

Crown drops inquiry as fiscal quits job

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A prosecutor has quit her job after being suspended in the wake of allegations that she dropped a criminal case as a favour to a friend.

Procurator-fiscal depute Morag Stuart, 34, tendered her resignation from her job in Dundee earlier this month.

The Crown Office yesterday said there would be no proceedings against her in connection with an alleged attempt to pervert the course of justice.

Ms Stuart was reported to the procurator-fiscal in Edinburgh and suspended from her work in October last year.

A Crown Office spokeswoman last night said: "Following a full and careful consideration of all of the facts and circumstances, crown counsel have instructed that no proceedings are to be taken in this case."

Detectives raided the Dundee office where Ms Stuart worked last September and removed files relating to hundreds of cases she worked on.

She had been on sick leave for several weeks and returned to work on a three-day basis just before being suspended.

A court insider said: "There were apparently very dramatic scenes when she was marched out of the office without ceremony.

"I don't know how it came to light, but it involves a case she was handling which was dropped. The allegation is that she took the decision not to proceed any further with the case because the accused was someone she knew.

"Fiscal staff have to be seen to be squeaky clean. Even if she was blameless and the case might have been dropped anyway, then it's an act of folly to have handled it herself."

Another court regular said: "She mainly worked in Dundee and in Arbroath sheriff courts. She has done all the usual stuff - trials and pleading courts. She was not what you would describe as one of the popular figures around here. Being off for such a long time probably didn't help either. This episode must be hugely embarrassing for the fiscal's office."

At the time she was suspended, a spokeswoman for the Crown Office confirmed that police were looking into allegations against a staff member. "We are aware that there is an ongoing police investigation in relation to a member of staff in Dundee," she said. "We do not comment on personnel issues, as these are clearly confidential. However, in accordance with normal practice the member of staff has been suspended."

Ms Stuart, a Dundee University graduate, worked as a private litigator in Glasgow before becoming a fiscal depute. She could not be contacted for comment last night.

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