

North Lanarkshire Council Report

Environment and Transportation

approval noting

Ref

Date 12/02/20

Memorial Benches and Structures

From Nicole Paterson, Head of Environmental Assets

Email patersonp@northlan.gov.uk **Telephone** 01236 632655

Executive Summary

This report presents members with a proposed policy for the installation of memorial benches and other structures (includes statues, art works, plaques etc.) within public open spaces and cemeteries. This policy provides clear guidance on the site selection, specification, cost, payment, installation, maintenance, inspection, restrictions on the provision of benches and their removal at end of serviceable life.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Environment and Transportation Committee:

- (1) Approve the introduction of the policy for the installation of memorial benches and structures within public open spaces and cemeteries.

The Plan for North Lanarkshire

Priority Improve North Lanarkshire's resource base

Ambition statement (17) Ensure we keep our environment clean, safe, and attractive

1. Background

- 1.1 The 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 or other structures although it is accepted that they provide a useful and valued public amenity.
-

2. Report

2.1 Service requests

- 2.1.1 In general most requests have been accommodated utilising informal procedures, with decisions often being left to the discretion of the officer who has been allocated the request. In most circumstances, customers have purchased new benches, although in some instances they have only purchased plaques to be fitted onto existing benches. This approach, although generally accommodating to the customer, has resulted 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 information.

2.2 Policy

- 2.2.1 This policy recognises the need for a consistent approach to the provision of memorial benches and other structures in public open spaces and cemeteries. As resources available to the Council to provide public services reduce, consideration of the level of infrastructure that can be provided and maintained is required. A rationalisation of the range and quality of infrastructure is also needed to avoid items which are onerous to maintain, have a poor life expectancy or put customers at risk due to their poor construction. In addition, opportunities to provide quality infrastructure for public benefit needs to be maximised.
- 2.2.2 The policy therefore continues to welcome the provision of suitable benches or structures in line with the Council specification and for appropriate locations within the public open spaces and cemeteries that the Council manages. The policy provided in Appendix 1 will ensure that requests for memorial benches and structures are responded to in a consistent, efficient and helpful manner, as well as providing clear definitions regarding responsibility for the bench through its serviceable life.

2.3 Conclusion

- 2.3.1 The policy has been produced with the following guiding principles.
- To be respectful and sympathetic to those seeking to install a memorial bench or structure.
 - To establish responsibility for the maintenance, repair and replacement of memorial benches or structures.
 - To ensure that memorial benches are not out of place in the area in which they are situated.
 - To ensure that the placement of memorial benches is sympathetic to all other users of public open spaces and cemeteries.

- 2.3.2 The policy will ensure that memorial benches or structures are erected which are instigated by the next of kin or executor or appropriate community group and that benches have a common appearance, style and size and will not cause offence to others.

3. Equality and Diversity

- 3.1 Fairer Scotland Duty
There are no unfair aspects contained with this report.
- 3.2 Equality Impact Assessment
There are no adverse impacts on equality or diversity contained within this report.

4. Implications

- 4.1 Financial Impact
Where benches or structures require to be removed due to damage or at the end of the serviceable life the costs will be met from the Environmental Asset Service revenue budget.
- 4.2 HR/Policy/Legislative Impact
No HR/ Policy/ Legislative impacts identified.
- 4.3 Environmental Impact
No Environmental Impacts identified.
- 4.4 Risk Impact
No risk impacts identified.

5. Measures of success

- 5.1 An increase in the number of good quality benches being provided within public open spaces and cemeteries.

6. Supporting documents

- 6.1 Appendix 1 – Memorial bench and structures policy
- 6.2 Appendix 2 – Form of agreement for a Memorial to be placed in a public open space for the natural serviceable life of the bench or structure.



Nicole Paterson
Head of Environmental Assets

APPENDIX 1

Memorial bench and structure policy

Site Selection

1. Only sites which do not already have a sufficient number of benches will be considered. This will be determined by any site specific management plans or the Environmental Asset Service.
2. 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.
3. The location will be chosen to ensure ease of installation, minimise future maintenance and risk of vandalism. Remote locations with poor access will not be considered.
4. In locations where there are 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.

Specification

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. Information on the bench types will be provided by the Environment Asset Service.

