Warnford Playground application for a grant from the Warnford Parish Meeting of November 2026

This application is for a grant of £550 from the Warnford Parish Meeting on 19th November 2026 for the year ending 31st March 2027.

Please find below background information on the Playground, our most recent accounts and projected expenditure for the 2027/28 year are attached.

Warnford Playground, R. P. Chester Memorial Trust Co Ltd

The Charity was set up in 1974 to provide an area for play and an open space for Warnford Village residents. It is located off Lippen Lane adjacent to the River Meon in an idyllic setting. The land was donated by Rex Chester and his family and is a memorial to R.P.Chester, who was the first member of the family to live and farm in the village, having purchased the Warnford Estate in the 1930s. He died in 1968. Since its creation the Playground has been run by a group of unpaid trustees who have traditionally been residents of the village, although an exception has been made for Kate, the granddaughter of R.P. Chester himself.

The current three trustees administer the charity and take on the responsibility for the upkeep of the Playground itself and the equipment that sits on the land. As well as being a registered charity, it is also a limited company. Apart from Warnford villagers, the Playground is used by outside visitors, particularly in the summer months, when it is a favourite for family picnics. We believe that all would agree that the Playground is a great asset to our village.

Reasons for the Application

The Playground is a registered charity and has no regular income. It therefore relies on donations and goodwill to keep it running. This current year we have received a 20% share of the Church fete profit, it being held on the Playground. We are also a beneficiary of the Tom Coles Charity that was set up many years ago to create a playground for the residents of the parish and pays out money from time to time when it can. In the last financial year, we have benefitted from the generosity of those attending Rex Chester's funeral and the family's wish that those wishing to could donate to the Playground in honour of Rex and his vision in donating and creating our playground.

In the past, this small income has been 'topped up' with grants from the Parish Meeting and we ask that this continues. One of the major costs each year is the insurance, which in the current year is a small part of our projected financial burden, together with the upkeep and running of the site. Generally higher inflation has though significantly increased petrol costs, spares and bark etc. added to our annual spending. We have major issues with the wooden climbing frame, installed in 2000, bark and its surround, all requiring attention, and highlighted in our annual safety audit, please see the budget.

Special Considerations

Ash die-back is costing us a great deal and by the end of this year £8600. Having felled four affected trees five years ago, we are going to very heavily prune four more hopefully by the time of the meeting at a cost of just under £5000, which will seriously cut into our reserves. We will then still have one remaining ash tree which looks fairly healthy at the moment but may still have to come down in a few years' time. Thanks to a very generous donation of £6000 received in 2022, specifically for this work, which covers most of this expenditure.

Financial Outlook

Expenditure budgeted for includes fresh bark chippings for the play areas at a cost £1200, maintenance of the wooden playing frame of at least £500, a quote recently received, maintenance of the surrounds to the bark enclosures, awaiting a quote but projected to be over £600. In addition, we have been subject to a huge rise in standing charge on our water supply, Portsmouth water used to charge us about £30 a year and Castle water now charge £90 or more. We no longer need a water supply for the Fete since teas are now in the village hall and the drinking fountain is a luxury, we have therefore decided to cut the supply off and the charge for doing this is almost £500, it would therefore take us about five years to recoup this cost, but we think we have to do it.

The Parish Meeting's previous support has been vital in keeping the charity solvent and we therefore ask that serious consideration be given to this application. If granted, the money will cover at least the cutting off of the water supply.

Thank you.

The Playground Trustees: Stephen Short, Robin Athawes and Kate Fismer.