



CONSUMER COUNCIL FOR WATER

Minutes of the Board Meeting

Public Session

Tuesday, 2 June 2009
Victoria Square House, Birmingham

Present:	Chair	Dame Yve Buckland
	English Regional Committee Chairs	David Bland Andrea Cook Charles Howeson Sir James Perowne
	Wales Committee Chair	Diane McCrea
	Independent Members	Mike Barnes Colette Isaaks Narendra Makanji
	Chief Executive	Tony Smith
In attendance:	Secretary to the Board	Mike Jackson
	Head of Corporate Services	Jane Morris
	Head of Policy and Strategy	Nick Ellins
	Head of Consumer Relations	Carl Pegg
	Head of Public Relations	Dave Thompson

CB14 Apologies and Declarations of Interest

An apology was received from Timothy Hornsby. Apart from the ongoing general declaration of interests already made by Charles Howeson and available for public inspection, there were no specific declarations of interest.

CB15 Approval and Receipt of Minutes and Matters Arising:

15.1 The minutes of the Public Board meeting held on 3 March 2009 were submitted for approval.

15.2 With regard to min. no. CB61, the Chair of the Wales Committee reported that the Welsh Assembly Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing had agreed to launch the Annual Report on 14 July.

AGREED: That the minutes of the Public Board Meeting held on 3 March 2009 be approved as a correct record and signed.

CB16 Chief Executive's Report

16.1 The Chief Executive orally reported on the following areas:

- The Price Review (PR09)
- Walker Review of Fair Charging and Metering
- Cave Report on Innovation and Competition
- Floods and Water Bill

He updated members on the latest position.

16.2 The Chair also reported on the meetings accompanied by the Chief Executive she had had with the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee (Efra) and Lord Whitty and Mr Ed Mayo of Consumer Focus. They had also met Mr Nick Herbert MP, Shadow Secretary of State and other opposition Members of Parliament with an interest in water, to discuss current water consumer issues.

16.3 There was a proposal being considered as part of the Consumer White Paper for a national consumer advocate or 'Consumer Tsar'.

16.4 Concern was expressed about the lack of representation of the Consumer Council for Water (CCWater) at a meeting recently convened by Gareth Thomas, Consumer Affairs Minister, involving Consumer Focus, Ofwat and Water UK. This issue would be followed up by the Chair together with CCWater's views on the White Paper.

Board Chair

AGREED: That the report be noted.

CB17 Annual Review 2008/9

17.1 The Head of Public Relations submitted the final copy of the Annual Review 2008/9 for approval.

17.2 The Annual Review had been already circulated to members and the comments received had been incorporated

17.3 It was agreed to re-order some of the quotations in the report. The Chair of

Subject to confirmation by the Board

Chair of the Wales Committee suggested it might be also appropriate to include a quotation from the Welsh Assembly Government if a relevant quotation could be found. Wales Committee

AGREED: That the Annual Review for 2008/9 be approved for publication subject to the above comments. Head of Public Relations

CB18 End of Year Complaints Report

18.1 The Head of Customer Relations presented the end of year performance report on complaints and enquiries. 20,382 enquiries had been received in 2008/9 and this was broken down by company and by categories.

18.2 Performance targets had been met or improved upon year on year in line with the operational business plan. Operational targets were higher in 2009-10 and included internal stretch targets. Targets were to be demanding but achievable.

18.3 Total caseload and number of complaints over 40 working days (our backlog) was as low as it had ever been. The number of open complaints as against those received in the last 12 months was also low (950 open complaints compared to 1706 in 2007-08).

18.4 Although customer satisfaction with outcome was lower than 2007-08, it was expected that there would be improvement across all consumer satisfaction measures this year. More statistically reliable telephone surveys would achieve higher satisfaction figures in 2009-10. Members commented that a more detailed analysis needed to be obtained in relation to customer satisfaction to identify the extent to which customer expectations could reasonably be met.

18.5 It was acknowledged that once consumer satisfaction levels were at their optimum, the next step would be to benchmark CCWater's processes.

18.6 £2.4m in compensation rebates had been secured during the course of the year.

AGREED: (1) That progress achieved in 2008/9 be noted;

(2) That a report be circulated to members on the outcome of the 'Away Day' on customer services as soon as it was available; Head of Customer Relations

(3) That a paper on the outcome of assessments be submitted annually to the Board; and Head of Customer Relations

(4) That the benchmarking and setting of targets be remitted to the Consumer Services Group. Head of Customer Relations

CB19 Finance Report

19.1 The Finance Report was presented by the Head of Corporate Services and showed a year end underspend of £237,357 (corrected verbally at the meeting from £273,357 as mentioned in the report).

Subject to confirmation by the Board

19.2 The reference in para. 4.1 of the report should be to 'companies' not 'water and sewerage companies' to avoid ambiguity.

