

Memorial Bench, Tree and Plaques Policy 2026

Date reviewed: July 2026

Next review: July 2029

1. Purpose and Objectives

1.1 The Town Council recognises that memorial benches, memorial trees and commemorative plaques can provide a lasting tribute to individuals, groups or significant events whilst also contributing to the character, amenity and environmental value of public open spaces. When appropriately located and managed, memorials can provide places for reflection and enhance the enjoyment of public spaces for the wider community.

1.2 The Town Council owns and manages a range of public open spaces and community assets for the benefit of residents and visitors. These spaces must be managed in a manner that balances the wishes of those seeking to commemorate loved ones with the Council's wider responsibilities for public safety, accessibility, environmental management, future development, maintenance and the equitable use of public land.

1.3 The purpose of this policy is to establish a fair, transparent and consistent framework for considering requests for memorial benches, memorial trees and commemorative plaques on land owned or managed by the Town Council. It sets out the principles, criteria and procedures that will be applied when determining applications and explains the respective responsibilities of applicants and the Town Council throughout the lifetime of a memorial.

1.4 The Town Council is committed to considering all applications sympathetically and on their individual merits. However, the provision of memorials is a discretionary service and approval is not automatic. All decisions will be made having regard to the Council's statutory responsibilities, the long-term management of its assets, the interests of the wider community and the availability of suitable locations.

2. Scope of the Policy

2.1 This policy is designed to provide careful management and regulation of memorial bench, tree or plaque requests to ensure consistency in approach and fairness to requestors. Periodic review of this document will ensure relevance as well as changing circumstances and opportunities.

2.3 This policy sets out the principles; eligibility criteria; application and approval process; installation; future maintenance/upkeep and renewal/removal arrangements for such memorials on land/property owned or managed by the Town Council, clearly defining roles; responsibilities and expectations of both donor and council.

The policy applies to:

- Members of the public wishing to commemorate an individual, group or significant event.
- Applicants, sponsors or donors requesting the installation of a memorial bench, tree or plaque on an existing council owned/maintained bench/property.
- Employees, councillors (where applicable), contractors and volunteers involved in assessing applications, installing, maintaining or managing memorials.

- Land, parks, open spaces, cemeteries, allotments/gardens and other locations owned or managed by the organisation where memorials may be permitted.

The policy covers:

- Memorial benches.
- Memorial trees.
- Memorial plaques attached to approved benches or other authorised locations.
- Eligibility and assessment criteria.
- Approved locations and design standards.
- Responsibilities for installation, inspection and maintenance.
- Ownership and lifespan of memorial items.
- Renewal, replacement, relocation and removal of memorials.
- Fees, donations and administration.

The policy does not cover:

- Memorials on privately owned land.
- Temporary memorials such as flowers, candles, balloons or other tributes.
- Memorials in buildings or facilities governed by separate procedures.
- War memorials.

Nothing within this policy prevents the Town Council from redeveloping, redesigning or altering any land or facility in the future where this is considered necessary in the wider public interest.

3. Legal Framework

3.1 Whilst there is no statutory requirement in England for a town or parish council to provide memorial benches, memorial trees or commemorative plaques, A parish or town council may choose to provide and maintain benches, trees and other amenities as part of its wider powers to manage parks, open spaces and recreational land subject to available locations, resources and the terms of this policy. The provision and management of all benches/trees/plaques in public open spaces owned/managed by Town Council is the responsibility of the Town Council.

Councils generally rely on their existing statutory powers, such as:

- **Local Government Act 1972** – provides various powers relating to land, public amenities and local government functions.
- **Open Spaces Act 1906** – enables councils to acquire and manage open spaces and provide amenities within them.
- **Local Government Act 1972, section 214** – gives parish councils powers relating to burial grounds and associated memorials in that context, but it does not require memorial benches or trees in parks or open spaces.
- **Localism Act 2011 sections 1–8** – Provides General Power of Competence for councils meeting the eligibility criteria. This gives an eligible council "the power to do anything that individuals generally may do", unless another law prohibits it.

3.2 Other legislation pertaining to memorial benches, trees and plaques:

- **Crime and Disorder Act 1998** – Town Council must consider the effect of its decisions on crime and disorder and therefore may deem a location unsuitable if potential to attract anti-social behaviour exists through historic or current knowledge regarding an area.
- **Equality Act 2010**
- **Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR** (for applicant information)

- **Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974** (installations and maintenance).

3.3 In most cases planting trees or installing benches will not require planning permission, restrictive covenants or other restrictions. Should a tree or bench require these, Town Council may refuse the application or in extenuating circumstances may request the applicant to pay for and apply for permission from the relevant authority.

3.4 Town Council are only able to approve memorial benches, trees and plaques on Town Council owned land as planting of trees or installation of benches is a private arrangement between the applicant(s) and Town Council. Support may be given by the Town Council to applications to the Highways Authority (Central Bedfordshire Council) for benches/trees on the public highway, although permission can only be granted by Central Bedfordshire Council as the Highways Authority.

