Justice Committee

Scottish Court Service recommendations for a future court structure in Scotland

Written submission from Kathleen A Steele

Haddington Sheriff Court

May I put forward my strong opposition to the court closure. I feel strongly that there are very few valid reasons for closing it but here are some of the reasons FOR KEEPING OUR HADDINGTON COURT OPEN:-

1. SOLICITORS COSTS - There would be massive costs for solicitor's travelling to court in Edinburgh (also time is money) and this in turn would add to the DEFENDANT AND WITNESSES COSTS.

2. TRAVELLING - It can COST about £10 (possibly a lot more depending where you live in East Lothian) to get into Edinburgh and then up to the courts. If someone is already on low income then say £20 or more each day of hearings would be a very large percentage of their income. You would probably have to add to this the COST OF MEALS. If you are already struggling with debt the last thing you need is to have to pay out money for travelling and attending court.

3. Defendants/witnesses etc would be exhausted and perhaps nervous or STRESSED going to the large central court.

4. The work of the SOCIAL WORK departments and foster care and local knowledge of the situation that the people involved should REMAIN LOCALLY ACCESSIBLE and efficient WITH QUICK OUTCOMES.

5. HUGE DELAYS WOULD RESULT because of the pressure on the Edinburgh Courts making this whole exercise a laughing stock and, if it is pursued, would be perceived as ARROGANT and DISMISSIVE.

6. The COUNCIL IS WILLING to work in a positive way to resolving any issues of MAINTENANCE and MODERNISATION and it has been shown that THERE WOULD BE NO SAVINGS (ACTUALLY IT WOULD COST MORE) so there is absolutely NO REASON to close the courts.

I trust the Committee will read and consider my plea to reconsider their proposal. I am a retired legal secretary who worked in Haddington.

Kathleen A Steele
18 May 2013