



Regulatory reporting assurance framework

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This document sets out the assurance activities that we have put in place to provide reliable, accurate and complete data, together with the wider assurance activities that we have undertaken or initiated to ensure that we can effectively listen to our customers and other stakeholders' views and continue to deliver the services that they want and can afford. This document contains six sections, which are summarised below:

A1 Measurement and data capture

The data required to report on the delivery of our outcomes and other commitments has been developed to be a sub set of our routine and often long standing operational and management information that is directly used to support and direct key business activities. We have also established a centralised reporting function, which has accountability for both assuring the quality of the data and for providing a single source of management information which can be used throughout the business.

A2 Risk based assurance of our regulatory reporting

We have adopted a structured risk assessment process to underpin the governance and assurance processes supporting our regulatory reporting. The overall combined risk rating is used to help to determine the level of governance and assurance that is applied to the reported information.

- As the level of risk increases the governance and assurance applied to the reporting of this data also increases and makes sure that key risks are escalated up to Board level where necessary to ensure that the management, control and reporting of any risks and resulting actions identified through the process are proportionate to the level of risk.

A3 Audit and assurance of our regulatory reporting

We have adopted a well-established "three lines of assurance" framework. The three lines of assurance are;

- First line – management has accountability for developing and maintaining sound processes, systems and controls in the normal course of their operations
- Second line – The Economic Regulation or Finance teams, where applicable, have accountability for providing the framework and governance for our regulatory reporting Our Corporate Audit team undertake rolling and cyclic audit activity and targeted reviews of key submissions
- Third line – Independent audit and assurance activities are undertaken by specialist external auditors.

A4 Governance and accountability

We are committed to the very highest standards of corporate governance with defined accountabilities from the Uuw Board level through Operational governance and review process.

A5 Additional communications and publications

In addition to publishing the minimum information requirements set out by Ofwat within the APR. We are committed to providing regular and transparent reporting of our performance and using a broad range of communications channels to communicate with our customers.

A6 Independent challenge and review

To ensure that our reporting is independently challenged we have established a new independent stakeholder forum called the YourVoice" panel. The role of the YourVoice panel is to both monitor and challenge us on the delivery of our business plan, to review and assure our reporting and to scrutinise our customer engagement on the development of our future business plans.

A1

Measurement and data capture

Approach

The outcomes and associated measures of success that form the basis for the AMP6 determination were derived from our statutory and regulatory obligations and reflected the preferences of our customers.

As a result of this approach, the majority of the data required to report on the delivery of our commitments is a subset of routine and often long standing operational and management data that is directly used to support and direct key business activities.

We have also recently established a centralised reporting function, with accountability for both assuring the quality of the data and for providing a single source of management information which can be used throughout the business.

Accountability for performance delivery

The accountability for operational and regulatory reporting sits with the relevant business units responsible for the day-to-day management of the associated processes. Scorecards are used by business areas to monitor performance against the regulatory measures supplemented by, and informed by, relevant operational measures. The scorecards are hierarchical and are rolled down within the relevant business area so that specific targets can be set, measured and if necessary appropriate management action can be taken if any issues are identified.

A significant proportion of the information required for reporting is already captured within and reported from corporate systems. The process by which we will capture and report data is defined in a suite of methodology statements. These documents set out the systems used to capture and report data, role accountabilities, processes used to analyse and calculate the resultant performance levels and the key process controls, and checks that assure the resulting data.

