Justice Committee

Scottish Court Service recommendations for a future court structure in Scotland

Written submission from Gemma Miller

I am writing to record my opposition to the proposed closure of Cupar Sheriff Court.

Closure of Cupar Sheriff Court will undoubtedly have a detrimental effect on access to justice for those living in the community that is currently served by the court. We are fortunate at Cupar to have a fully integrated facility where the court, police and social services are local and to be moved into one location. If the court in Cupar is closed, those attending court (including the police, social workers and witnesses) will face longer and more costly journeys (particularly if by public transport) - whether travelling to Kirkcaldy, Dunfermline or Dundee.

Cupar Sheriff Court covers many rural areas where a taxi, 2 buses and a significant walk or another taxi may be required to attend court in Dundee, Kirkcaldy or Dunfermline. The costs and inconvenience to be caused to court users should not be overlooked or underestimated. I feel that it has been thus far. The importance of having local people administering justice and dealing with your case should not be underestimated either.

To many people in Cupar's jurisdiction, Cupar is convenient and local and has provided that service for a very long time. I feel that there will be a big impact upon people having to attend the city of Dundee to deal with, for example, executries, family cases and debt actions and it may discourage the public from using the court if their closest court is not local to them.

The projected savings put forward by the Scottish Court Service do not justify dismantling the local justice system in North East Fife and I am not clear that any savings in closing the court have been properly measured against the increased cost to the public purse of court attendees having to travel further.

I shall be grateful of your confirmation that full consideration has been given to the financial and social impact of the closure of the court on access to justice for the extended rural community it serves and on all users of the court, not just in Dundee but the impact upon the other courts and users expected to hear the cases to be transferred to them.

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