Justice Committee

Scottish Court Service recommendations for a future court structure in Scotland

Written submission from James D S Steel

I am vehemently opposed to the closure of Cupar Sheriff Court. This is politically driven, does not make financial sense and will greatly affect the poor the disabled and the infirm in north Fife.

Cases will be moved to Dundee which does not have the capacity to effectively deal with the increased business.

Witnesses and accused will have to travel to Dundee from inaccessible parts of Fife with no rail links and poor bus services. For those without their own transport it will be very difficult for them to be at court in Dundee for the required time – 9:30 am.

We have already seen the debacle that arose a couple of months ago when cases were transferred from Perth to Dundee. Witnesses in rural Perthshire could not get to court in time. The result was that the sheriff in Dundee requested the police to arrest witnesses and when they appeared in court some were kept in prison to await the case hearing with which they were involved. If Cupar Sheriff Court closes we can only expect more of the same. This will not aid justice and will be oppressive so far as the poor and vulnerable are concerned. Who will want to be a witness in these circumstances?

To close Cupar Sheriff Court does not make sense on economic or humanitarian grounds and I would urge that it is reprieved.

Regards

James D.S. Steel
21 May 2013