

**Water Sector ADR Panel
Meeting 34
Minutes of a Meeting on 19 June 2019 at Water UK, 36
Broadway, London**

Present:

Louise Beardmore	Daksha Piparia
Claire Forbes	Sir Tony Redmond
Helen Hunter	Sandra Webber (Chair)
	Katy Taqvi
Apologies	
Lissa Balmer	
Attending	
Laura Sockalingum	

Secretary: Shona Flood

		Action
ITEM 1	Minutes and actions arising from meeting on 25 March 2019	
1.	The Minutes of the meeting on 25 March were agreed.	
2.	It was noted that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the fact sheet needed to be updated to include data from the 2018/19 annual statistical review; and b. a separate fact sheet for NHH customers should be produced. It was agreed that the following information about how WATRS was funded would be included on the fact sheet: “all companies who are part of the scheme pay towards its costs.” It was further agreed that information about how WATRS was funded should appear on the WATRS and RWD websites.	SF SF
3.	Ms Beardmore confirmed that the issue of the “8-week deadline” had been discussed at a meeting of the Customer PAG and that there had been agreement to implement it. Ms Beardmore mentioned that companies were due to update their complaints classifications in the autumn to take account of complaints made via social media. It was agreed that the 8-week deadline could be introduced at the same time; the Board should be asked to ensure this and if possible that all companies should use an agreed form of wording.	SW
ITEM 2	Standing items	
4.	The changes made to the service provider’s monthly report were noted. It was agreed that greater clarity in the labelling of some information was still required and that there appeared to be duplication of information on some slides, for example ‘average company response times’ on slides 13 and 14. The service provider would be asked to remove this. There were potential lessons for	SF

	companies in the data but nobody had responsibility for ensuring these were taken on board.	
5.	It was noted that outcomes from NHH customer applications in the first quarter of 2019/2020 were more evenly balanced as between 'actions required' and 'no actions required' than in previous quarters.	SW/SF
6.	It was agreed that the Panel would recommend to the Board that information from the service provider's monthly report should be shared with member companies.	
7.	It was noted that a response was awaited from the service provider to confirm what action was taken in response to customer satisfaction survey results it obtained.	SF
ITEM 3	Recommendations to RWD re tender specification document	
8.	<p>The draft recommendations to RWD regarding the tender specification were reviewed. It was agreed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. no change to the name of the scheme from WATRS would be required as part of the tender, as the changes would absorb energy better spent on awareness raising. b. a requirement for digital strategy and search engine optimisation should be included in tender c. the tenderer should be able to demonstrate an understanding of the latest best practices with regard to ensuring accessibility; d. customer call backs from the answering service should be within 24 hours and the tenderer should be asked to provide priced options for telephone access hours; e. the scheme should remain free for all customers to use. The option that NHH customers (excluding micro-business) should be required to pay a nominal fee was considered and rejected at this time on the ground that this would be inequitable given that the scheme is unable to address 'wholesaler issues'; f. whilst decisions had to reflect the legal position between the parties, the emphasis should be on the use of plain English and, as far as possible, avoid the use of legal phrases. It was noted that there were significant regional variations in literacy levels. The tenderers should be asked to re-write an existing decision as part of the tender response to demonstrate their approach. g. Ms Hunter would provide the relevant citations for the reading age statistics. 	HH
ITEM 4	Annual statistical report	
9.	<p>The draft annual statistical report was reviewed and agreed subject to the following amendments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. information regarding the comparative performance of companies should be included, recalculated to complaints per 10,000 connections; 	

	<p>b. there should be a greater emphasis in the case studies on highlighting the difficulties posed by the lack of redress for NHH customers in respect of supply issues; and</p> <p>c. if possible there should be a diagrammatical representation of the issues.</p> <p>It was further agreed that the report would be sent as a draft to the Board for feedback before being disseminated to companies and stakeholders</p>	SW/SF
ITEM 5	Change to governance	
10.	The changes to the governance process were noted.	
ITEM 6	Proposed changes to Scheme Rules:	
11.	The proposed changes to the Scheme Rules were agreed subject to a further amendment to enable complainants to request that the adjudicator make recommendations to prevent the reoccurrence of an issue. It was agreed that the proposed amendments would be sent to the Board for consultation under the process for minor changes.	SF
ITEM 7	NHH update	
12.	It was noted that there appeared to be a general appetite to resolve the consumer detriment whereby NHH customers do not have access to independent adjudication of supply problems.	
ITEM 8	AOB	
13.	It was agreed that the Chair should write to Ms Fletcher about her evidence to the Public Accounts Committee.	SW
14.	The proposed tender timetable was considered. Ms Flood was asked to circulate it to Panel members for reference. The Panel would like to see the tender sub-group's tender evaluation scores and would like to meet the one or two highest scorers before the preferred tenderer is selected. It was likely that this would be in mid-November.	SF SF
15.	It was noted that the Board had requested that a report be made from the Panel. It was agreed that the Chair would provide a report to the Board following each meeting of the Panel.	SW
16.	It was noted with regret that Ms Hunter would be stepping down from the Panel in the Autumn. Ms Hunter was thanked for her contribution to the work of the Panel.	
	It was also noted that Ms Taqvi would be going on maternity leave in September. The Board was to be asked to consider the possibility of an alternative water only company representative attending in place of Ms Taqvi until her return from maternity leave.	SW/SF
	Next meeting: 12 September 2019	