

# MEMORIAL BENCHES POLICY

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 People have a strong emotional connection to St Ives and dedicated benches, displaying a commemorative plaque, have been installed across the parish for many years. The parish now has over 200 benches, placed at various locations, typically celebrating the life of a loved one. Some popular spots, such as the Island have 36. The Council supports the wishes of families to commemorate their loved ones in this way, but is mindful that these areas are enjoyed by a wide variety of people and they remain, first and foremost, open spaces.
- 1.2 There is no statutory or legal obligation for the Council to offer the commemoration of 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.
- 1.3 This policy sets out the principles and process for managing and administering benches with dedications (and sponsored benches). The aim is to achieve a balance between the demand for commemorative benches and ensuring open spaces are welcoming and managed for the benefit of all.
- 1.4 The term dedicated bench covers all benches with plaques including sponsored, memorial and commemorative benches.

## 2.0 Objectives of the Policy

- 2.1 The Council aims to adopt a clear, measurable and sympathetic approach to the management of all public benches in open spaces, which will take account of the competing demands of service users.
- 2.2 The Council is not seeking to increase the number of dedicated benches, given the existing number in management, and will only consider requests for 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 seeks to ensure that dedicated benches, which are replaced and / or are erected, have a common appearance, style and size.
- 2.5 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 Council is committed to ensuring that assets are as sustainable as possible and to minimising their impact on the environment. This shall be a key consideration in the choice of products and materials used to install, repair and maintain benches.
- 2.7 The Council will endeavour to provide the highest standard of service and customer care.

## 3.0 Service Standards

- 3.1 St Ives Town Council offers a sponsorship service for benches on public land to display a commemorative plaque (or in some cases bench sponsorship).
- 3.2 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 in the St Ives parish to the Town Council. Any enquiries, complaints or questions should, therefore, be directed to the Town Council.
- 3.3 All dedications are subject to a number of policy conditions, which are set out below.
- 3.4 The majority of dedicated benches are historic, with plaques installed by previous Council administrations – Penwith District Council or Cornwall Council. Where these are subject to an active agreement, which has been entered into within the last 10 years, The Town Council shall honour all the terms of the agreement. Historic agreements or more than 10 years cannot be honoured although the Council will use reasonable endeavours to make contact with relatives or sponsors and offer a re-dedication or return of the plaque.

## 4.0 Policy Conditions

- 4.1 All applications for sponsorship of benches must be made on an application form, which can be downloaded from the Council's website or collected from reception and be signed by the applicant.  
<https://stivestowncouncil-cornwall.gov.uk/info-page/public-benches/>

- 4.2 For new or replacement benches, the council has commissioned a marine blue, fully recycled bench in coastal locations, and a forest green, fully recycled bench in park locations. Only these bench designs of the type and colour specified by the Council will be approved at any specific location.
- 4.3 Currently, the Council maintains a waiting list for dedication benches. Applicants are free to request a particular location but will be advised of any current waiting time for popular locations. Specifying only one location may result in a longer wait. Applicants will be offered an alternative, wherever possible. Applicants cannot "reserve" a bench prior to the death of a loved one. As such, no-one can remain on the waiting list longer than two years if they have been offered a bench at a parish location and declined it.
- 4.4 The exact location, in which the bench will be placed, is determined by the Council, and dependent on need and availability. Whilst the Council will try to locate a bench at a requested site, due to the popularity of some locations, this cannot be guaranteed.
- 4.5 The Council will limit the number of commemorative benches in particular areas so that they do not detract from the primary purpose of the open space. Therefore, the size and location of the space shall limit the number permitted. 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 are available.
- 4.6 The applicant will be required to pay the full amount once a bench dedication has been agreed. It is expected that any commemorative bench will have a serviceable life of 10 years. This 10 year 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 is limited to the current 10 year maintenance period for the bench, so that all plaques and maintenance arrangements will end on the same date (but are capable of being 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.
  - In a limited number of circumstances for a specific bench design, the Council may be able to offer a refurbished wooden bench. But this is wholly at the Council's discretion.
- 4.7 The current schedule of fees is appended to the application form. Fees are reviewed annually and the relevant fee in the year of installation will be the fee payable.

## **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 agreement 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 aesthetic appearance alone, an alternative location will be sought in consultation with the sponsor. If an alternative location can not be agreed, the Council will compensate the sponsor with a sum equivalent to 1 tenth of the total donation cost, multiplied by the number of years remaining of the agreement 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, as appropriate. However, the Council is under no obligation to replace the bench and will do so at its discretion.
- 5.4 Under no circumstances will any installation of a bench by a third party 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" x 2". This allows space for approximately 5 lines with 21 - 25 letters, to include spaces, on each line. The plaque will generally be fitted to the centre of the upper most lath of the back of the bench. Any inscription that is deemed to be inappropriate, offensive, or likely to bring the Council into disrepute shall be refused.
- 5.6 Applications for commemorative benches for pets will not be granted.
- 5.7 No additional mementoes 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.
- 5.8 Nothing in the dedicated 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 Sponsorship

6.1 In addition to dedicated benches, the Council operates a sponsorship scheme through which local businesses can sponsor a public bench, in order to assist with its repair and maintenance. Sponsorship opportunities shall only be available for existing benches, which are not subject to an existing dedication agreement. In order to sponsor a bench, businesses must be local to the parish and the following terms shall apply in addition to 5.1, 5.2, 5.3 and 5.7 above: · The agreement will be for a period of 3 years, extendable up to 10. The fee shall be paid at the beginning of the sponsorship agreement. The size, location and wording of the sponsorship plaque shall be agreed by the Council, and will be in keeping, proportionate in scale and respect the location and setting of the bench. No corporate branding will be permitted.

## 7.0 The End of the Dedication Period

7.1 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 then be made available for rededication by another sponsor.

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

7.3 The sponsor can also opt for a re-dedication of a plaque with a new bench in 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.

7.4 It is essential that sponsors ensure that 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. The bench will either then be replaced or rededicated with a new memorial plaque.

7.5 Any plaque from removed benches will be retained by the Council for a year, for the sponsor to collect. After this time, the Council will relocate it to a suitable location.

## 8.0 Historic Agreements

8.1 For those benches that have been sponsored prior to September 2021 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 customer must be able to provide written evidence of an existing bench maintenance agreement, should they wish to challenge to the Council's decision.

## 9.0 Review

9.1 The policy, approved bench designs and fees and charges shall be reviewed annually.

## 10.0 Fees and Charges for 2026 - 27

| 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 St Ives Bespoke recycled bench in marine blue, including a single plaque. | Charge for a refurbished wooden bench including a single new plaque |
|--------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Net                            | £110.00   | £1,995.00   | £1095.00  |
| VAT                            | £30.00  | £399.00   | £219.00   |
| Total payable upon application | £130.00   | £2,394.00   | £1,314.00   |