



STOTFOLD TOWN COUNCIL

MEMORIAL BENCH & TREE POLICY 2024

1. SCOPE OF THE POLICY

- 1.1 When loved ones die, their friends and relatives will often want to commemorate them with a lasting memorial. This can initially be within the cemetery as a memorial on the grave space to remember that person but also this will be in the form of a tree or bench which not only honours their memory but provides a beautiful and functional improvement to the local environment.
- 1.2 Stotfold is fortunate enough to have numerous parks and open spaces, as well as Stotfold Cemetery these are mostly owned and managed by Stotfold Town Council. This policy sets out how we approve memorial benches and trees; who is responsible for their upkeep; and what is expected from the donor and the council.
- 1.3 The Town Council will always endeavour to be respectful, sympathetic, and fair towards those donating trees and benches; to balance the needs of facility users; and to maintain the high quality of its open spaces.

2. WHAT AND WHO IS COVERED BY THE POLICY

- 2.1 The policy covers any memorial bench, tree, or other lasting item (excluding those sited at Stotfold Cemetery) placed on Stotfold Town Council-owned property and is relevant to anyone who has commissioned, or is thinking of commissioning, a memorial tree or bench.
- 2.2 Stotfold Town Council-owned property includes: The Green, Riverside Playing Field, Hitchin Road Recreation Ground, Centenary Wood, Pix Brook Play Area, Greenacre Park, Arlesey Road and Stotfold Cemetery on Mill Lane.

3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- 3.1 The planting of trees or installation of benches on land as memorials, is a private arrangement between the friends and relatives commissioning the memorial, and the landowner. As such, the Town Council can only approve memorials and trees on Town Council-owned land. The Town Council may support applications for benches placed on the public highway, but permission is required from the local highways' authority, Central Bedfordshire Council.
- 3.2 Generally speaking, installing trees and benches will not be subject to planning permission, restrictive covenants, or other restrictions. However, there may be cases where the Town Council is unable to install benches for such reasons.
- 3.3 Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the Town Council must consider the effect of its decisions on crime and disorder. It may deem a location unsuitable, if it may attract antisocial behaviour.

3.4 When the Town Council agrees to install a bench or tree, they are bought by the friends and family and donated to the Town Council. The tree or bench then becomes the property of the Town Council, and the donor does not retain any right to determine its future management. The Town Council will nevertheless endeavour to ensure it is properly maintained and cared for.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

4.1 Determining requests

4.1.1 Enquiries for a memorial bench or tree should be made by emailing enquiries@stotfoldtowncouncil.gov.uk. The requests will be reviewed and approved by the Public Realm Committee.

4.1.2 The Town Council will endeavour to accommodate any reasonable requests for the planting of memorial trees or installation of memorial benches on Town Council-owned property only. Requests may not be able to be fulfilled if the location is unsuitable due to the risk of vandalism, antisocial behaviour, over-population of trees or benches, or any other material factors.

4.1.3 Benches are always Brown Countryside seat, with fixings below ground



<https://uk.glasdon.com/countryside-tm-seat>

Memorial Trees are always Irish Yew trees (Taxus Baccata Fastigiata)

- 4.1.4 Bench Plaques are a size 150mm x 50mm and made of stainless steel, Tree plaques in the Cemetery are stainless steel, with a light oak finish back base, and size 200mm x 150mm
- 4.1.5 The exact location of the tree or bench will be agreed during a site visit with Town Council staff. It is the donor's responsibility to ensure that the location (and orientation in the case of a bench) is well-communicated to the Town Council and confirmed in writing, by letter or email, with an accompanying sketch. In the case of the Cemetery, the Town Council reserves the right to choose a location, to maintain layout of the cemetery for future burials.
- 4.1.7 Memorial benches and trees will only be considered from people that can demonstrate a close tie with the person being commemorated. The Town Council reserves the right to refuse a memorial bench, or tree should it have any grounds to believe it would be contrary to the wishes of the commemorated person's next of kin.

4.2. Costs

- 4.2.1 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).
- 4.2.2 A further one-off surcharge of 20% will be added on top of the cost for the continuing and future maintenance of the tree or bench.

4.3 Installing and planting

- 4.3.1 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 the financial donation has been made.
- 4.3.2 Tree planting will usually only be permitted between late autumn and early spring, in line with the tree-planting season.
- 4.3.3 Trees will normally be planted by the Town Council's Contractor. However, donors are welcome to be present at the tree planting and carry out a small ceremony if they wish.
- 4.3.4 The Scattering of Ashes is permitted only around the Central Lime Trees behind the Chapel in the Cemetery and permission should be requested from the Town Council. It is not permitted on a family grave or around a family Memorial Tree. Burial of ashes under a tree will not be permitted. Scattering of Pet Ashes or Internment of these is prohibited on Stotfold Town Council property.

4.4 Plaques

- 4.4.1 Commemorative plaques can be affixed to a memorial bench, subject to agreeing a size, wording and specification with the Town Council and obtaining written permission once agreement has been reached. Plaques for trees are not recommended unless in the Cemetery due to the increased risk of vandalism. No plaque may be affixed to a tree itself.
- 4.4.2 Commemorative plaques may be affixed to existing benches, where there is no other visible sign of it being a memorial bench. The fee for this will be the cost of the plaque and installation,

plus 50% of the estimated cost of a like-for-like replacement bench. Note, only one plaque will be affixed to any one bench.

4.5 Maintenance

4.5.1 The Town Council will only source high quality/durable benches and will endeavour to maintain and care for the memorial bench or tree. However, it cannot guarantee their condition. If the bench is badly damaged or unusable after ten years, the Town Council can dispose of it and the family will be given the choice of either purchasing another one, as per the council's memorial bench policy, or the space will be made vacant for another family's memorial bench. If the family is not contactable, the council will take appropriate action deemed necessary at the time.

4.5.2 Donors should also be aware that benches or young trees in public areas may be subject to vandalism, and the Town Council will not be held responsible for any costs in replacing them.

4.5.3 The Town Council shall endeavour to maintain and care for a memorial tree and bench for as long as possible and any necessary tree maintenance and monitoring will form part of the Town Council's ongoing schedule of works. However, it reserves the right to re-site or remove any tree or bench that it deems to be unsafe, unrepairable, or other reasons.

Should the tree die within the first year then the Town Council will take responsibility for replacement of the tree, should it die after the first year then an application to replace the tree will need to be made to the Town Council.

4.5.4 No placing of flowers or other objects at memorials will be permitted, except with the permission of the Town Council.

Revision History

Date Adopted	11 November 2020
Date Reviewed	16 October 2024 Updates relating to scattering/interment of pet ashes, condition and maintenance of benches, location of benches to be installed, tree longevity and update to Committee name.