

SPSO decision report

Case: 201302453, A Council
Sector: local government
Subject: policy/administration
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mrs C complained to us about the council's involvement in the naming of a nearby property. The name chosen by the other owner – and approved by the council – was almost identical to the name of Mrs C's property. This caused problems with the mail, of which Mrs C became aware when she received letters for the owner of the second property.

The council explained that they check naming requests when they receive an application. However, in this case, their checks had not identified Mrs C's property, because her property name consisted of a single word. The second application had a space in the name, although otherwise the name was identical to that of Mrs C's property. The council acknowledged that their checks failed to identify the similarity. However, they explained that they had alerted Royal Mail to the situation to prevent future mix-ups. They also outlined their legal role in naming and numbering streets, and explained that their house naming policy aimed to prevent confusion or duplication of names. However, as property owners are responsible for property names the council said they could not legally force a change. We upheld Mrs C's complaint as the council had failed to identify Mrs C's property in line with their policy.

Recommendations

We recommended that the council:

- apologise for their administrative oversight in processing the naming request;
- confirm the steps that they have taken to ensure that when considering future naming requests this kind of error is not repeated; and
- contact the other owner, in light of our findings, to explore whether or not they would be willing to amend their house name.