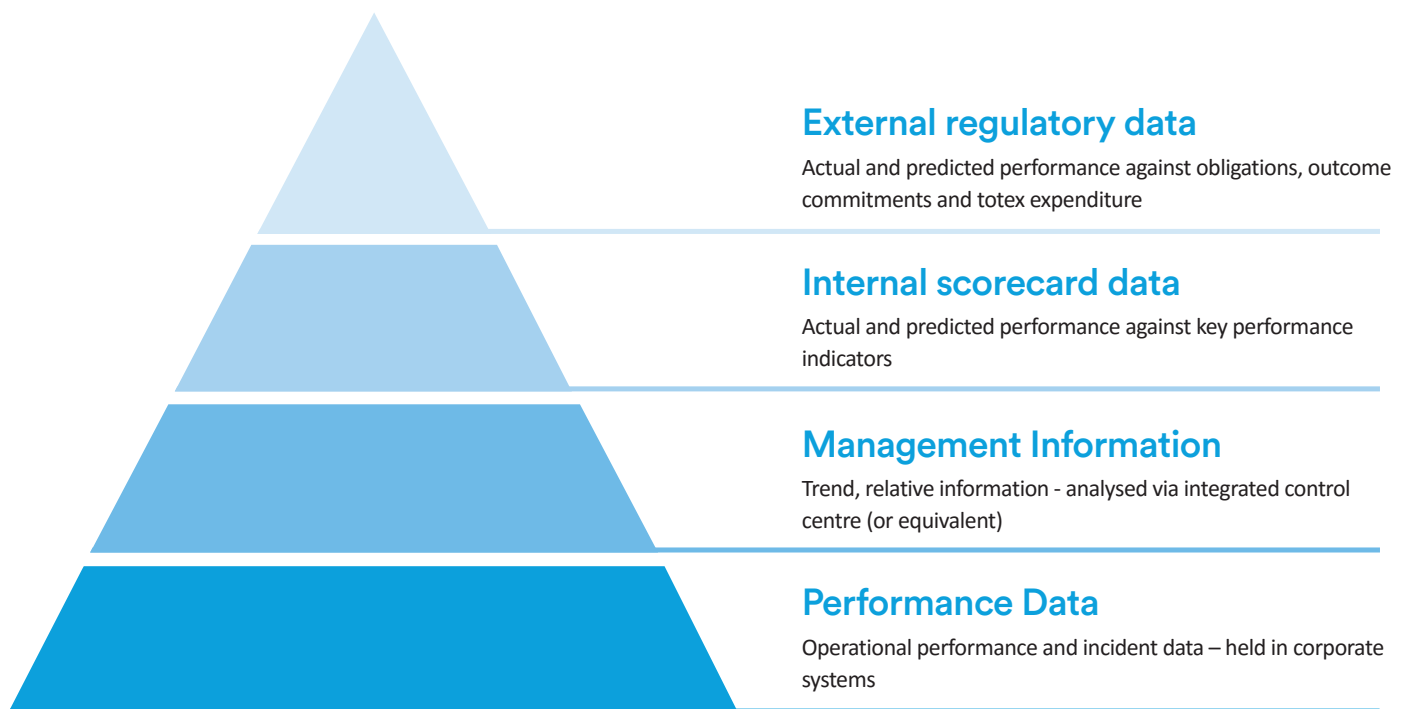


Figure 1: Hierarchy of data for performance management and reporting



Effective utilisation of information technology

To ensure the quality, reliability and robustness of our operational and management information and to support the move to a new and more proactive data led operating model, we have recently undertaken a major business change programme. As part of this programme we have significantly enhanced many of our core data systems and have recently established a new, integrated control centre (ICC). The ICC is a central team with accountability for all key Wholesale operational performance data, bringing together and analysing the information input to and contained within the related corporate or other data systems. They are also accountable for validating the data and providing the management information required to populate all levels of business scorecards and support the decision making process.

This process ensures that data is collected and obtained at a single source, that there is clear accountability for the population, analysis and provision of data and information and that the same data can be used consistently, both internally within the business and for external publications and reporting.

Detailed data capture and measurement processes

We have created a series of detailed definition documents to summarise the process by which we capture the data and calculate the resultant performance levels for each of our performance commitments. These documents set out the purpose and nature of the measures of success and the details of the measurement processes and methodologies for generating the reported performance values and of any outcome delivery incentive schemes associated with these measures.

The detailed process for capturing all our regulatory data, key supporting information for that data, or data that is critical to ensure that we comply with our regulatory or statutory obligations, is set out within a series of methodology documents. These documents are regularly updated by accountable business owners and reviewed for completeness and compliance by the Economic Regulation team as part of its 'second line of assurance' oversight role.

These methodologies, together with the data collected and compliance against relevant targets, forms the basis of the routine and reactive review and assurance process with any risks or issues being identified and escalated as appropriate within the business.

A2

Risk based assurance

We have adopted a structured risk assessment process to underpin the governance and assurance processes supporting our regulatory reporting. The risk assessment approach builds on the approach we took during AMP5, with this process having been cross referenced against the approach produced by Ofgem, the gas and electricity regulator, and updated to reflect the requirements of Ofwat’s AMP6 company monitoring framework. The key component of this approach is the assessment of regulatory data against a set of criteria to establish the impact and probability of potential misreporting of information.

The reviews cover both historic and forecast data, methodologies, performance and compliance statements and audit trails to confirm that the information reported is reliable accurate and complete and meets regulatory reporting requirements.

The risk assessment process separately reviews the impact and probability of any potential risks associated with misreporting of each data item. The risk assessment is undertaken within an excel model and generates an overall combined risk rating (low, medium, high or critical).

The impact score assesses the scale of the potential consequence of inaccurate, incomplete, misreported or late data across four categories; stakeholders, competition, finance (either in period or at the next price setting) and performance targets or outcomes (again in period or at PR19).

The probability score is assessed via two steps; initially the inherent risk involved in the processes for data collection, manipulation and reporting the data is assessed and then the mitigating effect of any established control activities, systems and processes is then assessed to determine the overall likelihood rating. The overall combined risk rating is then derived from the combination of the impact and the likelihood score.

