



# GREAT BENTLEY PARISH COUNCIL

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Next review due March 2025

## **Memorial Bench and Tree Policy**

Great Bentley Parish Council supports the needs and principles of allowing memorial benches and trees in its open spaces. The Council is mindful that these facilities are enjoyed by a wide range of people and therefore the council will ensure that the issue is managed and regulated for the mutual benefit of all through this policy.

The Council through this policy will endeavor to always offer the highest standard of service in undertaking its management and regulatory responsibility.

The content of this policy will be revised as necessary to meet changing circumstances, fashion and trends. The policy will be reviewed at least every two years and proposed amendments shall be submitted to the Full Council for approval.

## **Objectives of the Policy**

The council is seeking to ensure it is adopting a clear, measurable and sympathetic approach to the management of its open spaces, which will take into account of the sometimes-contrasting needs of a variety of users. The policy will also ensure that only memorial benches are erected or trees planted that are instigated by the next of kin or the executor and that the benches have a common appearance, style and size which are appropriate for that location and will not cause offence to others.

Once installed the tree or bench then becomes the property of the Council, and the donor does not retain any right to determine its future management.

This policy will establish responsibility for maintenance, repair and replacement. The Council through this policy will endeavor to always offer the highest standard of service in undertaking its management and regulatory responsibility.

Tree planting will usually only be permitted between late autumn and early spring, in line with the optimum planting season.

This policy supersedes all previous arrangements, policies and agreements and applies to all commemorative benches on Great Bentley Parish Council land.

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## **Location**

The Council cannot guarantee a location for any memorial but will liaise with all applicants prior to any placement to ensure that a suitable location is agreed.

Requests may not be approved if the location is unsuitable, due to the risk of vandalism, anti-social behaviour, overcrowding of trees or benches, or any other material factors.

## **Memorials**

Great Bentley Parish Council offer memorials within its open spaces, which include the following:

- Wooden Memorial Bench with or without a plaque (subject to availability)
- Trees that will thrive in the proposed location, these are based on the recommendations from the Tree Wardens.

Memorial benches shall be positioned to maximise the benefit and development of the open space but the council will attempt to accommodate the wishes of the applicants. The Council will limit the number of memorial benches in particular areas so they do not detract from the prime purpose of the open space. Therefore, the size and location shall limit the number permitted. The council reserves the right to refuse applications on this basis.

The Council shall specify the type of benches and trees to be installed to be in keeping with the intended location.

## **Lease Period**

All memorials are based on a 10-year lease for benches and can be renewed after this period if the applicant wishes (at a cost of £150). The fee covers the delivery and installation of the bench, together with the ongoing repair and maintenance for the 10-year period.

Once installed the tree or bench then becomes the property of the Council, and the donor does not retain any right to determine its future management.

## **Inscriptions for the Plaque**

Memorial plaques for benches shall be affixed in the centre of the upper most lath of the back of the bench.

Memorial plaques for trees will not be affixed to a tree, but a memorial stake can be placed in the ground in front of the tree.

Memorial Stakes are made from wood with a brass plaque affixed to them, please note the price of these will be confirmed on application due to fluctuating sale prices.

## **Process**

Once the application has been received, agreed by a council meeting and the location has been agreed, the council shall arrange for the purchase and installation of the bench.

All applications for memorials should be completed on the official application form and be signed by the applicant. This is available on Great Bentley Parish Council's website.

The Council reserves the right to remove any memorial benches that have been damaged and are in the view of the council beyond economical repair. The Council accepts no liability for damage to any memorial benches from vandals, third parties or whilst the Council carries out routine maintenance.

The Council reserves the right to remove any memorial trees that have been damaged or have died. The Council accepts no liability for damage to any memorial benches or trees from vandals or third parties if the tree dies within the first 3 years of planting the council will replace this at their cost.

No additional mementos, e.g. vases, statues, flowers, wreathes, balloons or other ornamentation etc. shall be permitted on or around the bench. These shall be removed without reference to the original applicant.

### **Payment**

Payment is required once the application has been agreed at a council meeting and before a bench is to be ordered. The cost of the bench is subject to change at the moment, this will be advised at the time of the application, the cost of the bench plus £150 for the delivery, installation and upkeep for 10 years is required prior to the council purchasing the bench.

### **Conditions**

Great Bentley Parish Council reserves the right to install benches and trees or place memorial plaques where suitable, but will, where appropriate, accommodate requests.

Once installed the bench cannot be repositioned or removed from the site. However, should a bench become unsafe, Great Bentley Parish Council reserve the right to remove it immediately in the interest of health and safety until repairs or replacement can take place.

Great Bentley Parish Council will maintain responsibility for the memorial bench and associated plaque during the 10-year lease period. This will include any preservation, treatment, repair works and replacement of the memorial where required due to fair wear and tear or vandalism.

After 10 years, the council will endeavor to contact the sponsor to ascertain whether:

- 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.

- The sponsor can reapply for a new seat and plaque in the same location, or families may wish to pay for a new seat and plaque in the same location, or families may wish to pay for a further period of sponsorship for the plaque only, if the bench is still in acceptable condition.
- 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. It remains the responsibility of the sponsors to advise the council of any change to contact details. These will be kept in accordance with prevailing data protection legislation and be used only for the purposes of this service.
- The sponsor may contact the council to seek an extension to the sponsorship from one year before the 10-year period is up.
- Benches and trees remain at all times the property of the Council.
- 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.
- The donor, or their representatives, shall not be permitted to undertake any maintenance of the memorial tree or bench, as it will be the property of the Council.

*Please contact Great Bentley Parish Council on 01206 256041 or email [clerk@greatbentleyparishcouncil.co.uk](mailto:clerk@greatbentleyparishcouncil.co.uk)*