

SPSO decision report

Case: 201407224, Business Stream
Sector: water
Subject: charging method / calculation
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

In September 2014, after reading his water meter, Business Stream told Mr C that he had used a high level of consumption and that he may have a leak. He was issued with a bill in excess of £4,000. Mr C phoned Business Stream about this and it was suggested that he test whether there was a leak in his supply pipe. A leak was subsequently confirmed and Mr C was advised to contact a plumber as soon as possible because water was continuing to leak.

Mr C then raised concerns that there may be others attached to the supply pipe but in November 2014, it was confirmed that his was the only connection. He also complained that the leak had not been fixed as his costs were increasing and Business Stream liaised with Scottish Water to confirm ownership of the supply pipe. Scottish Water confirmed Mr C's ownership and thus the fact that any repair was his responsibility.

In February 2015, Business Stream explained that in terms of the Water (Scotland) Act 1980, the owner of the supply pipe was responsible for its maintenance (that is, Mr C). He was urged to complete repairs as soon as possible as his bill continued to mount. Mr C complained that Business Stream had not made this situation clear to him when he first complained in September 2014.

We investigated the complaint and made enquiries of Business Stream. We found that although he was billed in September 2014 and told that repairs to the pipe were for him to carry out, it was not until February 2015 that Mr C was sent a detailed explanation for the reasons why he was responsible for the leak. We upheld his complaint.

Recommendations

We recommended that Business Stream:

- provide Mr C with an appropriate apology; and
- ensure that explanations about the public's liability for payment are clearly explained to them.