

SPSO decision report

Case: 201200562, Business Stream
Sector: water
Subject: meter reading
Outcome: upheld, action taken by body to remedy, recommendations

Summary

Mr and Mrs C complained that Business Stream failed to read a water meter at their farm over a two year period. They said that this meant that there was a delay in informing them that the meter was giving false readings, and they said this meant they were overcharged.

Our investigation found that Business Stream had not read the meter during the period of time specified in the complaint, which was not in line with their licence. However, the meter readings available did not indicate that the meter was faulty and, indeed, it appeared that water was being used in significant quantities. Mr and Mrs C had said this was not the case but as Business Stream could not find fault with the meter, they had charged for the usage.

After we got in touch about the complaint, Business Stream made further enquiries and confirmed that a spike in usage had occurred during the period concerned, although this had now returned more or less to normal. A new meter had been installed but the change to normal usage had begun before that. The enquiries also showed that at some point in the past, the account to a sub meter had been closed and Business Stream speculated that a leak from this supply could have been registering with the complainants' meter. However, with the passage of time, it was not possible to determine this. Because of the inconvenience caused to Mr and Mrs C, Business Stream offered them an ex-gratia (voluntary) payment.

We upheld the complaint. Business Stream had clearly failed to read the meter, which meant that Mr and Mrs C were not aware of the high water usage and were then put to great inconvenience and stress to try to remedy matters. We recommended that Business Stream apologise to Mr and Mrs C, but as they had already offered the ex gratia payment we made no other recommendations.

Recommendations

We recommended that Business Stream:

- apologise to Mr and Mrs C for the stress and inconvenience caused.