19.3 The approved budget for 2009/10 was £6.655m. A cost improvement programme was to be prepared for 2010/2011 in response to the current financial and political climate. There had been a small revenue underspend in April of £53k. Chief Executive

AGREED: That the report be received.

CB20 Annual Declarations of Interest

20.1 The Register of Board members' interests had been recently updated and was submitted for noting on the record.

20.2 It was suggested that consideration should be given to the Register being revised to:

- distinguish between remunerated and non-remunerated posts
- add a column for membership of professional bodies.

20.3 In considering her re-appointment, the Welsh Assembly had also asked the Chair of the Wales Committee for ministerial appointments to be separately listed from other appointments.

20.4 Some members updated their list of interests. These needed to be declared on the forms provided for the purpose.

AGREED: (1) That the form used for the Register be revised to take account of the above comments and re-issued to members; Board Secretary

(2) That returns also be sought from members of the English Regional and Wales Committees supported by Committee Chairs once the form had been revised; and Board Secretary

(3) That the Register be noted for the record and made available for public inspection. Board Secretary

CB21 Reports from Consumer Council for Water Committee Chairs and Minutes of Committee meetings

21.1 A report was submitted appending the minutes of the meetings held by the 4 English Regional Committees and the Wales Committee since they were last reported to the Board on 2 March 2009.

21.2 The minutes related to the following meetings:

- Central and Eastern Region Committee - 28 January 2009 (Leicester) and 1 April 2009 (Lincoln)
- London and South-East Region Committee - 11 March 2009
- Northern Region Committee - 4 February 2009
- Wales Committee - 27 January 2009
- Western Region Committee - 12 February 2009

21.3 Each of the Committee Chairs presented their Committee minutes and drew attention to points of general interest for discussion by the Board.

Subject to confirmation by the Board

- 21.4 It was suggested that consideration be given to either appointing Associate Members or establishing a group of distinguished and suitably experienced people to act as a 'Sounding Board' on policy matters. Board Chair
- 21.5 One issue that was raised was the need to raise the awareness of Pensioners in terms of their expectation as to the cost of water derived from a metered supply in each company's area. It was suggested that this could be very simply done based on the cost of an estimated standard consumption for an individual in a particular company area on a measured basis. The point was illustrated by a report from the Devon Pensioners Forum which had shown an elderly person paying 3 times what they should have expected to be paying over a long period.
- 21.6 Concern was expressed about the mixed use disconnection policy being practised by Dwr Cymru. The Board Chair suggested she should write to Dwr Cymru seeking a copy of their legal advice and requesting information with regard to disconnections. Board Chair
- 21.7 Another area of general concern related to debt collection complaints. It was agreed that this matter be considered in September by the Board. The Head of Consumer Relations was asked to look at trends on this issue in assessments. Head of Consumer Relations
- 21.8 It was also agreed that water supply issues in the South East should be examined to identify the wider implications. Head of Policy and Strategy
- AGREED:** That, subject to the above comments, the reports be received.

CB22 Board and Board Committee Attendance for 2008/9

- 22.1 The Board Secretary submitted the records of attendance of Board members at Board and Board Committee meetings for 2008/9.
- 22.2 The English Regional and the Wales Committee chairs were asked to undertake a similar exercise for attendance at their committee meetings and include an item on their committee agendas. Committee chairs/ Policy Managers
- AGREED:** (1) That the records be noted; and
- (2) That such records be submitted annually with an additional column to record other meetings to which members were invited. Board Secretary

CB23 Consumer Service Group

- 23.1 The Head of Consumer Services submitted the proposed Terms of Reference for the above Group and outlined progress made to date.
- 23.2 Representation on the Group was to be finalised by the Chair. Head of Consumer Services/ Board Chair
- AGREED:** That the Terms of Reference be agreed and the work done to date be noted.

CB24 Welsh Language Scheme

- 24.1 A revised Welsh Language Scheme was submitted for Board approval by the Chair of the Wales Committee. The scheme required the approval of the Welsh Language Board as the final statutory CCWater Welsh Language Scheme and had to be submitted by 15th June 2009.
- 24.2 The amendments to the previous Scheme included the introduction of a scoring scheme to decide which documents should be automatically translated into Welsh.

AGREED: That, subject to the word ‘national’ being deleted from the penultimate paragraph in para. 1.2, the Scheme be approved. Head of Corporate Services

CB25 Date of October meeting

The October meeting needed to be changed due to a clash of dates. It was anticipated that the meeting would be in London as an informal meeting was being planned on the day before with Consumer Focus.

AGREED: That the date of the October Board meeting be changed from 6th to 13th October.

CB26 Resolution to Move into Private Session

AGREED: That pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, representatives of the press and other members of the public be excluded from the Board meeting in private session, having regard to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, publicity on which would be prejudicial to the public interest.

End of meeting