

SPSO decision report



Case: 201902495, Perth and Kinross Council
Sector: Local Government
Subject: other
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Ms C complained about the service provided by the council after her property sustained water ingress from a nearby mains water pipe. The pipe was located under a council owned footpath and fed a nearby property. Scottish Water was unable to assist in the circumstances and so the council undertook to investigate the leak. Subsequently, a contractor appointed by the council excavated the footpath and fixed the leaking pipe. Initially, the water ingress into Ms C's property ceased. However, a short time later Ms C contacted the council to advise of a reoccurrence of the water ingress. The council did not accept Ms C's position that the work carried out by their contractor had caused the further ingress and decided not to undertake further work on the pipe. Ms C was unhappy with the way the council had dealt with the leaking pipe.

We found no evidence that these repairs were inspected by the council prior to or at completion to ensure that they were carried out to a satisfactory standard. We concluded that there was a lack of appropriate oversight over the works and we upheld this aspect of Ms C's complaint.

Ms C also had concerns about the way the council handled her correspondence and complaints. The council acknowledged to Ms C that they had not responded to a number of her letters, yet we found that they did not adequately establish the reasons as to why this happened. While other aspects of the council's complaint handling were satisfactory, we upheld this aspect of Ms C's complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Ms C for the failings identified. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets.

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

- A clear specification of works should be provided to contractors acting on behalf of the council and, where appropriate, inspections should be performed to ensure work is carried out to an appropriate standard. Any inspection should be documented.

In relation to complaints handling, we recommended:

- Where resolution is not possible, an investigation should provide a customer with a full, objective and proportionate response that represents the council's final position.

We have asked the organisation to provide us with evidence that they have implemented the recommendations we have made on this case by the deadline we set.