

**Water Sector ADR Panel
Meeting 41
Minutes of a Meeting on 1 July 2020 via MS Teams**

Present:

Susan Bradford	Daksha Piparia
Louise Beardmore	Sir Tony Redmond
Claire Forbes	Sandra Webber (Chair)
Apologies	
Joe Brownless	
Attending	
Kate Raybould	Shona Flood (Secretary)

		Action
ITEM 1	Minutes from meeting on 2 April 2020	
	1. The minutes of the meeting on 2 April 2020 were approved.	
ITEM 2	Matters arising	
	2. It was noted that RWD had concluded that whilst the NHH trial had been positive in terms of demonstrating a workable process, it would not be practical to operate a tripartite scheme given the current market structure. It was decided that it would be helpful to have more information regarding the wider ADR landscape and in particular how CCW dealt with the different operating ADR service providers. It was agreed that representatives from CCW and the ADR Group would be invited to attend a future meeting in order to gain further information.	SF
	3. It was noted that progress had been made with regard to the inclusion of information on company websites relating to the 8 week escalation time period but that coverage was not yet universal.	
	4. A number of changes had been made to the format and content of the monthly report. The Panel remained concerned that there was still very little commentary, narrative or interpretation of the information presented and further that changes that had previously been requested had not yet been made. It was noted that the introduction of a case management system would alter the type of information available but the Panel were keen to see changes and improvements to the current report particularly regarding the provision of narrative comments and requested that these be made as soon as possible.	SF
	5. It was noted that direct comparisons with customer feedback from other ADR and/or ombudsman schemes was problematic given the structure of the water sector and the variety of schemes available.	

	<p>6. Ms. Forbes reported that Ofwat held a virtual workshop with companies in June following a request for information relating to customer complaints handling. Ms Forbes agreed to share the slides from the workshop session with the Panel.</p> <p>7. Discussions regarding the form and content of the Panel’s publication policy were deferred until the next meeting.</p>	CF
ITEM 3	Standing items	
	<p>8. See paragraph 4 above. It was also noted that anonymised decisions were now available on the WATRS website.</p>	
ITEM 4	Trial of preliminary decisions	
	<p>9. It was noted that the companies who had responded to the consultation had been broadly supportive of the trial. It was further noted that RWD firstly would like the trial to go ahead, initially for a 3 month period but with the ability to extend for a further 3 months and secondly would like the Panel to agree success criteria and then evaluate the trial.</p> <p>10. A number of success criteria were considered. It was agreed that the following 5 measures would be recommended to RWD:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduction in customer service complaints to CEDR’s independent assessor • reduction in negative feedback on the customer satisfaction survey to relevant questions • additional learning for adjudicators if drafts lead to final decisions that are materially different • higher acceptance rate of decisions • the number of final decisions that are materially altered from the drafts <p>11. In respect of the qualitative evaluation of the trial, it was noted that it was important to get customer feedback on whether the preliminary decisions enhanced the perceived fairness of the Scheme. It was agreed that CEDR would be asked whether members of staff not involved in the WATRS decision process could telephone customers to ask for feedback. Companies would be asked for feedback by email.</p> <p>12. It was agreed that CEDR would be asked to provide the preliminary decisions in 2 variants to be randomly spread across actions required and no actions required decisions: Format A: current format with full finding Format B: current format but without the final finding</p>	SW/SF
ITEM 5	tender programme update & changes to scheme rules	
	<p>13. It was noted that the terms of the draft contract had been agreed with CEDR subject to comment by member companies. The final version of the main contract and the back to back company contracts were on schedule to be issued at the end of July.</p> <p>14. The proposed changes to the Scheme Rules were considered and approved subject to minor amendment. It was agreed that the time</p>	

	limit for adjudicators to provide the preliminary decision should be amended from 5 to 7 days and for the final decision from 5 to 3 days.	
ITEM 6	End to End Review response	
15.	It was noted that there had been a very constructive response from CEDR with regard to the recommendations made following the End to End review. CEDR said that they found the process helpful and hoped that it would be undertaken again.	
16.	The generic recommendations made to RWD and companies had been discussed, noted and agreed by the Customer PAG.	
17.	It was further noted that CCW have agreed to expand the narrative summary description of the customer's complaint in the application form. It was also further noted that whilst CCW acknowledged that there were benefits to customers from having a clear articulation of their complaint they considered the potential delay in agreeing and setting out a detailed chronology would be a disbenefit.	
ITEM 7	Annual report	
18.	The contents of the annual report were agreed subject to minor amendments. Ms Webber was asked to expand on her introductory remarks regarding the work and activities undertaken by the Panel.	SW
ITEM 8	AOB	
19.	Ms Taqvi's reappointment was agreed. It was noted that Mr Brownless would step down from the Panel on Ms Taqvi's return from maternity leave.	
	Next meetings: October 2020 date tbc	