

SPSO decision report

Case: 201709302, Aberdeen City Council
Sector: local government
Subject: policy / administration
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained about the increased number of waste and recycling bins which are being stored on the pavement of his street. He said that the council were failing to address the issue. He asked for the council to have a formal policy in place for bin removal and to explain why his request to access reports/correspondence relating to this issue was not upheld. The council said a new mixed recycling service meant that there are more bins on the street and residents have told them that they have nowhere to store them. The council said that there is no quick solution to this and that they would be happy to explore any suggested options.

We found that the council were unable to provide evidence that they had consulted with residents about the issue of bin storage. They were also unable to provide evidence that they had carried out any assessment of alternative bin provision, such as communal disposal options. We also found that the council had not carried out the actions that they had said it would in response to Mr C's complaint, such as identifying and removing unused bins from the street. The council had already taken steps to improve record-keeping and to ensure that contact with the public was properly recorded. The council's responses to Mr C and to this office could not be supported by evidence other than staff recollection. Therefore, we upheld the complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Mr C for the failures in relation to record-keeping and providing evidence of their actions. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets.
- Make a new offer to engage with Mr C in order to identify solutions to the bins storage issue.

What we said should change to put things right in future:

- The council should consult with residents and inform them of the results.
- The council should review the bins to identify and remove any that are unwanted or unused.

In relation to complaints handling, we recommended:

- The council need to ensure that complaint responses are based on contemporaneous written evidence, not only on unsupported staff recollections.