

Memorial Benches

Policy Notes



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Introduction

Lenham Parish Council receives occasional requests from members of the public who wish to place a memorial bench within a public open space. These are often places with which individuals or families have a particular connection or special relationship.

There is no legislative requirement for the provision of public or memorial benches although it is accepted that they provide a useful and valued public amenity. Lenham Parish Council has a vision for the parish set out in the Neighbourhood Plan – which includes issues such as place making. In devising this policy, the Parish Council wishes to be compassionate and considerate to those seeking to install a bench; to be clear and easily understood by residents and users; and to establish responsibility for maintenance and repair and replacement.

The provision and management of all seats and benches on all public open spaces owned or managed by the Parish Council is the responsibility of the Parish Council.

This policy covers the provision of memorial benches in public open space which includes areas such as the cemetery, parks, and countryside sites.

In general, most requests are accommodated but procedures followed have varied over time, with decisions often being left to the discretion of officers without reference to a Parish Council policy. Generally, families have purchased a new bench, although in some instances they have only purchased plaques to be fitted onto existing benches. This approach, although generally accommodating to the families, can result in over provision and inappropriate siting of memorial benches in some areas, maintenance difficulties due to a wide range of bench styles being used, and ineffective recording of memorial bench information.

This policy recognises the need for a consistent approach to the provision of memorial benches in public open spaces.

The policy gives guidance on acceptable bench styles for various locations which also rationalise the range and quality of bench which is needed to avoid items which are onerous to maintain or have a poor life expectancy.

The policy therefore continues to welcome donations of suitable benches for appropriate locations in the public open spaces the Parish Council manages. The operating principles below will ensure that requests for memorial benches are responded to in a consistent, efficient and helpful manner. It will result in appropriate bench styles being purchased and installed in appropriate locations to ensure they are easy to maintain and not unduly prone to vandalism.



Operating principles:

1. There are two principal spaces where memorial benches can be considered by the Parish Council: the cemetery (to the north of the A20) and 'other' green open spaces (such as William Pitt Field or Cherry Downs). For the cemetery, only when an individual is buried or has their ashes interred in the cemetery can an application for a memorial bench be considered in this area.
2. Only sites which do not already have a sufficient number of benches will be considered. This will be determined by the Parish Council as part of a review upon receipt of a request for such a bench.
3. Suitable locations within the site where people are likely to make good use of the bench will be considered. These will be areas which lack any seating nearby or are at a likely stopping point such as a particular view or rest point on a path. In addition, the location will be chosen to minimise future maintenance and vandalism. Remote locations with poor access for maintenance and users will not be considered.
4. In locations where there will be several benches in the same area, no more than 50% will be offered as a placement for a memorial bench. This is to prevent the area taking on the ambience of a dedicated memorial garden which may compromise the enjoyment of the space for general recreational activities.
5. A limited selection of suitable low maintenance standard designs for memorial benches will be available at a range of costs, the choice of bench being dependent on the location. Annex 1 shows the range of bench and plaque options with suggested prices.
6. There is no guarantee that damage could be repaired, and any costly repairs would be at the discretion of the family who request the bench. Any damaged bench which is not repaired in a suitable and timely manner will be removed at the discretion of the Parish Council.
7. Purchase of a memorial bench will be for the expected life period of the bench only, after which time it will be removed. The cost will include the bench, plaque, inscription, installation and surfacing and, as the benches should require minimal maintenance, there will be no additional cost for this. The cost and life expectancy of the bench will depend on the type of bench and its location. Any replacement would be treated in the same way as a new memorial bench.
8. To ensure installation is undertaken safely to the required standards, the Parish Council will provide and install the memorial bench with plaque and surfacing in all cases.
9. Where there is no space for an additional memorial bench, requests for placement of a memorial plaque on an existing bench will be considered where the bench is in good condition and point 3 above has been assessed.
10. As the bench has already been provided through public funds, a charge which includes a modest contribution towards the original purchase of the bench, plus the plaque and installation cost will be required. This will accommodate the families wishes and ensure a fair contribution is made towards the provision of the bench as a personal memorial. The funds raised will be used for the repair or provision of other public benches. The same conditions on life expectancy and maintenance will apply to any existing benches as apply to new benches.



