

SPSO decision report

Case: 201303061, Business Stream
Sector: water
Subject: charging method / calculation
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mrs C complained that Business Stream's water charges were incorrect. Her business premises shared a water supply with two neighbouring businesses. She had the main water meter and the usage through the two sub-meters was deducted to calculate her water usage. Although she tried hard to use minimal amounts of water, Mrs C found that her bills were disproportionately high compared to the neighbouring businesses. She, therefore, suspected a problem with her water meter and queried her bills with Business Stream. Investigations were carried out to check for leaks and Business Stream's engineers inspected the pipework in Mrs C's premises, but found no cause for her high bills. Mrs C complained to us that Business Stream did not do enough to identify the cause of these.

Based on the evidence submitted to us, there was no clear cause for Mrs C's high water usage and we upheld her complaints. We were satisfied that the sub-meters' usage was deducted correctly in all but a few cases and Business Stream agreed to review her account to ensure that her bills were accurate in this respect. There was, however, a significant spike in Mrs C's water usage at one stage, which coincided with a period where Business Stream failed to take the required two meter readings per year. Had they done so, the spike might have been identified sooner and Mrs C could have investigated and addressed this. There was no obvious evidence of a fault with Mrs C's meter, but we considered that Business Stream should have offered her a meter accuracy test, which they did not do.

Recommendations

We recommended that Business Stream:

- investigate the removal of one of the sub-meters from Mrs C's account and ensure that the correct deductions have been applied;
- issue a credit for an amount equivalent to 50 percent of Mrs C's volumetric water and waste water charges for the period between two specified dates; and
- provide Mrs C with details of their meter accuracy test procedure should she wish to pursue this in the future.