

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201403062, Aberdeen City Council  
**Sector:** local government  
**Subject:** communication staff attitude and confidentiality  
**Outcome:** upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Mr C had written to the council to ask if a condition of planning approval had been purified (agreed to have been discharged) by their planning department. Under the council's planning enforcement charter he was entitled to a formal response within ten working days, but he did not receive this. When he wrote again this email was also ignored. Mr C then complained to the council and received their final response which signposted him to us. He then complained that the council did not respond in good time to his concerns about a possible breach of planning control at a neighbouring property.

The council told us that they did not send a formal response as Mr C had met one of their officers at a council office (although Mr C said that this was while on other business). We decided, however, that they should have formally responded to his enquiry, in line with their charter. We upheld his complaint and were also critical of the council's complaints handling.

### Recommendations

We recommended that the council:

- apologise to Mr C for the failings identified by our investigation;
- remind staff that the model complaints handling procedure from our Complaints Standards Authority requires them to clearly communicate the outcome of an investigation to the customer; and
- demonstrate to us that action has been taken to resolve the discrepancy between the response time stated in the charter and the one stated in their automated acknowledgement email.