

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 15 JUNE 2020

INFRASTRUCTURE, HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE – 23 JUNE 2020

LEISURE, ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE - 8 JULY 2020

PART I - DELEGATED

6. MEMORIAL BENCHES, MEMORIAL TREES AND PLAQUES POLICY (DCES)

1 Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to recommend an update to the existing policy for approving and installing memorial benches, memorial trees and memorial plaques across the District.

2 Details

- 2.1 The Council receives a number of requests for memorial benches and memorial trees across our parks and open spaces. These are not vast quantities (1 bench request during 2019, 1 during 2018 and 2 in 2017, memorial trees: 1 during 2019 and 1 in 2020 so far), however, currently this is not advertised as an option to the public.

- 2.2 In addition, the Aquadrome was deemed at capacity in 2015 (for memorial benches) – this may change within the next 5-10 years, in which the option to purchase one for this location may be offered.

- 2.3 The original policy was agreed at the Leisure and Community Policy and Scrutiny Committee on the 2nd March 2010 and the Executive Committee on the 29th March 2010 that:

- *with regards to memorial benches, members of the public be charged the sum of £500 to 'sponsor' a bench for the period of 10 years;*
- *benches only be sited following consultation with ward members;*
- *sponsors of benches be advised at the time of sponsoring that no other memorial tributes should be placed around them.*

- 2.4 In order to strengthen and streamline how this is implemented and to ensure that all costs are covered to the Council when installing and maintaining memorial benches and trees, it is proposed that:

- A member of the public can either sponsor a bench or tree exclusively or have a plaque installed on an existing bench (this can be up to 3 plaques per bench).
- There will be a selection of locations across the district for this purpose – these have been chosen based on available space, limited anti-social behaviour issues and to ensure the locations are manageable for Environmental Protection, Regulatory Services and Trees and Landscapes to monitor and maintain (see Appendices A and B for proposed locations).
- Over time, locations may change due to becoming full or other sites having available space. This will be done in consultation with the appropriate Lead Member and Head of Service.
- Benches may also be sponsored on the highway or other routes outside of parks and open spaces under any of the Council's capital programme

- The costs of exclusively sponsoring a bench in a park, open space will range from £1,000 - £2,500, dependent on location and type of bench installed (see Appendix A for types of benches and their cost).
- The costs of exclusively sponsoring a bench on the highway or on other routes outside of parks and open spaces will start from £1000. Costs will vary, dependent on location and type of bench specifically in terms of installation costs. These will link in with the Council's Streetscape Policy and Walking and Cycling Strategy.
- The costs of exclusively sponsoring a tree will be £1,500. This cost will include the tree, its plantation, 5 year maintenance and 1 tree replacement in the first 3 years after plantation if the tree dies from natural causes.
- The costs for the bench or tree will cover the cost of purchase, installation, and maintenance.
- All benches will be DDA compliant with arm and back supports.
- Trees will be native or naturalized species and will be a minimum of 2 to 3 years old.
- The cost of a plaque for a bench would be £250 – this cost was agreed at the 27 November 2019 Leisure, Environment and Community Committee as part of the Fees and Charges setting process (minute note LEC 26/19).
- The bench would be sponsored for the life of the bench – in the event that it falls into disrepair, is damaged or is unsafe for public use, then it will be removed. The plaque owners will then be asked if they wish to keep the plaque and have it sent to them and if an exclusive sponsorship, the bench owners asked if they would like to collect the bench for their own purposes.
- The tree would be sponsored for 25 years. In the event that tree is damaged through natural causes or vandalism and becomes unsafe, the tree will need to be removed. The plaque owners will then be asked if they wish to keep the plaque and have it sent to them.
- All information would be displayed on the website and the public can submit an online request for this.
- Environmental Protection would be responsible for the monitoring and management of memorial benches in parks and open spaces.
- Regulatory Services would be responsible for the monitoring and management of memorial benches it installs.
- Trees and Landscapes would be responsible for the monitoring and management of memorial trees in parks, open spaces and woodlands.

2.5 This proposal differs from the initial policy, due to price increases (£500 did not cover the expenses incurred by Environmental Protection), inclusion of memorial trees and ensuring all costs are covered when installing a new memorial bench or tree. Locations for these benches and trees are plotted, monitored and agreed from the outset, so there wouldn't be a need for consultation on each request that comes in.

2.6 Costs will be reviewed year on year to take into account inflation and increased costs from manufacturers/suppliers and will be included as part of the Fees and Charges process.

2.7 The full proposed policy can be viewed in Appendix D.

3 Options and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 To recommend a new process for approving and installing memorial benches and trees as well as memorial plaques across the district.

4 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications

- 4.1 The recommendations in this report are not within the Council's agreed policy.
- 4.2 The purpose of this proposed policy is to provide a more proactive way to managing and installing memorial benches, memorial trees and plaques across the district.
- 4.3 The proposed policy will impact on the following performance indicators:
1. EP16 Satisfaction with quality/provision of parks and open spaces
 2. CO02 – Public perception of how well informed they feel about public services
- 4.4 The impact of the recommendations on this/these performance indicator(s) is:
1. The ability for the public to purchase a memorial bench, memorial bench plaque or tree to remember a loved one within a park or open space should increase the public's satisfaction in parks and open spaces. The resulting policy will also mean the potential for an increase in benches and trees and possible funds to enhance these locations.
 2. Currently there is no information available to the public on memorial benches or plaques, resulting in a reactive approach to dealing with requests. The new process will provide information on the website to the public and make it easier for them to know where, what and how much it will cost them, in advance of making an initial enquiry.

