

SPSO decision report

Case: 201104883, Business Stream
Sector: water
Subject: charging method / calculation
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C purchased a property in October 2009 which he renovated to create residential and office accommodation. In April 2011, he received a water bill from Business Stream which he found to be disproportionately high. He complained that Business Stream did not explain their terms or their charging structure and that a water account was created for his business without his knowledge. Furthermore, Mr C was unhappy about being issued a water bill backdated to October 2009, when he was not aware of the need to have an account.

We found that the previous occupiers of the premises had a water account with Business Stream but did not tell them when they left the property. Business Stream was first notified of this in March 2011 and promptly contacted Mr C. The requirement to set up a water account with a licensed provider was relatively new in 2009 and we acknowledged that business customers may not have been aware of the need to do so. However, we were satisfied that the responsibility lay with the customer to notify Business Stream when they left or moved into a property. The failure of either occupant to notify Business Stream of the change of ownership meant that the original occupier continued to be charged for water services while Mr C used the water without charge. We did not consider that there was any specific action that Business Stream could have taken to create a new account for Mr C's business any sooner.

We were satisfied that, once Mr C's business account was set up, Business Stream applied legitimate backdated charges and followed the correct procedure for supplying properties with mixed residential and commercial uses.