Costs

6. The cost will include the bench, plaque, inscription, installation and any required surfacing.
7. The cost and life expectancy of the bench will depend on the type of bench and its location.
8. 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 4 above has been assessed. As the bench has already been provided through public funds, a charge will be incurred. This will be based on the installation costs and serviceable years and calculated as follows.

(Installation cost (£) / serviceable life (years)) x Remaining serviceable life (years)

Payment

9. A standard agreement will be completed by the Council and the customer to ensure all terms and conditions are clearly understood prior to purchase and installation. The agreement will be returned to the Council with payment in advance of the memorial bench being ordered. Appendix 2 of this report shows the standard form of agreement.

Installation

10. 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.

Maintenance

11. The Council will have no responsibility or liability for the maintenance, repair or replacement of any bench purchased under this policy. The applicant(s) will be responsible for keeping the bench fit for purpose and clean. This may involve occasionally removing built up algae and grime, removal of graffiti and repairing minor faults.
12. The range of new benches has been chosen for durability without the need for regular painting or treatment. There is a move away from regular painting as in the long term this results in benches becoming unsightly and results in a negative perception of the environment. Therefore, painting of benches will not be permitted, however appropriate treatment such as oiling of wooden benches will be permitted.
13. The Council reserves the right to remove any memorial benches or structures that have been damaged and are in the view of the Council beyond economical repair. In these circumstances the applicant(s) will be offered the opportunity to provide a new bench or structure in accordance with the procedures set out for a new installation.
14. The Council accepts no responsibility if a memorial bench is damaged, vandalised or stolen. Any damage will be notified to the applicant(s). If the damage has not been repaired within 4 weeks of this notification, the Council may arrange for the removal of the bench.
15. The council will not be responsible for any maintenance or repair. However, if any maintenance is, in the opinion of the Council required, the applicant(s) will be informed and given a period of 4 weeks in which to complete the necessary works. Where the works are not complete within this period, the Council may arrange for the removal of the bench or installation for the safety of the users.

Inspection

16. The Council will undertake a periodic inspection of all benches and reserves the right to remove any bench that is no longer considered safe and fit for purpose. In this event, the applicant(s) will be informed. Any related inscribed plaque will be returned to the applicant(s) or disposed of if contact cannot be made.

Restrictions

17. The council will not grant applications for memorial benches to pets.
18. No additional mementoes e.g. vases, statues, flowers, wreaths, balloons or other ornamentation etc. shall be permitted.

Unauthorised benches

19. Where benches have been placed within public open spaces and cemeteries without completion of the procedures identified within the policy and where they do not meet the council's standards the benches will be removed as soon as practicable, retained for a period of 4 weeks and thereafter the bench will be disposed of.

End of serviceable life

20. Purchase of a memorial bench will be for the expected serviceable life of the bench only, after which time it will be either;

- Removed and the plaque returned to the applicant(s) where practicable.
- Renewal of the bench which would be treated in the same way as a new memorial bench.

Data Protection

21. The Council will keep a record of applicant(s) and their contact details in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations. It is the responsibility of the applicant(s) to advise the Council of changes to the contact details. Failure to do so could lead to the memorial bench being removed without the Council providing any notice.

APPENDIX 2

Form of agreement for a Memorial Bench to be placed in a public open space for the natural serviceable life of the bench.

Memorial Bench Agreement between North Lanarkshire Council and

(name and address)-----

This letter sets out the agreement regarding the purchase of (delete either 1 or 2)

1. A new ----- (type of bench)
2. A memorial plaque to be placed on an existing bench situated at

As shown on the attached plan.

The memorial message will read:

I ----- will pay the sum of £ -----

(delete either 1 or 2)

1. Being the full cost of the installation on site of the bench with plaque.
2. Being the cost of the installation of the plaque and a contribution to the cost of the bench.

The Council will place the bench with plaque in the agreed location within three months of receipt of the payment. Once the bench has reached the end of its serviceable life, the bench and plaque will be removed/ replaced. A request to purchase a new replacement bench can be made at the appropriate time.

The Council cannot guarantee against theft or vandalism and any costs to replace either the bench or plaque will be met by the applicant.

Signed: -----

Date: -----

Contact telephone number: -----

Email: -----