11. The Parish Council's standards of maintenance will be accepted as keeping the bench fit for purpose and clean. This will involve occasionally removing built up algae and grime, removal of graffiti and repairing minor faults within resources available. The range of new benches has been chosen for durability without the need for regular painting or treatment.
12. Publicity on the Council website will provide information and an enquiry form for those interested in purchasing memorial benches. The enquiry form is shown in Annex 2.
13. A standard written letter of agreement will be sent by the Parish Council to the family to ensure all terms and conditions are clearly understood prior to purchase. The form will be returned to the Parish Council with payment in advance of the memorial bench being placed. Annex 3 shows the standard form of agreement.

Memorial bench purchase procedure

1. This procedure describes the process which will be followed from the first contact with the family enquiry to the last contact to inform them that their memorial bench is in place.
2. Family enquiries coming to the Parish Council are directed to the website to view the policy and download a memorial bench enquiry form as shown in Annex 3. If required, an enquiry form is posted to the customer.
3. Family completes the enquiry form specifying a requested location, and bench and plaque style, and sends this by e-mail or post to Clerk to the Parish Council for consideration at the following Council meeting.
4. The Parish Council meeting considers the requested location for the bench and decides, by applying the operating principles, whether a memorial bench is appropriate in this location. If the requested location is not suitable, the nearest alternative location will be offered.
5. The Parish Council ensures that the requested bench and plaque style is suitable for the location and that the plaque text is clear and suitable for use on a public bench. Four bench styles only will be used in situations as shown in Annex 1 and will be at the discretion of the Parish Council for each specific site.
6. The Clerk to the Parish Council contacts the family to confirm or discuss the details by phone. If an alternative location is required, a letter with a map to illustrate the alternative site being offered will be sent.
7. On agreement, a standard agreement letter is sent to the customer to confirm arrangements and request payment.
8. When payment is received, the allocated officer orders the purchase and installation of the memorial bench, for completion within 2 months of receipt of payment.



9. The Clerk to the Parish Council ensures the work has been carried out as specified, photographs the bench and ensures all information is recorded in an asset management system for future reference.
10. The Clerk to the Parish Council ensures a letter and photograph are sent by post or email to the family to notify them that the bench is in place.

Maintenance standard

Benches will be kept fit for purpose with minor faults being repaired and build-up of algae or grime being removed within available resources.



Appendix 1 - Styles for installation of new benches

(available from <https://www.memorialbenchesuk.co.uk/> or <https://www.wealdenbenches.co.uk/teak-garden-benches>)

Great Maytham

Teak 3 seat garden bench

25 year life expectancy



Marden

Teak 3 seat garden bench

25 year life expectancy



Farleigh

Teak 3 seat garden bench

25 year life expectancy



For remote sites/sports areas

Peak Commemorative Bench

Recycles plastic garden bench (1500mm long)

Long life expectancy – no maintenance

<https://www.tdp.co.uk/product/peak-commemorative-bench/>



Note: if a base is required for the bench location this will be at additional charge.

All prices to be found on relevant websites.

Engraving/Plaques

The standard size plaque is 5" x 2" and you can have a maximum of 5 lines per plaque. Each line can have 50 characters, giving a total of 250. Cost £35.00 (brass) £45.00 (stainless steel)

The larger size plaque is 10" x 2" and you can have a maximum of 5 lines per plaque. Each line can have 100 characters, giving a total of 500. Cost £65.00 (brass) £70.00 (stainless steel)



Engraved onto the bench up to 100 characters, including spaces, along the top rail of bench back (£60.00)

