

Concerns over the future of rural policing

THE forthcoming closure of a police station has sparked concerns over the policing of rural areas of Llanelli.

Councillors discussed the closure of Felinfoel Police Station at a Llanelli Rural Council meeting last week, where Inspector James Davies addressed members.

The police station has been earmarked for closure within the next three to 15 months, as part of a money-saving exercise by Dyfed-Powys Police.

The force announced earlier this year that it would be shutting smaller police stations down in order to save £13 million by 2014, to satisfy the Government.

The closures are expected to save it £1.1 million over the next 10 years.

Swiss Valley councillor Giles Morgan said he was worried over the closure.

"The visibility of the police station in the area does help things, even if it's not manned

by Chantelle Rees

all the time it's enough to deter criminals," he said.

"It makes a statement that there are police in the area.

"I understand that savings need to be made but I would like to express a concern."

Inspector Davies said although Mr Morgan was "quite right" about the presence of the station, the closure "would not affect the policing in the area whatsoever".

He said: "I do not believe that it will affect the area's policing at all — you will still have the same officers."

Plans

"The police you have now will be there no matter what happens.

"Although we do not yet know where they will be based, there are no plans to reduce the number of officers in the area."

Councillor John Evans pointed out that the council has offered police officers in Felinfoel a base at the new Felinfoel Community Centre, based at the village recreation ground.

He added: "There is a room there for you to use free of charge.

"It will provide you with a base to see people and will also help to protect our new centre from vandalism if people know there are police there."

Inspector Davies said in reply: "As far as I'm concerned, officers can be at the centre at certain points throughout the week.

"I can't see us using it full-time as we need officers to be out on the streets, but we can certainly try to be there for a few hours a week."

Council clerk Mark Galbraith said he was planning to meet with Chief Inspector Richard Lewis next month to discuss the closure.