

Water Sector ADR Panel
Meeting 42
Minutes of a Meeting on 6 October 2020 via MS Teams

Present:

Susan Bradford	Sir Tony Redmond
Claire Forbes	Katy Taqvi
Daksha Piparia	Sandra Webber (Chair)
Apologies	
Louise Beardmore	
Attending	
Shona Flood (Secretary)	
JP Azzi and Holly Quinn (CEDR Items 5 and 6)	

		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 there was a number of ADR providers available to provide services to water companies. It was agreed that Ms Piparia would undertake a review of the services provided and report to the next meeting.	DP
3.	It was noted that the slides provided by Ms Forbes would be circulated to Panel members.	SF
4.	It was noted that CCW had expanded their narrative summary description of the customer's complaint in the application, and CEDR reported that this was proving useful.	
5.	The Annual Report had been circulated to all member companies, Ofwat, CCW and Defra. A copy of the Report was also available on the RWD website.	
6.	It was noted that a number of companies had included a reference to the 8 week referral period on their websites; what was not clear however was the number of customers who actually referred their complaint to CCW at that stage. It was agreed that the Customer PAG would be asked to provide an indication of the number of referrals. It was also agreed that Ms Flood would undertake a review of all member companies' websites to ascertain if there was information about the 8 week referral available for customers.	SF
ITEM 3	Standing items	
7.	It was noted that a short form version of the service provider's monthly report had been circulated. A new format would be available in the future using the case management system which could	

	<p>incorporate customer satisfaction data. It was further noted that the monthly report should include year on year comparison data.</p> <p>8. It was noted that the anonymised decisions were available on the WATRS website although there were still some difficulties with the search facility which CEDR would be asked to address. More generally it was agreed that the WATRS website had improved.</p> <p>9. It was noted that whilst there were some positive comments in the free text responses in the customer satisfaction survey there were also a number of issues raised regarding perceived bias and issues relating to vulnerability. The representative from CEDR confirmed that the customer satisfaction survey results were reviewed on a weekly basis and were fed back to the relevant team to be followed up where appropriate.</p> <p>10. It was noted that currently there was not a large uptake in the webchat facility available on the WATRS' website. The webchat is not robotic. A review was being undertaken to see if the responses could be made more conversational in tone.</p> <p>11. It was also noted that details of customer complaints made against CEDR were available in the Independent Assessor's report for all of the CEDR operated schemes. A link to the report would be circulated.</p>	SF
ITEM 4	Contract Implementation	
	<p>12. It was noted that all wholesale companies had either signed the new contract or indicated that they would be signing shortly. The majority of non-household (NHH) companies had renewed their membership. Two HH companies had given notice of termination.</p> <p>13. It was also noted that good progress had been made in relation to the incorporation of and/or implementation of specific contract conditions.</p>	SF
ITEM 5	Case Management System	
	<p>14. It was noted that there was good video guidance available on the WATRS' website to explain how to make an application using the case management system (CMS).</p> <p>15. The Panel received a presentation on the operation of the CMS from representatives from CEDR. The Panel considered the CMS was a helpful development for customers, who could now track activity on their case. It was noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. if a customer was not able to access the CMS system and/or preferred not to use electronic communications their application could be taken over the phone or by post and manually added to the CMS. The application would be flagged as requiring additional assistance and WATRS would use the customer's preferred method of communication with the customer. Options for additional assistance included reading out responses for the customer, providing additional time to respond and using different coloured paper and font sizes; 	

	<p>b. survey questions were incorporated at ‘touch points’ during the CMS process; the Panel hoped this included a free text option and the CEDR representative said he would check.</p> <p>c. the survey questions at the end of the process were based on questions used in other statutory schemes</p> <p>16. In respect of quality assurance, it was noted that all decisions are currently reviewed before issue.</p> <p>17. It was noted that a new scheme being provided by CEDR for another sector which was being launched in the New Year was going to trial the use of customer champions. CEDR will review the effectiveness of this role with a potential to possibly roll out to other schemes.</p>	
ITEM 6	Preliminary decisions	
	<p>18. It was noted that there are a number of decisions with adjudicators in readiness for a preliminary decision to be issued but none have been issued yet. CEDR have marked the start of November to begin the process of obtaining customer feedback via a phone call from a staff member in another team. This feedback should be available in December. At present all decisions are quality-assured by manager before being issued and this would continue to apply. Preliminary decisions would be reviewed before being issued and would be reviewed again if the final decision varied significantly from the preliminary decision.</p>	
ITEM 7	Longer Term Reform of water sector complaints structure	
	<p>19. Ofwat, CCW and DEFRA had shown an interest in pursuing the longer term reform of water sector complaints. It was agreed that the Panel would continue to monitor the progress being made including progress with regard to NHH matters.. .</p>	
ITEM 8	Publication Policy	
	<p>20. The proposed wording to be added to the RWD website regarding the Panel’s publication policy was agreed subject to minor amendments.</p>	SF
ITEM 9	Panel Recruitment	
	<p>21. It was noted that the recruitment process for an independent Panel member was being co-ordinated on behalf of RWD by Northumbrian Water. Adverts had been issued and shortlisting and interviews of potential candidates would take place in November. The secretary was asked to confirm where the advert had been placed.</p>	SF
ITEM 10	AOB	
	<p>22. It was noted that Ms Webber would be stepping down as Chair of the Panel. She was thanked for her invaluable work and guidance from the inception of the Scheme to its current operation. Ms Webber thanked the Panel secretary for her excellent support over the last six years</p>	

23. It was agreed that a sub-committee (Ms Piparia, Ms Bradford and Ms Taqvi) would meet in mid-December to review the progress of the preliminary decisions trial. The next full Panel meeting would be arranged for mid-January.	
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