

**Meeting:** Overview and Scrutiny Board

**Date:** 8 April 2026

**Wards affected:** All

**Report Title:** Memorial Bench Policy

**When does the decision need to be implemented?**

**Cabinet Member Contact Details:** Councillor Adam Billings, Cabinet Member for Pride in Place. Adam.billings@torbay.gov.uk

**Director Contact Details:** Alan Denby, Director of Pride in Place. Alan.denby@torbay.gov.uk

## 1. Purpose of Report

---

- 1.1. To provide information on proposed updates to the Memorial Bench Policy

## 2. Reason for Proposal and its benefits

---

- 2.1. The Memorial Bench Policy was introduced in 2025 to formalise prior operational arrangements and provide clarity. It was recognised from inception that updates would likely need to be made to the policy.
- 2.2. Having been in place for approximately 12 months the Council's Cabinet has reviewed the Memorial Bench Policy, considering customer feedback and is now proposing several updates to the Policy. This review has also responded to the opposition's Notice of Motion.
- 2.3. By implementing these updates the revised pricing structure will address concerns which had arisen regarding the previous arrangements adequately providing for long term maintenance, repair or replacement of benches while being cost neutral.
- 2.4. This ensures that memorial benches remain safe, dignified and well maintained throughout their sponsorship term and provides greater transparency to sponsors regarding what is included within the charge.

## 3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

---

- 3.1 As per the current policy a bench and plaque will be provided and installed with a guaranteed maintenance term of five years, during which time any damage will be repaired to as new standard or, if required the bench and/or plaque will be replaced. This service will be provided as per the cost in the policy.

- 3.2 Having considered customer feedback following the initial roll out of the Policy, it is now proposed to be updated as follows.
- Towards the end of the initial five-year sponsorship, sponsors will be contacted and given the option to extend the sponsorship for a further 5 years. This offer will be repeated at five-year intervals,
  - Subject to the sponsorship being extended, the bench will be left in place for as long as it remains in good condition.
  - The renewal of the sponsorship at these five-year intervals will incur an administration fee of £35. These renewals will ensure relatively up to date contact information is retained for sponsors.
  - At the point of renewal, or at any time after the initial five-years if damage occurs, the condition of the bench will be discussed with the sponsor. If works or a replacement bench are required this will be offered, priced as required and would be at the sponsor's expense.
- 3.5 At the point of renewal, after the initial five-year term and subject to the condition of the bench, a further guaranteed maintenance period could be purchased by the sponsor for peace of mind if they so wish. The cost of this would be 25% of the cost of a new bench.
- 3.6 With the alterations to the five-year agreement there will be an associated alteration to the twenty-five-year term. This will be retained for those who require total peace of mind for a longer period. The terms of the agreement will remain the same, e.g. during the term any damage will be repaired to as new standard or, if required the bench and/or plaque will be replaced. The cost will be reduced by 50% compared to previously publishes charges and there will be shorter sponsorship periods available on application.

## 4. Appendices

---

None

## 5. Background Documents

---

- Record of Decision 4<sup>th</sup> September 2025 introducing the policy and supporting information
- Notice of motion Cabinet 16<sup>th</sup> December 2025
- Record of Decision Notice of Motion 16<sup>th</sup> and supporting information

## 6. Introduction

---

- 6.1. Memorial benches are a non-statutory, discretionary service provided by the Council within public open spaces. There is no legislative requirement to provide memorial benches; however, they are recognised as a valued public amenity and an important means for families to commemorate loved ones.
- 6.2. The current Memorial Bench Policy was introduced to address several operational challenges, including a deteriorating stock of benches, a growing waiting list, and the existence of multiple historic agreements dating from 2004, 2006 and 2010 with differing terms and limited provision for long term maintenance or replacement.
- 6.3. The policy and pricing structure were approved through an officer delegated decision on 4 September 2025, taken by the Director of Pride in Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, in accordance with the Council's Constitution.
- 6.4. Subsequently a Cabinet Notice of Motion came forward requesting that the Council bring forward the review of the policy.
- 6.5. This paper summarises the changes that are proposed to be made to the policy.
- 6.6. Clear written information is already provided to sponsors at the point of application and renewal, setting out available options, costs and terms in plain language. Officers already discuss renewal and maintenance options with sponsors when appropriate.

## 7. Options under consideration

---

- 7.1. An alternative option was to bring forward a policy in the form suggested in the notice of motion. This envisaged charges of £2,200–£2,400 for exclusive sponsorship and £600 - £650 for a 15-year period with the fee covering installation and maintenance costs. Officer's professional advice is that such a charging rate would (a.) not be cost neutral and would instead require a contribution from the annual budget settlement (b.) be likely to concentrate new memorial benches in sea front locations to the detriment of residential areas; and (c.) likely result in residential benches subsidising sea front location memorial benches as the styles of benches needed to for sea front locations typically have higher initial purchase prices where they are conservation settings. This option was hence discounted,
- 7.2. A further alternative option was to leave the policy in its original form. This too was discounted.

## 8. Financial Opportunities and Implications

---

- 8.1. Memorial bench provision is delivered as a discretionary service and is intended to be cost neutral. Charges are set to recover the full cost of installation, administration, inspection, maintenance and, where applicable, repair or replacement over the agreed term.

