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<b>Report To:</b>	<b>Environment &amp; Regeneration Committee</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>12 January 2023</b>
<b>Report By:</b>	<b>Interim Director, Regeneration &amp; Environment</b>	<b>Report No:</b>	<b>ENV012/23/SJ/KL</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Kenny Lang</b>	<b>Contact No:</b>	<b>01475 7125906</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Memorial Bench Review</b>		

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## **1.0 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY**

1.1  For Decision  For Information/Noting

1.2 The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Committee to end the provision of memorial benches and to offer a memorial tree service in its place.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee agree:-

- I. that the provision of additional memorial benches be stopped as of 1 April 2023
- II. That officers contact existing owners or memorial benches in poor condition and remove those benches where no feedback is received.
- III. To expand the memorial bench plaques scheme as per 4.2
- IV. To expand the memorial wall plaque scheme in accordance with 4.3
- V. To introduce a memorial tree service in accordance with 4.4.

**Gail MacFarlane**  
**Shared Head of Roads & Environmental Services**

### **3.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

- 3.1 The Council receive a number of requests for memorial benches across our parks and open spaces annually.
- 3.2 With approximately five hundred benches across Inverclyde, of which two hundred and fifty are memorial, unfortunately, there is now very limited scope for the Council to place benches which are usually requested at favoured positions or viewpoints.
- 3.3 Memorial benches are purchased through the Council at a cost of £824 and includes an engraved plaque. On purchase the bench becomes the property of the Council who will maintain it. Depending on the location benches will last for approximately ten years. Benches which are damaged beyond economic repair are removed and disposed of no replacement is made.
- 3.4 The Council have received 67 request for benches as follows over the last 3 years
- |           |                          |
|-----------|--------------------------|
| 2020/2021 | 27 benches               |
| 2021/2022 | 21 benches               |
| 2022/23   | 19 benches (To Dec 2022) |
- 3.5 While the benches are a fitting and respectful memorial, many residents are unable to afford the cost, a further complication is that many benches are now in a poor state of repair or families are no longer contactable.
- 3.6 The Council also offer a memorial plaque which is placed on a memorial bench within Port Glasgow, Kilmacolm or Knocknairshell Cemeteries or in the Garden of Remembrance at Greenock Crematorium. A maximum of 10 plaques are available per bench on a 10 year lease basis at a cost of £230 per plaque.
- 3.7 A memorial wall plaque is also offered on a 10 and 15 year lease at a cost of £400 and £567 respectively.
- 3.8 Having reached an effective saturation point, there is requirement to consider an alternative provision available to bereaved families or expansion of the memorial plaque lease. Officers have considered that within 2 to 3 years there will be no space for memorial benches in Inverclyde.

### **4.0 PROPOSALS**

- 4.1 It is proposed that the Council consider :-
- 4.2 **The expansion of memorial bench plaques.**

It would be possible to expand the memorial plaques to benches within Council owned land. This would allow bereaved residents to have a memorial situated in a public space subject to availability but also allows the expansion of memorials at reduced costs compared to a single bench.

As identified above a number of memorial benches are in a poor state of repair, officers will make an assessment of the benches and contact families to advise that the benches would require to be repaired or replaced. Where no contact is received benches would be removed and made available to the memorial bench plaque scheme. The original plaque would be retained and placed on the bench.

#### 4.3 The development of a memorial wall at our cemeteries

Memorial Walls already exist in our cemeteries, this could be simply extended, and an enhanced service implemented across all of our cemeteries. Currently we have wall plaques situated at Greenock Crematorium, Knocknairshill, Port Glasgow and Kilmaccolm Cemeteries These have proved to be very popular. In addition to this we have memorial plaques at the Garden of Remembrance.

Further development of Remembrance Walls would be brought to this committee.

#### 4.4 Memorial Trees

A further option would be to offer memorial trees, these would be a mixture of ornamental naturalised species, such as Malus ( crab apple) , Acers, and Cherry and native species such as Birch, Rowan and Beech. Committee will be aware that it was agreed on 27th October 2022 to develop a local tree growing project which would include our schools. The native species grown from this project would be made available as part of the memorial tree service. Each species would be located in an area sympathetic to its habitat.

Trees would be a minimum of 2 to 3 years old and planted by the Council , in the event that the tree dies within the first 2 years of planting these would be replaced free of charge.

In the event that the tree is damaged through natural causes, disease or vandalism after the 2 year period the tree would be removed and family advised.

Each tree would have a memorial plaque positioned adjacent to it. Where the tree is removed the family would be advised and the plaque would be returned to the family should they wish to receive it or relocated should they choose to purchase a new one.

The cost of the tree including all planting, plaque and 2 year maintenance would be £500. It is likely that offering a tree would be a more attractive option and offset the differential in costs between the memorial bench. Furthermore this removes the ongoing liability for maintenance and replacement that exists with the memorial bench service.

### 5.0 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation(s) is(are) agreed:

SUBJECT	YES	NO	N/A
Financial		x	
Legal/Risk		x	
Human Resources		x	
Strategic (LOIP/Corporate Plan)		x	
Equalities & Fairer Scotland Duty			x
Children & Young People's Rights & Wellbeing			x
Environmental & Sustainability	x		
Data Protection			x

#### 5.2 Finance

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report (£000s)	Virement From	Other Comments
NA					

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
N/A					

### 5.3 Legal/Risk

There are no Legal Implications arising from this report.

### 5.4 Human Resources

There are no HR implications arising from this report.

### 5.5 Strategic

There are no strategic implications arising from this report.

### 5.6 Environmental/Sustainability

Has a Strategic Environmental Assessment been carried out?

X	YES – the growing of trees fits with the councils existing strategy.
	NO

## 6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 There is no consultation pertaining to this proposal.

## 7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 There are no background papers relevant to this proposal.