



Flitwick Town Council
Memorial Benches and Trees Policy

Overview

Flitwick Town Council applies this bench and tree policy to standardise the provision of memorial benches and trees. The policy specifies recycled 'plastic wood' benches with a 25-year guarantee and 'natural hardwood' benches with a 10-year guarantee and sets out an approach for replacing trees that are lost. Together, these measures support sustainability and help nurture the local environment.

Introduction

Flitwick Town Council receive requests from residents who wish to place memorials within a public open space or park. When loved ones die, their friends and relatives may want to commemorate them with a lasting memorial. Often this will be in the form of a bench or a tree which not only honours their memory but provides a functional improvement to the local environment.

This policy sets out how we approve requests for memorial benches and trees, who is responsible for their upkeep, what is expected from the Council and the donor and what happens when the bench or tree reaches end of life.

What is covered by the policy

This policy covers any memorial bench or tree placed on Flitwick Town Council owned land or property. The policy is relevant to any resident who has commissioned or is thinking about commissioning a memorial bench or tree.

Legal

The planting of memorial trees or installation of memorial benches on land as memorials, is a private arrangement between the donor and the landowner (Flitwick Town Council). As such the Council can only approve memorials on Town Council owned land. The Council can support applications for benches or trees to be installed or planted on the public highway, but permission is required from Central Bedfordshire Council.

Normally, installing benches and trees will not be subject to planning permission, restrictive covenants or other restrictions. However, there may be cases where the Council is unable to install benches for these reasons.

Under the Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the Council must consider the effect of its decisions on crime and disorder. The Council may consider a location unsuitable if it may attract antisocial behaviour.

When the Council approves an installation, they are purchased by the applicant and donated to the Council. The tree or bench then become the property of the Council, and the donor does not retain any right to determine its future management.

The Council will ensure the memorial is properly maintained and cared for. The applicant agrees to provide the Council with up-to-date contact details so the donor can be notified.

Application Procedure

Requests for a memorial bench or tree should be made by email – info@flitwick.gov.uk to the Town Clerk. The Council will endeavour to accommodate any reasonable requests for the installation of memorial benches or planting of memorial trees on Council owned land and property only. Requests may not be approved if the location is deemed unsuitable due to over population of trees or benches, risk of vandalism and anti-social behaviour, or other material factors. Only trees suitable, in-keeping to the immediate surrounds and bench from the Council's approved list will be considered.

1. Initial enquiry emailed to info@flitwick.gov.uk
2. Applicant directed to www.flitwick.gov.uk to view the policy and download and application form. This information can be posted or emailed by request.
3. The applicant will complete the application form specifying all requested information. The request will be considered by the Clerk.
4. Should the specific location of the memorial not be clear, a site visit will be arranged. If the requested location is not suitable, alternatives may be offered.
5. A full quotation will be sent to the applicant in line with the specifics along with a plaque proof, if applicable.
6. On agreement, an email will be sent to the applicant to confirm arrangements and request payment in full.
7. When payment is received, the Council will place the order for the memorial.
8. Delivery and installation of the memorial have a completion target of two months from receipt of payment (subject to suppliers lead times).
9. The applicant will be informed by email with a photograph of the memorial to confirm the memorial is in place.

From this point the ownership of the memorial is with the Town Council. An allocated Officer will ensure that all the work has been carried out as specified, photographs of the memorial and ensures all information is recorded in the asset register for future reference.

Costs

The cost of the tree or bench will include any plaques/inscription, delivery, and planting/installation costs (e.g.; fixings, tree guard, paving or base around the bench).

Operating Principles

1. Only sites which do not already have enough benches will be considered. This will be determined by any site-specific management plans or by any Committee with this designated responsibility.
2. Suitable locations within the Town 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 maintenance and possible vandalism. Remote locations with poor access for maintenance and users will not be considered.
3. 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.

4. 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 the Town Council for approval. On approval the bench would then be supplied to Town Council for installation in an agreed location. There is no guarantee that damage could be repaired, and any costly repairs would be at the discretion and cost of the original applicant.

5. The cost and life expectancy of the bench will depend on the type of bench and its location. 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. The applicant's costs will include the bench, plaque, inscription, installation & surfacing, and, as the benches should require minimal maintenance, there will be a moderate 10 year 'up front' charge for this, included in the initial purchase price.

6. Retention of a memorial bench will be for the expected life period of the bench only, after which time it may be removed. Removed plaques will be offered to the original applicant where practical. Any replacement bench on that site would be treated in the same way as a new memorial bench.

7. 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.

Installing/Planting

The arrangements for ordering and installing the bench or tree will be made directly by the Town Council once a specification has been agreed with the donor and once financial donation has been received by the Council.

Benches can be installed at any time of the year and will be installed by the Council's Public Realm Team.

Tree planting will usually only be permitted between late autumn and early spring, in line with tree planting season and will be planted by the Council's Public Realm Team.

By prior arrangement, donors are welcome to be present at the tree planting and/or bench installation.

Plaques

Commemorative plaques can be affixed to a memorial bench or placed next to a memorial tree, subject to agreeing the sizing, wording and specification with the Council.

Plaques may be subject to vandalism, and any replacement costs will need to be met by the donor.

A plaque proof will be emailed to the donor for approval.

The plaque will be removed at the end of the memorial's natural life, and the Council will contact the donor offering to return the plaque or give you the opportunity to purchase/donate another bench/tree. If the Council is unable to contact, you after three attempts the plaque will be disposed of.

Maintenance

The Council only source and purchase high quality, durable benches and will endeavour to maintain and care for the memorial bench or tree. Donors should be aware that benches or young trees in public areas may be subject to vandalism and the Council will not be held responsible for any costs in replacing them.

The Council endeavours to maintain and care for a memorial tree and bench for as long as possible. However, it reserves the right to re-site or remove any tree or bench that it deems to be unsafe, unrepairable or for other reason. The Council will notify the donor.

Council accepts no liability for replacing a bench or tree at the end of its useful life. When a tree or bench has been disposed, the commemoration will automatically cease. A new application will need to be made to the Council, and the Council reserves the right to agree a commemoration with a new donor.

Additional Memorials

There is to be no placing of artificial flowers or plants, soft toys or any other objects on/around the bench or tree. Fresh flowers can be placed at the memorial following written request and approval from the Council for the anniversary of the death. The flowers will be removed after 7 days.



Flitwick Town Council

Memorial Benches and Trees Application Form

Please complete this form to apply for a memorial bench or memorial tree on Flitwick Town Council owned land. Applications will be considered in line with the Memorial Benches and Trees Policy.

1. Applicant Details

Full Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

2. Memorial Request Details

Type of Memorial Requested (please tick):

☐ Memorial Bench

☐ Memorial Tree

Name of Person to be Commemorated: _____

Preferred Location (please provide as much detail as possible):

Reason for Location Choice (optional):

3. Bench / Tree Preferences

Preferred Bench Type (if applicable): _____

Preferred Tree Type (if applicable): _____

Would you like a commemorative plaque?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Preferred plaque wording (subject to approval):

4. Installation Arrangements

Would you like to attend the installation/planting?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Any additional comments or special requests:

5. Declaration

I confirm that I have read and understood the Flitwick Town Council Memorial Benches and Trees Policy. I understand that approval is subject to Council agreement and that ownership of the memorial will transfer to Flitwick Town Council upon installation.

Applicant Signature: _____

Date: _____

Office Use Only

Application Received By: _____

Date Received: _____

Approved / Declined: _____

Location Agreed: _____

Quotation Sent: _____

Payment Received: _____

Installation Completed: _____

Please return the completed application form to info@flitwick.gov.uk