



**OPEN REPORT
COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

Community & Environment Committee – 9 February 2023

MEMORIAL BENCH POLICY

Report of Head of Community & Environmental Services

Report Author and Contact Details

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Wards Affected

District wide

Report Summary

To consider revisions to the Memorial Bench Policy and adopt the revised policy with effect from 1st April 2023.

Recommendations

1. That the revised Memorial Bench Policy for implementation from 1st April 2023 be approved.

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 Draft Bench Memorial Policy
Appendix 2 Equalities Impact Assessment
Appendix 3 Memorial Bench Policy Agreement

Background Papers

None

Consideration of report by Council or other committee

No

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from Press or Public

No

Memorial Bench Policy

1. Background

- 1.1 The District Council has over several years allowed memorial benches to be donated, in memory of loved ones, and placed in locations under its responsibility such as cemeteries, recreation grounds, parks and beauty spots. Many other councils offer similar.
- 1.2 Currently there are benches registered / situated in the table below plus current waiting list requests:-

Location	Number of memorial benches	Number on waiting list
Ashbourne		
Cemetery	15	1
Memorial Gardens	4	
Fishpond Meadows	2	
Brickyard Cottages Play Area	1	
Highfield Road Play Area	3	
Bakewell		
Recreation Ground / Park	35	18
Cemetery	5	
Riverside	17	
Riverside Sensory / Gardens	8	
Bath Gardens	21	
Bath Street junction	3	
Agricultural Business Centre	1	
Bonsall		
Recreation Ground	5	
Churchyard	4	
Darley Dale		
Cemetery	14	2
Parkway	2	
Eyam		
Car park	1	
Matlock		
Hall Leys Park	14	7
Dale Road opposite former Boat House	1	
Sparrow / Smedley Street Park	2	
High Tor	2	
Starkholmes War Memorial	1	
Matlock Bath		
Derwent Gardens	5	
Middleton by Wirksworth		
Cemetery	1	1
Monsal Head		
Front	15	8
Rear	12	

Tansley		
Village Green	1	
Wirksworth		
Steeple Arch Cemetery	9	
Fanny Shaw Cemetery	1	

- 1.3 Since the adoption of the current Policy in August 2019, only a handful of requests have been fulfilled / benches installed. This has been due to various reasons including lack of available spaces and lack of capacity to process requests & install benches due to the impact of the Covid pandemic & other workload pressures.
- 1.4 More latterly rising costs have meant that fees & charges (set in 2019) were not reflective of costs incurred.
- 1.5 Therefore, it was decided to pause fulfilment of any requests and allow a Review of the Policy to take place.

2. Key Issues

2.1 Current position

- 2.2 Many of the benches have been in place for a number of years under ad-hoc agreements or in some cases no agreement (that can be found on file).
- 2.3 The current Memorial Bench Policy was adopted 21st August 2019 and sought to standardise memorial bench donations and included costs for the bench itself plus installation costs and a contribution towards maintenance.
- 2.4 Some areas are up to capacity with benches such as Bakewell Recreation Ground. A waiting list also exists with several on the list, particularly for Bakewell and Monsal Head, some requests dating back to 2016.

2.5 Scope of Policy & Agreement

- 2.6 The proposed policy seeks to be simple and clear with the Memorial Bench agreement period to be for 10 years (as per current policy), after which the sponsor will be contacted and asked if they would like to renew their Agreement / replace the bench. At the termination of any Agreements, the plaque may be returned to the sponsor if desired.
- 2.7 The previous policy included Short Term Sole Dedications offering an option to sponsor an existing bench for a five year period by adding a plaque to an existing non-memorial bench. There was little take up for this option and as there are few suitable benches to fulfil this option, this is not included in the 2023 policy proposals.

- 2.8 Benches are to be a standard design and sourced in line with procurement regulations. The Council will not accept any non-standard benches and sponsors will not be allowed to carry out any customisations or repairs.
- 2.9 Trees were not included in the existing policy, although some have been planted in recent years, some with plinths & plaques. There is a lack of available space for trees and the Clean & Green and Community Development Teams are of the view that due to the maintenance & care required over many years and that they are an easy target for vandalism, memorial trees should not be included in the policy.
- 2.10 The policy also includes a section on current stock to allow removal of benches where appropriate in liaison with sponsors.

2.11 Locations

- 2.12 Traditionally benches have been placed in cemeteries and parks and at Monsal Head. Some areas are oversubscribed and waiting lists also exist.
- 2.13 Bench donations need to be limited to where there is adequate space and all areas that are appropriate for benches will be pre-plotted in advance to allow sponsors to choose an available location – the locations may also be advertised on the Council's website.

