

Case: 201101436, The City of Edinburgh Council
Sector: local government
Subject: council tax, complaints handling
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Ms C complained that the council treated her unfairly when administering her council tax account. She said that money continued to be deducted from her pension credit to pay council tax after the council said that they had instructed the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to stop this. Ms C also said that she was incorrectly charged for a late payment, and that the council did not give her sufficient information about the years to which the arrears on her account related. Ms C's complaint included an allegation that the council failed to deal with her complaints according to their complaints procedure.

We upheld all of Ms C's complaints. When we investigated, the council confirmed that they had told DWP to stop the deductions. However, when DWP told them that this would not be done for some months, the council failed to follow this up despite Ms C complaining again about the continued deductions. We found this delay inappropriate. On the matter of the incorrect charge, the council accepted that Ms C was unlikely to have received the demand notice that resulted in the issue of a warrant for late payment. They also accepted that she was not given enough information about the council's application to the DWP about deductions to her pension credit and about the unpaid council tax that resulted in this application being made. We noted that the council acknowledged in correspondence with Ms C that there had been delays in dealing with her complaint. As a result of our investigation they also accepted that they should have told Ms C that their response would be delayed.

Recommendations

We recommended that the council:

- apologise to Ms C for all the failings identified;
- apologise for failing to comply with the complaints procedure; and
- take measures to ensure that information is provided to customers when direct deductions are made, and confirm to us what these measures are.