

SPSO decision report

Case: 201302772, Business Stream
Sector: water
Subject: incorrect billing
Outcome: not upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C rents a residential cabin, which is near a number of other cabins. He complained that he was the only occupier to pay Business Stream for water, that this was unfair and that he should be repaid all the money he has paid. He said he had been overcharged and that, without prior notice, Business Stream took an unexpectedly large amount from his account.

We considered all the complaints correspondence, a statement of Mr C's account from 2003, meter readings and copies of Business Stream's computerised records. We also made formal enquiries of Business Stream.

Our investigation found that Mr C paid his bills by direct debit and that, as usual, he was notified of the larger bill at least two weeks before the money was taken from his account. He told us that he had not expected the bill to be any different from previous ones and was not concerned about it. It was not clear whether he had in fact looked at the invoice but, as we found that the information appeared to have been available to him, we did not uphold this complaint.

We found that the bill was particularly high because most of Mr C's previous bills were based on estimated readings. When actual readings were taken, this showed that previous bills had been underestimated. We found no evidence from the readings that Mr C had been overcharged, although our investigation did confirm that he was the only person being billed by Business Stream, even though others appeared to have water services. Business Stream explained to us that they were working with Scottish Water to establish whether others also had a direct supply and should also be brought into charge to regularise this. Although Mr C was unhappy that he was billed while others were not, we did not find it appropriate that he should be reimbursed.

Recommendations

We recommended that Business Stream:

- provide the Ombudsman with a planned programme of the work required to regularise the situation.