



**Damian Hinds**  
*MP for East Hampshire*

News release

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For immediate release

## **Initial response to proposed closure of Alton Magistrates' Court**

The Ministry of Justice has announced that, as part of the drive to save costs and integrate services across Her Majesty's Court Service, the Ministry is now actively considering the closure of Alton Magistrates' Court, with work being transferred to Aldershot. Damian Hinds, MP for East Hampshire, has stated his determination to play a key role in the ongoing consultation.

Damian Hinds said: "We all understand that there is massive pressure to reduce operating costs across all government departments and the recent written announcement from the Ministry of Justice must be seen in this light. However, we have to ensure that vital local services are not sacrificed without due consideration. I was informed of the announcement by my ministerial colleagues of the consideration to close Alton Magistrates' Court and am writing to them to ensure that I am fully consulted in the process going forward. I am determined to play a very active part in the Ministry's deliberations."

According to the Ministry of Justice, there is currently one member of staff based at Alton Magistrates' Court, annual operating costs for 2009/10 were £178,000, and closure would also remove the need for HMCS investment in backlog maintenance of around £290,000. The most recent Disability Discrimination Act Access Audit identified needed improvements totalling over £170,000.

The court currently sits every week on Monday, Thursday and Friday. As well as handling criminal work it is also the Specialist Domestic Violence Court for NE Hampshire and specialises in youth and family matters. (Aldershot and Basingstoke are also Specialist Domestic Violence Courts).

Damian Hinds said: "Every community is going to have to look hard at how it can innovate and integrate services to meet the cost of our national deficit while minimising impact on vital

public service delivery. That being said I shall be undertaking a close consultation with representatives within our community and ensuring that nothing is done without the views of East Hampshire being heard. I will be consulting widely so I can make the most informed representations to the Ministry, and I would encourage any local residents to contact me at [damian.hinds.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:damian.hinds.mp@parliament.uk) to let me know their views or how this would affect them.”

ENDS

Notes to editors:

The full text of the MoJ's statement is available at

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/consultations/docs/proposal-on-the-provision-of-courts-services-dorset-hampshire-iow-wiltshire-finala.pdf>

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