

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201605800, Aberdeen City Council  
**Sector:** local government  
**Subject:** repairs and maintenance  
**Outcome:** some upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Mr C owns a flat in a block of six, half of which are owned by the council and half of which are privately owned. Mr C complained that the council failed to write to him to advise of repairs that needed to be carried out in communal areas and that as a consequence no estimates were obtained and he had not been aware that work had taken place.

The council invoiced Mr C in March 2016 for work carried out in April 2015 and August 2015. He complained about the delay in receiving the invoice and asked for a breakdown of costs, which the council said they were unable to provide. The council instructed a debt collection agency to recover the debt, and Mr C complained that the council had failed to notify him that this would be their next step.

The council provided evidence showing that they had notified owners of planned repairs, allowing them time to obtain alternative estimates. Mr C accepted that in the case of emergency repairs the council did not need to notify owners in advance. We considered that the council had not unreasonably failed to notify Mr C in advance of repairs that required to be carried out, and did not uphold this complaint.

We found that the delay in issuing the invoice for repairs in April and August 2015 was unacceptable, and recommended that the council apologise for this.

With regards to providing a breakdown of costs, the council's position was that repairs are often carried out by sub-contractors, who invoice the council in batched accounts. We considered it reasonable for the council not to provide a breakdown of costs in these situations but recommended that when possible, for example when repairs are carried out by council tradespeople, the council should provide a breakdown of costs.

Mr C complained that the council gave him no notice that they would be instructing a debt collection agency to recover sums owed. However, the council provided evidence showing that there had been a clear statement to that effect on the overdue invoice sent to Mr C. We did not uphold this complaint.

We noted Mr C's frustration at not being able to communicate with the council, especially regarding emergency repairs. We recommended that the council nominate a key contact for communication about any matters relating to communal parts of the building and provide Mr C with contact details.

### Recommendations

We recommended that the council:

- apologise to Mr C for the delay in issuing an invoice;
- provide a breakdown of costs on invoices where possible, and confirm to us that this will be implemented; and
- nominate a key contact for communication regarding communal areas of the building, and provide Mr C

with contact details.