

**EVIDENCE TO THE REVIEW OF SPCB SUPPORTED BODIES COMMITTEE
FROM IAN FERREL**

I would like to bring to the attention of the committee my experience of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). In November 2006 I decided to refer a complaint regarding how my local council had handled my complaint. The first draft report by the SPSO was completed in May 2007; however the local council refused to accept the findings of this report. A second draft report by the SPSO was completed in November 2007: again my local council refused to accept this report. I was informed that the SPSO was going to meet with my local council to discuss this case. I requested that a reciprocal meeting should be arranged in February 2008 and repeated my request again in March 2008 after the meeting between the SPSO and my local council had taken place on the 11th March 2008.

At this point I enlisted the assistance of my local MSP to enquire about my request with the SPSO. In April 2008 I decided to start the formal procedure of a Service Delivery Complaint regarding how the SPSO was handling this case. The written complaint was acknowledged stating that the complaint would be investigated by a member of staff who was involved with the original case, which I found strange. The letter also stated that I should expect a response within four weeks or if not possible an update and an indication of when the complaint will be completed, would be sent instead.

After a number of e-mails and letters even from my MSP the SPSO did not respond until the 8th September 2008 some six months after my original service complaint letter which is five months late as stated in their own procedures.

I have had a meeting with the Ombudsman at the start of December 2008 and she has personally apologised for the failing of her service in dealing with this Service Delivery Complaint and has stated she will look into the original complaint against my local council and hopes to have a third draft report available by the end of January 2009.

So to recap my original complaint regarding my local council is still ongoing 2 years and counting and my Service Delivery Complaint was ignored by the SPSO for 6 months even after reminders from myself and letters from my MSP.

It would appear that the SPSO is totally independent and only answerable to itself. In my case the SPSO has failed to supply the service laid down in their procedures. I feel there should be some course to refer case like this to a totally independent body for intervention.

Ian Ferrel
11 January 2009