

Report to Millbrook Parish Council – Opening of play park facilities

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Timeline – play park closure (legislation and guidance)



03/07/2020

- A round table video conference, which included the Chairman of the Association of Play Industries, Deputy Director of MHCLG and Helen Ball, Shrewbury Town Clerk took place.

03/07/2020

- Reported feedback from MHCLG meeting 'the guidance wasn't designed to be prescriptive, it was drawn up recognising all playgrounds are very different and it is something that needs to be drawn on and interpreted'

03/07/2020

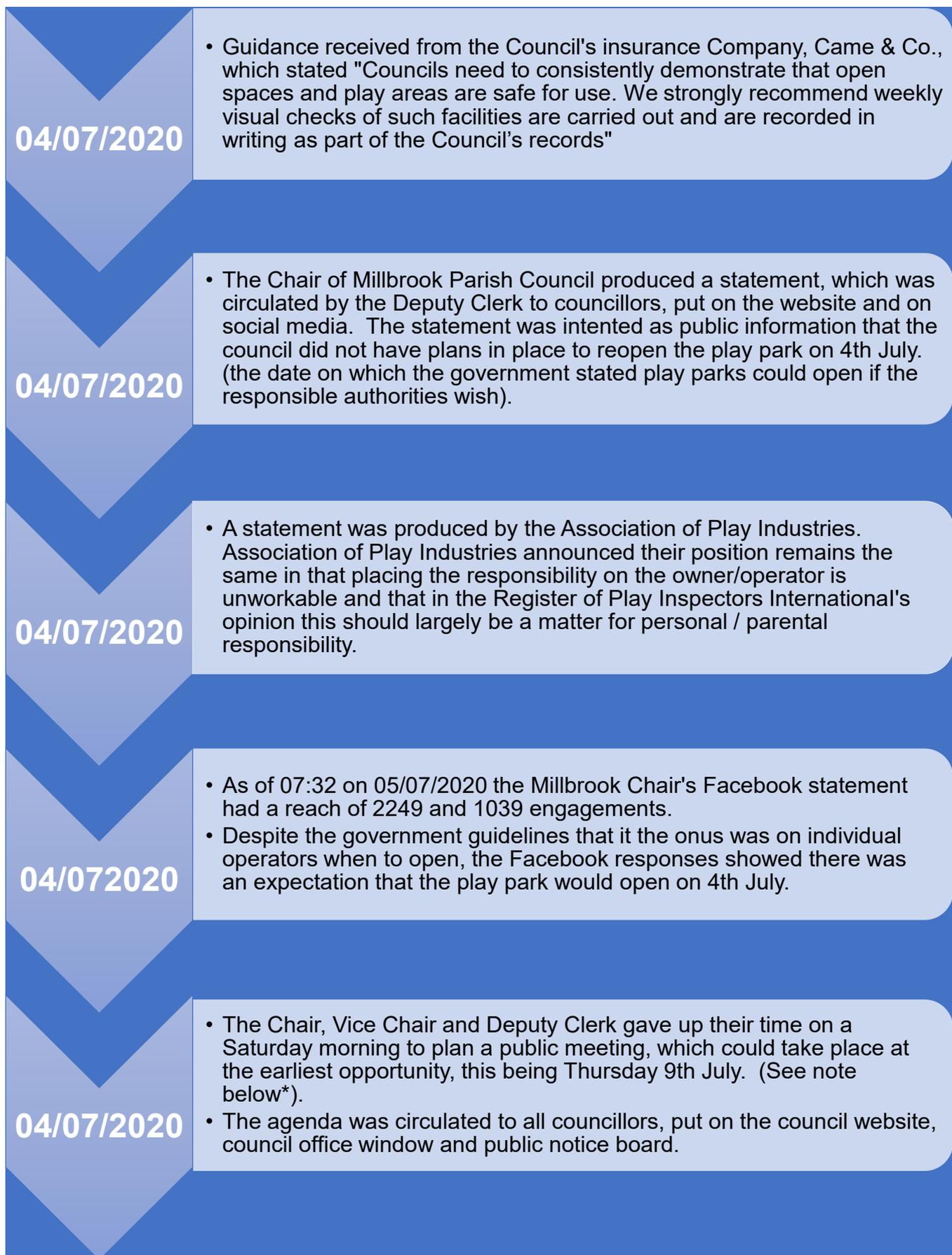
- The COVID Risk Assessment, in determining the mitigating measures that need to be put in place to restrict the transmissions of the virus, needs to be completed.

