

Benches in Broadstone: their future.

1. Introduction:

- 1.1 Recent additions to Broadstone's benches following investment by Broadstone Neighbourhood Forum and the creation of Broadstone Town Council make this an opportune moment to assess the number, condition, ownership and future maintenance of the benches.
- 1.2 This draft report outlines the number and location of each bench, assesses the condition and suggests options for the future. Further work, especially around the financial elements associated with the purchase and maintenance of the benches, is necessary and will underly any final proposal.
- 1.3 However, at this point in time the question to be answered is: is this an opportunity the town council wishes to take forward?

2. How many benches and where?

- 2.1 Residents have relatively easy access to a bench almost anywhere in Broadstone though a significant number – 19 - are to be found concentrated within the commercial centre or the Boadway.
- 2.2 These vary significantly in style and condition with two at least identified as 'commemorative'. Apart from those recently installed – 4 – as part of the Neighbourhood Forum's Broadway renewal programme the rest date back to the 1980's or earlier and so are reaching their end of life.
- 2.3 Broadstone Park and Recreation Ground (Plainfield Farm) has 24 benches (18 and 6 respectively) including some mounted on concrete stands, some memorial and three new (two picnic style and one other provided by Broadstone Neighbourhood Forum).
- 2.4 Springdale Park on Lewesdon Drive has a total of 6 benches (5 within the children's play area and one outside. These consist of 3 metal and slatted wood benches, 1 picnic and 2 flat benches.
- 2.5 There are no benches in Pocket Park or Pine Springs Nature Reserve
- 2.6 Elsewhere benches are scattered around the centre providing suitable resting places for those walking into the centre., for example, Wentworth Drive by the tennis courts, the junction of Moor Road and Golf Links Road, Clarendon Road opposite the roundabout, Lower Blandford Road south of Wallace Road.
- 2.7 Altogether there are 53 benches.

3. Condition

- 3.1 Apart from those supplied within the last 18 months ie those provided by Broadstone Neighbourhood Forum (7), it is fair to say that the majority fall within the amber (evidence of some repair but still requiring further

maintenance) and red (lacking any evidence of maintenance with some damage and generally outdated) categories.

3.2 This gives an overall impression of shabbiness and neglect. Several of the memorial benches fall into these categories.

4. Ownership

4.1 Apart from those provided by Broadstone Neighbourhood Forum which are or will be passed to the Town Council's list of assets the rest are the responsibility of BCP Council. For these there is no maintenance programme or budget. Repair takes place as and when required to make them safe and usable.

4.2 However, it is thought the memorial benches are managed slightly differently as funding was/is provided from private sources. Details are awaited following a request for further information from BCP Council.

5. Future options

5.1 Clearly several options are available to the Town Council:

5.2 Take no further action: this would leave the council with the responsibility of those benches on its asset list. In which case a basic maintenance policy would be required and an annual budget established. This would leave the majority of benches with BCP@ and no planned maintenance programme. The impact on those areas where the benches are would be highly negative and potentially harmful to Broadstone's environmental quality and feeling of well-being.

5.3 Agree to take over the management of all the benches: this would require a significantly higher maintenance budget and a more complex management programme. This would ensure a more pleasing appearance and encourage greater use adding a positive benefit for the community.

5.4 Provide new benches to those areas identified as benefitting from such an addition, eg Pocket Park: This would require capital investment which could be managed by creating earmarked reserves as part of the overall budget But it would add to the maintenance budget, thus increasing the need for additional revenue. Would the benefits outweigh the costs?

5.5 Negotiate a replacement programme with BCP council: This would result in a similar position to that set out in 5.3 but would have two advantages. The take-over would be gradual and more manageable and would be less strain on financial resources especially the revenue account.

6. Decision Required

6.1 to agree that a detailed financial report be presented to full council in July.