

SPSO decision report

Case: 201402088, The City of Edinburgh Council
Sector: local government
Subject: statutory notices
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C owns a property in Edinburgh. The council issued a statutory notice requiring repairs to chimneys shared with a neighbouring property. A separate notice had been served for work required at the neighbouring property. The property owners asked the council to take over management of the required works, and a project manager and contractor were appointed. An estimate was provided detailing the likely cost and timescale for the works. Scaffolding was erected and a full survey carried out. Mr C complained that, once the scaffolding was erected, the project suffered from unreasonable delays and unexplained increases in the associated costs. Despite his requests for clarification, he was not provided with an adequate explanation as to why the costs had increased.

We found the communication from the council and their contractors to be poor. The costs associated with Mr C's property actually decreased, however, no clear explanation was given to him as to what he was being charged for. An independent investigation was carried out to assess the validity of the charges and we were satisfied that the council took Mr C's concerns seriously, waiving costs that had been added to the project unreasonably. However, we were critical of the quality of their communication throughout the project.

Recommendations

We recommended that the council:

- apologise to Mr C for failing to clearly explain the costs associated with the statutory notice work at his property; and
- waive 50 percent of Mr C's administration fee.