

SPSO decision report

Case: 201400044, Business Stream
Sector: water
Subject: incorrect billing
Outcome: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C's business premises were located below a block of tenement flats. The flats' courtyard formed the roof of his premises. His business was identified as a gap site (a business that is receiving water services, but is not being charged) and Business Stream was appointed as his licensed provider of water services. An invoice was issued based on the business's estimated water usage. Mr C queried the amount he was charged. He explained to Business Stream that there was a water meter in place (although it was unreadable) and that his business used only a very small amount of water. He also questioned whether he should be charged for roads and property drainage given that his premises had no roof of its own.

Had the meter in Mr C's premises been installed by Scottish Water, his business should have been billed based on his metered water usage rather than an estimate. We found that, although it had been confirmed that a meter was in place, this was badly corroded and it was not possible to confirm whether this had originally been installed by Scottish Water. We were satisfied that Business Stream made reasonable efforts to confirm whether this was a Scottish Water meter, however, we accepted that there was insufficient evidence available for them to accept responsibility for the equipment. We were critical of Business Stream for a subsequent delay in replacing the meter and commencing metered charges.

We found the charges for property and roads drainage to be reasonable. To avoid such charges, it is the customer's responsibility to provide evidence that water is not transported away from their premises via the public sewer network. No such claim had been made by Mr C. That said, we asked Business Stream to contact Mr C with details of what evidence would be required to pursue this matter further.

Recommendations

We recommended that Business Stream:

- apologise to Mr C for the delay to installing a new meter at his business's premises;
- recalculate Mr C's water charges for the period in question based on his metered average daily usage rate and refund any overpayments on his account; and
- write to Mr C explaining fully the reasons for their property and roads drainage charges and the type of evidence that would be required from him should he still feel that the charges are incorrect.