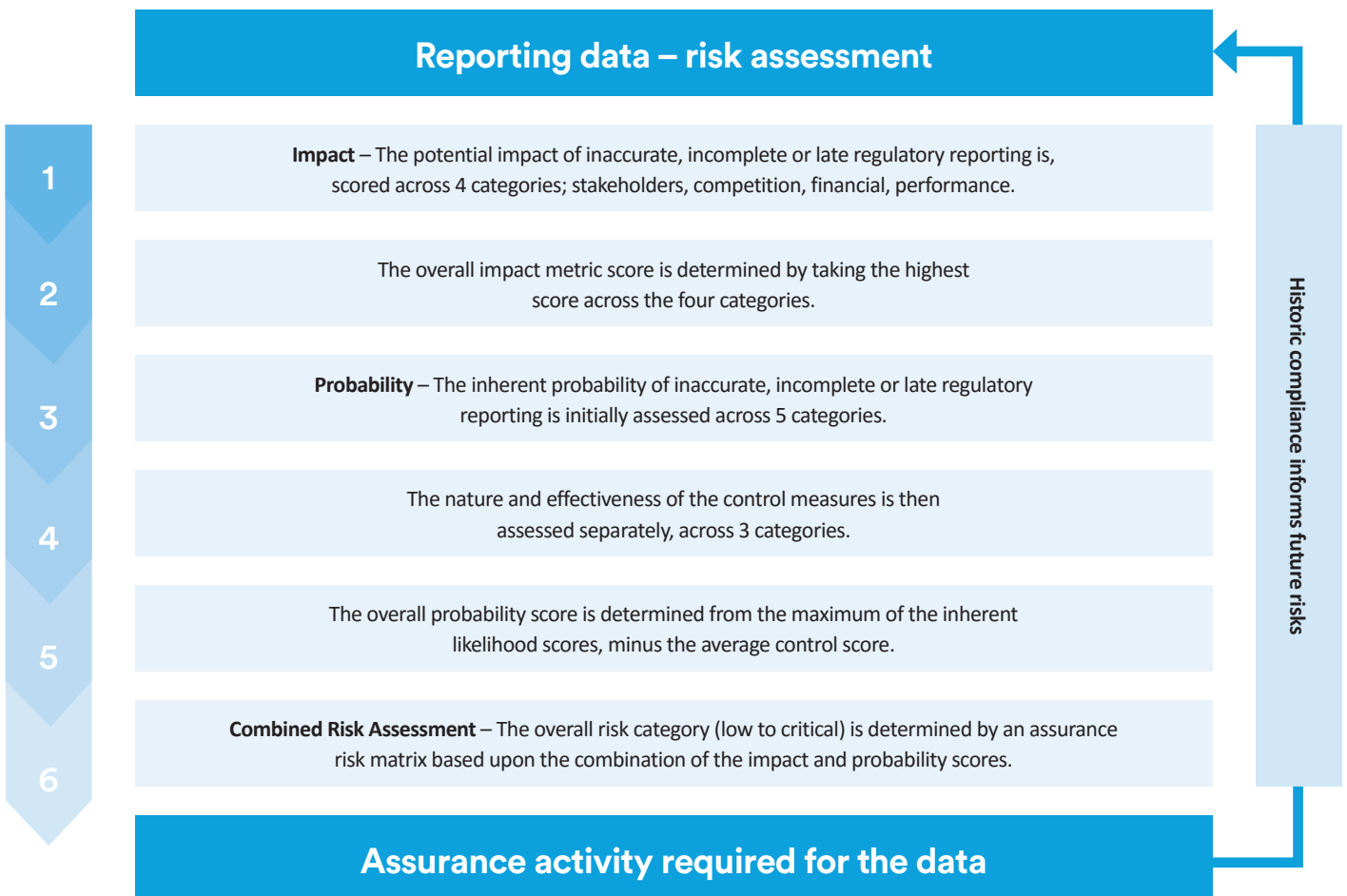


Figure 2: Regulatory reporting risk assessment process

A2

Risk based governance and assurance

The overall combined risk rating is used to help to determine the level of governance and assurance that is applied to the reported information. Figure 3 below, sets out the differentiated assurance applied on the basis of the risk assessment.

This approach ensures that as the level of risk increases the governance and assurance applied to the reporting of this data also increases. The approach makes sure that key risks are escalated up to Board level and the reporting of this data is subject to detailed independent assurance.

Key risks identified through this process are highlighted in the annual statement of risks, strengths and weaknesses and in the Draft and Final Assurance plans.

Other relevant factors are also considered in addition to the results of the risk assessment when finalising the assurance plans. With more details of these factors being discussed in each plan.

