Justice Committee

Scottish Court Service recommendations for a future court structure in Scotland

Written submission from Mandy Barbour

Please find my points below on why Cupar Sheriff Court should not be closed.

- If the court is moved to Dundee, it will involve more time and expenses for people to attend Court and for employers to give employees time off to attend Court
- Local access to justice will be lost
- More taxpayers’ money will have to be spent by the Police and Social Services attending Court in Dundee than the projected £38,000 per year saving to the Scottish Court Service by closing Cupar Sheriff Court
- The Court sat the equivalent of 257 days last year which merits it remaining open
- Relative savings from closure (net of dilapidations which is only a paper accounting entry) leaves only £38,000 per year out of hoped for savings of £1.43m per year. Such a tiny saving does not justify dismantling local justice in Cupar - compare the one-off transfer to Dundee costs of £91,000. On the other hand Cupar Court generates fees of around £200,000 per year which must off-set its running costs
- Cupar is/will be a fully integrated service like Livingston comprising Court, Police and Social Services all under one roof
- Cupar has three "cafeteria" facilities paid for by Fife Council, a vulnerable witness suite and up-to-date technology
- There will be an economic impact on Cupar town as many wage and salaries dependant on the Court will be spent elsewhere
- One Sheriff sitting in a country Sheriff Court like Cupar provides continuity of approach and benefits from local knowledge and deals with cases at every stage as espoused by retired Sheriff George Evans
- The backlog maintenance claim of £470,000 for Cupar is not credible when compared with an average of £12,000 per year over the last five years (£51,000 of which was spent on the one-off refurbishment of the Sheriff Clerk’s office)

Mandy Barbour
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