

**URN:** 21-179

**Subject** Dedication Plaques

**Report to** Executive Leadership Team – 10 November 2021  
Environment Committee – 25 November 2021

**Report by:** Head of Property and Asset Management



#### **SUBJECT MATTER**

A new policy is proposed in relation to dedication plaques on benches for roses bushes, trees, and other items around the borough. The Policy also identifies the proposal for a vase facility to be added to benches in the Gorleston Seafront location.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**That Members:**

- 1. Approve the policy for dedication plaques and vase provision in the borough.**
- 2. Agree the new fee of £70 for the provision of a dedication vase. This fee and charge to form part of the annual fee and charge policy moving forward.**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. There are numerous public benches across the borough and many of which have had dedication plaques purchased by customers to commemorate events, identify favourite locations, and remember loved ones.
- 1.2. The Gorleston Seafront upper and lower promenade has some 255 benches and is a particularly popular location for requests for dedication plaques on benches. Benches are for public use and currently the operation of this scheme, other than the large benches on the Lower Promenade, allows one plaque per bench and no dedications of any kind to be left on or attached to the benches.
- 1.3. Historically people have left flowers and other memorabilia on the benches in Gorleston and from time to time these items are removed and left to the side of the bench for collection. Currently documentation issued at the time of any enquiry is clear that items must not be left on the bench as these are a public facility in an open amenity space and benches should be kept clear for public use.
- 1.4. Items do continue to be left on benches in this area and across the borough and there has been several complaints received around the volume and condition of some of the items left on the benches. This is a sensitive area and the council only undertakes removal when necessary although Health and Safety in relation to items left remains a challenge with glass vases, metal clips and sharp objects continuing to be left as memorials.

- 1.5. Following the removal of items plaque owners have expressed distress that the process by which these memorabilia are removal is unnecessary and have requested that a method by which some form of dedication can be left at the bench be considered particularly for the Gorleston area but available across the borough.
- 1.6. This report covers two areas, to formally agree the Policy for Dedication plaques for benches and associated memorials and to consider the option of including a vase for benches with a dedication plaque.

## **2. PROPOSAL**

- 2.1. The Policy identifies clarity around the purchase of plaques and makes clear that the bench always remains an asset of the council and must be clear and available for public enjoyment. The locations of these benches are not within memorial gardens but recognised public open spaces and therefore consideration must be given to this in all circumstances.
- 2.2. The proposal in relation to Gorleston puts forward an allowance within the policy for one vase per bench plaque to be purchased and placed on benches at the Gorleston seafront location. The proposal includes a design for a vase which would be fixed to the rear of the bench, with no sharp corners, alleviating any health and safety concerns. As has been mentioned the benches are public assets and as such, we do not currently allow any memorabilia to be placed on the bench, but this vase provision would allow for a small dedication to be left without impacting the use of the bench. The proposal of a vase if purchased by the plaque owner would provide a location for one floral dedication, no further memorabilia would be permitted on or around the benches and would be immediately removed.
- 2.3. It should be noted the council would still reserve the right to remove any floral arrangement from a vase if they become dilapidated.
- 2.4. For clarity a policy document attached, appendix 1, is suggested to ensure all purchasers of dedication plaques are aware of the restrictions in relation to these public benches. A signed application form will be completed and submitted for each purchase and confirms that purchasers understand the terms and conditions of purchase.
- 2.5. If the provision of a vase is permitted in relation to benches it is recommended that a maximum of one vase per bench be permitted (there are larger benches on the lower promenade at Gorleston which would be excluded from this option as multiple plaques are purchased on these benches) in line with the proposed policy.

## **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1. In addition to the standard plaque fee a charge of £70 is proposed for the provision and installation of a vase. Installation must only be undertaken by the council as it is noted that the bench remains an asset of council ownership. Any damage or vandalism during the life of the vase, as with the plaque, would be the responsibility of the purchaser and would result in a fee for replacement.

- 3.2. The committee is asked to note that administrative costs in relation to the introduction of a vase will be incurred and the costs will therefore need to be monitored going forward and adjusted if necessary.
- 3.3. It is recommended that this fee form part of the fees and charges policy and reviewed annually in line with inflation.

#### **4. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1. The utilisation of a vase will reduce the risk of injury from this installation and by installing on the rear of the bench will not restrict the use of the bench seat in any way. The ability for individuals to purchase a vase will enable flowers to be left discreetly by the owner of the plaque without impacting the general use of the bench.
- 4.2. The policy remains that dedications will be removed from any other part of the bench as soon as practical by the grounds maintenance and cleansing team.
- 4.3. All benches remain public assets of open space and therefore the need to ensure these benches are available unimpeded is of the highest importance in considering this provision.
- 4.4. All existing and new plaque owners will be provided with a copy of the policy and made aware of the availability of a vase should they wish to retrospectively purchase.

