

Memorials Policy



Key Information (To correspond with Covalent)

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Section/Directorate:	Leisure, Open Spaces and Community Facilities
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External Consultation:	Friends of Lake Meadows Friends of Wickford Memorial Park Community Diversity Council Rochford District Council
Internal Consultation:	Parks & Open Spaces Management & Staff Ndunge Kivuitu – Manager of Inclusion and Diversity
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Policy Approval – Member Level	Cllr David Harrison – Chair of the Neighbourhoods and Public Spaces Committee
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1. Introduction

This Policy looks to standardise the allocation and management of memorial trees and benches located within parks and open spaces. This has been proposed to ensure all memorials are allocated and managed consistently, using one operating process across all parks and open spaces within the Borough.

The Policy also sets out the process to standardise and control the scattering of human ashes within parks and create an option for depositing ashes in parks alongside a memorial. This process will enable parks staff members to adequately manage requests for ash scattering and prevent unauthorised scattering of ashes which can affect the enjoyment of other park users.

Organisations such as the RSPCA, the Marine Conservation Society and the National Farmers Union have campaigned for Local Authorities and government agencies to prohibit the release of balloons and lanterns on public land. Lanterns and balloons can cause littering up to 1000m from each release site as well as causing entrapment and ingestion risks to wildlife. There have also been a number of fires which have been caused by lanterns, this has caused risks to both land and buildings. The policy is looking to prohibit the release of lanterns and balloons on all council owned land in the Basildon Borough.

2. Policy Statement / Vision

The vision of this policy is to ban the release of balloons and lanterns on council owned land. There is support from wildlife and farming charities across the UK who have highlighted the risks to both the environment, buildings and land which is caused by the release of these items. This will be achieved through introducing a ban on these items on council owned land as well as educating members of the public through the events application process and through our parks staff operating within the borough.

The proposed Memorials Policy sets out the conditions to ensure that memorial sites are managed consistently and fairly. It will also allow parks management to have a consistent decision making process around the approval and allocation of memorial items. This Policy will ensure that memorials in parks can be managed in a consistent way that supports the enjoyment of all parks users, as well as supporting residents of the borough who wish to remember a loved one. The policy will be achieved by the introduction of a Memorials Process which will set out the management of the following criteria.

- Ownership and renewal of memorials
- Allocation of memorials
- Management of memorial items
- Ash internment

3. Context

Prohibition of the release of balloons and lanterns

Nationally there have been a number of campaigns to prohibit the release of balloons and lanterns by the RSPCA, The Marine Conservation Society and the National Farmers Union. These campaigns have been driven by a number of factors including:-

- Ingestion, entanglement and entrapment of wildlife leading to injury or death
- Risk of fire to both land and buildings
- Increased littering

Over 60 councils in the UK have already introduced a ban on balloons and lantern releases. This has been driven by a national interest in reducing the amount of single use items that cause littering and that take a significant time period to biodegrade.

To introduce the prohibition of lantern and balloon releases this will be included as part of the Parks and Open Spaces event application process. Although this ban can be enforced through the use of Section 87 of the Environmental Protection Act, it would be more beneficial to use the events application process as a way of educating residents about the ban. The introduction of this ban would also allow parks staff to speak to any residents seen releasing balloons and lanterns within open spaces to ask them to stop as well as educating them on the policy.

Memorial Benches and Trees

There are a number of sites across the borough that can offer memorial benches and trees including Norsey Wood, Lake Meadows, Gloucester Park, Wickford Memorial Park, Northlands Park and Wat Tyler Country Park. Other locations can be made available on request. There are currently sites within the borough which are at maximum capacity for memorial benches. The new policy has explored solutions to ensure site capacity is managed effectively and that memorials are maintained to benefit all parks users.

Ownership and renewal of Memorials

There are memorial benches and trees within the borough which have been in place for a number of years, are in a poor condition and require replacement. For these aged benches there is no indication as to how long they have been in situ or who they are allocated to ensure parks and open spaces are managed to a high standard, all new benches or trees that are purchased will be allocated for a period of 10 years. After this 10 year period the memorial owner will be asked to re-new the memorial period. If they do not wish to re-new the site will then become available for a new memorial.

Where there are existing memorial benches within parks, these will be maintained until the end of their useful life. The plaque from these benches will then be held by the Parks Management Team for one year from removal.

This process will ensure that memorial benches stay in good condition. It will also ensure that sites are managed and that memorials are appropriate.

Allocation of Memorials

The policy looks to ensure that memorials are proportionate within parks. Each park will have mapped areas of vacant memorial plots for both trees and benches. This will ensure that any requests for memorials will be based upon the suitability and vacancy within each park. This will standardise the process and ensure that plots are allocated both fairly and consistently.

Management of Memorial Items

As part of the policy, memorial items such as statues and teddy bears will not be permitted under the terms and conditions of the memorial item. Small floral arrangements will be permitted but these will be removed by parks staff after 5 days. Any memorial items that are found by parks staff will be disposed of. By establishing this protocol it will keep benches in a condition whereby they can be enjoyed by all parks users.

Ash Internment

There have been requests from members of the public to place human ashes within parks and open spaces across the borough. The policy looks to permit the internment of human ashes within public spaces if it is accompanied by a memorial tree or bench. The decision has been taken to not permit scattering of ashes within parks and open spaces as this becomes challenging to manage without affecting the enjoyment of park users and volunteers.

Consultation

We have consulted with Friends Groups around the borough as well as the Community Diversity Council. Some feedback has been received regarding the cost of memorial items, these costs have been calculated on a full cost recovery basis. The council will not make profit on these items but will provide the service on the basis of cost neutrality.

Friends groups have been very supportive about the introduction of a ban on the release of balloons and lanterns. They feel the impact on the environment and the littering that is caused does not benefit the parks and they would support the council on the introduction of this ban.

Council Promises

The Memorials Policy meets the Corporate Promises of Basildon Council through...

Corporate Promises	Levels of Impact			
	High	Medium	Low	None
1. A place for everyone to call home				X
2. A place where everyone prospers				X
3. A place to be proud of.		X		

6. Outcomes and Priorities

The outcome that this policy will achieve is to standardise the Council's approach to how decisions are made across its parks and open spaces throughout the borough in relation to memorial items, creating a fair and transparent approach with the aim to enhance the experience of visitors and volunteers, protect the natural environment and ensure full cost recovery.

In order to achieve this, specific focus will be on the prohibition of the release of balloons and lanterns and the management of memorial benches and trees.

7. Links to other Corporate Policies or Partner documents

Wat Tyler Country Park Management Plan
Norsey Wood Management Plan
Pollinator Action Plan

8. Appendices

- Procedure Notes – Enclosure 2
- Service Impact Assessment – Enclosure 3
- Fees and Charges – Enclosure 4
- Risk Management Implications – Enclosure 5

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