

SPSO decision report

Case: 201204466, Business Stream
Sector: water
Subject: charging method / calculation
Outcome: not upheld, recommendations

Summary

Ms C owns a business. In November 2000 she had a water meter installed, by the predecessor of Scottish Water, which she believed would measure only her own water consumption. From 2005 onwards her average combined water and waste water charges were normally under £200. In late 2011, the use of the shop next door changed. At first, this had no apparent effect on Ms C's bills, but for the quarter ending September 2012 her bill was almost £1000. Ms C contacted Scottish Water, and Business Stream (her licensed water provider). Investigations by a plumber and by Scottish Water found that the water supply was in fact shared with the shop next door, which was on unmeasured charges. Ms C complained to Business Stream and was unhappy with their response. She complained to us that Business Stream's actions in relation to her shared water supply were unreasonable.

We did not uphold Ms C's complaint. Our investigation found that Business Stream had investigated and after they realised that the supply was shared and the metered consumption was accurate, they had put recovery action for the September 2012 bill and subsequent bills on hold. They had, appropriately, encouraged Ms C to reach a private agreement with the proprietor next door. Business Stream and Scottish Water's policy was not to fit a secondary meter in such circumstances.

Recommendations

We recommended that Business Stream:

- consider putting a further hold on recovery action to a specified date; and
- share the details of our decision with Scottish Water to enable them to make the adjacent premises licensed provider aware of the circumstances.