

2026

Hampsthwaite Parish Council: Benches Renewal and Maintenance Policy



Adopted: 10th February 2026
Review Cycle: 3 Years
Next Review: January 2029

1. Purpose

This policy sets out how the Parish Council manages public benches within the parish, including requests for new benches, memorial benches, maintenance responsibilities, and end-of-life arrangements. The aim is to ensure benches are safe, accessible, appropriately located, and managed in a fair and consistent way.

2. Scope

The policy applies to:

- Benches owned or managed by the Parish Council
- Requests from residents, community groups, or organisations for new or replacement benches
- Memorial benches and associated plaques
- Maintenance, inspection, and removal of benches on Parish Council land

It does **not** apply to benches owned by other authorities or private landowners.

3. Principles

The Council will:

- Provide benches that enhance public enjoyment of parish spaces
- Ensure all benches are safe, durable, and accessible
- Manage memorial requests sensitively but within clear operational limits
- Avoid creating long-term liabilities that cannot be funded or maintained
- Ensure consistent design standards to protect the character of parish spaces

4. Requests for New Benches

Residents or organisations may request a new bench by submitting:

- A written request including the proposed location
- The reason for the request
- Any accessibility considerations
- Whether the request includes a memorial element

The Council will assess:

- Suitability of the proposed location
- Impact on accessibility, sightlines, and neighbouring properties
- Existing bench provision
- Maintenance implications
- Environmental considerations (e.g., tree roots, drainage, wildlife)

The Council reserves the right to approve, amend, or refuse any request.

5. Memorial Benches

The Council recognises the importance of memorial benches as a way for families to commemorate loved ones. To manage demand fairly and sustainably:

5.1 Eligibility

Memorial benches may be approved for:

- Individuals with a demonstrable connection to the parish
- Community figures or groups where appropriate

5.2 Design and Specification

To ensure consistency, all memorial benches must:

- Be of a Council-approved design and material
- Include a plaque of standard size and format (e.g., 150mm x 50mm, brushed metal)
- Use wording that is respectful, non-commercial, and non-political

5.3 Costs

All costs associated with:

- Purchase
- Installation
- Plaque
- Delivery
- Initial groundworks

...must be met by the applicant in full prior to installation.

5.4 Lifespan

Memorial benches are installed for a **10-year term**.

At the end of the term:

- The family will be offered the option to renew for a further 10 years (at cost)
- If no renewal is requested, the bench may be removed or repurposed at the Council's discretion
- Plaques will be returned to the family where possible

The Council cannot guarantee the bench will remain in perpetuity.

6. Maintenance and Inspections

The Council will:

- Inspect benches at least annually
- Carry out routine maintenance (tightening fixings, cleaning, minor repairs)
- Remove or make safe any bench that becomes dangerous

The Council is not responsible for:

- Replacing benches damaged by vandalism, weather, or age unless the bench is Council-owned
- Maintaining benches installed without Council approval

Where a memorial bench becomes unsafe or beyond repair, the Council will contact the donor where possible. If contact cannot be made, the Council may remove the bench.

7. Locations

Benches will be placed in locations that:

- Are accessible and safe
- Do not obstruct footpaths, sightlines, or maintenance routes
- Do not create nuisance for nearby residents
- Complement the character of the area

The Council may decline locations that are unsuitable or already saturated.

8. Unauthorised Benches or Plaques

Benches or plaques installed without Council approval may be:

- Removed without notice
- Stored for up to 3 months for collection
- Disposed of if unclaimed

9. Donations and Community Projects

Community groups may propose bench installations as part of wider projects. These will be assessed on:

- Long-term maintenance implications
- Suitability of design
- Accessibility
- Environmental impact
- Alignment with Council priorities

10. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed every **three years**, or sooner if required due to changes in legislation, demand, or maintenance capacity.