

Appendix to Agenda Item 7a

Broadstone's Benches – financial considerations.

1. Introduction:

1.1 At the last Full council meeting (June 8th) it was agreed that a financial report relating to key aspects of Broadstone's public benches should be prepared and presented at the next full council meeting (July 20th). This report sets out the potential costs of a number of options and possible recommendations for future consideration.

1.2 There are some 60 benches scattered unevenly across Broadstone though there are three areas in which benches are concentrated, the Broadway, Broadstone Park/ Recreation ground and Lewesdon/Springdale Park, The majority of benches are of considerable age and predate the formation of BCP Council (2019) which is currently responsible for all except six.

1.3 These six were originally provided by Broadstone Neighbourhood Forum as part of a phased programme of enhancement of the Broadway. They are now the responsibility of Broadstone Town Council as part of its assets. Apart from these, all the other benches are in varying states of disrepair. (see page).

1.4 There is also a lack of consistency in bench design with several different styles in use which does little to enhance the surroundings or to encourage people to use them. It could therefore be of benefit to Broadstone for the Town Council to take over the management of some or all of these benches subject to costs and the wishes of residents.

2. Current management:

2.1 BCP council Parks and Green Spaces service unit is responsible for the majority of benches in Broadstone. A small number, the memorial benches, of which there are no more than 5 in Broadstone, are managed by the Commemorative Team for which there is a very clear policy and charges framework (see below). Neither the Parks Department nor the Commemorative Team have a scheduled maintenance programme even though it is stated "benches are maintained in a good condition." However, repairs are carried out as required when damage is reported.

2.2 Funding for this work differs. The Parks Department does not have a set budget for bench maintenance or repairs hence for park managed benches any repairs are financed from the Parks Department's annual budget potentially impacting other aspects of their work.

2.3 The commemorative Team, however, build into their charges a 10 year maintenance budget, currently £100/yr yet there is no scheduled maintenance programme!

2.4 Currently this council has no scheduled maintenance programme or specific maintenance budget for the benches it now has responsibility for.

3. The options:

3.1 This report sets out several options for discussion, and at this stage of the review, none should be considered an actual proposal for adoption.

3.2 Option 1- Do nothing; If the council were to do nothing then the newly acquired benches would deteriorate more quickly than if there were a maintenance programme. While there would be no

Donation Details – New Donations	Price Band	£ Price (ex VAT)*
New bench (10 years) – not currently available	A	£3560 - £3830
New bench (10 years) – SHARED** – not currently available	A	From £1187
New bench (10 years) - not currently available	B	£3910 - £4110
New bench (10 years) – SHARED** – not currently available	B	From £1306
New bench (10 years) - not currently available	C	£4820 - £5070
New bench (10 years) – SHARED** – not currently available	C	From £1607
Existing Bench (10 years)	A, B, C	£2915 - £2955
Existing Bench (10 years) – SHARED**	A, B, C	£972 - £1005
Additional/Replacement Plaque	Bronze	£495-£595
Additional/Replacement Plaque	Stainless Steel	£435-£535
Additional/Replacement Plaque	Brass	£435-£535
Location additional cost (for high footfall or high maintenance areas)		£100
Additional installation charges (e.g. concrete base)		from £70

*VAT is not usually applicable to donations.

capital outlay there would be a loss of value and an increasing shabbiness within the Broadway. However, there is always a risk of damage which would then need to be repaired to avoid any public injury, thus incurring unplanned expenditure.. In the worst case scenario of a bench having to be replaced the unplanned cost would exceed £1,000, given the style of bench.

3.3 Option 2 – Maintain the council’s benches only: This would require the development of a maintenance strategy and creating a specific budget line to cover the costs of implementing the maintenance programme. On the basis of 6 benches as at present this is not likely to exceed £360 per year. This figure is based upon an average of £30/hour labour costs and a maximum of 2 hours per bench. This does not allow for damage repair or inflation. A service level agreement could be drawn up and agreed with either BCP Council or an appropriate private company. In the former case minimum costs could be as high as £100 per bench per year based on their current charges and therefore significantly higher than if a private company were to be used.

3.4 Option 3 – Invest in additional benches: this can be achieved in two ways. Firstly through adoption of BCP council’s existing benches and secondly by replacing existing benches. In either case agreement would have to be reached with BCP Council.

3.5 By adopting BCP Council’s benches it is assumed these would be passed to Broadstone Town Council at no cost but with the agreement to maintain and repair them. For the whole of Broadstone that would be approximately 60 benches. The minimum cost of taking on this quantity of benches would be in the region of £3,600/yr with an unknown damage repair sum.

3.6 If, however, a limited number of benches were adopted, for example, those on the Broadway, not only would this reduce the annual maintenance bill by approximately £2,940 but it would also provide an opportunity to continue the enhancement of the Broadway over time.

3.7 It would not be financially feasible to replace all of BCP’s Broadstone benches in a single transaction as the cost would be prohibitive especially if BCP insisted on carrying out the procurement and fixing. Even on a like for like basis the minimum cost per bench could be as high as £926 giving a total of £55,560 plus any plaques at an average of £500 each. The Neighbourhood Forum in 2023 were considering sponsoring a memorial bench but with BCP’s insistence on doing everything the quoted cost exceeded £2,500 plus £1,000 for 10 years maintenance. The project was abandoned.

3.8 Replacing a limited number of existing BCP stock, for example, Broadway benches only, would be more feasible and enable the enhancement of the Broadway to continue but would still be expensive with each new bench costing just over £1,000. There are 11 benches. This could be done in a series of phases of planned expenditure but because this would be a capital expenditure it would be necessary to set aside the money as earmarked reserves.

4. Conclusions:

4.1 It is up to the Council to decide what it wants to do, bearing in mind doing nothing is not a realistic option. The figures referred to in the text do not include VAT nor do they include the effects of variable annual inflation rates. However, they are a good indication of the potential costs the council would face depending upon which option, if any, is preferred. It must also be remembered that there are other options around the financing of a potential project such as this, including grants from outside bodies. There is however one action that can be taken immediately and that is to agree to develop a maintenance strategy for the Council’s own benches and create an appropriate budget line for its implementation.

Cllr Mike Brooke