## 9. Legal Implications

---

- 9.1. None

## 10. Engagement and Consultation

---

- 10.1. Engagement has taken place through a review of correspondence received from residents, elected members and other stakeholders following the initial implementation of the policy. This feedback has informed the proposed changes, particularly the introduction of greater flexibility at renewal points and optional maintenance arrangements

## 11. Procurement Implications

---

- 11.1. None

## 12. Protecting our naturally inspiring Bay and tackling Climate Change

---

- 12.1. None

## 13. Associated Risks

---

- 13.1. None

## 14. Equality Impact Assessment

Protected characteristics under the Equality Act and groups with increased vulnerability	Data and insight	Equality considerations (including any adverse impacts)	Mitigation activities	Responsible department and timeframe for implementing mitigation activities
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>18% of Torbay residents are aged under 18 years old.</li> <li>55% of Torbay residents are aged between 18 to 64 years old.</li> <li>27% of Torbay residents are aged 65 and older.</li> </ul>	Older residents may be more likely to commission memorial benches. The revised policy introduces greater flexibility and allows sponsors to review arrangements over time.		
Carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At the time of the 2021 census there were 14,900 unpaid carers in Torbay.</li> <li>5,185 of these carers provided 50 hours or more of care.</li> </ul>	It is recognised that carers may be under financial pressures; however, the policy is considered to be affordable as prices for a plaque on a shared bench range from £550 to £850. This is lower than the starting prices for benches under the last policy some 15 years ago,		
Care experienced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As of January 2026, there were 277 former care experienced young people aged 18-24 in Torbay.</li> </ul>			

Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the 2021 Census, 23.9% of Torbay residents answered that their day-to-day activities were limited a little or a lot by a physical or mental health condition or illness.</li> </ul>	Disabled people are not affected. The policy does not alter physical accessibility standards or bench locations.		
Gender reassignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the 2021 Census, 0.4% of Torbay's community answered that their gender identity was not the same as their sex registered at birth.</li> </ul>			
Marriage and civil partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Of those Torbay residents aged 16 and over at the time of 2021 Census, 44.2% of people were married or in a registered civil partnership.</li> </ul>			
Pregnancy and maternity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Between 2013 and 2024, the rate of live births (as a proportion of females aged 15 to 44) has been slightly but significantly higher in Torbay (average of 56.0 per 1,000) than the Southwest (53.4) and broadly in line with England (56.3).</li> <li>For the period 2022 to 2024, rates in Torbay (44.6) have been</li> </ul>			

	significantly below England (50.0).			
Race	<p>In the 2021 Census, 96.1% of Torbay residents described their ethnicity as the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1.6% as Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh</li> <li>• 0.3% as Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African</li> <li>• 1.5% as being of Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups</li> <li>• 96.1% as White</li> <li>• 0.4% described their ethnicity another way.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic communities are more likely to live in areas of Torbay classified as being amongst the 20% most deprived areas in England.</li> </ul>			
Religion and belief	<p>The 2021 Census showed that the residents in Torbay identify their religion and/or belief as the following;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 48.5% are Christian</li> <li>• 0.4% are Buddhist</li> <li>• 0.2% are Hindu</li> <li>• 0.6% are Muslim</li> <li>• Less than 0.1% are Sikh</li> <li>• 0.1% are Jewish</li> <li>• 0.7% have another religion</li> </ul>			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 43.2% have no religion</li> <li>• 6.3% did not answer</li> </ul>			
Sex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 51.3% of Torbay's population are female.</li> <li>• 48.7% of Torbay's population are male.</li> </ul>			
Sexual orientation	<p>In the 2021 Census, residents described their sexuality as follows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 89% as Straight or Heterosexual</li> <li>• 1.7% as Gay or Lesbian</li> <li>• 1.1% as Bisexual</li> <li>• 0.1% as Pansexual</li> <li>• 0.1% described their sexuality another way</li> <li>• 7.4% of people didn't answer the question</li> </ul>			
Armed Forces Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2021, 3.8% of residents in England reported that they had previously served in the UK armed forces.</li> <li>• In Torbay, 5.9% of the population have previously served in the UK armed forces.</li> </ul>			
<b>Additional considerations</b>				
Socio-economic impacts (Including impacts on child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Torbay is ranked as the 39th most deprived upper tier local authority in</li> </ul>	It is recognised that families may be under financial pressures; however, the policy is considered to be affordable as prices for a plaque on a shared bench		

poverty and deprivation)	England in the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2025.	range from £550 to £850. This is lower than the starting prices for benches under the last policy some 15 years ago,		
Public Health impacts (Including impacts on the general health of the population of Torbay)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For the five-year period 2020 to 2024, data shows there is a 6-year life expectancy gap between males who live in Torbay's least and most deprived areas and, a 3-year gap for females.</li> </ul>			
Human Rights impacts				
Child Friendly				

## 15. Cumulative Council Impact

---

15.1. None

## 16. Cumulative Community Impacts

---

16.1. The proposed changes relate to pricing, renewal terms and optional maintenance arrangements for memorial benches. They do not restrict access, eligibility, or location of memorial benches on the basis of any protected characteristic. The policy applies equally to all applicants and provides greater flexibility and choice than the previous arrangements.