

Minute of the 2nd meeting of the Customer Forum
Held on 29th November 2011 in Edinburgh

Present: Peter Peacock (Chair)
Cowan Ervine
Mary Goodman
Agnes Robson
Iain McTaggart
Dr Susan Walker (teleconference)

Apologies: Johanna Dow
Dr Sarah Hendry
Bob Wilson
Trish McAuley (Deputy Director, Consumer Focus Scotland)

In attendance: Mark Nolan (Project Co-ordinator)
Belinda Oldfield (Scottish Water)(Item 9)
Alan Scott (Scottish Water)(Item 9)
Peter Farrar (Scottish Water)(Item 9)
Fiona Templeton (Scottish Water)(Item 9)

Chair's opening remarks

The Chair welcomed those present to their first meeting of the Forum and in particular welcomed Iain McTaggart who is the new forum member appointed from the SCDI.

Item 1 – Apologies

Apologies were NOTED.

Item 2 – Minutes of the last meeting

The minute of the previous meeting held on 26th October 2011 was APPROVED.

Item 3 – Update on action points

Members also suggested the following as potential groups which the Forum may wish to engage with: Cosla, Developers/Builders, Supply Chain Companies (for business customers); Voluntary Organisations (for vulnerable customers) including Child Poverty Action, the SCVO, Quality Improvement Scotland; consideration should also be given as to how the Forum can engage with 'harder to reach' customers. Agnes Robson also suggested inviting along Richard Norris, Director of the Scottish Health Council.

Item 4 – Reflection on the Induction Day

The Forum agreed that the induction day had been beneficial in providing members with a comprehensive overview of the water industry in Scotland and the various organisations which Scottish Water has to work with. It was noted that some organisations sent less senior representatives than others and although it was a good landscaping exercise, a ‘rosy’ picture was presented.

Item 5 – Update on chair’s recent meetings

Alex Neil MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure and Capital Investment

The Chair explained to the Minister the role of the Forum and some of the likely priorities for the Forum, also the fact that, as a completely new venture, the Forum was still feeling its way forward.

The Minister welcomed the Forum and was very positive about its creation and the part that it can play. He also highlighted a number of areas which he was probing with Scottish Water and where the Forum might consider the customers’ interest within these. The Minister highlighted issues, such as, the use to which cash surpluses at Scottish Water might be put; what more could be done to address customer confusion over who customers should contact; issues around compliance with SEPA requirements; appropriate Framework contract which might optimise opportunities for Scottish companies. The minister was also conscious that the charging system means that customers are often unaware that they pay for water and sewerage services.

Alan Sutherland, Chief Executive, Water Industry Commission for Scotland

The Chair had also met Alan Sutherland as part of deepening his understanding of the issues.

Douglas Millican, Finance Director, Scottish Water

The Chair had also met Douglas Millican who was encouragingly clear that there was considerable scope for strengthening the customer voice within the considerations of Scottish Water and they fully support the Forum and want to work with the Forum to ensure the legitimacy of the customers’ voice.

Item 6 – Clarification on Forum members claims process

The Forum NOTED this paper

Item 7 – Draft Communications Strategy

The Forum NOTED this paper, providing feedback which will be sent back to the CFS Communications Manager to update.

Item 8 – Update on Engagement Committee

Agreement was reached that having rotating member would not be appropriate, but that a system of having alternate Members to cover for the absence of Engagement Committee members will be pursued with SW and the WIC. . The Chair will now reflect on feedback

given by Forum members on their potential involvement on the Engagement Committee make nominations to the committee in the New Year.

Item 9 – Scottish Water Presentation

Scottish Water presented the findings on the first phase of their deliberative and qualitative research.

The Forum also requested information on the background to the research programme and Scottish Water agreed to provide this as soon as possible.

Scottish Water advised the Forum that there was an opportunity for the Forum to see the next stated preference survey before it goes out and also for it to provide input into the next survey, however, any feedback would have to be done within three weeks.

The Forum agreed that the detail of the research programme outlined was impressive and was, on the face of it, thorough. However, the Forum did not believe that it was reasonable, nor practical, to be asked to give a considered view within 3 weeks for the next phase of the research work to be carried out. The Forum agreed to contact Scottish Water to express this view and to explore ways to work together going forward.

Approved 25 JAN 2012