SPSO decision report

Case: **201200647, Fife Council**
Sector: local government
Subject: primary school
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained about the council's consultation process in selecting a site for a replacement of the local primary school. Specifically, he alleged that the council did not reasonably consult in selecting a site for the new school, did not reasonably consider other options for the site, did not adequately communicate their decision on a preferred site and did not keep adequate records of the consultation process.

Our investigation found that the need for a replacement school was identified in 2008, and that the council's development services had carried out a site option appraisal. In early 2009, the project was brought forward in the council's capital expenditure programme. The sites were later visited and scored by a cross service group of officers (using a site-scoring matrix). A report was presented to councillors in October 2009. In the following four months, meetings took place with the school's parent council and the town's community council, and in June 2010 councillors, council officers, community council members and parents visited the shortlisted sites. A limited public engagement exercise also took place at the local library.

The council made a decision on a preferred site in November 2010 and requested a further report on the business case for the replacement school on that site. This was approved in May 2011. Formal public consultation on the proposal in compliance with the recently introduced School Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010 took place in the autumn of 2011.

Our investigation did not find evidence to uphold any of the four elements of Mr C's complaint. We found that the consultation on site selection had been appropriate; the other options had been reasonably considered; and the council's reasons for selecting the preferred site were set out in the officers' reports and committee minutes. We also considered that the council had kept adequate records of the process.