2.14 Supply & Procurement

- 2.15 For a number of years, the Council had sourced hard wood benches from a company based in Scotland. These benches are quite expensive and have high emissions associated with their delivery. A procurement exercise has taken place recently to source a standard bench that is not only cost effective but is also sustainable. As the total spend over 3 years will be less than £30,000, procurement regulations require 3 quotations which have been sought.
- 2.16 The procurement was undertaken in compliance with the Council's Sustainability Procurement Policy which sets out how the Council will:
Encourage suppliers to take action to reduce waste and promote re-use, remanufacture and recycling at every level of the supply chain.
Specify products which: conserve raw materials, are sustainably sourced with low embodied energy, are made from recycled materials, or can be recycled or re-used, cause minimal damage to the environment and limited or mitigated carbon emissions in their production, distribution, use and disposal, have low transport emissions, using locally sourced goods where possible and reduce use of packaging, utilising recycled and recyclable materials.
- 2.17 The company who was successful is TDP who are locally based in Wirksworth. The design is called The Dale and it is manufactured from 100% recycled UK plastic lumber, which has the aesthetics of wood, with the durability of plastic. Using recycled plastic not only reduces the amount of energy used when compared to making plastic from raw materials but also

reduces plastic going to landfill and means that fewer trees are felled for timber.

2.18 The benches should require little or no maintenance and will be more resilient to a changing climate than traditional wooden benches e.g. periods of extreme weather or those in areas where flooding may occur.

2.19 TDP has made a commitment to be a net zero carbon business.

2.20 Four Dale benches were purchased in 2022 as part of the Steeple Arch extension development and these have proved to be highly satisfactory and in keeping with the area.

2.21 Fees & Charges

2.22 Fees have not been increased since the existing policy was adopted in 2019 and are not reflective of product, installation, maintenance & associated administration costs. Therefore, it is proposed that fees & charges cover the supplier's bench & fittings costs plus the District Council's installation & administrative costs.

2.23 Because the Dales is a high tourist area and we receive several applications from non-residents, it is proposed to apply a differentiation in fees for local and non-residents who would pay double the fee. This should allow more opportunity to fulfil applications made by residents of Derbyshire Dales.

2.24 Requests are received from time to time, for replacement or additional plaques where the sponsor wishes to update in memory of another loved one. Therefore, on top of the plaque cost, there will also be an installation & administrative fee for a replacement plaque only.

2.25 We have secured the charge for the bench for 2023 and we will review prices each year, based on the actual cost of the bench and plaque associated costs thus allowing a realistic fee to be included in the fees and charges for future financial years.

MEMORIAL BENCHES (NEW)	Existing Charge 2022/2023 £	Proposed Charge 2023/2024 £
Memorial Bench	NA	£537.23
Installation and administration	NA	£450.00
Plaque 100x50	NA	£51.91

Plaque 150x50	NA	£56.95
Plaque 125x75	NA	£61.99
Plaque 150x75	NA	£67.03
Installation of New Plaque	NA	£50.00

2.26 Application process

- 2.27 It is proposed to develop an expression of interest / application form for inclusion within the Council's CRM system so sponsors will be able to access on the website along with possible sites and advice on where waiting lists exist.
- 2.28 Applications will be acknowledged and sponsors advised of the current situation and timescales.
- 2.29 It is anticipated that applications will, mainly, be processed with installation taking place between April and October. Any requests will then be paused until the following April. This will allow bench installations to take place at a similar time, in decent weather conditions and manage customer expectation.

2.30 Current stock and maintenance

- 2.31 Where current benches come to end of their life (10 years), the sponsor will be contacted and advised of removal of the bench and offered the opportunity for a replacement bench under the new policy.
- 2.32 Where there are no details on file for current sponsors, attempts will be made to find the sponsor via on site notices and / or a website campaign urging sponsors to contact the Council.
- 2.33 The condition of benches is checked as part of Clean & Green's overall routine work when attending a particular area. Where there may be issues, these are reported to Clean & Green Managers and the Neighbourhoods team. The Clean & Green Team use a digital asset system for play area inspection monitoring and it may be possible to extend this also for memorial bench checking.

3. Timetable for Implementation

- 3.1 It is intended for the Policy to be effective from 1 April 2023.
- 3.2 Ahead of 1 April, pre-plot site locations, review current data & waiting list and where a suitable site exists, contact potential donors on the waiting list.

4. Financial and Resource Implications

- 4.1 As set out in the report, it is proposed that within the Memorial Bench Policy fees & charges will be applied to cover the supplier's bench & fittings costs plus the District Council's installation & administrative costs. It is also proposed to apply a differentiation in fees for local and non-residents who would pay double the fee. This means that the Council should recover its costs and so the financial risk associated with the recommendations of this report is assessed as low.

5. Legal Advice and Implications

- 5.1 This report relates to the revisions to the Memorial Bench Policy and adopt the revised policy with effect from 1 April 2023. The Legal Risk associated with this report has been assessed as low.

6. Equalities Implications

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and is included as an appendix. It contains advice to develop the criteria clearly prioritising residents and previous residents and included on information on the scheme and application form. Charging non-residents double for benches supports the offer of a lower cost to DDDC residents.

7. Climate Change Implications

- 7.1 There are no direct climate change implications arising from the recommendation of the report. However, it is clear that climate change impacts have been considered during the procurement process, as detailed in 2.15-2.19, and the positive steps have been taken to lower the impacts of this procurement

Report Authorisation

Approvals obtained from:-

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Paul Wilson	01/02/2023
Director of Resources/ S.151 Officer (or Financial Services Manager)	Karen Henriksen	26/01/2023
Monitoring Officer (or Legal Services Manager)	Kerry France	19/01/2023