

YourVoice - Minutes of 10 June 2022 Meeting via MS Teams

Present:

<u>YourVoice members</u>	<u>United Utilities</u>
Bernice Law – Independent Chair Dr Tayo Adebawale – Independent Member Alistair Maltby – Director Woodland Trust Mark Atherton – GMCA Claire Bunter – Environment Agency Dave Thompson – Disability Partnership, Warrington Steve Cullen – Warrington CAB Emma Degg – NWBLT Stuart Dunne – Youth Focus North West Andrew White – Consumer Council for Water Peter Fitzhenry - Secretary	Sally Ainsworth – Head of Service Recovery James Bullock – Strategy, Policy & Regulation Director Emma Dennett– Regulatory Contract Manager Jo Harrison – Environmental Planning & Innovation Director Gaynor Kenyon – Corporate Affairs Director Chris Matthews – Head of Public and Community Affairs Ben Nadel – Regulation, Reform & Compliance Manager Gaynor Murphy – Head of Stakeholder Manager
Apologies Adam Briggs, Damian Waters, Allen Creedy, Keith Ashcroft, Bhupendra Mistry.	

Item 1 – Introductions and apologies & actions from the previous meeting

The Chair reported that new members had joined the Panel but some were unable to attend due to prior commitments. These included: Cath Murray-Howard (Chief Operating Officer Torus Group), Rob Loughenbury (Director of Strategy Onward Housing Group) Steve Parry (IOS Liverpool based Developer).

Peter Fitzhenry has joined the Panel as independent support to programme and administer meetings, maintain the challenge log and create and circulate agenda/minutes.

Your Voice members asked for their congratulations to be passed to Louise Beardmore on her appointment as United Utilities CEO designate and look forward to working with her over the coming years.

The Panel thanked Alistair Maltby for his 10-year contribution to the development of Your Voice. Alistair has made a key contribution to the work of the group and to the Environment and Social Capital sub group which he chaired.

Actions from previous meeting were discussed with some as agenda items for this meeting, some requiring follow up meetings, and some to be scheduled as items for future YourVoice meetings.

Item 2 – YourVoice Sub-Group Reports

- a) **Vulnerability and Affordability sub group** – Dave Thompson highlighted the welfare work currently being undertaken with other utility companies. The increased number of customers signed up to the Priority Service register was highlighted and it was noted that if a customer signs up to this service with UU, or Electricity North West or British Gas, they will automatically be added to all 3 utility company schemes.
- b) **Environment and Social Capital sub-group** - Alistair Maltby highlighted how the company's refreshed carbon strategy had generated lots of discussion and challenge at the last sub group.

Item 3 – YourVoice Chair’s update

Bernice Law reminded colleagues that this was the final Your Voice meeting in its current format. The future structure will focus on four sub-groups; the existing three and a new Stakeholder sub group. This will give the opportunity to spend time on matters of interest and concern to customers and stakeholders and allow the opportunity to drill down into relevant topic areas. The four sub group chairs will meet with the Your Voice chair on a regular basis to bring together the sub group deliberations.

The Chair reported on the Central Oversight Group, on which she sits with other CCG chairs, Ofwat and CCW. Regular updates on the national research programme will be a frequent item on the Customer Engagement sub-group agenda.

Action: there is a need to finalise sub-group membership and appoint chairs to all sub-groups. Secretary to circulate a full list of sub-group membership.

Item 4 – PR24 Programme update

James Bullock provided an update on how Ofwat’s plans for PR24 were developing. This covered methodology, modelling, challenges, performance commitments, a PR19 comparison, timetable, assurance and early indicators of change. It contained a link to Ofwat report “PR24 and beyond: Creating tomorrow, together” which sets out four challenges. James highlighted several items:

- Customer expectations on service, society and environment
- Affordability challenges
- Long term understanding of customers and communities,
- Environmental and social challenges
- Efficiency and innovation
- Climate change and resilience risks
- Effective and competitive procurement

Ofwat’s full methodology will be available in July 2022 and Your Voice is to receive a fuller presentation by September 2022.