3.5 Successful applicants are responsible for the purchase of approved benches/trees/plaques and must donate the memorial item(s) to the Town Council. Once donated the item is officially the property of the Town Council with no rights for determining future maintenance retained by the applicant/donor. Town Council will undertake to inspect, maintain and preserve the item in accordance with existing inspection and maintenance schedules relating to its similar assets.

4 Guiding Principles

- Memorials are provided at the absolute discretion of the Town Council and there is no automatic entitlement to a memorial.
- Approval of one application does not create a precedent.
- The needs of the wider community and safe management of public spaces will take precedence over individual memorial requests.
- Memorials become Town Council assets upon installation.
- The Council reserves the right to relocate, replace or remove memorials where operational, safety, environmental or legal considerations require.

5. Policy Statement

5.1 Eligibility Criteria

Applications may be submitted by:

- an individual;
- family member(s);
- friends acting with the support of the family;
- community organisations;
- charities;
- local schools;
- businesses (where appropriate); or
- any other person or organisation with a legitimate interest in commemorating the individual, group or event.

Applicants may be required to demonstrate their connection to the person or event being commemorated.

5.2 Who may be commemorated?

The Council will normally consider applications commemorating:

- former or current residents of the parish;
- individuals with a significant connection to the parish;
- persons who have made an exceptional contribution to the local community;
- local organisations or community groups;
- significant local historical events; or
- nationally significant events where there is a clear connection to the parish.

The Council reserves the right to consider exceptional circumstances on their individual merits.

5.3 Is there a required connection to the parish?

The Council will normally expect at least one of the following:

- residence within the parish;
- previous residence;
- close family connection;
- long-term employment;
- significant voluntary service;
- exceptional contribution to parish life.

5.4 Determining Requests

5.4.1 Applications/enquiries regarding a memorial bench, tree and/or plaque should be submitted to the Clerk: clerk@arlesey-tc.go.uk or telephone 01462 733722. All requests will be formally considered by the Town Council. Applications will be considered fairly and consistently without unlawful discrimination.

5.4.2 Town Council will strive to accommodate suitable/reasonable requests for tree planting or bench installation on Town Council owned/managed property. Identified risk of vandalism, anti-social behaviour, over population of benches/trees or other material factors may prevent application permission being granted.

5.4.3 The exact location and orientation of the bench/tree will be agreed between the applicant and Town Council during a site visit consisting both parties. The applicant retains responsibility for informing council in writing of the exact location and specific details such as orientation using phone apps to pinpoint location or via photographs depicting the site. Cemetery locations will be under the strict control of the Town Council to ensure location does not compromise future interments/layout and is in-keeping with the overall aesthetic and layout of it's design. Permission may be granted to replace an existing bench which is in poor condition/requires removal with the donor meeting all costs.

5.4.4 Requests will be included on an Agenda for Council consideration and therefore provide opportunity for resident (s) to comment. Council may take into account representations received where these relate to planning, operational, environmental or community considerations. Town Council reserves the right to refuse an application for a memorial if it has grounds to believe public upset would result or it would be contrary to the wishes of the commemorated individuals' next of kin.

5.4.5 All approved benches must be of recycled plastic construction, with 25year guarantee, **brown in colour** and complete with suitable ground fixings appropriate for the surface installed upon.

5.4.6 Bench plaques will be stainless steel, 150mm wide, 75mm height, 3mm thick. up to 4 lines along with 32 characters per line (including spaces).

5.4.7 Plaques will not be permitted on trees, however a recycled plastic stake with a stainless-steel plaque no larger than 150mm wide and 75mm high, may be placed in the ground a suitable distance in front of the tree in the cemetery grounds. Plaques for trees in other public places pose higher risk of vandalism/removal and are therefore not supported.

Suitable plaques are available from:

[Memorial Plaque - Marmax Recycled Plastic Products UK](#)

5.4.8 All inscription for any plaque must be approved by the Clerk prior to purchase, with the Town Council reserving the right to refuse any inscription deemed offensive or inappropriate.

5.4.9 When a bench is installed and becomes the property of the Town Council it will be considered with other benches, for subsequent applications to affix additional commemorative plaques in memory of other individuals should no suitable alternative be available or overpopulation of benches prevents additional bench donations. A maximum of 3 commemorative plaques will be permitted on each bench.

5.4.10 Plaque only purchases. Where only a plaque is purchased to be affixed to an existing council owned bench/arbour/asset plaques must still meet the defined specifications of stainless steel, 150mm wide, 75mm height, 3mm thick. up to 4 lines along with 32 characters per line (including spaces) and a one off installation fee of £15 will be payable in addition to purchase cost (approval of wording is required in line with bench/tree plaques).

