

**Minutes of the second meeting of the Customer Forum on 8 June
at the offices of the Water Industry Commission for Scotland, Moray House, Stirling**

Attendees: Peter Peacock (Chair)
Rachel Bell
Jo Dow
Andrew Faulk
Stuart Housden
Mairi Macleod
Thomas May
Agnes Robson
Bob Wilson
Donna Very

In attendance for specific items:

Jon Rathjen, Scottish Government, Head of Water Industry Team
Ian Tait, Director of Network Regulation, Water Industry Commission for Scotland
Sam Ghibaldan, Manager of the Consumer Futures Unit
Gail Walker, Water Policy Team Manager, Consumer Futures Unit

Chairman's opening remarks

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the second meeting of the Customer Forum for Strategic Review of Charges (SRC) for the period 2021-27.

Apologies

Apologies were received from Sue Walker who had provided the Chair with a note of matters related to decision and discussion items on the agenda

Declaration of conflicts of interest in relation to the Agenda

No conflicts of interest were declared.

Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

Oral update

The Forum reflected on their first meeting, and considered it to have been a very informative start to their work in the Strategic Review of Charges 2021-27, and some members sought clarifications on issues arising.

CF01 – Decision paper – Understanding Customers and Potential Customers

The Forum discussed how it would develop its understanding of customers in relation to their water interests and needs. The Forum agreed that it would work closely on research work with Scottish Water to gain an insight into customers' views as a preferred means of working, while not ruling out doing research independently if and when necessary. The Chair would approach some Forum members who may have an interest in undertaking a role to regularly liaise with Scottish Water on this work.

The Forum discussed the proposed format of a Research Co-ordination Group which would involve the Forum, Scottish Water and the Consumer Futures Unit, and possibly WICS, for the purpose of co-ordinating and aligning the extent of possible research effort, and considered this to be something that should be welcomed. The Forum would seek to co-operate fully with this group but would reserve the right to be able to carry out its own independent research.

The Forum discussed two pieces of research carried out on behalf of the previous Forum exploring various economic conditions affecting families, as well as changes to the financial social support systems. The Forum agreed that this research should be updated and that the Chair should be given authority to secure such updates, preferably from those commissioned previously.

CF02/17 – Decision paper – Customer Forum Support Resources

The Forum discussed the need of support resources for their work during the SRC process. The Forum agreed that there was a real requirement for a person with clear policy skills who would be able to assist the Forum in its own policy considerations. This person should also be able to demonstrate strong analysis of the data that the Forum was being provided with by others and assist the Forum in determining its various dispositions for dealings with Scottish Water. The person should be able to assist in draft appropriate inputs to the process and in giving detailed and nuanced feedback to Scottish Water and others on positions the Forum was forming. While there may be a number of options for securing this support, including possible secondments from others, the Forum would prefer this person to be independent to any of the stakeholders. While it would be desirable to secure the services of someone with insights into water services and regulation more generally, it was the person's skills in policy analysis that were seen as most important. The Chair was authorised to speak to the CEO of the Water Industry Commission on this matter and take whatever steps were necessary to secure the services of someone on a part time basis, with the potential for flexible working sufficient to be able to draw down time as and when required. Agnus Robson agreed to assist the Chair with a Job Description, Person Specification and recruitment.

CF03/17 – Discussion paper – Communities dimension

The Forum had a preliminary discussion on what the communities dimension to its work might entail and how it would engage with Scottish Water. The Forum agreed that this work is a potentially huge task and it would need to gain a better understanding of how they identify who/what a community is. The Forum agreed that it would be helpful to have a short note prepared by the Chair capturing the issues raised in discussion ahead of entering conversations with Scottish Water (available separately to this Minute) .

Update from Water Industry Commission

The Chair welcomed Ian Tait, Director of Network Regulation to the meeting. Mr Tait circulated the first batch of Initial Decision Papers to be published on 21 June. Mr Tait explained how the papers fit into the timeline for the SRC process. The papers set out the boundaries that the Forum would work within. The Chair confirmed that the papers will be discussed fully at the next Forum meeting and thanked Mr Tait for this update.

Scottish Government introduction

The Chair welcomed Mr Jon Rathjen to meeting. Mr Rathjen gave an overview of the Water Industry Team and the role they play on behalf of the Scottish Government. Mr Rathjen outlined how the Ministerial Objectives are formed and approved and gave a flavour of what the key considerations in updating the Ministerial Objectives would be. He also provided an overview on Principles of Charging and matters such as quality and standards and the Hydro Nation initiative.

Consumer Futures Unit, Citizens Advice Scotland

The Consumer Futures Unit (CFU), Sam Ghibaldan and Gail Walker were welcomed to the meeting. Mr Ghibaldan introduced the role of the CFU and its statutory remit and powers. The Forum were informed of some Water related projects that the CFU were working on and some of the research that was being carried out. The CFU team commented that they were looking forward to working with the Forum.

AOB

The Chair thanked all those for attending and the next meeting will take place on 20 July 2017.