

## YourVoice - Minutes of 2 March 2022 Meeting via MS Teams

### Present:

<b>YourVoice members</b> Bernice Law – Independent Chair Tayo Adebawale – Independent Member Mark Atherton – Greater Manchester Combined Authority Adam Briggs – NFU Alistair Maltby – The Woodland Trust Bhupendra Mistry – Consumer Council for Water Deborah Murray – Groundwork Greater Manchester Dave Thompson – Disability Partnership, Warrington Damian Waters – CBI Andrew White – Consumer Council for Water	<b>United Utilities</b> Charmian Abbott – Chief Scientist Louise Beardmore – Customer Services & People Director 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
<b>Apologies</b> Keith Ashcroft – Environment Agency, Claire Bunter – Environment Agency, Simon Chadwick – United Utilities' Water, Wastewater and Digital Services Director, Steve Cullen – Warrington Citizen's Advice Bureau	

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

Apologies were noted as listed above. The minutes were accepted and the matters arising had been, or were in the course of being, dealt with or were on the agenda for this meeting or a future meeting.

### Item 2 – YourVoice Sub-Group Reports

#### **a) Environment & Social Value subgroup**

Alistair Maltby summarised discussions from the last meeting which included climate change adaptation, the Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP) and the Environment Act. Members discussed the opportunity to strengthen its membership by including a representative from river groups.

**Action: Bernice Law and Alistair Maltby to discuss and agree an approach**

#### **b) Customer Engagement subgroup**

Tayo Adebawale explained that the group hadn't met since the last main YourVoice meeting. While no meeting had taken place, the company had provided helpful summaries of each piece of research it had undertaken.

#### **c) Affordability and Vulnerability subgroup**

Dave Thompson summarised discussions from the last meeting in January that focused on priority services (with around 2,600 registrations per month), performance and work on a pilot booklet for the care sector covering water and energy. He welcomed new members to the group, including those representing food banks. The Panel noted that community engagement had recommenced and that affordability schemes had reached over 70k people.

Dave Thompson provided an update on COVID-19 and, in particular, how long COVID is affecting 1.4m people.

### **Item 3 – Performance Deep Dive: Water Quality**

Charmian Abbott presented the Panel with a comprehensive update on the company's approach to water quality after the Panel had observed some of the key performance measures had not improved in line with targets. This covered the four different metrics used by the Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) to measure water quality, alongside the number of taste, smell and appearance contacts. Details of current performance against these metrics and progress in the delivery of improvement plans were shared with the Panel.

In response, the Panel sought to understand in more detail how random sampling works, the causes of discolouration, the link to catchment management and partnerships, and the timelines for the Water Quality First programme. Members welcomed progress made the company and sought further clarity on the governance arrangements it had implemented, which was provided.

***Action: Charmian Abbott to report back on how the certainty of engineered solutions is considered alongside nature based solutions in the governance approach for the Water Quality First programme***

***Action: It was agreed that the next deep dive topic would be sewer flooding***

### **Item 4 – Customer research programme update**

Ben Nadel provided an update on the customer research programme, covering projects recently completed, live or upcoming and the latest on the collaborative research with significant changes from the PR19 methodology.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- Ofwat's engagement policy position paper and what it means for publishing research.
- The role for Customer Challenge Groups and the Central Oversight Group in PR24 and how assurance will be undertaken.
- That non-digital expectations need focus alongside digital ones. In response, the company shared that its approach is digital by choice and that some customer journeys, such as sewer flooding, are not best on online.

***Action: Bernice Law to send a copy of the Ofwat engagement policy paper to YourVoice members***

### **Item 5 – PR24 Update**

Dave Howarth presented an overview of the assumed timelines for the PR24 programme and how the company is governing its approach. It was noted that some of this would change when Ofwat publishes its methodology later in the year. It was requested to avoid the back end loading of content for YourVoice members to review at the point of plan submission to Ofwat. The company explained it would aim to do this as far as it could.

### **Item 6 – Quarterly Performance Report**

Louise Beardmore presented customer and operational performance measures for the previous period highlighting where some measures had been impacted by single events or recent storms. It was noted that the Panel had already agreed to receive a presentation on sewer flooding and members asked for that to include details on the company's 'Dynamic Network Management' initiative.

### **Item 7 – Evolving YourVoice**

Gaynor Kenyon presented updated proposals from the company's on the evolution of YourVoice, with particular focus on creating a regional stakeholder group to bring a broader range of views into the challenge process. The following points were raised in discussion:

- That Panel members supported the emphasis placed on the role of the YourVoice subgroups
- Some concern was expressed that the proposed changes might increase complexity and

result in some duplication. The company and Chair agreed to consider this as the proposals are finalised.

- That progress was being made to bring in new people for areas currently under represented. The Panel discussed possible new members.

***Action – YourVoice members to share suggestions on members of the new regional stakeholder group to Bernice Law***

**Item 8 – AOB and future meetings.**

No items were discussed.

***The next YourVoice main group meeting will take place at 10am on 10 June 2022.***