

## **STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE**

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**Date:** Monday, 11 July 2022  
**Title:** Happy to Chat Bench  
**Contact Officer:** Project Officer - Nicky Cayley

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### **Background**

In 2020 Guideposts requested a “chat bench” to combat loneliness but have since withdrawn from the project. At the time the Council designated the bench outside Halifax as a suitable site. Due to the pandemic, this had not progressed.

Another request was received in March 2022 (from a resident). The Council supported this and allocated a budget of £150.

### **Current Situation**

As no response has been received from either Guideposts, this is a project the Town Council will progress.

The Project Officer has researched this and the most common way of turning a bench into a chat bench is to put a laminated sign reading: -

#### **Happy To Chat Bench**

**Sit here if you don't mind someone stopping to say hello!**

A laminated sign would not last long in the exposed location of the proposed bench and a proper metal sign would be smarter and more durable. The Council orders memorial plaques for the memorial wall and the Maintenance and Environment Officer has confirmed that this would be suitable for the bench. The Project Officer would suggest that the commonly used wording (as above) would be appropriate. It is understood that a QR code has also been suggested although this may not add anything beneficial to the wording already in place and conversely may add to a feeling of exclusion in the older community - who are the most likely to suffer from loneliness and isolation – as they may not have a smart phone or even understand how to use a QR code. A brass memorial plaque (size 20cm X 10cm) from a local shop would cost £50.

In terms of decoration, it might not be appropriate to use very bright colours in the conservation area, but the metalwork of the bench could be painted (any colour can be obtained) and the wood of the bench rubbed down and re stained to smarten it up.

Members may also like to consider inviting the community to do some yarnbombing to give the bench a real community feel ( see attached photos for some examples).

### **Environmental impact**

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

There are no environmental risks associated with this project.

### **Risk**

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability. There are no risks associated with this project.

### **Financial implications**

The allocated budget for this project is £150. A plaque would cost around £50, and paint would be under £100.

### **Recommendations**

Members are invited to note the report and consider:-

1. Wording for the bench;
2. If a plaque should be ordered with the agreed wording;
3. Restoration of the bench with paint and re-staining as outlined;
4. If the community should be invited to decorate the bench by yarnbombing or any other suggested way.