Design for the **cemetery** must be:



Available from: [Costcutters UK.com Marmax Traditional Recycled Plastic Outdoor Park Bench](#)

Commemorative plaque purchased via the same supplier and fitted prior to delivery. Plaque Dimensions: 150mm wide, 75mm height, 3mm thick. **up to 4 lines along with 32 characters per line (including spaces).**

Design for the **Recreation Ground** must be:



Available from: [Woodberry Recycled Plastic Bench steel re-enforced](#)

Plaque not available from supplier. Plaque dimensions permitted: 150mm wide, 75mm height, 3mm thick. **up to 4 lines along with 32 characters per line (including spaces).**

Design for the **allotments** must be:



Available from: [Costcutters UK.com Marmax Traditional Recycled Plastic Outdoor Park Bench](#)

Commemorative plaque purchased via the same supplier and fitted prior to delivery. Plaque Dimensions: 150mm wide, 75mm height, 3mm thick. **up to 4 lines along with 32 characters per line (including spaces).**

5.4.10 The Town Council does not accept any liability for any damage or loss that may occur if a memorial is damaged, vandalised or stolen.

5.4.11 Trees should where possible be native species, approval of these tree species will be most widely supported.

5.4.12 Consideration of potential tree height and canopy coverage will be a strong consideration in determining availability of space, along with soil type and suitability to provide greatest potential for survival.

6. Fees and costs

6.1 Costs for a bench/tree/plaque will be a complete fee (exclusive of VAT) which includes delivery, inspection, planting/installation costs (eg: ground fixings and installation of hard surface if required, tree guards and stakes etc) and is payable by the donor.

6.2 A one off admin fee of 10% of the total purchase and installation costs will be payable in addition to purchase costs to cover ongoing safety inspections, maintenance or cleaning costs for the bench/tree.

6.3 Ordering and installing the bench/tree will be arranged by the Town Council once all details have been confirmed between all parties involved and upon receipt of full payment including the 10% charge.

6.4 Bench installation and tree planting

6.4.1 Tree planting will only be carried out between November and March to ensure greatest survival rate and in line with the recommended tree planting season.

6.4.2 The applicant will be advised of any agreed installation/ planting date once arrangements are in place, however council reserves the right to alter the set date should staff availability, weather conditions etc require it.

6.4.3 Bench installation and tree planting will generally be carried out by council staff, although some occasions may require an external contractor (additional fees apply)

6.4.3 A small group are permitted to attend a tree planting and conduct a small ceremony if requested prior to planting.

6.4.4 Scattering of ashes is currently prohibited within the Town Council cemetery and public open spaces including around memorial trees and this includes living burials, tree pod burials or eco burials whereby ashes are encapsulated in a pod beneath the tree root to aid tree growth.

7. Maintenance and Safety Inspections

7.1 Approved benches have a 25year guarantee but still require safety inspection and cleaning as located in the public realm and Town Council assets.

7.2 Town Council reserves the right to remove and dispose of damaged, vandalised or unsafe benches over 5years old. If replacement is not available under the Town Councils insurance policy, the dedicating family/applicant will be contacted (correct/updated contact information permitting) and will be given the option to provide a replacement, or the location will be made available for siting a bench dedicated to another individual. If Town Council has not been provided with up-to-date contact information and the family/dedicator is uncontactable, the Town Council will take action deemed appropriate for bench removal.

7.3 Donors should be mindful that benches and trees in public areas may be subject to vandalism and the Town Council will not be held liable for costs to replace damaged/vandalised items.

7.4 No additional adornments are permitted around a memorial tree or bench this includes vases, flowers or ornaments etc) Any such items will be removed and stored by the Town Council until the family/dedicator can be contacted to collect the items. Items will be stored for 12 weeks after

which time if contact cannot be made or collection has not been carried out, Town Council reserve the right to dispose of the items.

7.5 On transfer of ownership of a tree/bench/plaque, Town Council will accept to undertake insurance, maintenance and care/upkeep benches/trees and plaques including tree maintenance to ensure the health of a tree where possible. This will be absorbed into the routine schedule of works of the Town Council. Should a tree die within the first 12 months of planting, the Town Council will undertake responsibility to replace the tree, however after one year an application will be required to replace with another memorial tree, following the Memorial Tree, Bench and Plaque policy procedure.

7.6 Town Council reserves the right to, at any time, re-site or remove any tree or bench deemed unsafe, unrepairable or for any other reason.

8. Records and Registers

8.1 The Town Council will retain a list of memorial benches, trees and plaques including locations, dedicatees and donor name(s) and contact information. Information will be stored in line with councils Data Protection Policy which conforms with UK GDPR Regulations and Data Protection Act 2018.

8.2 It is the responsibility of the donor to ensure contact details held are kept updated, informing the Town Clerk of changes by emailing clerk@arlesey-tc.gov.uk or by post to: Town Clerk, Arlesey Town Council, Community Centre, High Street, Arlesey, Beds, SG15 6SN. Failure to provide accurate, current contact details could lead to removal of memorials without prior warning being possible.

9. Appeals

There is no right of appeal. However, applicants may request that the Council reconsider a decision where significant new information becomes available.

Date of Consideration: 21st July 2026

Date adopted.....

Date for next review: July 2029