



## **Policy for Provision of Memorial Benches in Public Open Spaces**

Lancaster City Council will facilitate the purchase and placement of memorial benches in public open spaces owned or managed by the Council including parks, countryside sites and streets on request, where appropriate opportunities exist.

### **Introduction**

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, although it is accepted that they provide a useful and valued public amenity. The provision and management of all seats and benches on all public open spaces owned or managed by the Council is the responsibility of the Public Realm department.

This policy covers the provision of memorial benches in public open space which includes areas such as parks, promenade, countryside sites and streets. Memorial benches within cemeteries are also managed by Public Realm. These are covered by a separate policy due to the particularly sensitive management arrangements covering these areas.

This policy recognises the need for a consistent approach to the provision of memorial benches in public open spaces. A rationalisation of the range and quality of infrastructure is needed to avoid items which are onerous to maintain or have a poor life expectancy. In addition, opportunities to provide infrastructure for public benefit in different and new ways need to be maximised. The policy therefore continues to welcome donations of suitable benches for appropriate locations in the public open spaces the Council manages.

The operating principles below will ensure that requests for memorial benches are responded to in a consistent, efficient and helpful manner. It will result in appropriate bench styles being purchased and installed in appropriate locations to ensure they are easy to maintain and not unduly prone to vandalism.

### **Operating principles:**

1. Only sites which do not already have a sufficient number of benches will be considered. This will be determined by the Public Realm Supervisor for Parks and Open Spaces, Asset Management Officer or any site-specific management staff.
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. In addition, the location will be chosen to minimise future maintenance and vandalism. Remote locations with poor access for maintenance and users will not be considered.
3. In locations where there will be 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.

4. 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.
5. Occasionally a unique rather than standard bench design may be requested as a memorial. In these circumstances, details of the bench construction, materials and specifications will need to be submitted to Public Realm for approval. On approval the bench would then be supplied to Public Realm for installation in an agreed location. There is no guarantee that damage could be repaired, and any costly repairs would be at the discretion of the owner.
6. Purchase of a memorial bench will be for the life period of the bench only, after which time it will be removed. The cost will include the bench, plaque, inscription, installation and surfacing. The benches should require minimal maintenance, therefore 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. The cost does not cover any repairs should the bench be damaged or vandalised. Should the bench become unsafe it will be removed. You would then be informed and given the options to pay for any repairs of a new bench if applicable. Any replacement would be treated in the same way as a new memorial bench. 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.
7. 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 3 above has been assessed. The design of the plaque will be within guidelines set by the Public Realm and the cost of producing the plaque and installation cost will lie with the applicant. This will accommodate the customer's wishes and ensure a fair contribution is made towards the provision of the bench as a personal memorial. The funds raised will be used for the repair or provision of other public benches. The same conditions on life expectancy and maintenance will apply to any existing benches as apply to new benches.
8. The Council's standards of maintenance will be accepted as keeping the bench fit for purpose and clean. This will involve occasionally removing built up algae and grime, removal of graffiti and repairing minor faults within resources available. There is a move away from regular painting as in the long term this proves more costly than just replacing the bench when it has reached the end of its natural life. The range of new benches has been chosen for durability without the need for regular painting or treatment.
9. A standard written letter of agreement will be sent by the Council to the customer to ensure all terms and conditions are clearly understood prior to purchase. Payment will be taken in advance.
10. When corporate policy deems that there is a cessation on the placing of memorial benches, applicants will be added to a waiting list. This list is based on a 'first come, first serve' basis. If a memorial bench falls into disrepair or is damaged beyond repair, the owners will be contacted. If they cannot be contacted, then the bench will be removed, and the plaque held by the Public Realm team. After three months, if the owner has not been able to have been contacted or have not responded, the first available applicant on the waiting list will be given the option of that location. If they don't want to proceed then it will go to the next person on the list and so forth.
11. Please do not place any decorations such as flowers or wreaths etc or they will be removed so that people can sit on the bench.

## **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 is in place.

1. Customer enquiries coming to the Customer Service Centre are directed to the website to view the policy and enquire by email to [publicrealm@lancaster.gov.uk](mailto:publicrealm@lancaster.gov.uk)
2. The allocated officer considers the requested location for the bench and decides, by applying the operating principles, whether a memorial bench is appropriate in this location. If the requested location is not suitable, the nearest alternative location will be offered if possible. At this moment in time we are not able to take requests for Happy Mount Park or Morecambe Promenade.
3. Bench styles will be at the discretion of the Council for each specific site.
4. The allocated officer contacts the customer to confirm or discuss the details by phone / email.
5. On agreement, a standard agreement letter is sent to the customer to confirm arrangements and request payment via card.
6. When payment is received, the allocated officer orders the purchase and installation of the memorial bench, for completion within 2 months of receipt of payment where achievable.
7. The allocated officer ensures the work has been carried out as specified, photographs the bench, and ensures all information is recorded on GIS and in the Asset Management system for future reference.
8. The allocated officer ensures a letter and photograph are sent by post or email to the customer to notify them that the bench is in place.