

# WATRS

## Water Redress Scheme

### ADJUDICATOR'S FINAL DECISION SUMMARY

Adjudication Reference: WAT/X393

Date of Final Decision: 28 February 2023

#### Party Details

Customer: XX

Company: XX

#### Complaint

The customer says he tried to apply for a water meter in 2017 but the company's online system was faulty and he could not complete his application. He has recently been surveyed for a water meter and as the company could not fit one it has applied the Assessed Household Charge ("AHC"). His bills are now much lower and he wants the company to backdate the AHC to 2017.

#### Response

In 2017 the customer contacted it so say he could not apply for a meter online so it emailed him an application to complete and return. He did not return this and did not apply for a meter until February 2022. As it could not fit a meter it applied the AHC going forward in line with its charging scheme. It denies the claim.

#### Findings

The evidence shows the company provided 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 28 March 2023 to accept or reject this decision.

# ADJUDICATOR'S FINAL DECISION

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## Case Outline

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

- In 2017 he tried to apply for a water meter online but received an error message.
- The company recently assessed his property for a meter and found it could not fit one. It now charges him based on the Assessed Household Charge.
- He wants the company to amend his bills by applying the Assessed Household Charge from the date he first tried to apply for a water meter in 2017.
- In comments on the company's response the customer says the company's position is unfair and he has no option to change supplier.
- The customer did not comment on a preliminary decision.

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

- In December 2017 the customer contacted it to say he tried to apply for a water meter online but received an error message. It then sent him an application by email to complete and return. However he did not return this. It has provided a copy of the email.
- In February 2022 customer applied to have a meter fitted at his home and one of its engineers attended to survey the property.
- It found that a meter could not be fitted to his supply. Therefore, in line with its charging scheme, it changed his tariff to the Assessed Household Charge (AHC). This is only offered to customers once it has surveyed their property and found that a meter cannot be fitted for whatever reason.
- 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.

### How was this decision reached?

1. The company's charging scheme makes clear it will only apply the Assessed Household Charge once it has found it is unable to fit a water meter. OFWAT has approved this charging scheme and it is not within my remit to criticise the company's charging scheme. Rather, in considering whether the company has provided its services to the standard to be reasonably expected, I must consider if it has acted in line with its charging scheme.
2. I acknowledge the customer first tried to apply for a water meter in 2017, however he did not complete an application. The company has evidenced it gave the customer another opportunity to apply by sending him a digital form to complete. It has provided a copy of the email sent and correspondence showing it sent to this to the correct email address the customer used at the time. I am therefore satisfied the company sent this email. I acknowledge the customer denies receipt, however I cannot say this was through any fault of the company. Further, the customer could have chased the company for a response if he wished but did not do so.
3. It is not in dispute that the customer applied for a water meter in February 2022 and, on finding it could not fit one, the company applied the AHC. I am satisfied the company applied this charge in line with its charging scheme.
4. The customer asked the company to backdate the AHC to 2017 and the company refused with reference to its charging scheme. The company was entitled to refuse the request and was acting in line with its charging scheme. Therefore, I am satisfied it provided its services to the standard to be reasonably expected.

5. As I have not found any failing by the company the customer's claim is unable to succeed.
6. I appreciate the customer will be disappointed with this outcome. And I understand he is unhappy he has been paying a higher charge for water over the years. However, as I have not found any failing by the company I cannot direct any remedy.

#### **Outcome**

The company does not need to take any action.

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

- This adjudication decision is final and cannot be appealed or amended.
- The customer must reply by 28 March 2023 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.



J Mensa-Bonsu LLB (Hons) PgDL (BVC)  
**Adjudicator**