

Hartlepool Panel - Meeting Notes

13th December 2017

Chair:

Peter Olsen - Housing Hartlepool

Present:

Colin - Consumer Council for Water (CCWater)
Jonathan - Joseph Rowntree Foundation
Rebecca - Orangebox Training Solutions
Beth - Hartlepool Borough Council
Tracey - Tees Credit Union

Carolyn - Anglian Water
Natalie - Anglian Water
Kevin - Hartlepool Water
Cat - Hartlepool Water

Apologies:

Dawn - West View Advice and Resource Centre
Zeba - Islam Community Services
Catherine - West View Advice and Resource Centre
John - Thirteen Group
Jeremy - Tees Valley Wildlife Trust

Next meeting:

22nd February 2018, 11.30am – 1.30pm, Hartlepool Water

1. Welcome and introductions

Peter Olsen welcomed and thanked everyone for attending. Peter introduced himself and described the Price Review (PR) process. All present introduced and described interest in the PR process.

2. Setting the scene

Kevin Ensell welcomed the group and set the scene for new members. Kevin covered Hartlepool Water; abstraction to tap water provision, trading name of Anglian Water Services, sewerage services provided by Northumbrian Water Ltd. in the area. Kevin described his role and the local team structure, proud to provide customers with quick response and proactive local service.

Kevin mentioned the impact of Market Reform and that there is still monopoly for domestic customers hence Ofwat holds us to account for services and fair charges while providing direction and requires a plan that is supported by customers. Kevin spoke about the structure of Customer Challenge Groups involved in the PR process and how it relates to the panel for people in Hartlepool.

This panel would need to feedback on a report written by the Customer Engagement Forum (CEF) independent secretary, Vicky. Colin Wilkinson conveyed concern

regarding timescales for report production, checking and feedback to ensure complete and correct. Carolyn Cooksey, Head of PR19 Strategic Stakeholder Engagement, AW informed and confirmed that the plan is for AW to submit a plan to for customer validation in draft form in April, customer feedback would be incorporated before submitting the final plan in August 2018.

3. Research so far

Carolyn described research for PR19 to date for AW including HW. The customer engagement strategy for PR19 began around 18 months ago in order to establish whether personal priorities had changed since PR14 in customers' minds, what customers feel we need to do better as a business and what had changed in terms of business priorities on climate, demand and environmental constraints. To start with we asked what customers want, expect and need; the output was that we should 'focus on what matters'.

For PR14 there was more customer focus than PR09 (i.e. the Regulator is ensuring that the direction for each Price Review and ultimate five year business plan period is increasingly customer driven). With a significant step change in effort through the PR19 process we're making sure customer engagement is not only feeding the development of the plan but is 'business and usual', while 'making sure it matters' to our customers rather than taking a 'shopping centre clipboard approach'.

Innovative engagement channels include online communities with weekly activities to check draft publications and initiatives where customers are able to provide feedback by online voting. As a business, we're then able to act upon feedback. We do need to work out how best to include a reflective number of HW customers in this or another group.

We're establishing Community Ambassadors to get feedback on specific topics, of which there will be two in Hartlepool. Following direction from customers telling us they want more face to face communication in groups rather than written information through the post.

There have been focus groups in the HW areas to establish the similarities and also the differences with wider AW – for example the 25year Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP) contains some similarities and differences between the two areas, so it is important to make the information known. The largely differing geographical regions result in difference in water resources stresses and we aim for a wholly inclusive plan for both HW and AW customers.

We'll circulate information on a sharing website once it is established and tested to ensure reports on engagement and other useful information is available for members to view in their own time.

We need to demonstrate links between customer engagement plus plans and what we've been doing so a 'Synthesis Report' has been written by an independent secretary which is structured in line with the outcomes from PR14 customer engagement; engagement results are categorised by outcome then sub-categorised. It pulls out the differences between customer group types and highlighted the

differences in priorities, views and values then enables us to identify and implement the target of balance between. We need to juggle investment priorities while keeping bills affordable.

Beth Major asked for more information on the online community, especially about how many local people had been involved. Carolyn explained that there is no representation currently as the recruiters have not been successful in Hartlepool but a membership refresh is due early 2018 and this will be looked at. Carolyn referred everyone to the paper note provided (*please see Appendix 1 at the end of these meeting notes for the full version*). Together with summarising the paper report, Carolyn impressed the importance of getting enough customer involvement to ensure that results are statistically significant; for example a survey earlier in 2017 involved a total of 1200 customers of whom 200 were from the Hartlepool area to ensure statistical significance of feedback and accurate representation of the HW customer base.

While no Hartlepool Water customers are currently included in the online community, it is important to remember that we do receive regular and frequent feedback on customer satisfaction via qualitative and quantitative surveys that are proportionally higher than those in the wider AW area.

