



**REPORT of
DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITY**

**to
COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE
28 FEBRUARY 2017**

MEMORIALS IN COUNCIL OWNED OPEN SPACES

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To propose a policy for the control and installation of memorials and commemorations in all Council owned Open Spaces including Cemeteries.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- (i) that the draft Policy proposed, including detail of Memorial Benches, Trees, Plaques, Fixed Memorials, Memorabilia / tributes, and income considerations, be reviewed and approved to allow Officers and the Public clear guidance regarding Memorials in Council owned open spaces;
- (ii) that Officers be requested to prepare a further report outlining the need and suggested process required to challenge the occurrence of memorial tributes clearly outside of policies;
- (iii) that Officers continue to investigate alternative / non-traditional options for memorial / legacy projects, and specifically in relation to the creation of an ongoing fund or foundation to support capital and revenue projects within the Council's Open Spaces, and prepare an options paper for Committee at a future meeting in 2017.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The Council has offered traditional Memorial / Remembrance opportunities for a number of years with current schemes in need of review and improvement to offer clearer guidance to both Officers and Public.
- 3.2 Existing policy only relates to Cemeteries and there are no policies / controls in place for Parks or other Green Spaces.
- 3.3 Following a request by Officers, this Committee granted a temporary suspension of permissions for new benches being placed within Cemeteries and Parks at the Committee on 24 May 2016 (Minute No. 112 refers), to allow for development of a Policy that would include guiding principles for all Open Spaces.

- 3.4 Benchmarking of other Local Authorities Memorial Policies was undertaken to establish general guidelines and accepted best practice.
- 3.5 This policy clarifies the protocols for the Council's existing Memorial schemes, extending them to cover those Open Spaces outside of Council Cemeteries, and also seeks to accommodate guidance for Fixed Memorials and Woodland planting schemes.
- 3.6 During the process of benchmarking and site inspections, Officers highlighted the proportionally small number of memorials, specifically those with large amounts of personal memorabilia / tributes, that are visually out of keeping with the nature of our Cemeteries and existing guidance and burial agreements.
- 3.7 Benchmarking also highlighted that a number of local authorities and public bodies operate "legacy" schemes, which can allow for a variety of alternative memorial schemes, improvement and infrastructure, projects, and new developments to take place within given sites.

3.8 Income

- 3.7.1 The sale of Memorial benches does not currently generate any surplus and the charges made by the Council only cover the cost of bench purchase and a minimal overhead installation. The new Policy provides allowance to ensure full cost recovery of any memorial installation.
- 3.7.2 The Council has offered traditional Memorial / Remembrance opportunities for a number of years but it is clear that the current schemes need refreshing and improving to offer alternatives that might be more appropriate to our settings and offer a wider variety of opportunities for those seeking to commemorate or celebrate events other than the death of a loved one.
- 3.7.3 A memorial, commemoration or legacy fund/foundation would allow for project specific funding to be generated from sources and donations outside of Maldon District Council (MDC) budgets to enable Capital and Revenue projects and to potentially assist in match-funding from Grants.
- 3.7.4 Local Authorities are using other ways to gain revenue from the Cemeteries Services. Columbarium's are used as a final resting place of cremated remains. A columbarium is usually 5 - 6 foot in height and in width, and made from a marble construction and depending on the exact size of the Columbarium holds approximately 48 cremated remains caskets. Other income opportunities include brass / metal trees with engraved leaves of lost loved ones. The tree is usually 8 - 10 foot in height and holds approximately 100 leaves. These are two examples of how the Cemeteries Service can offer families other ways remembering loved ones

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 A new policy regarding memorials in open spaces has been written to provide guidance for Officers and Public for memorial bench and tree placement in MDC owned open spaces.

- 4.2 This Policy will be used in conjunction with purpose drawn plans and setting limitations to memorial numbers to ensure that any such are appropriate to site and setting.
- 4.3 There is clear evidence that within our cemeteries there are practices taking place clearly outside of existing and proposed regulations, which are not only out of keeping with the nature of the sites themselves but can negatively impact on other legitimate users and residents.
- 4.4 A memorial, commemoration or legacy fund / foundation would allow for project specific funding to be generated from sources and donations outside of MDC budgets to enable Capital and Revenue projects and to potentially assist in match-funding proposed schemes for Grant funds e.g. Big Lottery Fund or Heritage Lottery Fund, etc.

5. IMPACT ON CORPORATE GOALS

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

6. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – The Council could consider other Memorial Schemes to offer customers, (as detailed above) in the longer term alternatives may be more popular and offer greater choice when deciding how to remember a loved one, celebrate significant events in an individual / family life, achievements of groups, Community organisations etc.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – By potentially introducing commemorative offers other than benches and trees which have a lower associated cost, there would be a positive impact on financial equality for residents and visitors to the District.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk** – None.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – The current cost to a customer of purchasing a memorial bench is £776 and this cost just covers the cost of the bench and installation.

A Columbarium costs around £7,000 to purchase and install. It holds approximately 48 cremated remains at a cost to the customer £650. Each base costs approximately £210.

A Brass Ornamental Tree Costs around £3,500 to purchase and install and can hold approximately 100 leaves at a cost of £350 - £400 with an outlay cost of £64 per leaf.

- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – None.

- (vi) **Impact on the Environment** – Some alternative commemorative schemes such as woodland or meadow creation could provide significant improvements to local environment and wildlife at those sites.

Background Papers: None.

Enquiries to:

Matt Wilson, Countryside and Coast Manager, (Tel 01621 876275) or

Richard Heard, Leisure, Leisure and Community Services Manager, (Tel 01621 875838).