

Sponsorship of Commemorative Benches Policy – East Suffolk Council

Version 5 18 July 25

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Memorial seats displaying a commemorative plaque may be sponsored by families wishing to celebrate the life of a loved one and placed at various locations in East Suffolk. However, the Council is mindful that the areas where these commemorative benches can be placed are enjoyed by a wide range of people and so need to ensure that the service is managed and regulated for the benefit of all.
- 1.2. The term ‘commemorative bench’ also applies to ‘memorial bench’.

2. Objectives of the Policy

- 2.1. The Council is seeking to ensure it is adopting a clear, measurable and sympathetic approach to the management of its assets in open spaces, which will take account of the sometimes-contrasting needs of a variety of facility users.
- 2.2. The policy will ensure that commemorative benches are erected which have a common appearance, style and size and will not cause offence to others.
- 2.3. The policy will establish responsibility for maintenance, repair and replacement.
- 2.4. The Council through the policy will endeavour to always offer the highest standard of service in undertaking its management and regulatory responsibility.
- 2.5. It is the intention that the policy only covers broad common issues and is not meant to be exhaustive. The policy will be reviewed at least every three years.
- 2.6. The content of this policy will be revised as necessary to meet the changing circumstances, fashion and trends in respect of commemorative benches.
- 2.7. This policy supersedes all previous arrangements, policies and agreements and applies to all commemorative benches on East Suffolk Council land.
- 2.8. This policy will be made available to the public and all applicants for commemorative benches on Council land will be issued with a copy.

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3. Service

- 3.1. East Suffolk Council offers a sponsorship service for a bench on Council Land to display a commemorative plaque.
- 3.2. Up to two more additional plaques can be ordered to display on a sponsored bench, by the sponsor within the ten-year period. This will occur a charge. No additional plaques can be added to a sponsored bench without the permission of the sponsor.
- 3.3. The placing and maintenance of commemorative benches on Council land is undertaken by the Council's partner, East Suffolk Services Limited (ESSL). ESSL are responsible for the service in its entirety, operating within the policy guidelines. Any reference to 'The Council' in this policy includes its operating partner ESSL.
- 3.4. Currently the towns of Beccles, Bungay and Southwold administer their own scheme, including on East Suffolk Council land.

4. Conditions

- 4.1. All applications for sponsorship of commemorative benches should be completed on the official application form and be signed by the applicant. This is available through the My Service area of the East Suffolk Council website [https://my.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/service/Cemeteries and memorial benches](https://my.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/service/Cemeteries_and_memorial_benches) or a copy can be emailed to you.
- 4.2. Benches provided will be of the type and colour specified by the Council to be in keeping with the intended location.
- 4.3. Applicants can request a particular location – details of the Council's land ownership can be found at https://maps.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/land_ownership.html
- 4.4. The exact location in which the bench will be placed is determined by the Council, dependant 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.

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- 4.5. The Council will limit the number of commemorative benches in particular areas so that they shall not detract from the prime 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, and sponsorship will only apply to the replacement of end-of-life benches on existing sites.
- 4.6. This service is offered on a first come, first served basis for location preference. An application can take up to 12 months to process, depending on demand and the location preferred. Benches are ordered from the manufacturer in batches and normally only one batch order is placed per year, unless demand is particularly high.
- 4.7. The applicant will be required to pay the full amount on installation of the bench or plaque. An invoice will be generated. As noted in 4.6, the installation process may take up to 12 months. A maintenance fee for a 10 year period is also included in the fee.
- 4.8. 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.
- 4.9. After a period of 10 years, the Council will endeavour to contact the sponsor to ascertain whether:
- 4.9.1. The sponsor requires removal and the return of any plaque to the sponsor. The bench, if still in good repair, can be made available for rededication by another sponsor.
- 4.9.2. The sponsor can reapply for a new seat and plaque in the same location, or families may wish to pay for a further period of sponsorship (5 years) for the plaque only, if the bench is still in an acceptable condition.
- 4.10. Should contact details not be available, after this period the Council may remove the bench or allow other memorial plaques to be placed on it. Any plaques from removed benches will be retained by the Council for a year, for the sponsor to collect.

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- 4.11. The applicant should therefore ensure that the Council is in possession of current contact details. These will be kept in accordance with prevailing data protection legislation and be used only for the purposes of the service.
- 4.12. The sponsor may contact the Council to seek an extension to the sponsorship one year before the 10 year period is up.
- 4.13. Benches remain at all times the property of the Council.
- 4.14. For those benches that have been sponsored prior to October 2020, the Council reserves the right to replace benches that have been in situ for more than 15 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, otherwise Condition 4.10 will apply.
- 4.15. Should a bench or plinth become damaged or unsafe through general wear and tear during the 10 year period, the Council will arrange for repair or replacement, as appropriate.
- 4.16. The Council cannot guarantee the long-term safety or security of the bench and, in the event that the bench or plaque is stolen or damaged through vandalism, the Council shall not be responsible for providing a replacement.
- 4.17. In some locations, a bench may be temporarily covered, blocked or fenced off if there is development in that area or, in the case of beachfront locations, beach huts are moved onto the Promenade due to winter housing or emergency works.
- 4.18. The Council accepts no replacement liability for the plaque or the bench at the end of its useful life (10 years).
- 4.19. 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.
- 4.20. Commemorative plaques fitted to benches are 100mm x 50mm (4" x 2"). This allows space for approximately 4 lines with 22 letters, to include spaces, on each

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line. The plaque will generally be fitted to the centre of the upper most lath of the back of the bench.

- 4.21. In cemeteries, wording must be “Donated to commemorate the life of” and not “In Loving Memory”.
- 4.22. Applications for commemorative benches for pets will not be granted.
- 4.23. No additional mementoes e.g. vases, statues, flowers, wreaths, balloons or other ornamentation etc., shall be permitted on or around the bench. If found, these will be removed without prior notice. The bench should be accessible to be sat on at all times.
- 4.24. It should be noted and accepted that any person may sit on any bench on the Council’s land.