

SPSO decision report

Case: 201407146, The City of Edinburgh Council

Sector: local government

Subject: council tax

Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Ms C complained that the council were incorrectly pursuing her for payment of council tax arrears for a period after she had vacated her rented flat. Ms C said that she had paid the council tax demand she had received from the council, and when she notified them she was moving out two months before the lease ended, she was told her account had been closed. Subsequently, she had received council tax demands for sums due before she left, and until the formal end of her lease. The council had admitted to her that they had made mistakes with her council tax account. However, Ms C told us that they had not satisfactorily explained to her why they had told her that her account would be closed when she vacated the flat, had then made further demands, and then continued to send her demands for different amounts.

We upheld Ms C's complaint because it was clear not only that she had been given incorrect advice at the outset that her account would close when she vacated the flat, but there had been a catalogue of errors following on from this in the handling of her council tax liability. The council had recognised that their service to her was poor when they responded to her formal complaints, and apologised. However, we considered that more could be done to resolve Ms C's complaint because the council had failed to provide her with demands for payment which showed that they had correctly calculated both what she had paid into her account, and what she owed.

Recommendations

We recommended that the council:

- make a time and trouble payment to Ms C; and
- review Ms C's council tax liability and payments record and provide fresh billing notifications, with a covering letter explaining any changes made.