

SPSO decision report

Case: 201404548, Business Stream
Sector: water
Subject: incorrect billing
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mrs C complained that Business Stream had charged her for water at her business premises even though it did not have any water services. She explained that Business Stream had agreed to stop their charges in the past but some time later began billing her again. This was because Business Stream felt that Mrs C had access to water facilities elsewhere in the wider building (the office she owned was a small section of a larger building) and, in their view, they should not have stopped their charges previously. Mrs C maintained that she had no water services and so Business Stream's charges remained invalid.

Business Stream's records showed that a site visit had confirmed that Mrs C's property had no water supply. However, as the property was commercially rated and, in their view, had access to water, they felt Mrs C should be charged. Business Stream's subsequent records said that Mrs C had access to water behind a locked door that she chose not to use, but Mrs C said that the wider building was locked to her and she could not arrange access. In other words, she had not locked away facilities she could otherwise have used.

We reviewed the evidence carefully. Business Stream's view about possible access to water was based upon the wider building, but Mrs C said she had no right of access to that and a site visit had confirmed that her property itself had no water services. Taking everything into account, we felt the evidence indicated that Business Stream had unreasonably invoiced Mrs C for water charges. We upheld her complaint and made one recommendation.

Recommendations

We recommended that Business Stream:

- close Mrs C's account and waive all associated charges.