**Bath Magistrates’ and County Court and Family Court (Magistrates)**

**Proposal**

Bath Magistrates’ Court is co-located with Bath County Court at Bath Law Courts, and is one of four magistrates’ courts in Somerset. The court deals with criminal business in adult and youth cases. The jurisdiction of the court covers the city of Bath and the surrounding rural area.

The proposal is to close Bath Magistrates’ Court and transfer the workload to Bristol Magistrates’ Court.

This proposal is linked to the proposed closure of North Avon Magistrates’ Court (also known as Yate Magistrates’ Court) which is also contained within this consultation. The capacity at Bristol Magistrates’ Court would only support the workload from either Bath Magistrates’ Court or North Avon Magistrates’ Court and the responses to the consultation will inform the decision on whether either of the two proposals are implemented.

Bristol Magistrates’ Court is a modern purpose built 12 courtroom building situated in the centre of Bristol. The court has excellent facilities for court users, staff and judiciary. The move to a significantly larger, modern building would provide better services for our users, enable more flexibility in the listing of cases and allow more efficient use of staff and judicial time.

There would be no enabling works required at Bristol Magistrates’ Court to accommodate the workload from Bath Magistrates’ Court.

Should this proposal go ahead the Judicial Business Group (JBG) would undertake local stakeholder engagement to consider the need for the merger of Local Justice Areas.

**Accommodation**

Bath Magistrates’ Court was built in 1989 and is in a good state of repair. It has a total of five courtrooms of which four are magistrates’ courtrooms.

The court has separate waiting rooms for prosecution and defence witnesses. It also has video link facilities for use by witnesses giving evidence but it does not have a prison video link.

All courtrooms are without a fitted hearing loop system and have to get by with antiquated portable loop equipment. This can sometimes be incompatible with the more modern hearing aids worn by court users.

**Workload**

Bath Magistrates’ Court has four courtrooms and is capable of sitting up to 992 days per year (at 248 days per courtroom). In the financial year 2014/15 Bath Law Courts (Magistrates’ and County) was utilised for approximately 46% of its current capacity.

Bath Magistrates’ Court is currently the centralised road traffic court dealing with all minor motoring offences committed in Somerset, Bristol, and Avon.

**Location**

Should Bath Magistrates’ Court close rather than North Avon Magistrates’ Court (Yate Magistrates’ Court), the proposal is for all the work to be moved to Bristol Magistrates’ Court. Bristol Magistrates’ Court is located in the centre of Bristol and is 13 miles from Bath. There is a frequent bus and train service between Bath and Bristol. Travel time by train is approximately 20 minutes and by bus is approximately one hour. The approximate cost of a return rail ticket is £7.00. The journey time by car is approximately 30 minutes.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Before** | **Time** | **%** | **After** | **Time** | **%** |
| **By Car** | **0-30min** | 74% | **By Car** | **0-30min** | 17% |
| **30-60min** | 26% | **30-60min** | 68% |
| **60-120min** | 0% | **60 - 120min** | 15% |
| **>120min** | 0% | **>120min** | 0% |
| **no data** | 0% | **no data** | 0% |
| **By Public Transport** | **0-30min** | 23% | **By Public Transport** | **0-30min** | 0% |
| **30-60min** | 30% | **30-60min** | 17% |
| **60-120min** | 43% | **60-120min** | 62% |
| **>120min** | 4% | **>120min** | 20% |
| **no data** | 0% | **no data** | 1% |

**Staff implications**

There are 17 staff based at Bath Magistrates’ Court.

**Other information**

Bath Law Courts is a freehold building and contains both the magistrates’ court and county court. The building forms part of a wider Ministry of Justice (MoJ) site which also accommodates National Probation Service staff. It is however self contained within the wider MoJ site.

The 2014/15 operating costs of the Bath Law Courts (County and Magistrates’) were approximately £453,000.

**Bath Magistrates’ and County Court and Family Court (County and Family)**

**Proposal**

Bath County Court and Family Court is located in the same building as Bath Magistrates’ Court at Bath Law Courts, and is one of four county courts in Somerset.

The proposal is to close Bath County Court and Family Court and transfer the workload to the Bristol Civil and Family Justice Centre (CFJC).

Bristol CFJC is a modern purpose built court situated in the centre of Bristol. The court has excellent facilities for court users, staff and judiciary. The move to a significantly larger, newer centre would enable more flexibility in the listing of cases, offer an improved service to court users and allow more efficient use of staff and judicial time.

No enabling works would be required at Bristol CFJC to accommodate the workload from Bath County Court and Family Court.

**Accommodation**

Bath County Court and Family Court was built in 1989 and is in a good state of repair. The building has a total of five courtrooms of which four are magistrates’ courtrooms and one is the civil courtroom.

The civil courtroom does not have a fitted hearing loop system and currently uses antiquated portable loop equipment. This can sometimes be incompatible with the more modern hearing aids worn by court users.

Bristol CFJC is a modern purpose built court centre situated in the centre of Bristol. The court has excellent facilities for court users, staff and judiciary.

**Workload**

Bath County Court and Family Court has one civil courtroom and is capable of sitting up to 248 days per year. In the financial year 2014/15 Bath Law Courts (County and Magistrates’) was utilised for approximately 46% of its capacity.

Bath County Court and Family Court deals with civil money claims, housing possession cases, bankruptcy, District Registry, and contested hearings in divorce cases and family work.

**Location**

The proposal is for all work that is currently dealt with at Bath County Court and Family Court to be moved to the Bristol CFJC which is located in the centre of Bristol and is 13 miles from Bath. There is a frequent bus and train service between Bath and Bristol. Travel time by train is approximately 20 minutes and by bus is approximately one hour. The approximate cost of a return rail ticket is £7.00. The journey time by car is approximately 30 minutes.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Before** | **Time** | **%** | **After** | **Time** | **%** |
| **By Car** | **0-30min** | 74% | **By Car** | **0-30min** | 17% |
| **30-60min** | 26% | **30-60min** | 68% |
| **60-120min** | 0% | **60 - 120min** | 15% |
| **>120min** | 0% | **>120min** | 0% |
| **no data** | 0% | **no data** | 0% |
| **By Public Transport** | **0-30min** | 23% | **By Public Transport** | **0-30min** | 0% |
| **30-60min** | 30% | **30-60min** | 17% |
| **60-120min** | 43% | **60-120min** | 62% |
| **>120min** | 4% | **>120min** | 20% |
| **no data** | 0% | **no data** | 1% |

**Staff implications**

There are eight staff based at Bath County Court and Family Court.

**Other information**

The Bath Law Courts building is freehold and contains both the magistrates’ court and county court. The building forms part of a wider Ministry of Justice (MoJ) site which also accommodates National Probation Service staff. It is, however, self contained within the wider MoJ site.

The 2014/15 operating costs of the Bath Law Courts (County and Magistrates’) were approximately £453,000.