Campaign to retain court at Lampeter

LAMPER'TS mayor has vowed to pull out all the stops to save the town’s court after it was announced on Monday that cases will not be heard there next year.

Dyfed Powys Magistrates Court Committee announced that they are to maintain Cardigan and Aberystwyth courts to serve Cardigan, but not lost any business at Lampeter from January.

The committee outlined their proposals to have two courts in the county, and Lampeter cases will now be heard at either Cardigan or Aberystwyth.

But following the meeting, Lampeter mayor Cllr Selwyn Walters and the town council and people of Lampeter now have a fight on their hands to keep the court open.

Eight members of the town council met with Cardigan council leader Cllr Dai Lloyd Evans and chief executive Owen Watkins last week to try and enlist their support in keeping the court open.

Cllr Walters said the county council had intended to support the plan to keep Cardigan and Aberystwyth, but Cllr Evans will put the proposal to support Lampeter's case to the Cardigan court on 24 October.

He said they would also appeal to the Dyfed Powys Magistrates Court Committee to try to enlist the support of their MPs and AMs and appeal to the Lord Chancellor if need be.

"Whatever can be done will be done, to either postpone or reverse the decision of the Magistrates Court Committee," he said.

Whatever happens we will not take this decision lying down.

Cllr Walters said there were many good reasons to retain Lampeter, but he felt the decision was part of a national policy.

"We've got better facilities than some of the courts they are going to loop open," he said.

"Lampeter is centrally loo"pied out only for Cardigan but also for west Wales.

"But it appears that Lampeter has been intentionally run down so that they can find reasons to close it.

"This decision appears to be simply following a national plan to centralise everything, but the people who make these decisions have no idea of the distances we have to travel in rural Wales.

"It would be an absolute crime to let it close, " Cllr Walters said himself and fellow councillors were disappointed with the way the Dyfed Magistrates Court Committee had handled the closure.

"We asked them many times what their intentions were and to keep us informed, but they didn't tell us anything until the actual decision was already made - even then we only found out about this meeting secondhand," he said.

"It is not a satisfactory situation and we are very aggrieved about that.

Peter Townsend, Chief Executive of the Dyfed Powys Magistrates Court Committee, said that the consultation process about the future of Lampeter magistrates court was still continuing.

"We are going to issue a consultation document at the beginning of next year," he said.