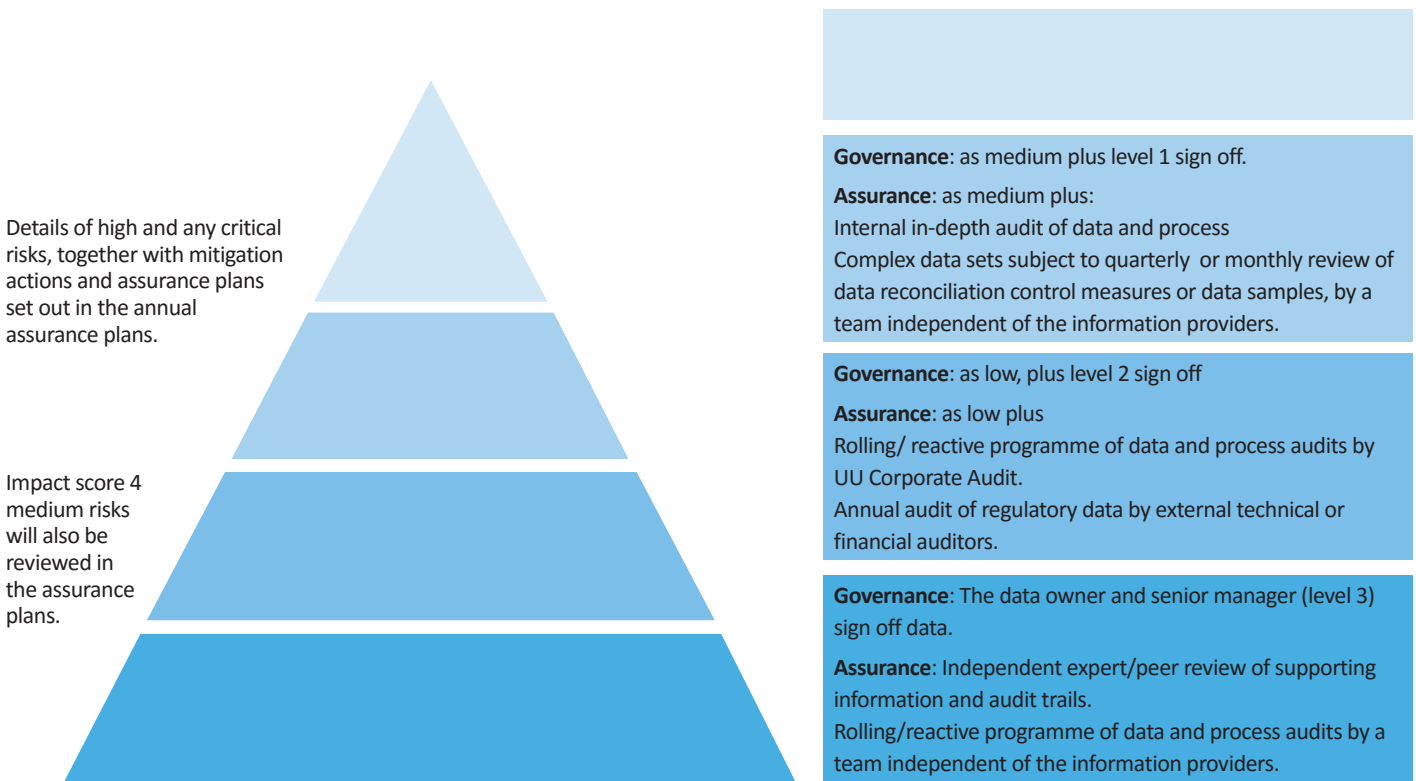


Figure 3: Illustration of risk based governance and assurance requirements

A2

Risk management process

In addition to supporting the governance and assurance processes applied to the regulatory data, the results of this risk assessment are also used to determine how the identified risks are managed.

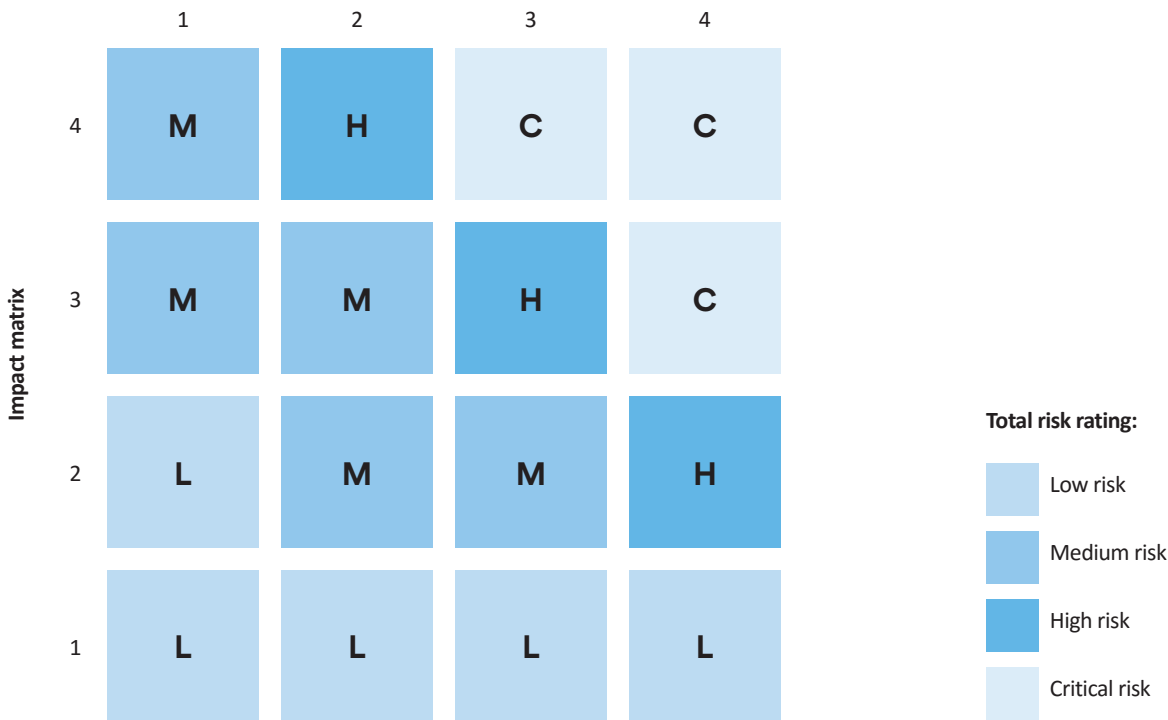
The risk assessment process assigns a risk rating of low, medium, high or critical to the information to be reported.