Panel members made a number of comments/challenges regarding the role of YourVoice and its sub-groups in responding to this process. YourVoice raised numerous questions around timetable, key drivers, water trading, environmental programme, and affordability in the light of the current economic situation. Differences between YourVoice challenge and Ofwat’s assurance requirements were also raised.

Action: once the company has analysed the draft methodology, it will arrange a session to update YourVoice members

Item 5 – Customer Research Programme update

Ben Nadel provided an update on the national customer research programme carried out by CCW and Ofwat and how this compared, contrasted and complimented UU’s own customer research. Ofwat has required all water companies to make available their customer research programme and outcomes by putting details on their websites.

This presentation outlined key research projects that had been completed and those planned during the remainder of this year and into 2023. The Panel was informed of the company’s intention to issue a stakeholder newsletter on research on a periodic basis.

The presentation produced a number of discussion points:

- Ensure stakeholders are made aware that customer research information is available on line.
- Keep YourVoice updated on work with regional welfare organisations to develop further insight into issues of affordability.
- Report to future meeting of YourVoice on triangulation proposals particularly linked to national research results.

Action: Dave Thompson to brief Mark Atherton on work by the Vulnerability and Affordability sub group.

Action: Ben Nadel to raise the topic of working with others on the cost of living pressures at the next meeting of the Customer Engagement Steering Group

Action: insight from national research to be a standing item on the Customer Engagement Steering Group agenda

Item 5 – Environment Act requirements & development of enhancement plans

Jo Harrison presented an update into the main themes, drivers (sanitary determinants and nutrients, frequently spilling overflows, storm overflow improvements and standards for intermittents), targets and implications arising from the Environment Act. The Act is significant because it will influence WINEP and wider investment decisions. Specific matters arising included:

- delays in receiving detailed guidelines are compressing decision-making timetables;
- collaborative teams are working on response, pending full guidance;
- implications for the company's investment programme;
- the potential that some drivers may lead to less than optimum investment decisions;
- strong emphasis on tackling storm overflows;
- the challenge to the supply chain to respond to significant increases in investment projects; and
- that the impact does not fall evenly across all water companies.

Panel members raised a number of issues:

- The level of potential cost associated with meeting Environment Act obligations
- The need to maximise partner collaboration and funding wherever possible
- Ensuring Ofwat and Defra realise the particular need and challenges of different regions of the country, particularly around the ability to pay an increased bill.
- The timetabling of any proposed work.

Item 6 – Stakeholder engagement – local authority engagement

Gaynor Murphy presented about the company's activities designed to engage with a wide range of local authority stakeholders. UU has engaged with 350 councillors from 41 authorities who raised over 200 queries. The presentation included in-depth examples of working to build effective relationships with specific local authorities. It also produced a range of themes as a basis for future joint working and awareness raising.

Action: Gaynor Murphy extended an open invitation to Your Voice members to attend future local authority engagement meetings.

Item 7 – End of year performance review

Sally Ainsworth and Jo Harrison provided an update on the end of year performance (2021/2022). 78% of measures met their targets so the subsequent discussion focused upon those performance indicators which did not reach target.

Per capita consumer consumption remains an ongoing area of concern for the Panel. It noted that the company continues to undertake significant amounts of work around metering, water saving audits and provision of free water saving devices along with providing increased customer information. The trend seems to be coming down towards pre-pandemic levels. The company reported that customer water efficiency awareness had increased by 24% to 73%.

Water quality remains an issue for the Panel. The company pointed to its strong internal focus to improve this performance measure with improvements made in the first quarter of 2022. This will continue to be a focus area for YourVoice.

Panel members noted that a number of measures that had missed their target were moving in a positive direction and were pleased to note that external flooding and leakage targets had been met. Flooding remains an area of scrutiny for YourVoice as the number of incidents internal flooding events did not meet target even though there was a reduction in the number recorded.