

Case: 201200138, The City of Edinburgh Council
Sector: local government
Subject: council tax (incl community charge)
Outcome: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Ms C was liable for council tax. When she received a bill, she emailed the council for assistance because she was having difficulty paying. The council did not respond to her email. They later took recovery action for her council tax arrears, which resulted in a charge being added to her account. Ms C complained that the charge was added to the account even though she was making regular payments. She also complained that her emails were not answered and about the quality of the complaint response letter she received from the council which she said contained spelling and grammatical errors.

We did not uphold the complaint about the charge because we found that Ms C's council tax account was in arrears and she did not make reasonable attempts to contact the council to make a payment arrangement. Although we noted that she had emailed them, we did not think that sending one email during a four month period (while aware that they had not yet replied) amounted to a reasonable attempt to contact the council. However, we upheld her complaints that the council did not respond to emails and about the quality of their complaint response.

Recommendations

We recommended that the council:

- review their processes for responding to email contacts to ensure that, where appropriate, emails are acknowledged and dealt with within the published timescales; and
- reflect on the quality of written communications, as demonstrated by this complaint, and take appropriate steps to ensure that they are of a satisfactory standard.