

SPSO decision report

Case: 201507690, Business Stream
Sector: water
Subject: communication / consultation
Outcome: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Ms C runs a business from premises that she rents from her landlord who occupies the neighbouring premises. These units formed a larger premises until they were subdivided by the landlord. Ms C had an arrangement where she paid water charges through her rent.

After a number of years, Business Stream contacted Ms C and confirmed that she was operating from the premises. Although water and waste water charges were being accounted for through her landlord's metered water bill, it was established that property and roads drainage charges were not covered for her premises. Business Stream issued a bill for this. Ms C complained that this was unfair as her landlord had informed Business Stream that they were sub-letting the premises previously and that they had been aware of her business. Ms C felt she should have been issued with a letter advising that she could change water supplier and that Business Stream staff had provided poor customer service.

We found that a welcome pack had been issued to Ms C which made reference to the open water market. We therefore did not uphold this aspect of Ms C's complaint. We also did not uphold her complaint about customer service as we found no evidence that this was poor.

However, we found that her landlord had contacted Business Stream a number of years earlier and told them that the premises were subdivided and let out, although no specific information had been provided about the tenant. We accepted that the drainage costs were due for payment but recommended that Business Stream provide Ms C with a long-term payment plan. During our investigation, Business Stream acknowledged a delay that had occurred in confirming that water and waste water charges were being billed through her landlord's account. We therefore upheld this aspect of Ms C's complaint.

Recommendations

We recommended that Business Stream:

- provide Ms C with a long-term payment plan to pay off the backdated balance alongside the continuing drainage costs; and
- apologise to Ms C for the delay identified.