

SPSO decision report

Case: 201200191, Business Stream
Sector: water
Subject: charging method / calculation
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C owned a retail unit that was occupied by a beautician's business. He complained that the water bills for the business were disproportionately high, and compromised its viability. Mr C asked Business Stream to consider reviewing the water charges, or fitting a smaller water meter. It was agreed that a smaller meter would be appropriate. However, Mr C felt that the price quoted to exchange the meters was too much, and he was not allowed to have his own plumber carry out the work more cheaply.

Business Stream asked Scottish Water to provide a quote for the work. After Mr C disputed the amount quoted, Scottish Water provided details of the work that they said was needed. Mr C disagreed that the work described was necessary, but ultimately the business agreed to proceed with the meter downsize. Once the work was completed, Mr C remained dissatisfied as he believed a simple meter swap had been carried out, rather than the excavation and pipe replacement work detailed by Scottish Water. He provided photographic evidence of the work that had been completed.

We did not uphold Mr C's complaint, as after investigation we were satisfied that it was for Scottish Water, as requested by Business Stream, to decide the work required and what the cost of that work should be. The amount quoted was in line with their published schedule of rates. We recognised that this was a standard charge and may not have reflected the precise cost of the work involved, but did not find it unreasonable for a schedule of standard rates to be used. We asked an independent water industry adviser to review the 'before and after' photographs submitted by Mr C. We accepted his view that there was evidence of excavation work and of the meter chamber being replaced which we considered was in line with the work proposed by Scottish Water.