

SPSO decision report

Case: 201602871, The City of Edinburgh Council
Sector: local government
Subject: council tax
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Miss C complained that the council had failed to provide a clear and understandable explanation for the council tax changes on her account over a five-month period. She also complained that the council failed to adequately communicate with her following her contact with them over a ten-month period.

We found that while the council had, following our enquiries, been able to provide us with as clear and understandable an explanation as possible, they had not done so for Miss C. We therefore upheld Miss C's complaint.

We noted that the council had not provided either Miss C or us with an explanation for reassessing her council tax on one specific occasion. We also felt that, when it became apparent to the council that the information they were providing was not clear to Miss C, it would have been helpful for them to consider alternative means of communicating this information, for example through a face-to-face discussion. We made recommendations to address these issues.

In relation to Miss C's contact with the council, the council had already recognised that they had provided a poor level of service to Miss C and had apologised to her. We upheld Miss C's complaint. We identified three specific areas where the council's service had been poor and made recommendations accordingly.

Recommendations

We recommended that the council:

- provide Miss C with a clear explanation for reassessing her council tax;
- remind the relevant complaints handling staff to consider all means of resolving a complaint, including face-to-face discussion with the complainant;
- apologise to Miss C for failing to provide a clear and understandable explanation for changes to her council tax; and
- review the circumstances giving rise to the three service issues identified by the council and provide us with evidence that they have taken action to prevent a similar situation occurring in future.