

# WATRS

## Water Redress Scheme

### ADJUDICATOR'S FINAL DECISION SUMMARY

Adjudication Reference: WAT-X833

Date of Final Decision: 7 March 2022

#### Party Details

**Customer:** The Customer

**Company:** The Company

#### Complaint

The customer says his metered charges are unusually high. However, the company has refused to revert to charging him on an unmeasured basis. Further, it has offered no explanation for the unusual meter readings. He claims for the company to investigate his bill and return to charging based on the Rateable Value of the property. He also seeks compensation of an unspecified sum.

#### Response

The company says it cannot revert the customer to unmeasured charges as the 12-month time limit for doing so has passed. It cannot explain the customer's usage, but it has offered a meter test and suggested he ask a plumber to check his private pipework for faults. It denies the claim.

#### Findings

The evidence does not show the company failed to provide its services to the standard to be reasonably expected.

#### Outcome

The company does not need to take any further action.

The customer must reply by 4 April 2022 to accept or reject this decision.

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## Case Outline

### **The customer's complaint is that:**

- The company suggested it install a water meter as it expected this to reduce his bills. However, his bills have been much higher than expected.
- He believes he is being charged for water that he has not used, perhaps due to a fault with the water meter.
- He noticed the meter showed lower usage from August 2020 when they were in the property more often. However, despite his requests the company has not been able to explain this.
- He has asked the company to revert to charging him based on the Rateable Value ("RV") of the property but it has refused.
- He would like the company to investigate his bill and return to charging based on the RV. He also seeks compensation of an unspecified sum.
- In comments on the company's response, the customer says the company has still not explained how his usage dropped by 60 to 80 litres per day once he started reporting monthly meter readings from August 2020.
- In comments on a preliminary decision the customer says his complaint is that the company has failed to provide a reasonable explanation for the drop in water usage recorded from August 2020.

### **The company's response is that:**

- The law says a customer has 12 months once a water meter has been fitted to ask the company to revert to charging on an unmeasured basis. Its own policy reflects this.

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- It fitted the customer's water meter in March 2019, but he did not ask to revert to unmeasured charges until August 2020. As more than 12 months had passed it could not agree to this request.
- It explains that after installing a meter it sets up customers on a 12 monthly payment plan based on their expected usage. After 12 months it reviews the actual usage at which point a customer's account may be in credit or they may have more to pay to make up any shortfall. In August 2020 it sent the customer a bill based on his actual usage and he contacted it, concerned about the amount and seeking to revert to unmeasured charges based on the RV.
- The meter is fitted inside the customer's property on his private pipework. During a visit it found no continuous flow on the meter to suggest a leak. However, it has advised the customer to engage his own plumber to check his pipework. It has also offered to test the meter which the customer has not yet accepted.
- It cannot explain why the usage recorded is higher than the customer expects. If the customer is concerned the meter is faulty he can request a test. It could also be the case that an appliance within the home is faulty and using more water than it should. The customer's own plumber would need to investigate this. There is nothing more the company can do at this stage. It denies the claim.

### How is a WATRS decision reached?

In reaching my decision, I have considered two key issues. These are:

1. Whether the company failed to provide its services to the customer to the standard to be reasonably expected by the average person.
2. Whether or not the customer has suffered any financial loss or other disadvantage as a result of a failing by the company.

In order for the customer's claim against the company to succeed, the evidence available to the adjudicator must show on a balance of probabilities that the company has failed to provide its services to the standard one would reasonably expect and that as a result of this failure the customer has suffered some loss or detriment. If no such failure or loss is shown, the company will not be liable.

I have carefully considered all of the evidence provided. If I have not referred to a particular document or matter specifically, this does not mean that I have not considered it in reaching my decision.

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### How was this decision reached?

1. The customer is not entitled to revert to unmeasured charges based on the RV of the property more than 12 months after having a water meter fitted. Therefore, when the customer made such a request after 12 months had passed, the company did not have to agree to it. I therefore find that the company did not fail to provide its services to the standard to be reasonably expected in this regard.
2. I acknowledge the customer's usage is much higher than he expected and that it dropped unexpectedly from August 2020. However, the company's initial investigations showed no evidence of fault with the water meter.
3. I am mindful the customer can request that the company test the meter if he wishes. Further, that the company is not required to investigate potential faults on the customer's private pipework. Bearing these points in mind, I consider the company cannot be expected to carry out any further investigations at this stage. Therefore, I find that the company has not failed to provide its services to the standard to be reasonably expected in this regard.
4. I note the customer asked the company to explain the drop in usage from August 2020 and the company has explained it is unable to do so. However, I do not consider it reasonable to expect the company to offer an explanation, given it has not had chance to test the meter, it has no oversight of the customer's usage and no oversight or responsibility for the customer's private pipework. I therefore find that the company did not fail to provide its services to the standard to be reasonably expected in this regard.
5. On review of all the information provided, I find the evidence does not prove that the company failed to provide its services to the standard to be reasonably expected. Therefore, the customer's claim is unable to succeed.
6. I appreciate the customer will be disappointed with this decision outcome. However, it remains that the customer can arrange further investigations privately if he wishes.

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7. I have taken account of the customer's comment on a preliminary decision however, my findings remain the same. In particular I draw the customer's attention to paragraph 4 above.

#### **Outcome**

The company does not need to take any further action.

#### **What happens next?**

- This adjudication decision is final and cannot be appealed or amended.
  - The customer must reply by 4 April 2022 to accept or reject this decision.
  - When you tell WATRS that you accept or reject the decision, the company will be notified of this. The case will then be closed.
  - If you do not tell WATRS that you accept or reject the decision, this will be taken to be a rejection of the decision.
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J Mensa-Bonsu LLB (Hons) PgDL (BVC)  
**Adjudicator**

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