Critical and high risks, together with any medium risks with an impact score of 4 are highlighted with the business owner, who is accountable for both ensuring that a new risk is added to the corporate risk management system and managing any resulting action plan. Where the reporting risk relates to an existing risk, the business owner ensures that a new control action is added to this risk.

Medium risks and mitigating action are added to the “regulatory action tracker” which provides a formalised reporting and escalation regime that is tracked by the department providing second line of assurance for the data item.

Low risks and mitigating actions are managed between the department providing the second line of assurance for that data item and the relevant level 3 business manager. With progress tracked informally on an ongoing basis and through the quarterly reporting cycle. Activities or initiatives associated with critical and high risk items have been highlighted within the Draft and Final Assurance Plans.

Impact and probability assessment matrix



A3

Targeted audit and assurance

The approach we have taken to audit and assure our data and reporting in AMP6 is based upon the ‘three lines of assurance’ approach that we successfully used for our AMP5 (2010-15) regulatory reporting.

Three lines of assurance

The process for capturing and assuring our regulatory data is underpinned by a ‘three lines of assurance’ approach to the analysis, review and assurance of the reporting of regulatory information.

- In the first line of assurance management has accountability for developing and maintaining sound processes, systems and controls in the normal course of their operations

- In the second line of assurance the Economic Regulation or Finance team has accountability for providing the framework and governance for regulatory reporting
- The UU Corporate Audit team also provide an independent review of the effectiveness and application of the assurance framework and undertake targeted reviews
- The third line of assurance provides independent audit and assurance activity through independent technical auditors

The three lines of assurance accountabilities and process are demonstrated in Figure 5 below:

First line of defence – Business and management accountability and responsibility

Accountability for developing and maintaining sound processes, systems and controls in the normal course of operations

- On-going review of processes and systems and controls e.g. Capital Investment Committee, Quarterly Business Review, report findings at 6 month, 9 month and year end
 - Performance compared to regulatory expectations
 - Change in risk profile identified through performance and compliance statements, control testing and evidencing, level 3 and level 2 management review
 - Assessment of data reliability and accuracy using confidence grade mechanism
- Identifying material changes to systems and processes

Second line of defence – Providing the enabling framework and governance for regulatory reporting

Economic Regulation Assurance

- Review of information submitted at 6 months, 9 month and year-end
 - Analysis of methodology, performance and compliance statements and supporting information
 - Monitoring delivery of obligations, measures of success and totex expenditure
- Identifying systemic risks (internal horizon scanning, linking to Regulatory interactions system,
- Industry intelligence (external horizon scanning) to Strategy Steering Group and recommendations to Political and Regulation group
- Reporting to Executive Management teams and other risk functions

Finance teams

- Review of information submitted at 9 months and year-end
 - Analysis of methodology, performance and compliance statements and supporting information
 - Monitoring delivery of obligations, measures of success and totex expenditure
 - Reporting to Executive Management teams

Corporate audit

Independent audit and assurance activity

- Cyclic audit activity to provide on-going testing and assurance of key processes and controls driven by assurance map across obligations

Third line of defence – Reactive audit programme rolling and reactive audits

Technical Auditor

Independent audit and assurance activity

- Cyclic audit activity to provide on-going testing and assurance of key processes and controls driven by assurance map across obligations
- Risk based audit activity determined by risks, issues and intelligence identified through first and second lines of defence

A3

Targeted audit and assurance

Application of the three lines of assurance to our regulatory reporting

The key elements of the three lines of assurance approach as applied to the assurance of our AMP6 regulatory reporting are summarised below;

Using our established processes and methodologies for reporting and assuring data.