03/07/2020

- Feedback is that public sector perception is, it is guidance that has to be followed to the letter. Some insurers are insisting on it being followed to the letter and as a result a lot of councils are refusing to open their play areas

03/07/2020

- During the MHCLG meeting officials were keen that play areas should open but they remain cautious of the transmission risk in play areas, not necessarily amongst children but between parents and grandparents.



*** The Local Government Act 1972, Sch 12, paras 10(2) and 26(2)(a) states that the publication of notices should be at least three clear days before a meeting of the council (this excludes the days of issue and the meeting, Sundays, the days of Christmas, Easter and bank holiday breaks and days appointed for public thanksgiving or mourning).**

Statement from the Register of Play Inspectors International

The Register of Play Inspectors International (RPII) is today calling for all playground owners to carry out an in-depth inspection prior to the reopening of any facility and ensure that all inspection schedules are brought fully up to date.

“While we are pleased that the Government has finally announced the date for the reopening of outdoor playgrounds in England, we are aware that some owners and operators of playground facilities have halted safety inspections of playgrounds altogether during the lockdown period”.

The RPII is expecting playgrounds to be very heavily used, especially with the warm weather that we are currently experiencing and the eagerness of the public to start using them again, so it is vital that playgrounds are thoroughly inspected to ensure a satisfactory level of safety is in place.

Owners and operators of playground facilities also have a responsibility to open playgrounds safely and remove any temporary barriers that may have been put up during lockdown which may also be hazardous.”

The RPII is providing the following guidance for families that plan to visit a playground safely:

1. If the playground facility you visit has not yet officially been opened, please do not attempt to use, or access the equipment or area.
2. Do not remove any temporary barriers to the playground or plastic fencing or unravel any swing seats or cables that may have been secured to put them out of use – this must be done safely by the owner or operator of the facility.
3. Follow the current social distance guidelines when visiting and encourage your children to do the same.
4. If the playground is busy, consider coming back at a later time. Talk to your children about this possibility before visiting.
5. Wash your and your children’s hands before and after visiting. Take hand sanitiser with you and consider taking a bottle of water for if your children’s hands get covered in mud. Ensure your children are using hand sanitiser frequently.
6. Follow and adhere to all current government advice in addition to the above guidance.

Preparing a playground or outdoor gym for re-opening (Government guidelines 26th June 2020)

Owners and operators of playgrounds or outdoor gyms are reminded that in addition to preparations to ensure they are COVID-19 Secure, there will be general maintenance requirements. Owners/operators must ensure playground and/or exercise equipment is safe to use and that risks from damaged or defective equipment are addressed before opening.

Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-playgrounds-and-outdoor-gyms/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-playgrounds-and-outdoor-gyms>

Children’s play and leisure: promoting a balanced approach (HSE)

Health and safety laws and regulations are sometimes presented as a reason why certain play and leisure activities undertaken by children and young people should be discouraged. Such decisions are often based on misunderstandings about what the law requires. The HSE has worked with the Play Safety Forum to produce a joint high-level statement that gives clear messages tackling these misunderstandings. HSE fully endorses the principles in this Statement.

