Justice Committee

Scottish Court Service recommendations for a future court structure in Scotland

Written submission from K A Melville

I was unable to attend the local meeting held with several local MSPS about the above held on 13th May 2013. However I had previously corresponded with Nigel Don MSP concerning the same indicating that I was totally against the closure.

My reasons have been expressed before and maybe shared by many members of this community. I understand from local lawyers and solicitors that the Aberdeen Court to which the current work from Stonehaven Sheriff Court would be held has an existing heavy work load and cannot cope with this resulting in delays. In addition my understanding is that there is not a great deal of savings by closing our local court. It has been stated that there are not many cases heard in Stonehaven but surely more of the routine and run of the mill cases could be heard in Stonehaven freeing up vital time for the more serious cases to be heard in Aberdeen.

Stonehaven is the County town and to close this court would be a serious loss to the community and cause some loss to the local legal practices and maybe to the community as well. This court is attached to the local Police Station and if the court is closed will the Police Station be next? It will be virtually impossible to sell the court building without the Police station attached or very unwise to do so.

When the proposal was first drawn up the current Local Plan may not have been finalised. This being the case you may be unaware that since then a new community at Chapelton of Elsick is to be built catering for something like 8,000 houses and all the rest of the necessities that go along with a new community including schools shops leisure facilities etc. It is situated to the west of Newtonhill about mid way between Stonehaven and Aberdeen. This is to provide for the number of houses etc needed for the Laurencekirk- Aberdeen corridor for the next 15 to 20 years. Which court will cater for the additional work that will be generated.? Aberdeen will not cope.

In my view this proposed closure has not been properly thought out and I would like to know the costs proposed to be saved and what if any provisions have been made in the findings for this new community.

I would ask the Scottish Parliament to think again.

K A Melville
20 May 2013