

SPSO decision report

Case: 201203903, Business Stream
Sector: water
Subject: charging method / calculation
Outcome: not upheld, action taken by body to remedy, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C's business took over new premises in December 2009. He raised concerns with Business Stream that the water meter there was serving more properties than just his own. Scottish Water investigated and confirmed this to be the case, and the meter was removed. Mr C's business was then charged for water based on the property's rateable value. He applied to have this reassessed, and his bills were reduced. Following further discussions with Business Stream and Scottish Water, Mr C was advised that he could have a new meter installed and he reverted to metered charges. Mr C complained that throughout this process, he was sent 26 water bills covering overlapping time periods and detailing various different charges. He found the bills confusing and suspected he had been charged incorrectly.

Our investigation found that Mr C's water meter had been installed incorrectly. In recognition of this, he was not charged for its removal. It was appropriate for his business to then be charged according to the property's rateable value, but incorrect information from Business Stream led to a delay in his application for reassessment (which would lower his bills). Mr C's business's payment arrangements changed from metered to unmeasured (rateable value) to unmeasured (reassessed) and back to metered. These changes along with the associated recalculations of his charges led to multiple invoices being issued, which were very confusing. That said, the evidence we saw showed that Business Stream acknowledged the impact the incorrectly installed meter and inaccurate reassessment advice would have had on Mr C's water bills. They recalculated his charges to reflect what he would have been charged had the meter been installed correctly from the outset. We did not uphold the complaint, as we found this to be an appropriate gesture and were satisfied that he was ultimately charged correctly for his business's water usage.