

MINUTES OF 22nd MEETING OF THE WESSEX WATER PARTNERSHIP

Video conference call Wednesday 4th November 2020

Present

Dan Rogerson – Chair (DR)	Wessex Water (WW) observers
Jeremy Hawkins – Independent report writer (JH)	
Michael Barnes – CCW (MB)	Andy Pymmer (AP)
Richard Cresswell – Catchment Panel Chair (RC)	Sue Lindsay (SL)
Sarah Cardy – Citizens Advice (SC)	Neil Wilson (NW)
Mike Short – CCW (MS)	Matt Greenfield (MG)
David Hawkes – Advice UK (DH)	
Kevin Ward – Environment Agency (KW)	
Ian Walker – Bath University (IW)	

Apologies:

Martin Green – Age UK South Gloucestershire (MJG)
Matt Vaughan-Wilson - Money Advice Trust (MVW)

1. Welcome and introduction from the Chair post appointment

DR welcomed everyone to the meeting.

He is delighted to be reappointed as the Partnership's Chair. He welcomed the transparent interview process which WW had arranged through an independent organisation. He found both the interview and the company's reflections on PR19 helpful. He is putting his thoughts together on the future organisation and activities of the Partnership in its role as a critical friend to the company. He will share these with the Partnership and the company. DR and JH have been formulating a forward programme for the Partnership. This was discussed later in the meeting. DR

DR welcomed Mike Short of CCW to the Partnership. Mike is the CCW Local Consumer Advocate for Wessex Water.

2. Minutes and actions including matters arising

No points were raised on the minutes from the meeting held on 11th June. The minutes were agreed, and DR will sign them on behalf of the attendees DR

All actions from previous meetings were noted as complete with the

exception of Action 20.4 where it was agreed that WW is not at the point in the PR24 process where a meaningful discussion on the customer engagement programme can be held with the Catchment Panel. This is likely to happen early next year.

Customer engagement update

Before the meeting WW had circulated a written update on its recent customer engagement activity and where Covid-19 had impacted this (document '01c Matters Arising – Customer engagement update.pdf'). The update covered:

- Wessex Water Image Tracking Survey
- Young People's Panel
- Online Have Your Say Panel
- Customer engagement strategy for PR24

DH noted that the Young People's Panel had discussed changing perceptions around water hardness, and he questioned why WW would want to do this. WW replied that it receives many customer contacts on water hardness. It wants to increase understanding that hardness is a function of the region's geology and is not an issue for water quality.

JH noted that CCW has recently published its review of the industry's customer engagement for PR19 and has recommended improvements for the future. He asked if WW has any initial responses to CCW's findings. WW replied that it is waiting for Ofwat's thoughts on engagement for PR24, due later this month, and will consider these and CCW's recommendations when formulating its customer engagement strategy early next year.

Wessex Water's Covid-19 emergency grants

Prior to the meeting, WW had circulated a written update on WW's Covid-19 emergency grants (document '01d Matters Arising – Wessex Water's Covid-19 emergency grants.pdf').

SC welcomed WW's Covid-19 assistance measures being provided through the Wessex Water Foundation. She added that looking ahead is most important as this is just the beginning of the impact of the pandemic. DH added that at least a 60% increase in debt advice is anticipated in 2021. In response AP outlined the other measures WW is taking to help its customers including the fast-tracking of its Covid Assist scheme. SL added that the company's new assistance triage arrangements for financial support will go live on the website by end of the week and will be accompanied by radio adverts, social media promotions and an article in the company magazine.

DR noted that the possibility of WW helping to promote other assistance

initiatives, for example Pension Credit, was discussed at the Partnership's recent Affordability & Vulnerability (A&V) Sub-Group meeting.

