

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201402362, North Ayrshire Council  
**Sector:** local government  
**Subject:** building warrants  
**Outcome:** some upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Mr C complained about the way the council handled his request for information about building standards. He felt the council had been unreasonably obstructive. We found that it took the council more than four months to acknowledge Mr C's request for information and over six months to respond. This was unacceptable. Although the council had apologised for the delay they had not acknowledged the considerable time and effort Mr C and his MP had to go to before getting a response. We asked the council to offer an apology which took account of this. The council told us the delay happened at a time of staff transition. We concluded that even during a time of reorganisation or transition the council should put arrangements in place to deal with incoming letters. We asked the council to carry out a review to check that suitable arrangements for handling correspondence within their building standards team were now in place.

We did not find the content of the council's response to Mr C to be unreasonable. The information Mr C requested was readily available and free to view online. Nevertheless, when asked to reconsider, they did provide the hard copy information Mr C had asked for.

### Recommendations

We recommended that the council:

- provide an apology which recognises the significant time, effort and inconvenience caused by the repeated failure to reply to correspondence over a six month period; and
- review the procedure within building standards for dealing with incoming correspondence to ensure it is now sufficiently robust and report back to us.