

Memorial/Commemorative & Public Bench Policy

1. Scope

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure there is a clear and sustainable approach to the management of the Town Council's memorial and public benches for the mutual benefit of all. This policy will be reviewed as necessary to meet changing circumstances.
- 1.2 The East Grinstead Town Council (EGTC) recognises that the provision of memorial benches within the East Grinstead Parish provides a useful and valued public amenity to a wide range of people.
- 1.3 This policy applies to all memorial and public benches on East Grinstead Town Council and West Sussex County Council Land (WSSCC) only. Requests made in relation to benches on WSSCC land will require the formal approval of the landowner. Memorial and public benches sited on Mid Sussex District Council land are owned and managed by the District Council.

2. Applications for New Memorial Benches

- 2.1 New applications for memorial benches will not be considered in the High Street or the McIndoe Lawn due to a lack of suitable space. The Council is unable to hold a waiting list of donors.
- 2.2 New applications for memorial benches not on land owned by the Town Council are considered if a suitable space can be agreed with the landowner's permission.
- 2.3 When a space becomes available following the removal of an existing memorial bench, it will not automatically be made available for a new donation. A replacement bench will be considered by the Estate Manager in consultation with the Town Clerk on a case-by-case basis; the following factors are considered:
 - a) Location: Is the location a natural stopping point, does it enhance the areas seating provision.
 - b) Accessibility: Is access for installation and maintenance suitable and can it be easily accessed and used by the public.
 - c) Ambience: Do the number of benches compromise the enjoyment of the space for general recreational activities.
 - d) Vandalism & Anti-Social Behaviour: Have there been issues of crime and anti-social behaviour with the previous bench and/or surrounding location.
 - e) Purpose: Is the proposed memorial dedicated to a resident or former resident of the Town, or a person with a demonstrable link of public interest.
- 2.4 The policy will be shared with the applicant at the point of the enquiry.

3. Management Plan of Existing Wooden Benches

- 3.1 EGTC monitors and maintains a large number of wooden memorial and public benches that have been purchase or donated over the years and placed around the Town, East Court and Mt Noddy Cemetery.
- 3.2 Benches on Mid Sussex District Council land are not included in the EGTC program of maintenance.
- 3.3 East Grinstead Town Council respects the significance that memorial benches hold for the loved ones of the decease. This policy seeks to sympathetically address ongoing maintenance when it is no longer economical, whilst navigating issues with historical records during the associated timespan.

- 3.3 It is accepted that a wooden memorial bench could be expected to have a serviceable lifespan of 10 years. Existing wooden memorial benches range between approx. 10 to 40 years old.
- 3.4 From 2023, EGTC will cease its ongoing maintenance of wooden benches. Cleaning, graffiti removal and varnishing and monitoring for signs of deterioration with may impact safety will continue to be undertaken.
- 3.5 Where the Estate Manager, in consultation with the relevant staff members, considers the condition of a bench to be either a) a health and safety risk, or b) in such a poor state of repair so as to have a negative effect on its surroundings the Council where possible will notify the original donor to discuss a more sustainable option. Where safety concerns are so great as to require the bench's immediate removal, donors will if possible be contacted after the event.
- 3.6 Where attempts to contact the donor fail, or where the donor fails to respond within 4 weeks of being notified, the Council may, in its discretion, remove the memorial bench and dispose of it. No further attempts to contact the donor will be made. In acknowledgement of issues with historical records relating to the recording of a memorial bench donor's information, the "space" left by any wooden memorial bench removed will not be offered to a new donor for at least 4 weeks after its removal.
- 3.7 Where, the donor does not wish to meet the replacement costs but wishes to keep the memorial bench the donor must make the necessary arrangements if they wish to collect. The Council will store the memorial bench for a maximum of an additional 4 weeks only, the Council may, at its discretion then dispose of it.

4. Replacement Benches – Terms and Conditions

- 4.1 All applications for replacement memorial benches must be completed using the official request form and be signed by the Donor.
- 4.2 A donation sum is payable upon approval of the submitted application form and will include:
- a) the cost of the bench and memorial plaque
 - b) the cost of any fixings and installation
 - c) an administration fee and maintenance fee for the duration of the life of the bench
 - d) current fees can be found on the application form
- 4.3 The purchase of the bench and its installation will be undertaken by Town Council employees. Once installed, the memorial bench will become the property of the Town Council.
- 4.4 New memorial benches must be made of recycled material resembling wood. For consistency they must be of a single design which also compliments any wooden benches which remain.
- 4.5 It is expected that a memorial bench of recycled material will have a serviceable life of at least 15 years. After this period the Town Council will contact the donors of the bench to ascertain the future of the bench.
- 4.6 The Council's standards of maintenance will be accepted as keeping the bench fit for purpose and clean. This will involve routine inspection, the occasional removal of any build-up of grime, the removal of graffiti (where possible).
- 4.7 The East Grinstead Town Council accepts no liability for damage to any memorial bench from vandals or third parties.
- 4.8 New public seats will also be made of either recycled material resembling wood or metal.

5. Memorial Plaques

- 5.1 Memorial bench donations will be recognised by way of one memorial plaque only fixed in the centre of the uppermost slat of the back of the bench.
- 5.2 For consistency, memorial plaques shall be 150mm wide x 75mm high, they will have 4 fixing holes and black infill lettering. A maximum of 3 lines of engraved lettering will be permitted and the Council reserves the right to reject any wording that is deemed inappropriate for the public amenity setting of the bench.
- 5.3 The Town Council accepts no liability for damage to any memorial bench plaque from general weathering, vandals or third parties.
- 5.4 Applications for a replacement memorial plaque should be made in writing to the Community Services Team by the original bench donor. A family member is permitted to request the addition of the original bench donor's name to a memorial plaque in the event of their passing. The cost of a replacement plaque is the responsibility of the applicant.
- 5.7 Memorial benches are provided for the mutual benefit and enjoyment of all. As such no additional vases, statues, flowers, wreaths, balloons, cards, other ornamentation, or additional memorial plaques shall be permitted on or at bench locations. Any such items found will be removed and disposed of by the Council without reference to the donor.

6. Donor Records

- 6.1 The Council will maintain a record of each donation and the donor's contact details in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations. It is the responsibility of the donor/family to provide the Town Clerk with updated details in writing. Failure to do so could lead to the bench being removed without the donor/family being notified.