This statement makes clear that:

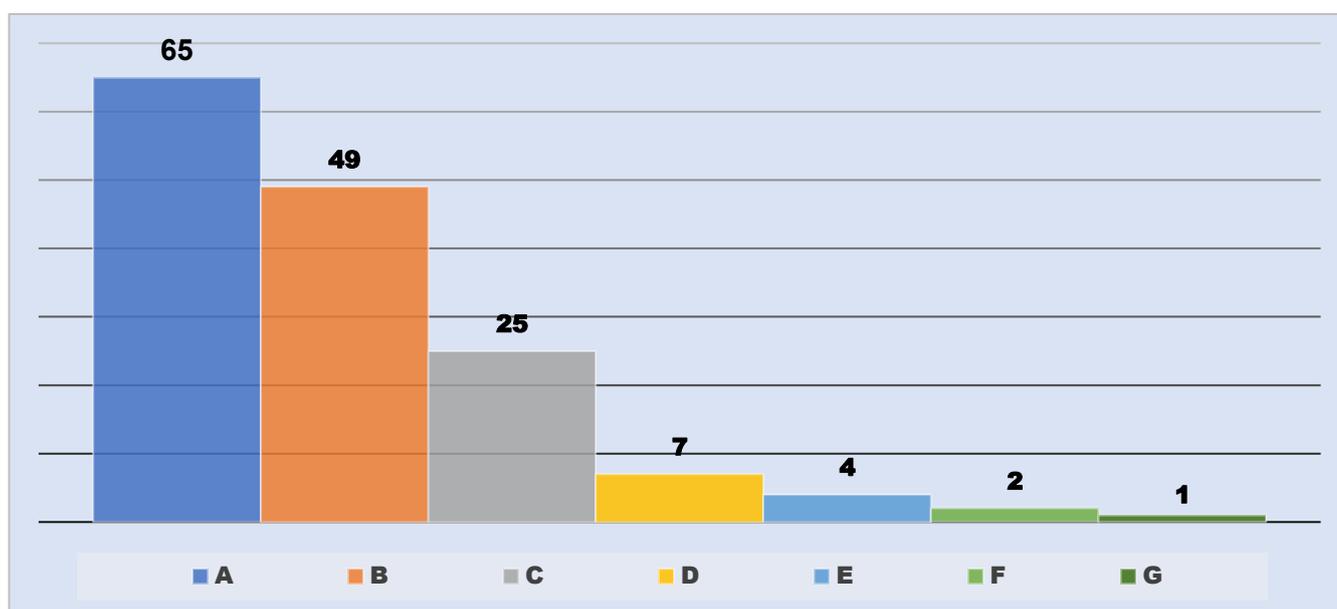
- Play is important for children’s well-being and development
- When planning and providing play opportunities, the goal is not to eliminate risk, but to weigh up the risks and benefits
- Those providing play opportunities should focus on controlling the real risks, while securing or increasing the benefits – not on the paperwork
- Accidents and mistakes happen during play – but fear of litigation and prosecution has been blown out of proportion

Children’s Play and Leisure: [promoting a balanced approach \(PDF\)](#)

Sources: (i) <https://www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/childs-play-statement.htm>

(ii) <https://www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/childrens-play-july-2012.pdf>

Survey amongst 153 town and parish clerks – completed 04/07/2020



A	Play facilities reopened - risk assessment complete	65
B	Plans to reopen but not rushing until risk assessment complete and procedures in place	49
C	Completed Risk Assessment and it shows we can't meet guidance so not opening	25
D	Risk assessment completed - no council staff to man the park so posters to be erected with guidance. Planning to re-open on 6th July just waiting	7
E	No plans to reopen - unable to meet guidelines but public continuing to ignore closure and are still using facilities	4
F	Council not considering reopening	2
G	Play facilities reopened - sanitiser provided	1

Guidance and information

NALC Covid-19 Risk Assessment	https://www.nalc.gov.uk/library/news-stories/covid19/3272-risk-assessment-for-covid-19/file
NALC Guidance for re-opening play parks, outdoor gyms and playparks	https://www.nalc.gov.uk/library/news-stories/covid19/3292-bhib-councils-insurance-guidance-for-local-councils-reopening-playgrounds/file
NALC Managing Facilities and public spaces	https://www.nalc.gov.uk/coronavirus
ROSPA	https://www.rospa.com/play-safety
Register of inspectors international	http://www.playinspectors.com/news/statement-on-the-governments-announcement-on-the-reopening-of-outdoor-playgrounds-on-july-4th-2020/

