

Shenstone Parish Council Playing Fields Funding and Management Policy 2026–2027

1. Purpose of the Policy

This policy sets out a clear and practical framework for how Shenstone Parish Council (SPC) provides and administers financial support for the management and maintenance of Parish Playing Fields.

Its purpose is to:

- Support Playing Field Committees in maintaining safe, attractive, and well-managed facilities
 - Ensure public funds are used responsibly, transparently, and in line with SPC financial regulations
 - Avoid unnecessary bureaucracy, particularly for low-value and routine works
 - Encourage cost-effective delivery, including appropriate use of the Parish Lengthsmen and annually negotiated contracts.
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2. Scope

This policy applies to the following playing fields within Shenstone Parish:

- Little Aston Playing Fields
- Stonnall Playing Fields
- Shenstone Playing Fields

It applies **only where Playing Field Committees are seeking SPC funding or grants.**

Playing Field Committees may continue to use their own independently held funds to procure goods or services directly, outside the scope of this policy.

3. Funding Streams

SPC support is provided under two distinct arrangements:

3.1 Infrastructure and Asset Maintenance Allocation

Each Playing Field Committee is allocated **£2,500 per financial year** to support:

- Repairs and renewal of play equipment
- Surfaces, pathways, fencing, and signage
- Minor asset replacements

- Other fixed infrastructure necessary for safe operation

This allocation is intended to give committees **flexibility and autonomy**, particularly for small-scale works.

3.2 Contracted Grounds Maintenance Services

SPC separately funds agreed routine maintenance services delivered through approved contracts (e.g. Lichfield District Council, (LDC) Tonks Tree Services), including:

- Grass cutting
- Hedge trimming
- Routine grounds maintenance

These costs are **paid directly by SPC** and do not reduce the £2,500 allocation.

4. Administration and Use of Funds

4.1 Use and Timing of the £2,500 Allocation

- The £2,500 allocation is recorded and managed by the Parish Clerk on behalf of each Playing Field Committee.
- It is expected that funds will normally be used within the relevant financial year.
- End-of-financial-year claims will not be treated as exceptional, provided expenditure relates to, and is within, that year's £2,500 allocation.
- Where invoices or payments fall shortly after year-end, these may still be processed against the relevant year's allocation, at the Clerk's discretion.

4.2 Small-Value Purchases and Minor Works (Delegated Authority)

- Playing Field Committees may make small purchases or commission minor works up to £250 per item from their £2,500 allocation without obtaining competitive quotes or SPC approval.
- These purchases typically include materials, fixings, or minor repairs where committee members may be providing the labour.
- Committees should:
 - Check spending represents reasonable value for money
 - Validate total spend does not exceed their remaining allocation
 - Notify the Clerk of the expenditure to facilitate expedient invoice payments.
 - Contractors should be instructed to invoice SPC directly

The Clerk will process payment and update the committee on the remaining balance.

4.3 Works Above the Small-Purchase Threshold

For works above £250 (but within the £2,500 allocation):

- At least one quote should be obtained to demonstrate value for money

- Committees may proceed without Finance Committee approval, provided:
 - The work is one-off in nature
 - It falls within the remaining £2,500 budget allocation
- Contractors should be instructed to invoice SPC directly

The Clerk will process payment and update the committee on the remaining balance.

5. Grounds Maintenance and Non-Routine Works

5.1 Routine Contracted Works

- Annual maintenance contracts are agreed by SPC at the start of each financial year.
- Contracts specify:
 - Scope of routine works
 - Visit frequency
 - Any pre-priced additional items (e.g. one-off hedge cuts)

Invoices are checked by the Clerk against the contract before payment.

5.2 Additional or Non-Routine Works

Where additional work is identified, the following will apply:

- 1. Assessment for Lengthsmen**
 - The Clerk will first consider whether the Parish Lengthsmen can carry out the work.
 - If so, the cost is charged to the playing field's £2,500 allocation.
- 2. Assessment Against Existing Contracts**
 - If unsuitable for Lengthsmen, the Clerk will check whether the work is already covered as an 'additional item' on the Annual Maintenance Contract e.g. with LDC.
 - If it is, the Clerk will arrange the additional work in line with the contract and arrange payment.

5.3 Works Outside Existing Arrangements

Where the proposed work falls outside the scope of the £2,500 grant can't be completed by Parish Lengthsmen and is not covered by the existing grounds maintenance contracts:

- The Playing Field Committee may identify a suitable supplier and obtain quotations in accordance with SPC's Procurement Policy.
- As this expenditure represents spend, not provided for within the Playing Fields grant allocation, or existing maintenance contracts. **Prior approval of the Finance Committee is required**, in accordance with SPC budgetary controls.

Subject to Finance Committee approval, the nominated Playing Field representative may instruct the contractor to undertake the work. The contractor must be advised to invoice Shenstone Parish Council directly.

6. Oversight of One-Off and Ongoing Commitments

SPC recognises the potential risk in one-off tasks, that gradually evolve into permanent arrangements. Accordingly:

- SPC will annually review:
 - Maintenance contracts
 - Additional works commissioned during the year
 - Any tasks that have become regular or recurring
 - This review will determine whether:
 - The work should be formally absorbed into contracts
 - Economies of scale can be achieved
 - Existing arrangements remain value for money
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7. Financial Year and Review

This policy applies to the **2026–2027 financial year**.

It will be reviewed annually by Shenstone Parish Council to ensure it remains:

- Proportionate
- Efficient
- Aligned with the Parish’s financial priorities

Grounds maintenance contracts will be reviewed ahead of the 2027–2028 renewal period, with particular regard to:

- Value for money
- Contract growth over time
- Opportunities for joint procurement or efficiency savings

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