5 Financial Implications

- 5.1 The cost on installation and maintenance for memorial benches will be covered by the proposed costs detailed in point 2.3.
- 5.2 Fees for the benches will be: £1,000, £1,400 or £2,500 dependent on location and type of bench as detailed in Appendix A.
- 5.3 Fees for the trees will be £1,500, price will not vary from location or species of tree planted as detailed in Appendix B.
- 5.4 Any income received from benches within parks and open spaces will be incorporated into the overall budget for Environmental Protection, the overall budget for Regulatory Services for benches it installs and the overall budget for Trees and Landscapes for memorial trees and reported through budget monitoring.
- 5.5 Costs will be reviewed annually year on year to take into account inflation, any additional costs and increased costs from manufacturers/suppliers and will be included as part of the Fees and Charges process.

6 Legal Implications

- 6.1 Members of the public will be informed and agree from the outset that the bench or tree will be removed if it comes into disrepair and is no longer safe to the public.

7 Equal Opportunities Implications

- 7.1 Relevance Test

Has a relevance test been completed for Equality Impact? See Appendix C	Yes
Did the relevance test conclude a full impact assessment was required? The benches to be installed will have arm and back supports and supports the guidance provided by the DDA.	No

8 Staffing Implications

- 8.1 The process for installing and managing the memorial bench and memorial plaque process within parks and open spaces will be overseen by Environmental Protection.
- 8.2 The process for installing and managing the memorial bench and memorial plaque process on the highway and other routes will be overseen by Regulatory Services.
- 8.3 The process for planting and managing the memorial tree process will be overseen by Trees and Landscapes.

9 Environmental Implications

- 9.1 The planting of additional trees across the district will have a positive impact on the environment, creating habitats for local wildlife and will support the Council's Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy.

10 Community Safety Implications

- 10.1 Locations proposed for memorial benches and types of benches to be installed have considered anti-social behaviour implications. Where concerns on a bench or location are raised, the Community Safety Officers will be consulted.
- 10.2 Any benches and trees that are vandalised and no longer safe for public use will be removed.

11 Public Health implications

- 11.1 Benches within parks and open spaces provide a place for members of the public to sit and reflect, supporting health and wellbeing. Being in the outdoors can have an impact on improving mental health, as defined by MIND (<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/nature-and-mental-health/how-nature-benefits-mental-health/>)
- 11.2 Trees improve the air quality, give us heat-stroke protection, better breathing, stress relief, disease prevention and defence from depression. Trees and greenery may boost lifespan, this has been studied for 8 years by Harvard researchers and published in April Environmental Health Perspectives. (<https://health.usnews.com/wellness/articles/2016-12-09/the-many-health-benefits-of-trees>)

12 Customer Services Centre Implications

- 12.1 The process will make use of the online services available to the public.

13 Communications and Website Implications

13.1 The information will be displayed on the website, with easy to follow links to submit an enquiry online.

14 Risk and Health & Safety Implications

14.1 The Council has agreed its risk management strategy which can be found on the website at <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk>. In addition, the risks of the proposals in the report have also been assessed against the Council's duties under Health and Safety legislation relating to employees, visitors and persons affected by our operations. The risk management implications of this report are detailed below.

14.2 The subject of this report is covered by the Environmental Protection Service Plan. Any risks resulting from this report will be included in the risk register and, if necessary, managed within this/these plan(s).

Nature of Risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response <i>(tolerate, treat, terminate, transfer)</i>	Risk Rating <i>(combination of likelihood and impact)</i>
Benches and trees could be vandalised or damaged	Benches or trees may become unsafe to the public	Bench or tree to be removed Location of benches and trees to be carefully considered Type and material of bench used to be carefully considered	Tolerate	4

14.3 The above risks are scored using the matrix below. The Council has determined its aversion to risks and is prepared to tolerate risks where the combination of impact and likelihood scores 6 or less.

Very Likely ↓ Likelihood	Low 4	High 8	Very High 12	Very High 16
	Low 3	Medium 6	High 9	Very High 12

	Low 2	Low 4	Medium 6	High 8
	Low 1	Low 2	Low 3	Low 4
	Impact			
	Low -----> Unacceptable			

Impact Score

4 (Catastrophic)

3 (Critical)

2 (Significant)

1 (Marginal)

Likelihood Score

4 (Very Likely (≥80%))

3 (Likely (21-79%))

2 (Unlikely (6-20%))

1 (Remote (≤5%))

14.4 In the officers' opinion none of the new risks above, were they to come about, would seriously prejudice the achievement of the Strategic Plan and are therefore operational risks. The effectiveness of the management of operational risks is reviewed by the Audit Committee annually.

15 Recommendation

15.1 That the Policy and Resources Committee agree to the new policy for installing memorial benches, memorial bench plaques and memorial trees within parks, open spaces and on the highway and other routes across the district as detailed at point 2.3 and within Appendix D subject to any comments from Leisure, Community and Environment Committee and the Infrastructure, Housing and Economic Development Committee.

15.2 Costs will be reviewed annually year on year to take into account inflation, any additional costs and increased costs from manufacturers/suppliers and will be included as part of the Fees and Charges process.

15.3 Locations will be reviewed year on year when required, in consultation with the appropriate Lead Member and Head of Service.

Report prepared by: Charlotte Gomes, Leisure Development Manager

Data Quality

Data sources:

Number of benches and trees installed/planted/requested during 2019 and financial costs of memorial benches and plaques

Data checked by: Malcolm Clarke, Waste and Environment Manager

Angela Borges, Tree and Landscape Officer

Peter Simons, Senior Transport Planner

Data rating:

1	Poor	
2	Sufficient	✓
3	High	

Background Papers

Memorial Benches Policy Report – Leisure & Community Policy and Scrutiny Committee – 2 March 2010 and Executive Committee – 29 March 2010

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Memorial Benches, Memorial Trees and Memorial Plaques Policy
Appendix B – Relevance Test