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Additional information:

Letter sent to Cabinet Secretary for Justice, as resolved at Council meeting on 17 December.

Authorised By	Angela Leitch
Designation	Chief Executive
Date	28 January 2014

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By email  
Kenny MacAskill MSP  
Cabinet Secretary for Justice  
Scottish Government

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Dear Cabinet Secretary

## **HADDINGTON SHERIFF COURT**

I am writing on behalf of East Lothian Council about ongoing concern over the decision to close Haddington Sheriff Court, in the light of recent information about the progress of cases in the receiving court in Edinburgh.

Recently the Council was given the opportunity to offer written evidence to the Scottish Parliament Justice Sub Committee on Policing in relation to Police Reform. In the course of considering the content of that evidence, the Council's elected members were made aware by officers of figures on the numbers of criminal cases being dealt with by Edinburgh Justice of the Peace Court and Edinburgh Sheriff Court (on summary procedure).

Those figures, made available by the Scottish Court Service to the Strategic Officers Group in October 2013, suggested an increase in the number of summary criminal cases and in the time taken to dispose of cases. The figures in question show that:

for **Edinburgh's Justice of the Peace Court**, in the three months ending August 2013 compared to the same period the previous year:

- there had been an increase of around 50% in summary complaints registered;
- summary complaints outstanding had increased by 139%;
- the time taken to bring a case to court (waiting period and trial diet) had increased by 17 weeks;

in **Edinburgh Sheriff Court** for the same period:

- there had been an increase of around 42% in summary complaints registered;
- summary complaints outstanding had risen by around 49%;
- time taken to bring a case to court had increased by 2 weeks.

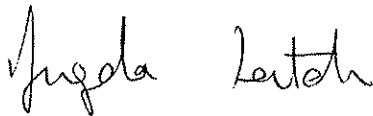
Given that Edinburgh is to be the receiving court on closure of Haddington Sheriff and JP Courts in January 2015, the figures are of concern:

- in the interests of the efficient administration of justice;
- in the interests of victims and witnesses facing longer waiting times till a possible court appearance;
- in terms of the effectiveness of any community-based disposal that might be ordered by the court, since it is generally accepted by practitioners that intervention is more effective the closer in time it happens to the offence event.

Council members naturally anticipate that the closure next year of Haddington Sheriff Court will lead to further increases in the figures above. The Council have therefore directed me to ask you in the light of this information to reconsider your decision to close Haddington Sheriff Court in January 2015. If you are minded not to reconsider, it would be useful to have your comments about the administration of these types of criminal case.

I am copying this letter to Iain Gray MSP, Colin Beattie MSP and South of Scotland List MSPs.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Angela Leitch". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A'.

**ANGELA LEITCH**  
Chief Executive