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Additional information:

This is a reply to the Chief Executive's letter of 18 January (Members' Library, January 2014, number 16/14:
http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/15155/1614_haddington_sheriff_court-letter_to_cabinet_secretary)

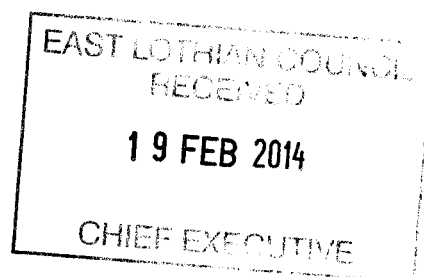
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Designation	Chief Executive
Date	25 March 2014

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Ar faidhle/Our ref: 2014/0003527

18th February 2014

Dear Angela

HADDINGTON SHERIFF & JUSTICE OF THE PEACE COURT

Thank you for your letter dated 28 January where, given recent increases in the number of summary criminal cases set down for the courts in Edinburgh, you asked me to reconsider closing Haddington Sheriff and Justice of the Peace Court. You also asked for my comment on the administration of these types of cases should I not reconsider.

As you are aware, in preparing their consultation for shaping Scotland's court services, the Scottish Court Service undertook a thorough review of business trends. They are acutely aware that the criminal justice system is largely demand led and will result in the number of cases registered at court fluctuating month on month. They also work closely with justice organisations to make sure that any increase in case volumes are properly accommodated in the court programme.

As Scottish Court Service has made clear, when cases transfer from Haddington to Edinburgh, the same level of court capacity, judicial and staff resources currently serving Haddington will be provided in Edinburgh.

I understand that moving cases from Haddington to Edinburgh will benefit some victims and witnesses in East Lothian. Edinburgh Sheriff and Justice of the Peace Court has dedicated vulnerable witness facilities which Haddington does not and all emergency out of hours child protection orders from Haddington are already dealt with by Edinburgh. For many victims and witnesses in East Lothian, travelling to Edinburgh by public transport will be easier and more convenient than going to Haddington.

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The Scottish Court Service has not presented me with new plans to retain Haddington Sheriff and Justice of the Peace Court and I do not intend to reconsider the parliamentary orders which close the court in January 2015. The administration of the courts in Edinburgh and Haddington is rightly the responsibility for Sheriff Principal Stephen and independent justice organisations and not Ministers. I would not then wish to comment on the management of court business.

I hope this is helpful.



KENNY MACASKILL