant age.*

*If it is not possible for you to dismantle this equipment, you should consider replacing it.*

*Please note that our inspector did not note any signs of instability or corrosion in the report.”*

**Summary**

* The unit cannot be checked **internally** for structural integrity, and so the recommendation from Rospa is to replace them.
* Wicksteed say that the **frame** is of the age where it will need replacing very soon.
* They do not give an indication of when the frame will need replacing however but for the last swings, with medium priority, it was in around 6 months.
* There is a duty of care placed on the Parish Council (PC) to protect the public in the provision of play equipment. It is their responsibility to carry out risk assessments and carry out recommendations by the experts.
* The insurance policy would not cover an accident when there is advice that they should be replaced or checked internally.

**OPTIONS**

1. Replace the swings like for like – Wicksteed quote is £8489.33 excl VAT, with a grant hopefully (CTP cost to the council of 11% £950 from reserves.)

Quote includes removal at £2692 and repair of wetpour surfacing matting at £2769.

1. Remove them as advised, and budget for the CTP next year and agree to replace with a grant next year.
2. Consider removal only – how much are these used? And replace with cheaper option/piece of equipment.
3. Leave the swings in situ, against the recommendation of the safety inspector.
4. Pay for a second opinion on the current stability and safety, however due to the age I suspect it will produce the same feedback.
5. Consider a full review of the area, depending how much it is used now the other area is improved, and consider alternative uses or alternative equipment.

Jenny Rice

Clerk 01/09/25