#### **5. CONCLUSIONS**

- 5.1. To adopt and confirm the attached policy in relation to dedication plaques for benches and to agree the proposal for a vase to be available for purchase with bench plaques. This provision will be at the discretion of the council and only available on a one vase per bench provision.
- 5.2. The fee and charge for the vase will require confirmation through Council and it is suggested that this be incorporated into the review of Fees and Charges in February 2022.
- 5.3. Should this provision be agreed contact will be attempted with all purchasers to provide information and offer the extra vase opportunity.

<b>Area for consideration</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Monitoring Officer Consultation	Included
Section 151 Officer Consultation	Included
Existing Council Policies See background papers	
Financial Implications	Considered and included
Legal Implications (including human rights)	None
Risk Implications	Covered within the report
Equality Issues/EQIA assessment	None
Details contained in strategy	
Crime & Disorder	None
Every Child Matters	None



## Policy

### Dedication Plaques

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## **1. Overview**

The Council will facilitate the purchase and placement of dedication plaques on benches, with rosebushes, trees and associated items as identified together with and if required a vase on existing seats in the borough where appropriate opportunities exist.

## **2. Introduction**

The Council supports the principle of allowing dedication plaques on existing Council owned seats in the borough, but only when permission is sought and the location is approved, and any licence or installation fee is paid.

The public amenity space is a valued resource and its facilities are enjoyed by a wide range of people, so each application will be looked at to ascertain if an appropriate location is available and will not cause upset or distress to others using the facilities.

This policy will be regularly reviewed, and any amendments submitted to Members for approval.

All fees and charges are detailed separately and will be reviewed on an annual basis in line with the Fees and Charges Policy.

## **3. Objectives of the Policy**

- 3.1 The Council is seeking to ensure it is adopting a clear, measured and sympathetic approach to the management of its facilities which will take account of the contrasting needs of users.
- 3.2 This policy will also ensure that all dedication plaques have a common appearance, style and size and will not cause offence to others.
- 3.3 The Council, through this policy, will endeavour to offer the highest standard of service in undertaking its management and regulatory responsibilities.
- 3.4 Any complaints relating to the implementation of the policy will be dealt with through the Council's Complaints Procedure.

## **4. General Arrangements**

- 4.1 Applications for the installation of a dedication plaque on any Council owned seat shall be submitted in writing or email on the agreed form.
- 4.2 The Council does not permit the placing or burial of cremated human remains, or the scattering of human ashes in any of its public open spaces.
- 4.3 The Council does not permit the burial of pets or the scattering of pet ashes in any of its public open spaces.
- 4.4 One small vase can be purchased if required with each plaque and will be fixed to the rear of the seat. The Council accepts no liability for damage or theft of or from these vases and reserves the right to remove flowers if not managed by the applicant.

- 4.5. No other memorial tribute or mementoes, such as personal vases, statues, solar lights, obelisks, flowers, wreaths, balloons or other ornamentation should be placed on or around a seat, or other location. If this were to occur, the Council reserves the right to immediately remove and dispose of any such item.
- 4.6 Any dedication plaque and vase should be paid for by the applicant prior to installation, and the location agreed in writing.
- 4.7 All seats remain the property of the Council and operate as public seating. The Council will undertake maintenance on the seats within resources available and reserves the right to replace a seat when it has come to the end of its natural life. The style of the replacement seat may differ from the original one. Any dedication plaque on the seat at such time will be transferred to the replacement seat.
- 4.8 The Council accepts no liability for damage or theft of any dedication plaque or purchased vase from vandals or third parties. In this eventuality, any replacements can be purchased through the Council at an additional cost.
- 4.9 Dedication plaques on seats shall be made of brass or stainless steel and are of a typical size 60mmx175mm.
- 4.10 This size plaque allows four to five lines of text to be inscribed on the plaque and be easily read. Please note that the inscription on the plaques and the wording is subject to the approval of the Council.
- 4.11 All costs and procedures for such plaques are reviewed each year and will be for a 10-year dedication period. The renewal cost will be the cost that is determined at the end of this period.
- 4.12 It is the responsibility of an applicant to ensure that the Council is kept informed about their contact details. At the end of the dedication period, if the applicant cannot be contacted, then the plaque will be removed from the seat, and the space offered to a new applicant.