

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201406751, Aberdeen City Council  
**Sector:** local government  
**Subject:** rent and/or service charges  
**Outcome:** upheld, recommendations

### Summary

When Mr C moved out of his property, into a larger council property, he was sent a bill for rechargeable repairs that needed to be carried out. Mr C complained that there had not been a pre-termination inspection which would have alerted him to any changes he had made to the property which the council were not satisfied with. Mr C also said he had offered to carry out the repairs himself, as he could not afford the estimated cost the council provided him with. When Mr C did receive the full invoice for the works, they were more than double the estimate previously provided and Mr C also complained about this.

During our investigation we found the reason no pre-termination inspection was carried out was because the council themselves had set a very tight deadline for Mr C to move into the new property, so that he would avoid paying two rents. We also found the council had not responded to Mr C's later offer to correct the work himself. For these reasons we upheld this complaint and recommended the council apologise to Mr C.

We also found the council were unable to specify exactly why Mr C's final bill was so much higher than originally estimated. While they provided general comments that it was difficult to predict exactly how each job would progress, we were not satisfied they could robustly explain what happened in Mr C's case. For these reasons, we upheld Mr C's complaint and made recommendations to address this.

During the investigation we also identified a number of administrative failings, including unreasonable delays, confusion over the appeals route and complaints procedure and made recommendations to address these aspects as well. In light of the failings, we also recommended the council cancel Mr C's invoice.

### Recommendations

We recommended that the council:

- apologise for the failings identified;
- cancel the outstanding invoice;
- reflect on the failings identified and how to prevent them occurring again;
- review the rechargeable repairs appeals procedure and ensure that it refers to us at the end of the process; and
- provide us with a copy of the standardised tool for estimating repair costs.