

Procedure for processing requests for benches

Assessment

1. When a request is received to place a bench in a specific location, the applicant would be required to provide their name, address and the reason why the bench is required at that location (e.g a disability which means they have a need sit down at regular intervals). The location would be assessed to see whether the location is suitable. When assessing the suitability, the following information would be considered.
 - Whether a request for a bench at the same location has been made previously and the outcome (i.e was it refused?)
 - The immediate area around which the bench is proposed. Benches will not be placed in front of windows or doors of residential premises or shops, or outside schools.
 - Whether there is another bench/bus shelter nearby.
 - Whether there is sufficient pavement width to place a bench – we would use the same criteria as is used for placing tables and chairs on the highway, as set out in the Transport Supplementary Planning Document. The standards relate to the width of footway that must be left clear of obstacles so that pedestrians can pass without being obstructed. A minimum of two metres must be left clear to allow pedestrians, prams and wheelchairs to pass without difficulty. In areas with high pedestrian flows the 'clear' footway would need to be more than two metres. Where a site is within a principal shopping centre' (areas considered to be busy) a minimum of four metres is required. Where an area is considered to be of medium usage a minimum of three metres clear pavement width is required.
 - Whether the bench can be physically installed (i.e it would not be placed over a cellar). This would be checked by consulting Highways.
 - Whether the bench is acceptable to the Community Safety team (i.e any history of anti-social behaviour near the location proposed).
2. Once the location requested has been assessed, if it does not meet the Council's criteria, the person making the request would be informed.
3. If the request does meet the criteria, the details of the request would be added to a list. All requests which have met the criteria would be looked at during February, June and October and, should the likely cost of approving all the request exceed our budget, they would be prioritised based on need - for instance, the number of requests that have been made for a bench at a specific location, whether there are no other benches or anywhere to sit in the vicinity of the bench requested, disability of the person making the request or there is a need to sit down, e.g. near a bus stop. If there are several requests for benches at locations which are fairly close together we would look for the location that would satisfy the most needs.

Consultation

4. Bench proposals would be put forward for consultation. A site notice inviting comments would be erected near the proposed site. The notice would also be sent to ward councillors and resident associations. Six weeks would be given for providing views on the bench proposed. This is the same public consultation process as is followed for traffic order changes.

Decision

5. If there are no objections at the end of the consultation period, the benches would be placed on the highway.
6. If there are objections, the Director for Transport and Highways would consider these after consulting with the Lead Member for the Environment.
7. A list will be collated of requests that have been refused and the reasons why.

Note. This process excludes benches which require planning permission.

Ends