Solicitor attacks court switch proposal

A FORMER clerk to Lampeter magistrates has strongly criticised a proposal to move the town's ancient court to Aberaeron.

Aberaeron Magistrates' Courts Committee has recommended that the town's court should be amalgamated with the Aberaeron court when and if adjoining there are any improvements. The Aberaeron court already deals with the Lampeter petty sessions division.

But Mr Vincent Evans, a former mayor of Lampeter, said the recommendation in a confidential report by the committee had provoked strong dismay and grave concern among residents of the town.

Mr Evans, a practising solicitor and member of the town council, said it was disconcerting that a responsible body like the magistrates' court committee should embark on a major policy change on the sitting of courts without any consultation or liaison with the town and community councils.

Public participation through councils and other representative bodies is necessary and essential to any decision making process in a democratic society, he said. "The magistrates enjoy no divine right to conduct their business in a way which is out of the public's view. It has no right to do anything which is unaccountable to the ratepayer and to the taxpayer."

Mr Evans said the report suggested that local knowledge of magistrates and the location of courts within a petty sessions division were no longer of any importance or relevance.

"The truth is that the local court, in its own peculiar environment, serving basically its own community - and not in the main people outside its orbit - has been suggested by some magistrates - "functioning with that degree of efficiency and fairness as can best be achieved in an imperfect human society," he said.

"Never mind that he will urge the town council and other community councils in the district to make representations to the magistrates' court committee, to the town council, to the minister in charge of the Lamperter court, that it should be a retro-grade step."

The clerk to the magistrates' court committee, Mr Lewis Davies, said the committee had discounted the future of the court as it had looked as way of wasting money and it had been decided that the court at Lampeter should continue to sit there for the time being.