Feedback is then divided in to groups by customer type. For example, one of the groups is titled 'Protective Provincials' and reflects around 9% of all AW customer base. This group don't want us to pursue Ofwat directives involving transfer of water over borders for resilience. In Hartlepool, the 'comfortable and caring' group are in a significantly higher proportion than the rest of AW and so from the outset differing priorities are clear.

Colin would like to see evidence in report form.

We've also looked at vulnerability of our customers; of whom 22% are classified as vulnerable according to the definition written in the Water Industry Act. We think that this classification could and should be much broader as vulnerability could be fluid depending on personal circumstances and that things can happen to anyone at any time. Four of forty customers interviewed about this were from the Hartlepool area.

We've carried out some acceptability research based on the Strategic Direction Statement (SDS) which is consistent for HW and AW. This can be difficult to explain to customers therefore we used focus groups to ask customers how to get the messages across. It was and is, important for us to communicate the difficulty in reliably predicting weather in the short, medium and long term.

Willingness to Pay (what customers will pay and be billed for) research has been very important. Some customers want to pay less for less dependable and thorough services, others would be willing to pay more for more. So, we're trying to look more at revealed preference and how we need to phrase questions to better communicate what we're trying to ask without guiding customers' answers. So far we've asked 1400 in total about this, of whom 200 were in Hartlepool.

A customer focus group took place in Hartlepool last night (*Tuesday 12th December*) in order to further explore the differences between HW and wider AW customer

priorities. On our behalf, Given London spoke to 10 people for around 2.5 hours, it was a very engaged group with all being happy to talk and contribute. *A summary of the session is included in the Appendix section of these meeting notes and some brief general points are below;*

- other groups in the wider AW area used words such as 'frantic' or 'busy' to describe their lives whereas the HW group agreed that they were 'busy but happy',
- the group mentioned housing as a priority which has not been seen in any other Focus groups held.
- money was a priority although important to note is that the group felt 'it's all about the money...and quality as well' so the customers understand value and quality and would for example use cheap tea-bags throughout the day then indulge in a top quality cup as a 'treat' once a day,
- all agreed that 'you get what you pay for', had a good understanding and appreciation for value rather than cost.
- when asked about water meters, the group wanted to be able to see their own water consumption,
- the group didn't like leakage or wastage,
- the group felt that services and communications from HW are good,
- overall the group liked that a small team serves a small area, it's flexible and not too defined, the group is aware of the localness and being able to access HW personnel as opposed to other utility companies.

Some more specific points to notes;

1. Communications

- the group would like to receive better communications from HW; perhaps more information in with bills, open days or local events,
- HW needs to better communicate services available to vulnerable customers in the best way for them to receive, understand and apply.

Colin mentioned Dementia Friends of which HW team members are and have recently undergone awareness training and are putting in to practice. We need to help carers and also get things done quickly especially in incidents.

2. Measured water use

- the group was very keen on the idea of SMART Meters and to learn about the trial in Newmarket,
- Industry target for current average usage of 135l/p/d to reduce to 80l/p/d
- the group suggested a phone app to enable budgeting (Rebecca questioned whether this would be used and how we would get customers to use it or engage and alter their behaviour).

Customers involved in the focus group were asked via an external and independent recruiter according to demographics and sample size in order to ensure representation of the customer base in Hartlepool.

The above research gave members a better understanding of expectations. Colin requested to know what customers are saying so that he is able to check before agreeing to approve the information. Carolyn agreed to share synthesis report as soon as possible for it to be forwarded on to Colin and other members.

Jonathan asked if there would be a separate report reflecting engagement with customers in Hartlepool. Carolyn informed the group that where the research results from customers in the Hartlepool area are statistically different from those in other areas then there would be specific mentions in the whole report, otherwise the report would represent Hartlepool customers too.

Carolyn also confirmed that this group would not be expected to write report. Information would be provided to Vicky (independent report writer for the CEF) who would then draft the report and present it to this group for checking. This report would reflect the differences between customers for the Hartlepool and wider Anglian Water areas and the panel would need to validate it. Colin offered CCWater’s technical support to give the group assurance for the Hartlepool specific report.

I. Actions

Following actions to be completed for the next meeting (or before if stated)

Subject	Status
Synthesis report and corroborating evidence to Colin and other members asap. <i>Version 7 sent to Colin 14/12/17 by post, electronic copies to be made available for members as produced.</i>	Available on microsite
Inform members of proportion Hartlepool customers involved in total research to date and planned.	To follow
Notes from focus group meeting 13 th December 2017 to Panel Members	To follow once provided by Given London

Appendix

1. Summary of research involving Hartlepool customers to date
2. Report on research regarding grouping customers by type