Deputy clerk recommendations

- Staffing committee to consider the capacity of the staff regarding the inspections, whether they can be completed when the play park is not in use (avoiding busy periods).
- Alternative / contingency methods for inspections to be put in place, such as volunteers from councillors. Does the council's insurance cover volunteers (not connected to the council) completing inspections?
- Council to have plans in place to deal with measures which may be required should there be another outbreak of Covid-19.
- In the summer, there is the possibility of an increase in users, due to visitors to the areas How will social distancing be managed?
- The Council needs to consider whether it is feasible to implement a one way system, as detailed in the NALC recommended risk assessment, a one way system could be implemented.
- Have the bins been emptied regularly?
- The skate park has been closed but it has been reported the facilities have been used. It has not been possible for the council to monitor the use of the facilities. The bin is broken in the skate park and needs replacing. Quotations will be obtained for a replacement.

Suggested poster – should the council vote to reopen the play park

The parents or children using the skate park might like to design their own posters.

The poster is a light blue rounded rectangle with four distinct sections. Each section contains an icon on the left and a corresponding text rule on the right. The bottom section contains a larger text message.

- Section 1:** Icon shows two stylized human figures with a double-headed arrow between them and the text '2m'. Text: **Maintain a 2m distance between yourself and others**
- Section 2:** Icon shows two hands being washed with soap bubbles. Text: **Sanitise your hands before, during and after using the play park, especially after touching play equipment and the access gates**
- Section 3:** Icon shows a group of children on a play structure with a red 'X' over them. Text: **Wash your hands thoroughly when you get home**
- Section 4:** Icon shows a hamburger and a drink with a red prohibition sign over them. Text: **If the play area is busy, please wait or come back at another time**

No food or drink, and please take your litter home with you

**Please be patient and kind
We all deserve to play safely**

COVID-19 Specific - Play Area/Outside Gym Risk Assessment

COVID-19 is a new illness that can affect your lungs and airways and is caused by a virus called Coronavirus. The symptoms can be mild, moderate, severe, or fatal.

This is a draft copy of a **generic Risk Assessment** for dealing with COVID-19. It is not likely to cover all scenarios and each council should consider their own unique circumstances.

Name of Assessor:

Assessment Date:

Review Date:

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed	Controls Required	Additional Controls	Action by who?	Action by when?	Done
<p>Spread of COVID-19 (Coronavirus)</p> <p>10</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees • Children • Vulnerable groups – elderly, those with existing underlying health conditions • Anyone else who physically comes in contact with the play equipment and/or Outside gym equipment 	<p>Cleaning Frequently cleaning and disinfecting objects and surfaces that are touched regularly particularly in areas of high use. Parents, Guardians and users of the gym equipment should be encouraged to clean the equipment before and after use by way of signage</p> <p>Social Distancing Social Distancing - Reducing the number of people to allow a distance of 2 metres, where possible, as recommended by the Public Health Agency https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people</p> <p>Wearing of Face Masks Should be encouraged but would be difficult to police</p>	<p>Posters, leaflets and other materials are available for display. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19</p> <p>Regular checks should be carried out to ensure strict adherence to the rules otherwise closure has to be considered</p>			

11		<p><u>Signage</u> To advise parents and users that the equipment needs to be sanitised before and after use.</p> <p>Reminder regarding socially distancing.</p> <p>Reminder to wear a mask</p> <p><u>Booking system</u> Instigate a booking system for the equipment – only feasible if the equipment is under total control/supervision of council i.e. an indoor play area</p> <p><u>One Way System</u> Consideration should be given to installing a one way system around the equipment if this is feasible</p> <p><u>Refuse</u> Increase the number of refuse collections (or increase the number of receptacles) to ensure that there are adequate facilities for people to dispose of their litter</p>	<p>Use of a number of “CORONAVIRUS!” Signs to remind users that the virus is still active.</p>			
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Any views or opinions expressed in this document are for guidance only and are not intended as a substitute for appropriate professional advice. We have taken all reasonable steps to ensure the information contained herein is accurate at the time of writing. In relation to any particular risk assessment issues, readers are advised to seek specific advice.

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