

K1: Land

Poor handling of the sale of plots of land

The complaint

The council decided to sell plots of land to those who had been renting them for many years. One man who had been renting a plot complained about the council's handling of his request to buy it.

What happened

When the council received a bid from a neighbour who wanted the same plot of land, it initially resisted pressure from the second bidder, explaining its original decision. Subsequently, however, the council changed its decision and chose instead to embark on a tendering process.

The council first stated that the reason for this was due to changing circumstances, however, the reports that informed the original decision had included the possibility that another buyer may be interested in buying more than one plot. So the council was aware of this possibility when the original decision was made. The council accepted that the change meant that the complainant had to compete for his plot while others had been able to purchase without competition, and that this was unfair.

Outcome

The complainant did eventually succeed in buying the land through the tendering process, but the evidence suggested that he had bid significantly more than he would have paid had the council not changed its decision. In recognition of this, the council agreed to refund £10,000 and to pay the complainant £500 for his time and trouble in pursuing the matter, which was made more complex and time consuming because of the changed decision.

(Case reference confidential)