

to: additional.charges@ofcom.org.uk

from:

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re: Ofcom review of additional charges

I was shocked to surprised to learn that I am suddenly being charged £4.50 just to pay my bill by cheque.

I always pay my bill on time. Why should I have to pay extra? I pay my gas bill and my electricity bill in the same way and there is no extra charge.

BT can't just charge whatever it wants. I never agreed to this change in so-called billing procedures. I just want to pay like I've always paid.

Not too long ago, I could pay my bill at the post office and there was no extra fee. Why this all of a sudden?

BT can *propose* such new terms to existing customers, but it cannot abuse its position and try to *dictate* them.

I read that the Office of Fair Trading believes customers like me who were with BT before it implemented its £4.50 quarterly fee for not paying by direct debit have strong case against paying this newly proposed surcharge. I think they're right. BT can add a new charge just because it feels like it.

Not to mention that £4.50 is a lot to pay as a service charge just to pay by cheque when the basic quarterly bill is under 30 pounds. That works out to a 15% on top just to pay the bill.

BT has said it's all to do with something about their costs. I don't care, I just want to pay for my telephone bill like I always have. I don't want to pay extra charges.

But BT cannot prove how costs are incurred, or explain why the cost it incurred for administering payments rose so dramatically last May. Just suddenly, they think they can add £4.50 on everyone's bill just like that? It's just an excuse for them to make more money.

Besides, there is nowhere I can pay by bill in person in cash. Not even at the post office any more. I heard they (BT) want to charge the extra fee even to pay in cash. That's crazy. It's not fair especially to pensioners.

I am never late with my payment. Why should I pay a penalty?

If late payment is the problem, why not increase the late payment fee by £4.50? If anyone should be penalised this way, it's those who pay late, not those like me who pay on time.

If BT claims that it is the cost of processing cash and cheques, why does it still charge non-DD surcharge for customers who would pay their bill electronically e.g. via internet banking?

What portion of the surcharge is to do with the cost of clearing payments by cash or cheque?
What portion of it is to do with chasing debtors?

All these different surcharges make it much more difficult for consumers to compare like for like. The price quoted such be inclusive (as it is for VAT).

Instead, there are different rates quoted, then different surcharges, making it all very confusing for the consumer.

The telephony companies appear to be working in collusion. Why is this industry allowed to get away with it?

It is a well known fact in marketing that direct debit makes it more difficult for consumers to switch suppliers, and therefore making it less likely that they will do so. This is one of the underlying true reasons why all the telephony companies want force customers onto direct debit payments.

BT is a big company. Other big companies like British Rail and the major supermarkets do not surcharge for paying in cash.

I don't want to be forced to use direct debit. Many people have been victims of fraud or the incompetence of companies taking more money out of their accounts than the agreed amount. The problem with direct debit system is that, although originators (the organisations requesting the money) are required to give customers a period of notice before any change in the amount of a direct debit, there is no way for a bank to verify that this notification has taken place before allowing a direct debit to be paid from a customer's account. Customers are usually unaware that a mistake has been made until after an erroneous amount has already left their account. The burden is then on the customer to try to retrieve the misappropriated funds, meanwhile possibly going into the red on their bank accounts and suffering penalties there as well.

Please stop BT charging £4.50 just to pay a bill. If other companies are trying to do the same thing, you should stop them too.

Thank you.