

SPSO decision report

Case: 201300466, Renfrewshire Council
Sector: local government
Subject: rent and/or service charges
Outcome: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained about the heating system in his council property. He said that it was inefficient, that the council had failed to explain the system to him before he signed the tenancy agreement and had refused to allow him to opt out of the heating service. He also complained about the council's handling of his representations about it.

The heating system was a communal one, paid for by all the tenants in the block of flats, and had been installed a number of years before. The council accepted that, although it had been upgraded over the years, the system required further upgrading to make it more efficient, and said that they were in the process of planning to replace it. However, they said they were satisfied that it met their operational standard to provide suitable and safe heating. They also explained that the system was serviced on an annual basis and that, during the last service, no issues had been raised.

During our investigation, we found that the separate charge for the heating system had, in error, not been detailed on the tenancy agreement and that the council had no documentation to show that the heating system was explained to Mr C when he viewed the property before signing the tenancy agreement so we upheld his complaint about this. However, we did not uphold his other complaints as we were satisfied that the council had provided a proper heating system and had responded to his representations. They had explained that he could not opt out of the heating system, as it was communal, and that it could not be turned off for a single property.

Recommendations

We recommended that the council:

- consider whether information should be provided on the heating system and the implications for the tenant, when sending out the 'first offer of housing' letter in relation to properties serviced by a communal heating system.