

SPSO decision report

Case: 201203123, Business Stream
Sector: water
Subject: policy/administration
Outcome: not upheld, recommendations

Summary

In December 2011, Mr C received eight invoices from Business Stream requesting significant sums of money for water and water services backdated to April 2008. Mr C disputed these, as there was no water available in his basement premises and he only had use of communal kitchen and bathroom facilities elsewhere in the building. Business Stream, however, said that Mr C had been receiving and using water services from April 2008, when the water industry opened to competition and they became default providers. They said he had used water, and was required to pay for it. They added that as there was no meter in the property, under the relevant legislation his water usage had been calculated on the rateable value of the property he occupied. Mr C was unhappy about this and complained to us.

Our investigation found that what Business Stream had said was correct, so we did not uphold his complaint. However, the investigation also showed that they had not dealt well with Mr C's representations and had failed to provide proper explanations about the amount due, or the reasons why it was due.

Recommendations

We recommended that Business Stream:

- apologise for the fact that Mr C was not given written notice and explanation that a significant number of invoices were to be sent;
- consider introducing explanatory letters as a matter of course; and
- apologise to Mr C for their failure to address properly his concerns and provide him with a detailed explanation of why his bill was as it was.