

SPSO decision report

Case: 201202881, Business Stream
Sector: water
Subject: meter reading
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C, who is a solicitor, complained on behalf of the owners of a farm. He said that the farm had received an abnormally high water bill despite being certain that they had not used the amount registered on their water meter. Mr C complained to Business Stream, suggesting that the meter was faulty. Business Stream arranged for the meter to be checked, but concluded that it was functioning normally and that the farm must have used the water.

We took independent advice from one of our water advisers. He said that the most likely cause of the high meter readings was air pockets or debris escaping from the water system following repairs to the water main near the farm. The farm's location and pipework made it particularly vulnerable to this. Although Mr C had provided several pieces of anecdotal evidence that should have highlighted these as potential causes of the high meter readings, we found no evidence to suggest that Business Stream had considered this. We concluded that they did not take adequate steps to fully investigate the cause of the high meter readings. We found it unreasonable that the farm should be expected to bear the full financial burden of something that seems likely to have been beyond their control, and made a recommendation to address this.

Recommendations

We recommended that Business Stream:

- re-calculate the farm's average daily consumption and credit their account with an amount equivalent to 50 percent of the over-consumption recorded on a particular meter reading.