

SPSO decision report

Case: 201203350, Business Stream
Sector: water
Subject: meter reading
Outcome: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C, the secretary of a bowling club, complained that it was unreasonable that Business Stream did not read the club's meter for sixteen months. The bills during that period had been based on estimates. After the meter was read, the club received a bill for £1,978.21, which was far in excess of any previous bills.

Our investigation found that Business Stream are required to submit two actual meter readings each year, one of which may be supplied by the customer. We asked them to explain why the meter was not read during the sixteen-month period. In their response, they said that there was a note on their computer system showing that the meter reader was unable to gain entry to the club grounds to take a meter reading on one occasion. However, there were no other notes on the computer system to explain why there was such a gap in reading the meter, so we upheld this aspect of Mr C's complaint.

Mr C also disputed that Business Stream had taken actual meter readings for the large bill, and considered that it was based on estimates. He said that the club had traced the area in which the meter was housed, and they had to clear foliage and debris to access it. He said that this confirmed that no access had been made for some time. However, the club had subsequently provided a meter reading that was higher than those that Business Stream had taken. Business Stream also sent us photos of their readings. Although these did not show the serial number of the meter, we were satisfied that the bill was based on actual rather than estimated readings.

Recommendations

We recommended that Business Stream:

- apologise to Mr C for the delays in responding to his complaints;
- consider awarding him a compensation payment in line with their service standards for the delays in responding to his complaints; and
- consider issuing a reminder to meter readers that, where possible, they should include the serial number of a meter in photos.