



CONSUMER COUNCIL FOR WATER

DRAFT Minutes of the Board Meeting

Public Session

Tuesday, 4th November 2008
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
		Timothy Hornsby
		Colette Isaaks
		Narendra Makanji
	Chief Executive	Tony Smith

In attendance:	Board Secretary	Mike Jackson
	Head of Consumer Relations	Carl Pegg
	Head of Corporate Services	Jane Morris
	Head of Policy and Strategy	Nick Ellins
	Head of Public Relations	Dave Thompson
	Policy Manager	Barbara Leech
	Consumer Services Policy Manager	Colin Lench (part)

Actions

CB12 Apologies

No apologies were received.

CB13 Declarations of Interest

Apart from the ongoing general interest already declared by Charles Howeson there were no other specific declarations of interest.

CB14 Listening session

No members of the public attended the meeting though one member of the public had previously indicated he was going to attend.

CB15 Minutes of the Public Board meeting held on 2 September 2006 and matters arising

With regard to para. 5.4, it was reported by the Head of Consumer Relations that the appointment by a customer of a solicitor did not of itself preclude CCWater involvement in investigating a complaint. Consumer Relations Managers were to be advised accordingly.

Carl Pegg

AGREED: (1) That the Minutes of the meeting held on 2 September be confirmed as a correct record and signed; and

(2) That a list of outstanding actions on Board minutes be presented to the next Public Board meeting.

Mike
Jackson

CB16 Price Review 2009

A paper was submitted prepared by the PR09 Programme Manager reviewing progress made to date and setting out the next steps.

It was agreed that the future emphasis in reports and communication with the media should be on what CCWater would like the companies to do in their final business plans rather than looking back to their draft Business Plans.

There was also concern expressed that pressure might be being exerted by other stakeholders to increase rather than reduce capital investment programmes.

AGREED: That the report be noted.

CB17 Household Revenue Collection - Customer Debt

The Head of Policy and Strategy and the lead Policy Manager for this area of work presented a paper updating the Board on the recent Ofwat announcement regarding outstanding water company revenue, giving an overview of current industry initiatives to reduce outstanding revenue and seeking confirmation of current CCWater policies in this area of activity.

Nick Ellins

Members commented that it was important to understand the level of business customer debt for water and whether this was also increasing.

AGREED: (1) That CCWater policy as stated in the report be confirmed subject to :

- (a) reviewing its position in relation to supporting the Saving from Poverty initiative; and
- (b) considering further whether it supports the approach being taken by companies to encourage payment by direct debit

Nick Ellins

(2) That CCWater continue to raise affordability as an issue distinct from encouraging companies to promote affordable ways to pay;

Board

(3) That a board seminar be held, if possible at its next seminar session in 2009, on customer debt and affordability and that representatives from Water UK, Dwr Cymru and the South-West pilot be invited to attend; and

Mike Jackson

(4) That CC Water supports the principle of extending liability to pay to ultimately the landlord not just the tenant.

Nick Ellins

CB18 Ofwat/CC Water Research into Household Customers' Views of Competition

The results were expected to be available in the next few days.

CB19 Company Assessments Update

The Head of Consumer Relations reported on the results of consultation on the audit process, in future to be called 'assessments', for debt handling and complaints. He looked forward to the review session planned for April.

It was pointed out that para. 2.3 in the report understated the position. The former audit process was accepted as a good concept and was acknowledged as a sound platform for development to deliver greater consistency and to facilitate comparability.

CCWater needed to ensure companies are getting it right first time. CCWater had an important role to play in facilitating cross fertilisation of good practice between companies.

The Chair proposed that customer experience and services be the focus

for the 'Away day' in May.

Carl Pegg

AGREED: (1) That the Board acknowledge the progress made to date and look forward to the further development that will take place following the April review; and

Mike Jackson

(2) That progress be reviewed at the Away Day in May.

CB20 Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive submitted his report setting out benefits that had been delivered for customers since his last report, action that had been taken to further strengthen relationships with stakeholders and initiatives that had been undertaken to lead and motivate the organisation.

Among the items reported on were:

- Water Price Review 2009
- Media campaign on consumer complaints
- The consumer voice contribution being made to the Government's Independent Review of Water Competition and Charging
- Lobbying at Political Party Conferences
- The annual staff and members' event held on 21 October 2008

The annual staff and members' event would be held next year on an allocated Board day, namely Tuesday, 1 December 2009.

Mike Jackson

AGREED: (1) That the report be received; and

(2) That a report on the staff and members' event be submitted to the next Board meeting in December.

Mike Jackson

CB21 Reports from Consumer Council Committee Chairs

The Chair of CCWater Northern Committee submitted a report outlining the Committee's achievements and activities in relation to United Utilities, Yorkshire Water, Northumbrian Water and Hartlepool Water. The report was received by the Board and welcomed as a very helpful document.

The Chair of the Board proposed that minutes/notes of committee meetings be submitted to future Board meetings with significant issues being highlighted.

Chairs reported orally on current activity in Wales and English regional committees and in particular indicated what companies had done with regard to site based area charging and its effect on local community customers. Clarification was to be sought on Ofwat's position.

AGREED: (1) That the reports be noted and in future minutes/notes of committee meetings were to be submitted to the Board highlighting significant issues;

Committee
Chairs/Policy
Managers

(2) That a report be submitted to the next Board meeting on

media messaging in relation to site based area charging; Nick Ellins
and

- (3) The Director of Consumer Protection at Ofwat be asked to clarify Ofwat's position in relation to site based area charging. Nick Ellins

CB22 Finance Report

The Finance Report was submitted summarising performance to September 2008.

A finance report had also been submitted to the Audit and Risk Management Committee on 28 October but the report to the Board though it contained the same information, had been written in a more user friendly way for public consumption.

The report distinguished genuine underspends from phasing or profiling underspends. It was anticipated that the year end position would show an underspend of about 2%.

AGREED: That the report be received.

CB23 Review of Present Policy Positions

The Head of Policy and Strategy presented a report summarising previously agreed policy positions in relation to:

- Rising block and seasonal sewerage tariffs
- Water Company fines, enforcement orders and penalties
- Tap water and giving consumers a fair choice

AGREED: That the policy positions be confirmed.

CB24 Exclusion of the Public and Press

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.