

WATRS independent ADR Panel
Meeting 46
Minutes of a meeting on 7 October 2021 via MS Teams

Present:

Susan Bradford
 Louise Beardmore
 Emma Clancy

Anton Gazzard
 Daksha Piparia (Chair)
 Claire Whyley

Apologies

Claire Forbes

Attending

Shona Flood (Secretary) Tom Earley and Nina Kelly
 Sally Ainsworth (Item 2 (Item 3)
 customer profile data)

| | | Action No. |
|---------------|---|------------|
| Item 1 | Minutes from meeting on 25 June 2021 | |
| 1. | The minutes of the meeting on 25 June 2021 were approved. | |
| Item 2 | Action log | |
| 2. | It was noted that the service provider had commissioned an external review regarding accessibility (website and documentation). The external provider had completed its initial review and the service provider anticipated that it would be in a position to report to the Panel by mid-November. | |
| 3. | In order to ensure that WATRS is an effective ADR scheme the Panel considers that it has to be accessible to all customers who wish to complain. The Panel is keen to assess how accessible WATRS is to customers who may face barriers due to age, disability, economic or social disadvantage and, if such barriers exist, what steps can be taken to mitigate or ameliorate. It was noted that there are currently no standard customer profile data available across water companies. | |
| 4. | The Panel received a presentation from United Utilities regarding customer profile and demographic data. It was noted that whilst the Board of RWD would be prepared to consider asking a limited number of companies to trial a data request, considerable concern had been expressed as to the scope and purpose of the proposed request and, if provided, how and by whom any data would be analysed and what the identifiable output would be. It was further noted that the Board were also concerned that conclusions that were not well founded could be made on that limited data. In addition, it was noted that CCW were in the process of undertaking work in relation to complaint 'exhaustion' which had not yet been completed. | |

| | | |
|---------------|--|---------|
| 5. | It was agreed that pending the outcome of the service provider's external review and report on accessibility, the service provider would be asked to request demographic data from customers which would be compared against wider industry averages which may be available through the Institute of Consumer. | [37] SF |
| 6. | The issue of customer profile data would be reviewed following the outcome of the accessibility review. | |
| 7. | It was agreed that the E2E review process would be amended to include round table discussions with relevant stakeholders after the initial document review has taken place. | [38] SF |
| Item 3 | Insights Report | |
| 8. | The Panel heard from representatives from the service provider. The intention is for the report to be issued biannually to RWD and subscribing companies to provide insights and learning to help reduce overall customer complaints. The report would be circulated to member companies and external stakeholders and would form the basis for the forthcoming WATRS stakeholder event. | |
| Item 4 | Standing items | |
| 9. | Re Insights Report: see Item 3 above. | |
| 10. | It was noted that with regard to decisions issued there had been a number of applications related to negative credit ratings. | |
| 11. | Re customer satisfaction data: see paragraph [12] below. | |
| Item 5 | AOB | |
| 12. | It was noted that concerns had been raised as to the purpose, nature and scope of the questions that currently appear in the customer satisfaction survey at the end of the WATRS process. It was agreed that Ms Flood would circulate proposed amendments for consideration. | [39] SF |
| 13. | It was noted that no suitable candidates had been identified through the recruitment exercise conducted in August. The issue of further recruitment would be reviewed in the New Year. | |
| 14. | It was noted that the service provider's stakeholder event would take place as a virtual event on 20 October. Member companies and external stakeholders including all Panel members had been invited to attend. It was agreed that Ms Flood would circulate the proposed topics for the breakout sessions to Ms Clancy to ensure that there was no overlap with work already being undertaken by CCW. | [40] SF |
| 15. | It was agreed that a separate note would be circulated with an update on the Complaints future landscape work being led by CCW. | [41] SF |
| 16. | It was noted that CCW had issued a consultation on fast tracking qualifying cases to WATRS. It was agreed that Ms Flood would circulate a draft response for consideration and comment. | [42] SF |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | It was agreed that Ms Flood would canvass future meeting dates outside of the meeting. | |
| | Next meeting: 6/12/21: 10am (provisionally at CCW's office, Birmingham) | |