Justice Committee

Scottish Court Service recommendations for a future court structure in Scotland

Written submission from Linda Devenney

I am a resident of Arbroath and would be grateful if the following could be considered at the Committee Meeting to be held on 21 May. I support local Solicitor Mr Nick Whelan in his view that closing Arbroath Sheriff Court would be cutting local people off from the justice system.

It is proposed that Forfar Sheriff Court would take over the current business carried out at Arbroath but this would cause huge problems in relation to travel as there are no trains to Forfar and the buses are few and far between it would be difficult to get to court by 10am and if you were able to get a bus it is quite likely that victims, witnesses (including vulnerable children and adults), solicitors and accused people could all be on that same bus. This is sure to raise concerns with the general public. Also it is likely that more accused people will be unable to get public transport and so more Warrants issued and more Police resource required.

Does Forfar have the means to carry out the extra business? At the moment Arbroath has far more cases than Forfar and if those were combined at Forfar this would probably result in cases being continued for longer periods and causing inconvenience to clients.

Arbroath Court has an appropriate vulnerable witness facility and an up to date fire alarm system but Forfar does not - there are obviously lots of upgrading works that would have to be carried out at Forfar to bring it up to the same as Arbroath is just now.

Local businesses in Arbroath would also be affected by the closure of Arbroath Court and this would not be good for the town as there are many closed shops as it is. It could also lead to more unemployment.

What would happen to the court building? If it is to be maintained by Angus Council can they realistically estimate the cost? It would be very sad for the town if it were to be another empty building in the town centre.

Linda Devenney
20 May 2013