



**REPORT of  
DIRECTOR OF SERVICE DELIVERY**

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to  
**COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE  
2 APRIL 2019**

**MEMORIAL BENCHES AND LEGACY SCHEMES WITHIN PARKS AND OPEN SPACES**

**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To update the Committee on considerations in respect of the Memorial Bench scheme and alternative ‘Legacy Scheme’ proposals within Parks & Open Spaces.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

For the Committee to agree:

- (i) That Officers can re-open applications for benches within Maldon District Council Parks & Open Spaces, but only where there are ‘voids’ on existing bench bases or replacement benches are required. No new locations are to be permitted prior to review of demand & supply proposed for April 2022.
- (ii) That a draft ‘best practice’ model for creation, processes, and functions of a Legacy Fund be prepared and returned to Committee for discussion by December 2019.
- (iii) A list of potential projects for application to a Legacy Fund scheme be developed, with details to include indications where they ‘fit’ with existing policy or need, financial costs/scale and deliverability, and indicative locations (including designs) be drafted for consideration.

**3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES**

- 3.1 The Council has offered traditional memorial/remembrance opportunities for a number of years with current schemes which were in need of review and improvement to give clearer guidance to both officers and the public. An updated Memorial Policy and accompanying report were presented to and approved by the Community Services Committee on 27 March 2018, (Minute 994 refers).
- 3.2 The report and Policy included reference to both cemeteries and Parks & Open Spaces, with an officer comment that further works were required to establish the following: current bench locations; capacity within key sites for additional locations; register demand for Memorial Benches (specifically) within parks; and to investigate

alternative “Legacy Schemes” and projects that could be developed in sites outside of our cemeteries.

- 3.3 The term “Legacy Scheme” will be used throughout this report as it is recognised by officers that there is a much wider interest and scope for the public to engage, purchase and donate to projects that are not exclusively seen as memorials or commemorations for the dead.
- 3.4 There are numerous existing and emerging legacy schemes nationally – including philanthropic giving – which can be used to benchmark against as best practice and allow families, groups and individuals to financially contribute to projects which can celebrate birthdays, anniversaries, to give as gifts, create personal interest for locations or occasions, or simply to be part of a wider ‘community’ that wishes to improve their parks, facilities, or the community use/benefit of such places.
- 3.5 **Review of Memorial Benches**
- 3.5.1 Since a suspension of permissions for new benches being placed within both cemeteries and parks (Community Services Committee, 24 May 2016, Minute 112 refers), officers have received less than 10 individual enquiries for the placement of a bench within any of the Maldon District Council (MDC) owned Parks & Open Spaces (excluding cemeteries).
- 3.5.2 Predominantly these requests have been within Promenade Park, Maldon, with the remainder within Riverside Park, Burnham-on-Crouch. A review in both sites of existing provision has identified that there are sufficient existing bench locations (i.e. pre-existing concrete base ‘voids’ or benches in need of replacement) to comfortably accommodate existing and estimated demand in both locations for the next five years, if demand continues at the same rate.
- 3.5.3 Officers are recommending that no new bench locations be created or approved in any park or open space (excluding previously approved cemeteries plans) for a period of five years, with a programmed review of demand and supply scheduled for April 2022.
- 3.5.4 Furthermore, officers are recommending that no permissions be granted for bench requests on seawalls where MDC is the landward landowner. Such requests require permissions from multiple agencies (*including ECC Highways, Environment Agency, Flood Defence Consent, Landowner consent and potentially planning permission*) and a disproportionate amount of officer time/input to co-ordinate.
- 3.5.5 In accordance with the approved Memorial Policy, all attempts will be made to contact families/individuals in relation to an existing pre-2016 purchased bench where it is in need of repair or replacement. Should such attempts not yield a response, any plaque will be carefully removed upon removal of the bench itself and stored until it can be relocated to a centralised memorial location within a given site, similar to the memorial walls within cemeteries (3.1 below suggests a possible option to this centralised location). Where pre-2016 benches are inscribed, or timber-routed, such inscriptions will be transferred to a plaque at MDC’s own cost and then relocated centrally, so that inscriptions/dedications are not lost.

