



# Melksham Town Council Memorial Bench and Tree Policy

Date Adopted: 15<sup>th</sup> September 2025

Date Amended 9<sup>th</sup> February 2026

Date Due For Review: September 2027



## **1. Sponsorship of Memorial Benches and Trees Policy**

1.1 Melksham Town Council is committed to providing facilities to allow residents and visitors to enjoy the environment and the outdoor space. Seating and trees are essential elements of the out-door offer and something that all well-maintained and managed parks should accommodate. Seating encourages parents to bring children to parks and offers all a welcome place to rest.

1.2 Town Council offers opportunities which enable members of the community to sponsor, at approved locations, benches or trees (hereafter referred to as “the memorial”) in memory of a loved one. It is envisaged that donated memorials will be placed in the town’s parks and open spaces and other locations that have been agreed in advance.

1.3 Applications for memorials in locations other than on the council’s approved list will be considered and if they meet the requirements of Highways and Town Council terms, approval may be granted.

## **2. Principles**

2.1 Through this policy the Council will try to ensure that donations and sponsorship at such facilities are appropriate, regulated, and managed. This policy will be reviewed periodically and will be made available to the public and to all applicants for memorials.

2.2 The Council will ensure a clear, measurable, and sympathetic approach to the provision and management of memorials and will take into account the contrasting needs of a variety of users.

2.3 The policy will also seek to ensure that donated benches have a common appearance, style and size which are appropriate for their location and will not cause offence to others.

2.4 The Town Council will not permit third parties to provide their own memorials for installation.

## **3. Locations**

### **3.1 Donated Benches**

Suitable locations within the town where people are likely to make good use of the bench will be considered. Whilst the council will consider any reasonable requests for placing a donated bench we ask prospective donors to be mindful of requesting locations that are accessible and where it can be demonstrated that the bench will be used. Likewise, the council will have to be mindful that to maximise the lifespan of the bench, locations with high levels of vandalism and that offer poor access for maintenance may not be suitable.

Once a bench is erected in a public area, it becomes available for anyone to use. The Town Council has a number of attractive places for memorial benches to be situated, including:

- St Michaels Closed Churchyard
- King George V Park
- All parks and open spaces (under Town Council control)

### 3.2 Existing Benches

The council recognises that in some areas of the town that have a special significance for the donor/person being remembered, there may already be a sufficient supply of seating. In this instance, the council may be able to offer the opportunity to replace an existing bench that is coming towards needing to be replaced, or allow the donor to adopt an existing bench for the placement of a suitable plaque for ¼ of the price of a new bench, plus the cost of a plaque.

### 3.3 Trees

Trees must be suitable for the proposed location and growing environment. Where possible, a selection of suitable types will be offered to the applicant based upon the chosen location.

## 4. Conditions of Scheme

4.1 The Town Council will arrange for the choice, specification and procurement of the memorial, its installation and suitable memorial plaque.

4.2 The cost of a memorial will be set and reviewed by the Amenities and Facilities Committee with the advice of the Amenities Manager and the CEO/Town Clerk. The cost includes installation, regular maintenance, a plaque (with an approved inscription) 12.5 cm x 5 cm, naming the loved one to be remembered.

4.3 Once a memorial bench has been installed, it becomes the Town Council's property. When the memorial bench has reached the point of needing to be replaced as it is no longer economically repairable, the council will attempt to contact the donor and offer them the opportunity to replace the memorial bench at whatever the current cost at that time is. If they choose not to replace the memorial bench the donor accepts that any replacement bench will not continue to display their plaque and may be sponsored by someone else and have a different plaque displayed.

4.4 It will be the responsibility of the donor to notify the Council if their address or contact details change.

4.5 Memorials may not be used for advertising or commercial purposes.

4.6 Memorials dedicated in memory of someone will require the agreement of the next of kin, personal representative and/or executor.

4.7 The inscribed plaque will be sourced and installed by the Town Council.

4.8 Plaques may contain the name of the person and date of birth and death and must be approved by the CEO/Town Clerk. Any additional personal inscriptions/dedications must also be approved by the CEO/Town Clerk, but such requests would not usually be declined. Where the CEO/Town Clerk recommends a request is rejected, the donor may appeal and the matter will be considered by the council or any committee of the council that such responsibilities have been delegated to.

4.9 Plaques may not be fitted directly to memorial trees and will be placed adjacent to the tree by way of a ground spike.

4.10 Donated benches become the property of Melksham Town Council and will be included in the council's standard insurance cover. However, the Council reserves the right to remove any bench which in its opinion is damaged or beyond economic repair, where its replacement or repair is not possible through the council's insurance. In this event, the council would follow the procedure set out in 4.3.

4.11 Memorial trees will be maintained in accordance with Melksham Town Council's usual tree maintenance procedures. Should a memorial tree become diseased, reach the end of its life, become unsightly or become unsafe, Melksham Town Council reserves the right to remove the tree. In this event, the council would follow the procedure set out for benches in 4.3

4.12 The Town Council's open spaces are there for the enjoyment of everyone and as such are not considered to be 'memorial' gardens. Therefore, no additional mementoes e.g. vases, statues, balloons or other ornamentation etc., will be permitted on or around the memorial. These will be removed by the Council without reference to the original applicant.

4.13 Notwithstanding clause 4.12 above, the council does recognise that at anniversaries or other significant dates the donor or other individuals may want to place appropriate floral tributes. Such tributes should not prevent the use of the bench and should be removed within seven days. The Town Council reserves the right to remove any floral tributes/wreaths left by a bench after ten days without further reference to the donor.

## **5. Contact**

To arrange for a memorial/commemorative plaque to an existing bench or to donate a new bench, contact the Town Council by email [towncouncil@melksham-tc.gov.uk](mailto:towncouncil@melksham-tc.gov.uk) or telephone the Town Council office on 01225 704187.