This requires data providers, their managers and business unit directors to produce and approve performance and compliance statements that set out the evidence to support the reported performance and control checks that have been applied. The majority of the regulatory and operational performance data is collected and reviewed at month six, nine and year-end. A small proportion of the information only warrants collection and assurance annually, due to the stable nature or the use of the data.

Comparing the reported outturn performance with our company business plan targets, regulatory targets and historic performance.

This exercise allows variances to be identified and explored. Where required, explanatory statements are sought from business managers. These statements are analysed and assessed by the Economic Regulation or Finance teams and findings are reported to the Business Unit Directors. Following the review, findings are reported and escalated to the Executive and Board as appropriate.

Business Unit Directors are required to complete an annual management control self-assessment.

This assessment provides confirmation that reporting processes and systems of control are robust, and any actions identified during the report year have been addressed, or have actions scheduled.

Reviews are undertaken by our Corporate Audit team and technical auditor of the company's processes.

Their findings are reported to the Board. Should a significant regulatory risk or issue materialise during the report year then we will update Ofwat and the appropriate stakeholders accordingly to demonstrate that the company is aware of and is responding appropriately to manage that risk or issue. Whenever possible, any risks or issues identified are addressed immediately. Where this is not practical, they will be built into an improvement plan for the following year's regulatory reporting cycle.

Review and challenge by the YourVoice independent panel forms an additional part of the third line of assurance.

YourVoice's findings are reported alongside the findings of our Corporate Audit team and external technical and financial auditors to aid the Board's decision to approve the annual suite of performance reports.



A4

Governance and accountability

Approach

We are committed to the very highest standards of corporate governance – those systems and processes through which our organisation is managed, controlled and held accountable. During the financial year ending 31 March 2017, we complied fully with the principles and the spirit of the UK Corporate Governance Code, which sets out universal standards of good practice in relation to Board leadership and effectiveness, remuneration, accountability and relations with shareholders.

Effective governance is not just the responsibility of our Board and Executive team. We aspire to apply the highest standards of governance to the way we conduct business around the board table and we strive to ensure that these standards are applied by the Executive team and cascaded throughout the group. In support of this, we have in place internationally accredited management systems governing quality, environment and health and safety to ensure consistently high standards.

Our certifications are scrutinised on a regular basis by external auditors to ensure we meet the requirements of the standards. These audits include documentation reviews, office based interviews and site visits involving employees from all parts of the business. We also run a rigorous programme of internal audits that covers the full breadth of the Group's activities. The findings of our risk based audit programme is communicated regularly to our Board, and our performance in the delivery of actions arising from our audit findings is monitored and reviewed closely by the senior management team.

Our Business Principles ensure that we act in the best interests of our customers and the region, in everything we do. They cover five key themes – customers, environment, communities, employees and stakeholders. Published on our website, this document gives more detail on what this means for us and the organisations we work with. It affirms our commitment to acting with integrity in our dealings with customers, suppliers, employees, regulators and investors.

Over the past few years, we have been monitoring the considerable change in the areas of governance and narrative reporting and continue to build on our approach to reporting.

We continue to apply a structured and thorough approach to the governance and assurance of our reports. We have already sought to adopt the principles of transparent reporting. Our United Utilities Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2015 was prepared in accordance with the principles set out in the International Framework published by the International Integrated Reporting Council in December 2013 and the 2014 UK Corporate Governance Code introduced section C.2.2 covering the requirement for companies to publish long term viability statements. We adopted this requirement early, in our 2014/15 Annual Report and Financial Statements.

In recognition of this our 2014/15 Annual Report and Financial Statements was awarded the Building Public Trust award for Reporting Excellence.

Further details of the governance arrangements are set out in [United Utilities Group PLC Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2015](#).

Board level accountability and control

Our Board manages the effective and efficient delivery of its obligations and operation of everyday activities within the business through the interaction of:

- Authorisations, approvals and procedures.** These are set out in the United Utilities Group PLC (UUG) internal control manual (ICM) to provide guidance to employees as to the system of internal controls which they must follow when acting on behalf of United Utilities Water (UUG) and United Utilities Group (UUG) as a whole. The ICM sets out a framework within which underlying detailed procedures and policies operate
- Policies.** The UUG Board has adopted an overriding set of Business Principles. These are supported by a range of underlying policies that provide guidance to our employees as to how they should conduct themselves when acting on behalf of UUG and UUG as a whole. Everyone working for or on behalf of UUG must comply with the policies (to the extent they are applicable to their roles). Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action being taken. This could lead to dismissal and possible civil or criminal prosecution in serious cases.
- Governance and control.** The UUG Board delegates responsibility for specific matters to a number of committees and working groups. This provides a framework that employees are expected to be aware of and comply with, where relevant to their role, to ensure business decisions are taken in accordance with best business governance practices.
- Regulatory reporting.** The Board sign off the AMP6 suite of Annual Regulatory Reports, based upon an approved suite of assurance processes.

