

Marhamchurch Memorial Bench Policy

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 There is no statutory or legal obligation for the Parish Council to offer commemorative benches as a service but it can be a way in which the wishes of families can be met, whilst providing a wider community benefit, helping to fund the provision of public benches across the Parish.
- 1.2 This policy sets out the principles and process for managing and administering benches with dedications (and sponsored benches).
- 1.3 The term dedicated bench covers all benches with plaques including memorial and commemorative benches.

2.0 Objectives of the Policy

- 2.1 The Parish Council aims to adopt a clear, measurable and sympathetic approach to the management of public benches.
- 2.2 The Parish Council is not seeking to increase the number of dedicated benches and will only consider benches in new locations in exceptional circumstances.
- 2.3 The focus is on maintaining existing sites, repairing and replacing benches and offering re-dedications.
- 2.4 The policy sets out who is responsible for maintenance, repair and replacement. This aim, wherever possible will be to minimise the impact on public funds.
- 2.6 The Parish Council is committed to ensuring that assets are as sustainable as possible and to minimise their impact on the environment. This shall be a consideration in the choice of products and materials used to install, repair and maintain benches.

3.0 Service Standards

- 3.1 The majority of benches are sited on land owned by Cornwall Council but it has devolved the ownership, repair, maintenance and management of all public benches to the Parish Council.
- 3.2 All dedications are subject to a number of policy conditions.
- 3.3 The majority of dedicated benches are historic. Where the plaques have been installed within the last 10 years the Parish Council will honour the placement. If the plaque has been installed for more than 10 years the Council will use their discretion as to whether to remove the plaque and will use reasonable endeavours to make contact with the relatives or sponsors and offer a re-dedication or return of the plaque.

4.0 Policy Conditions

- 4.1 All applications must be made on an application form, which can be downloaded from the Council's website.
- 4.2 The Clerk will present the application to the next meeting of the Parish Council for consideration of approval. The Councillors may have further questions of the applicant before approval can be given; best attempts will be made not to prolong the decision making process.
- 4.2 New benches will be of a type, design and colour approved by the Parish Council. There is no standard bench to be installed as the Council are happy to consider various designs of benches that may add ambience to the Village. Only bench designs of the type and colour specified by the Council will be approved at any specific location.
- 4.3 Applicants are free to request a particular location but will be advised if this is not possible and applicants will be offered an alternative, wherever possible.
- 4.4 The exact location in which the bench shall be placed is determined by the Council, and dependent upon need and availability.
- 4.5 In most locations, no new bench sites are available. Only the replacement of existing benches in poor condition or re-dedications of benches on existing sites may be available.
- 4.6 The applicant will be required to pay the full amount once a bench has been agreed. It is expected that any commemorative bench will have a serviceable life of 10 years. This period is calculated from the date of installation. There are two options and these are dependent upon the location and circumstances:
- **Option A:** re-dedication – payment for the production, engraving and installation of a plaque on an existing bench in reasonable condition, together with an administration and maintenance fee. The duration of the dedication has been limited to the current 10 year maintenance period for the bench, but may be extended.
 - **Option B:** replacement – payment for the production, engraving and installation of a plaque on a new replacement bench at an existing site, together with an administration and maintenance fee for 10 years.
 - The Parish Council may be able to offer a refurbished wooden bench but this is wholly at the Council's discretion.
- 4.7 An estimated schedule of fees is appended to the application form. Fees are estimated and the relevant fee will be relayed to the applicant after pricing of the bench (see 9.1 below).
- 4.8 The Council's standard of maintenance will be accepted as keeping the bench fit for purpose. This will involve routine inspection, the occasional removal of any

build up of grime, the removal of graffiti (where possible) and repairing minor faults within resources available.

4.9 The Parish Council accepts no responsibility / liability if a memorial bench is damaged, vandalised or stolen.

5.0 Terms of the Agreement

5.1 Benches shall remain at all times the property of the Council.

5.2 Benches shall remain in place for the 10 year period. Within the 10 year period, the Council reserves the right to remove the bench or plaque at any time if it becomes unsafe, damaged beyond economic repair or unacceptable from an aesthetic or procedure perspective. If the Council chooses to remove a bench on the grounds of aesthetics alone, an alternative location will be sought. If an alternative cannot be agreed, the Council will compensate the sponsor with a sum equivalent to one tenth of the total donation cost, multiplied by the number of complete years remaining of the 10 year period.

5.3 Should a bench or plinth become damaged or unsafe through general wear and tear during the 10 year period, the Council will consider arranging for repair or replacement. However, the Council is under no obligation to replace the bench and will do so at its discretion.

5.4 Installation of a bench by a third party will not be permitted. If it is found that a bench has been installed by anyone other than the Council, the bench will be removed without notice and without guarantee of safe return.

5.5 Commemorative plaques fitted to benches are 6"x2". The plaque will generally be fitted to the centre of the upper most lath of the back of the bench. Any inscription deemed to be inappropriate, offensive, or likely to bring the Parish Council into disrepute shall be refused.

5.6 A maximum of 3 memorial plaques per bench will be permitted.

5.7 Applications for commemorative benches for pets will not be granted.

5.8 No additional mementos e.g. vases, statues, flowers, wreaths, balloons or other ornamentation etc or additional unauthorised plaques shall be permitted on or around the bench. If found, these will be removed without prior notice. The bench should be accessible at all times.

5.9 Nothing in the dedication bench scheme confers special rights to the sponsor – it should be noted and accepted that any person may sit on any public bench at any time.

6.0 The End of the Dedication Period

6.1 After a period of 10 years, the Council will make reasonable endeavours to contact the sponsor to ascertain whether they require the removal and the

return of any plaque. The bench, if still in good repair, can be made available for rededication by another sponsor.

6.2 Up to 1 year prior to the end of the agreement, the sponsor is encouraged to make contact with the Council to confirm their wishes, either to extend the dedication period or request that the plaque be removed.

6.3 The sponsor can opt for a re-dedication of a plaque with a new bench at the same location, or may wish to pay for a further period of sponsorship for the plaque only, if the bench is still in an acceptable condition.

6.4 It is essential that sponsors ensure the Council holds up to date records of their contact details. These will be kept in accordance with data protection legislation in force at the time. Should contact details not be available, or the Council be unable to make contact, after having made reasonable attempts, the Council will remove the plaque.

6.5 Any plaque removed from benches or from removed benches will be retained by the Council for a year, for the sponsor to collect. After this time the Council will dispose of the plaque.

7.0 Historic Agreements

7.1 For those benches that have been sponsored prior to June 2023 and without an active agreement in place, the Council reserves the right to replace benches or plaques that have been in situ for more than 10 years. The sponsor, should the Council be in possession of current contact details, will be contacted and offered first refusal to enter into a further 10 years sponsorship. A sponsor must be able to provide written evidence of an existing bench agreement, should they wish to challenge the Council's decision.

8.0 Review

8.1 The policy, approved bench designs and fees shall be reviewed every three years.

9.0 Fees and Charges for 2023-24

9.1 The sponsor will be informed of the cost on application. This will depend on the bench type and size. Examples of approximate costs are below.

Option	Charge for the installation of a new or additional plaque on an existing bench (price per plaque)	Charge for the purchase and installation of a new recycled bench including a single plaque	Charge for a refurbished wooden bench including a single plaque
Total Payable	£150 - £250	£2,000.	£1,500