

SPSO decision report

Case: 201202800, Business Stream
Sector: water
Subject: charging method / calculation
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained that his business unexpectedly received water bills for more than £3000 in May 2012. He had thought that the water charges were his landlord's responsibility. He contacted Business Stream but found the advice he received unhelpful. Business Stream confirmed that his premises had been identified as a gap site (a property that is receiving water services without being charged) in January 2011. A month after receiving the bills, Mr C applied for reassessment of the water charges and as a result a credit was applied to his account.

Our investigation found that there was a delay between Business Stream being made aware of the gap site and their taking action to start charging for water services. Mr C also had a responsibility to advise a licensed provider that his business was in the premises and to start paying for water services. We did, however, uphold his complaint as, although Mr C and Business Stream had a shared responsibility to make arrangements to set up a water account, we were concerned that the delay in issuing the initial bill meant that Mr C was not given an opportunity to apply for reassessment until June 2012.

Recommendations

We recommended that Business Stream:

- should consider crediting Mr C's account with 50 percent of the difference between the unmeasured rateable value charges and the reassessed charges between January 2011 and June 2012; and
- apologise for the fact that written notice and an explanation were not given for the number of invoices sent.