A4

Governance and accountability

Operational governance and review process

As described in section A1 of this document, the accountability for operational performance and delivery of the customer outcomes sits with the relevant business units. The AMP6 measures of success are included on the relevant business scorecard, with performance against the regulatory measures and relevant supporting and operational measures being reviewed on a monthly basis.

As described in section A2 of this document, we have developed and adopted a risk based approach to the assurance and governance of our regulatory data. This risk assessment process ensures that all reported data is signed off by the most appropriate level of senior or executive management and allows executive management to focus on material risks, issues and high priority regulatory data.

As part of the governance framework for our regulatory data, we have agreed accountability for every piece of regulatory information. All regulatory data is signed off by the relevant data owner and senior manager. The risk assessment described in section A2 of this document determines the level of management sign off based upon a risk based review of the importance of the data and the materiality of any potential risks or issues. This ensures that all issues are escalated to an appropriate level. The different sign off levels are outlined below, the minimum sign off for regulatory data being level 4 and level 3 sign off (see below)

- Level 1 Executive Director – the Managing Director of the relevant business
- Level 2 Business Unit Director – the owner of the relevant performance scorecard and the Director accountable for delivery of the measure
- Level 3 senior manager – the manager responsible for the day to day performance of the measure with accountability for achieving the targets and monitoring and confirming performance and compliance levels
- Level 4 data owner – the subject matter expert who is accountable for working with the ICC to manage the capture, review and provision of the data.

The regulatory data is provided by the business and collated by the Economic Regulation or Finance teams who independently review, monitor, assess and challenge all the reported data against internal and external targets and expectations. The majority of regulatory information is captured at nine months and year-end. Depending on the nature of the information and the outcome of the risk assessment information, some information is collated quarterly. The teams are also accountable for checking and verifying that the relevant data capture methodology has been complied with and that any risks and issues identified during this process are escalated appropriately within the business potentially up to Board level.



A5

Additional communications and publications

Approach

The minimum information requirements that companies need to publish in their Annual Performance Reports is set out in RAG 4.06 – Guideline for the table definitions in the annual performance report .

In addition to publishing these minimum requirements we are committed to providing regular and transparent reporting on our performance against each measure of success, and to updating customers and other stakeholders on delivery against our totex allowances, performance commitments and customer promises.

We seek to provide a detailed supporting commentary to our main Annual Performance Report. The focus is on the current year's performance, although the report also sets out information with the five year context of the AMP6 period, including the accumulation of penalties and rewards resulting from the company's outcome delivery incentives, or relative performance against the final determination totex expectations. We also include relevant background information, reflecting the detailed review of our performance that some of our stakeholders may seek to undertake.

We also aim to provide more targeted summary documentation that highlights how we are performing against the commitments set out in the final determination for the AMP6 period. With areas of our underperformance being highlighted.

The style, coverage and format of these performance reports is reviewed by and agreed with the YourVoice panel, who have also reviewed and challenged the data and supporting commentary that we included in the reports to help to ensure that the information is a fair reflection of our performance.

Relevant sections of the regulatory performance data are also incorporated within our United Utilities Group PLC Annual Report and Financial Statements (published in June), and our online Corporate Responsibility Report updates (which appear quarterly).

In addition to these specific and formalised reports, we continue to provide a comprehensive range of other customer and stakeholder communications. Listed below are four communication activities we have undertaken in the first year of AMP6 to communicate performance to stakeholders.

a. 2016/17 performance summary

To support our 2016/17 Annual Performance Report we developed and published a relatively short summary guide in PDF format.

Our investment and plans for 2016-2017 were underpinned a series of customer promises and supporting performance commitments, which were shaped by listening to our customers and stakeholders to understand their priorities. The summary guide was designed to provide a short update on how we had performed against these promises and performance commitments in the first year of the AMP6 (2015-2020) period.

The guide included an update on our progress so far, including some of this year's positives, but also the areas where we could improve and included a one page scorecard summarising performance against our commitments and highlighting any penalties or rewards that had been incurred through associated outcome delivery incentives.

b. Supporting definition-of-terms

We have provided a more detailed definition and explanation of our AMP6 measures of success at two main levels.

Internally we have developed a simple but engaging document to depict and explain each of the AMP6 measures of success and outcomes. This information is published on our intranet and available to all employees and has also been shared and used for more detailed discussions with key stakeholders such as YourVoice, and representatives from the Environment Agency and CCWater.

Externally we have published detailed technical documents to set out the coverage, detail and calculation methodologies behind each of our performance commitments, and any outcome delivery incentives, associated with these performance commitments.

These documents reflect and support the information published in the PR14 final determination and provide greater detail on the purpose, coverage and incentive regimes associated with each measure.