3. **Mid-year performance**

NW gave an update on the WW's performance against its regulatory Performance Commitments at end of September. The information presented had been circulated prior to the meeting in the document '02 Mid-year Performance Update 2020-21.pdf'. It covered:

- 2020-21 Overview
- Factors affecting half-year performance
- Update on Educated Services pupils engaged PC
- Water Supply – half year position
- Wastewater – half year position
- Customer & Communities – half year position
- Looking ahead

DR noted that WW has and continues to experience a combination of significant issues including unusual weather conditions, Brexit and Covid-19. He noted that some of these are likely to be long term and reflect a 'new normal'. He asked how WW is dealing with these risks.

NW replied that WW is looking at longer term risks, for example their effects on the capital programme. WaterUK is also looking at scenarios. Some of the risks are within the company's control, but some are not. For example, the shrinking number of chemical suppliers is creating frailty in the supply chain and there are issues around not being able to stockpile chemicals on site due to limited shelf lives. Alternative methods of treatment are being considered where possible to overcome this.

DR suggested the Partnership's PC and investment sub-group should review WW's performance in more detail later in the year including the company's responses to the risks it is facing. WW agreed with this suggestion and will arrange a meeting once the request is received from the Partnership.

KW provided an overview of EA's assessment of WW's environmental performance. The annual meeting between EA and WW had recently taken place. EA is pleased to see that WW has regained its 4-star status under the EPA. Permit compliance was slightly down but EA is generally happy with the company's performance. The EPA scores have now been finalised and released.

RC asked if WW any initial comments on the EPA consultation. AP replied that he considers that WW's and EA's aspirations are aligned, and the parties

share common aims. WW recognises that the EPA does not measure all impacts on the environment. WW is keen to work with the EA in building public confidence and trust in communicating and celebrating environmental improvements, while at the same time being held to account by the EA.

4. **Indicative wholesale charges 2021/22**

MG gave an update on indicative charges for 2021/22 and presented a series of slides to illustrate these.

DR asked WW to ensure that abbreviations used on slides should be referenced to help understanding. WW noted this.

DR asked if WW is able to model the impact of charges by household or customer-type. The Partnership's A&V sub-group may wish to review charges at this level. WW replied that it is relatively straightforward to provide information in this way and would be happy to do so if requested.

5. **Risks, Strengths and Weaknesses/Draft Assurance Plan**

MG presented an overview of the WW's draft information Risks, Strengths and Weaknesses Statement /Assurance Plan. He did not go through this in detail but said that there were no significant changes from the previous year. The main changes related to process with Ofwat no longer running the Company Monitoring Framework but instead asking all company boards to complete a statement on the accuracy and completeness of their company's data.

MG asked for comments from the Partnership on the draft Assurance Plan by the end of the week. JH was asked to coordinate any responses for DR.

All
members
/JH

6. **AOB**

KW asked if there had been any indication from Ofwat on the future of CCGs. DR said that Ofwat is organising workshops for CCG chairs in December. DR hopes these will set out a broad vision for CCGs and their terms of reference. SL said that Ofwat's engagement document published later this month may reference CCGs.

JH presented the draft forward programme for the Partnership which is currently under discussion with WW. This proposes four meetings of the main Partnership each year and approximately six-monthly meetings of its sub-groups on customer engagement, A&V and PCs/investment. The frequency of the sub-groups will likely increase in 2021/22 as the PR24

activity ramps up.

IW felt the customer engagement sub-group schedule looked sensible but suggested the timing of meetings be aligned with landmark events in WW's engagement programme once it is known.

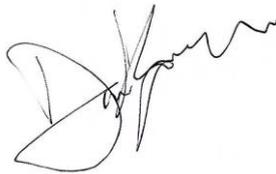
DR agreed and said that the Partnership may now be more flexible in arranging and holding meetings given that meetings are likely to be held online for the foreseeable future.

DR will send the Partnership's proposed forward programme to WW so that meetings for the remainder of 2020/21 can be scheduled.

DR

There were no other items of AOB.

Signed as a true record of the meeting

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'D. King', written over a faint circular stamp or watermark.

Chair

Date 9th March 2021