3.5.6 An option for a centralised location that would be in keeping with both Promenade Park and Riverside Park involves the re-use, refurbishment and siting of the green-heart oak timber ‘Dolphins’ that were removed and replaced from the Hythe Quay in 2016 as additional seating within the park. These dolphins are approximately 10 feet in length and 18 inches square and would be shot blasted then sanded to a smooth finish - potentially retaining a section at either end untreated to indicate their heritage. Each would have a small information plaque affixed to explain their source and would provide both additional seating and a large surface area for placement of relocated or additional plaques. (See **APPENDIX 1** for illustrative photographs)

### 3.6 **Legacy Projects and Fund development**

3.6.1 As outlined above, legacy funds & projects are commonplace throughout public and charity sectors and have been for many years. MDC would need to establish both financial and management protocols for the administration of any such fund creation as well as a clear approval route for project identification, selection and prioritisation.

3.6.2 Any such project proposals would need to align with Strategic Corporate and Service priorities as well as being deemed suitable within the context or limitations of any given site/location (e.g. Central Area Master Plan, Conservation Areas, Green Infrastructure Strategy, recreational need, landscape character etc.)

3.6.3 Understanding and communication needs to be transparent and fully available for public scrutiny regarding the scale of any such approved projects, financial requirements, expected length of time of fundraising to completion – with thresholds/milestones/phases of projects established from initiation.

3.6.4 Many successful legacy fund projects have a tangible/physical ‘product’ associated with them that can be personalised to any donors or contributors to that specific fund. Examples of this can be found in almost any publicly accessible space from the engraved wall of the Great Court at the British Museum to many brass plaques that adorn the handrails of Southwold Pier.

3.6.5 Use of any individual project legacy fund will be restricted solely to that identified project and will categorically not be used for any ongoing revenue costs, un-associated works, or ‘backfilling’ of capacity/need outside of the stated project remit. Subject to the terms of reference/protocol of any legacy fund being created, it may be appropriate to capitalise from the fund for some elements professional/consultant/staff time to ensure competent and effective project delivery, however such need should be identified at the earliest stages of any project proposal, prior to any approval, and not retrospectively.

3.6.6 Four example project types are given in **APPENDIX 2** to illustrate potential direction and uses of a legacy fund. These are intended to be indicative only.

## 4. **CONCLUSION**

4.1 Existing locations for memorial benches are sufficient to meet current and expected demand within key park sites. On this basis, officers feel that applications for benches may be re-opened under the terms of the 2018 revised Memorial Policy.

- 4.2 Officers should investigate, benchmark and propose a ‘best practice’ model in regard to the creation of a legacy fund for the delivery of infrastructure improvements within Parks & Open Spaces.
- 4.3 This model is to be reported to the appropriate Committee within the Future Council model by December 2019 and should contain draft terms of reference, protocols for project selection and management, and outline public communications options should Members decide to proceed with the creation of this Legacy Fund.

## 5. IMPACT ON CORPORATE GOALS

- 5.1 This activity and report support the corporate goals of delivering good quality, cost effective and valued services.

## 6. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – Memorial benches are a popular choice of memorial option in cemeteries and open spaces around the District. This meets the needs of the families and gives members of the public ample seating should they so wish. A memorial legacy scheme would give customers an alternative way of remembering a loved one in addition to the traditional options currently offered by the Council.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – None
- (iii) **Impact on Risk** – None
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – The current fees and charges scheme sale cost of memorial benches has been revised and now includes a small surplus to allow for maintenance and repair, rather than just purchase and installation. “Legacy Schemes” would allow for improvements and add value to projects from an identified and strategic list that would be over and above the planned maintenance or routine replacement of infrastructure, potentially working in conjunction with larger scale projects core funded
- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – None
- (vi) **Impact on the Environment** – The number of benches in the Council’s Parks & Open Spaces are limited so as not to spoil the natural landscape and visual aspects of these sites.

Background Papers: Previous reports to the Community Services Committee in May 2016 and March 2018.

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