



# Whitchurch Memorial Bench/Tree Policy

Adopted by Whitchurch Town Council on 7.10.21

Whitchurch Town Council will facilitate the purchase and placement of memorial benches and/or trees on request, in public open spaces owned or managed by this Council including the cemetery and parks and where appropriate opportunities exist.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Whitchurch Town Council has responsibility for parks and the cemetery in Whitchurch. Whitchurch Cemetery includes the garden of remembrance and War Graves, which are maintained by the War Grave Commission.
- 1.2. Bench memorials are currently provided in Whitchurch Cemetery, including the Garden of Remembrance and in Jubilee Park. Tree memorials can be planted in the Harry Richards Garden or the Cemetery.

## 2. Dedicating a Memorial Bench or Tree

- 2.1 Dedicating a memorial bench or tree to a loved one who has died can be a touching way to honour their memory.
- 2.2 The Council receives occasional requests from members of the public who wish to place a memorial bench or tree within a public open space. These are often spaces, with which individuals or families have a personal 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.
- 2.3 Memorial bench and tree requests to date have been accommodated in line with policy since 2019 and the responsibility for organising installation of the bench or tree has been delegated to officers.
- 2.3 This policy recognises the need for a consistent approach to the provision of memorial benches in public open spaces. As such, the Council agree to using the bench option(s) provided at Annex A to this Policy.

## 3. Operating Principles

- 3.1 Only sites where space is provided for a memorial bench will be considered. If within a park this will be determined by any site plan or directives of the Committee responsible for Parks/Public Realm.
- 3.4 The Council will facilitate the inscription and installation of all memorial plaques and will have the final decision on size, design and material of all plaques.
- 3.5 Purchase of a memorial bench will be for the expected life period of the bench only, after which time it will be removed. This will include benches where memorial plaques

have been placed on an existing bench. The cost will include the bench, plaque, inscription, installation and surfacing if required, and as the benches should require no additional 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.

- 3.6 To ensure installation is undertaken safely to the required standards, the Council will provide and install the memorial bench with plaque and surfacing in all cases.
- 3.7 The Council's standards of maintenance will be accepted as keeping the bench fit for purpose and clean. This will involve occasionally removing grime, graffiti and repairing minor faults within resources available. The range of benches have been chosen for durability without the need for regular painting or treatment.
- 3.8 Customers will be requested to complete the form at Annex as a signed agreement that they are willing to purchase and pay for the chosen bench and/or tree, including plaque, inscription and installation. Each customer will receive a confirmation letter or email and will be kept up to date with regards to installation of the bench or tree.

#### 4. Memorial Bench Purchase Procedure

This procedure describes the process which will be followed from the first contact with the customer enquiry to the last contact to inform them that their memorial bench or tree has been installed.

- 4.1 Customer enquiries coming to the Whitchurch Town Council offices will be in the longer term directed to the Council website to view the policy and download a memorial bench or tree enquiry form, at Annex A. If required, an enquiry form will be posted to the customer. Customer Advisors on the Community Hub will process the enquiry and pass to the relevant officer for facilitation.
- 4.2 Customers will complete the form highlighting which bench they would like installed and specifying a location on the designated plan, prior to returning this to a Customer Advisor, preferably by email. The Council have delegated responsibility to officers to deal with memorial bench and memorial tree installations.
- 4.3 Officers will ensure that the requested plaque information/ wording is suitable for a bench in a public space.
- 4.5 Officers will contact the customer to confirm or discuss the details by phone or email.
- 4.6 Once agreed, a standard confirmation agreement letter is sent to the customer to confirm arrangements and request payment.
- 4.7 When payment is received, officers will order the bench/tree and arrange for the plaque to be etched, aiming for a completion within a 2-month timescale from receipt of payment.
- 4.8 Officers will ensure that the work has been carried out as requested, will take a photograph of the bench or tree for the Council's records and asset register.
- 4.9 Officers will ensure that a letter and photograph are sent to the family, by post or preferably email, to notify them that the bench or tree is in place.