

WALSALL COUNCIL PARKS & GREEN SPACES MEMORIAL POLICY

1.0 Introduction

Commemorative seats and memorial trees have become a very popular way of remembering loved ones, which can also be appreciated by others.

Walsall Council supports the needs and principles of allowing memorials in parks and green space areas, but is also mindful that these facilities have many uses and are enjoyed by a wide range of people. The Council will therefore ensure that the issue is managed and regulated for the mutual benefit of all.

2.0 Objectives of the Policy

This policy has been produced with the following guiding principles:

- To be respectful, sympathetic and easily understood by customers
- To balance the sometimes contrasting needs of a variety of facility users
- To maintain and enhance the high quality appearance of sites and not detract from their prime recreational purpose
- To clearly establish the responsibility for maintenance, repair and replacement of memorials
- To achieve full cost recovery by Walsall Council for any memorials provided

3.0 Sites Included

Only the sites under the direct management of Walsall Councils Healthy Spaces team will be subject to this policy. This includes Parks and Countryside sites. Recreational open spaces within the wider borough managed by other organisations will be subject to their own policies.

4.0 Operation of Policy

The policy will be available to the public on the Walsall Council website.

4.1 Memorial Benches

Memorials will be positioned to maximise the benefit and development of the park and the number of memorials in a particular area may be limited. However the Council will attempt to accommodate the wishes of the applicants wherever possible.

In order to maintain consistency of appearance, quality and control over location, all benches will be ordered and installed by Walsall Council.

The total cost of the installation of a memorial bench (including plaque) is set as a yearly charge within our fees and charges document and will be based on cost price of purchasing and installing the bench.

The council in line with the current maintenance regime for benches will maintain the bench. However, no replacement liability will be accepted at the end of the useful life of the bench or if it is damaged through vandalism.

Each site has a maximum number of benches that can be accommodated and when this has been reached an alternative site will be offered. Alternatively an option to refurbish or replace an existing non memorial bench may be offered subject to the condition of the existing bench.

4.2 Memorial Trees

The planting of memorial trees will only be permitted within specified Healthy Spaces team managed sites and the number of trees permissible may be limited dependant on location.

Decision on species of tree that can be planted will be decided upon through discussion with the customer, and will be at the discretion of Walsall Council in keeping with the local environment. Suitability to the tree planting location – right tree, right place as per Urban tree Manual [Link to Urban Tree manual](#) and availability. Trees will be planted during the autumn and winter planting season by Council employees, but the member of public may be present and assist if practicable and desired.

Due to large numbers of existing trees with plaques and relatively high levels of demand for trees, plaques will not be allowed on new trees.

The total cost of the memorial tree is set as a yearly charge within our fees and charges document and will be based on an average cost price of purchasing and installation.

Walsall Council will not accept responsibility or liability in respect of any damage to, or loss of a memorial tree unless this is reasonably shown to be due to the negligence of the Council. However if the tree dies or is vandalised within the first year then it will be replaced free of charge.

4.3 Scattering of Ashes

Scattering of ashes is permitted within our parks and green spaces. Ashes shall only be scattered in a location agreed in advance by the Healthy Spaces team at a predetermined time and date. To submit a request to scatter ashes, please contact us by email or phone.

Guidelines for scattering of ashes include

- Ashes should be spread over an area of at least 20 square metres to minimise visible deposits.
- Thought should be given to wind direction and speed. The designation of 'windblown ashes' should be considered prior to release.
- Be aware that regular maintenance operations will continue on this site regardless of the scattering of ashes.
- No floral tributes or memorials of any kind shall be permitted.
- All water courses should be avoided.
- Please avoid rose gardens, formal flower beds and vegetable growing areas.

- Please avoid conservation sites such as; SSSI's and Nature Reserves as the phosphates and other minerals could damage sensitive ecology.
- Please be aware that in scattering ashes on a site there will be no official record kept that would allow future generations to locate where the ashes were scattered.
- Ashes may be scattered around the base of memorial trees (or nearby), but we do not bury ashes underneath the trees.

4.4 General

Placing of flowers and keepsakes are allowed at memorial benches / trees on important dates for the family such as birthdays, or date of passing. These need to be identified within the application, and all items should be biodegradable. Please note any item deemed non-biodegradable will be removed after 1 month.

Any memorial items attached to wider trees or spaces in our sites must also be biodegradable, and must not put at risk the long term health of the tree. No items can be screwed, inserted, embedded or hammered into the bark of any tree – any item such as this will be removed immediately.

Any wider items adorning non memorial trees will be removed after 1 month.

You may notice that we did permit plaques by trees in the past but due to increasing demand and understanding we will no longer permit them. If plaques, are left at trees these will be removed and disposed of as per a non-biodegradable item.

5.0 Appendices

The council reserves the right to move to a new location or remove completely any seat, tree and or plaque if it is deemed to be in the council's best interest. Notification of such action will be made to the applicant at the last known address.

Throughout the existence, trees and seats will remain in the ownership of Walsall Council.