A5

Additional communications and publications

c. Additional stakeholder communications

To allow the YourVoice panel to review and challenge our performance and to effectively review and scrutinise our reporting, we provide it with detailed and regular updates on performance.

We provide YourVoice actual performance levels against targets at least quarterly, and clearly indicate and discuss the current and predicted future performance levels relative to the published performance commitment targets and expectations.

We also actively work with our other regulators, such as the Environment Agency, Drinking Water Inspectorate, Consumer Council for Water, Public Health England and the Health and Safety Executive, continuing with our programme of regular liaison meetings and providing all relevant regulatory data, as and when required.

d. Additional customer communication channels

We continue to use both new and existing communications channels to share and seek feedback on our performance with our customers and stakeholders. We recognise that one size does not fit all when it comes to communication, so there is a range of tailored communications activities targeted at our North West audiences, to ensure that we are as transparent as possible about our progress against our promises.

Alongside our dedicated web pages highlighting our performance reporting, our communications strategy is designed to engage both customers and other stakeholders. The stakeholder engagement team coordinates engagement about all our activities in specific areas. In addition, the customer communications team provide support by creating materials which help promote understanding of the projects that are underway, and offer opportunities to give regular feedback as we deliver our plans.

We run targeted campaigns such as 'Great Value', which used an experiential approach to focus on one-to-one engagement with customers about 'what do you get for your money?' We used this as an opportunity to help customers understand their water bill, and importantly, be reassured about how we spend money on their behalf by sharing our performance reporting.

Our external affairs team are also accountable for engaging with our local MPs, local authorities, key media and influential bloggers to give added cut-through for our communication on outcome delivery performance.



A6

Independent challenge and review

Approach

To ensure that our reporting is independently challenged we have established a stakeholder forum called the YourVoice panel. Background information related to YourVoice key reports and minutes of meetings are published on our website and can be found [here](#).

Background

During our business planning for the 2015-2020 period, the Customer Challenge Group (CCG) provided United Utilities with assurance on its customer engagement strategies and research to support the setting of prices for 2015-2020.

As an independent body of individuals from different sectors, backgrounds and with different areas of expertise, the CCG ensured that customers were at the heart of the company's business planning engagement and that there was a healthy debate about the priorities for investment and what this would cost customers. The expertise embodied in the CCG ranged from Citizens' Advice, to the CBI; from environmental organisations to public health; and from flood and coastal defence organisations to consumer interests. The group was effective and influential and challenged the company at a range of levels, including through engagement with the Executive Management Team and at Board level.

CCG members (through an independent review of its work) and United Utilities expressed a wish to see the group continue to play a key role in the company's delivery of its 2015-2020 business plan.

Establishment of the YourVoice panel

Building on the work and membership of the CCG, a new group of customer and stakeholder representatives, known as "YourVoice" panel, has been formed. The panel has an integral part in monitoring, assuring and reporting on the delivery of the company's commitments to customers and other stakeholders as agreed with the regulator for the water and sewerage industry, Ofwat. The panel also looks at how company research can continue to capture and strengthen the views of its customers.

The objective of the panel's work is to help United Utilities to reflect on what type of consumer representation is needed and how this relates to the company's existing governance arrangements. The new panel has some 'fresh faces' to ensure there is a healthy dynamic of both experienced and new views. In particular the Chair and United Utilities have sought to ensure the right mixture between customer, regulatory and environmental representatives, enhancing the number of organisations representing customer views, to improve the balance with other members that have a purely statutory remit.

The make-up of the panel, which now meets regularly, can be found [here](#).

Challenge and review

We provide the panel with regular updates on our performance against each of our performance commitments. We also review and discuss potential actions the company has taken or is planning to take to deliver the current or target performance levels, together with the impacts that these actions could have upon potential financial penalties and rewards.

This forum provides the ideal opportunity to have detailed and transparent reviews of the risks, issues and opportunities facing the company with customer representatives and to have open and honest two way conversations with them to help to ensure that our plans reflect our customers' views and that we continue to deliver the services that we promised.

We are also working with the YourVoice panel to ensure that we provide information for customers and stakeholders that is reliable, timely, appropriate to the audience, and that we are seen to be transparent with customers and stakeholders about the data assurance that we have put in place.

Independent report

As part of their role in reviewing our 2016/17 publications YourVoice developed and published their own independent report on our progress, called "Reflecting on United Utilities' performance – 2016-2017". This report is published on our web site and can be found here:

<https://www.unitedutilities.com/corporate/about-us/performance/annual-performance-reports-2015-2020/>

Board engagement

A key part of the role of the YourVoice panel is to provide additional independent review and assurance of our data. Minutes of the panel's quarterly meetings are shared with our Board, with the YourVoice chair attending a Board meeting at least annually. At this meeting, the chair discusses the panel's independent report and outlines the findings of its review and challenge processes, which aids the Board's decision in approving the annual performance report.



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