

Yorkshire Forum for Water Customers
Minutes of Meeting
19 January 2023
Microsoft Team Meeting

Attendees:

Andrea Cook	Chair
Chris Griffin	Independent Member
Dave Merrett	Independent Member
Kursh Siddique	Independent Member
Jamie Ashton	Citizens Advice
Naila Hussain	Yorkshire Water
Richard Hepburn	Yorkshire Water

Apologies:

James Copeland	National Farmers Union
Tom Keatley	Natural England
Steve Grebby	CC Water
Melissa Lockwood	Environment Agency
Zoe Burns-Shore	Yorkshire Water
Chris Offer	Yorkshire Water

Guests:

Oliver Spoor	Yorkshire Water
Danielle Skilton	Yorkshire Water
Angie Nock	Yorkshire Water

1. Welcome

- a) Apologies were noted as above. Introductions were made with new YW members.
- b) RH clarified OS will step in for interim with IJ leaving.

2. PR24 Programme Critical Path – Oliver Spoor

- a) OS presented a summary of what the critical path is and presented a set of slides with the critical path diagram.
- b) OS covered the critical path journey
- c) OS briefly outlined how it was created and gave an overview of the critical path.

- d) With an introduction to the Critical path explained this list all the activities and milestones required to deliver the end products of the programme.
- e) A critical path frames a high-level direction for the programme plan. It will allow to identify the critical risk and dependencies within certain times.
- f) The critical path is used to build the basis of a detailed programme and workstream plans to enable better detail and oversight of the programme.
- g) The need for critical path was identified from early engagement. OS presented a timeline demonstrating the journey of how the critical path came together.
- h) OS presented the critical and provided an in-depth break down of this explained the programme milestones within various programme areas.

Action 1: Oliver Spoor to send slides to Naila to be circulated to the Forum

3. Open Challenge Sessions

- a) Paul Chapman provided summary on Ofwat/CCW draft guidance from 'Your Water, Your Say'.
- b) Company outlined what Ofwat have set out in their Draft Guidance, however they are still consulting currently and looking to have final guidance for organisations by the end of Jan / early 2023.
- c) Forum member clarified that Ofwat consulted CCG leads at recent CoG. The purpose and role of the CCG was discussed.
- d) Sessions which the energy sector went through were held after submissions, not prior.
- e) There will be two sessions, one is to be held prior to submission, the session for YW will possibly be in May. Purpose will be for attendees to ask questions of YW to understand how the plan moving forward is meeting local needs. It will be an opportunity for YW to present a direction of travel based on the four key themes which Ofwat identified in the final methodology.
- f) Second session will likely be in Oct/Nov after the submission to Ofwat, this is an opportunity for companies to present what points were raised, how they were addressed, or for companies to explain if points were not addressed.
- g) Sessions are completely open so companies will need to think about how this is promoted across fairly to customers and stakeholders, forum members will also be able to join such conversations.
- h) Everything which is covered will need to be documented in the final business plan, for instance why companies may have addressed certain issues and not others.
- i) Each session will be chaired by an independent chair, Ofwat / CCW will be recruiting for this.

Action 2: Paul to provide Andrea with tender for recruitment of the chair.

- j) The sessions will be held virtually. There needs to be 100 people in attendance. There is no plan in place yet to attract attendees. YW are

currently working on how they will promote the session. The event needs to be promoted 6 weeks prior to the date.

- k) Ofwat would like to attract stakeholders who sit outside the area of the price review / water in order to get a new perspective.
- l) The sessions will be run by having an introduction of the chair followed by companies having a 10-15-minute high-level presentation on the four key themes outlined in the final methodology. Thereafter an open forum for attendees to ask companies any questions they may have. There will be a very broad audience, anything could be asked therefore need to work on who need to be on panel.
- m) Each session will be recorded then a full written record is to be produced with every question asked pre-event and during the event with responses, this is to be prepared within 7 days. The chair will review this up to day 10, then a draft is to be sent out to all attendees for comment, once received back the final version will be produced and sent to the Chair for sign off before being published on the Company website. There is an approximate timeframe of 2 weeks from the end of the session to publish online.
- n) This will need to be done again for the second session whilst pulling together the plan. It will be a critical point of process therefore need to work on having enough resource to produce quality content.
- o) Forum member mentioned from the CoG, Ofwat wanted CCGs to challenge companies' presentations prior to being presented at the event and questioned if this is anticipated by the company. The company confirmed this hasn't been mentioned however the company will look to do this anyway. It would be useful to have feedback and challenge back from the Forum.
- p) YW asked a question for those customers who aren't able to join online sessions, how could the company include them in via an alternative route.
- q) Forum member suggested support can be given through community organisation groups, to meet customers on a regular basis directly where they feel comfortable to explain the process and what the company are doing and gather feedback, the method would be direct engagement.
- r) Forum members further suggested that if the company do have a community engagement role, this would be beneficial. The best way to target the right groups is to go to them and suggested to find a team which can facilitate this. Another member suggested to get charities and community organisations on board with an incentive to be involved. Libraries would be a good idea too. Forum members further added it has to be as close to where people live in order to engage those difficult to reach, and community volunteers and organisations are needed.
- s) Forum member highlighted the 90-minute sessions won't be a focus group, people are not invited to speak particularly they will need to speak out

themselves, so it may not be comfortable. The company explained the 90 minutes will be broken into 4 sections to speak around specific topics to engage the attendees and ask for their input, the focus will be the audience mind on that particular area of the plan, within each section.

- t) Forum member questioned whether the company would include information on the participants in terms of demographics.
- u) The company will look at this from its customer base to ensure how they will promote it. The company don't want to exclusively promote via digital channels will look at how it ensures this.
- v) Forum member questioned whether there is a way to keep a track of the background of the people who attend and where they're coming from. The company confirmed they will be doing this and will discuss internally to explore how it can resource moving forward, once this is done it will pull together a framework together of the demographic make-up of areas in which the company will be actively promoting, this includes the community areas where it will be promoting into too.

4. Affordability & Vulnerability

- a) The company presented detailed slides covering affordability and vulnerability support.
- b) A detailed slide was presented for information surrounding affordability support. This covered points on affordability for customers, additional financial support from 2022 – 2025, willingness to pay and community engagement.
- c) A tracking slide with a graph was shared demonstrating that the company were performing well back in July, and also the financial support to customers performance commitment which was being tracked.
- d) Following the cost-of-living crisis and the pandemic, it was recognised that customers require more water support. The graphed showed that over-performing had continued and the reason for the large shift across the three months was very much in response to cost of living and as expected.
- e) There is a continued uplift meaning the company are on track to ending this year having met its Year 5 performance commitment target.
- f) Although the business couldn't predict there would have been an economic crisis, it has as a business tried to respond to those things which have seen a big shift in its performance on financial support.
- g) Across the various of support schemes in YW performance commitment, there will have been more than 90,000 customers having received a bill reduction in the last 12 months.
- h) The company has 5 different support schemes. The Community Trust, which is an independent charity which Kelda fund as a big donation and

thus charity provides about £1,000,000 worth of support to around 2000 customers in need of debt relief support.

- i) The company has 2 debt schemes within their own rights supporting a breadth of customer segments with bill reductions. This is generally in the form of payment matching, where the company try and support customers to rehabilitate into regular payments and payment match where they do so.
- j) The company then has social tariffs which reduce bills. The purpose of these is to actually prevent debt for customers and relieve them of this worry, therefore the company reduces bills and caps them at an amount.
- k) Within the last 12 months, 90,000 customers will have received support through one of these metrics, this is just for the company's performance commitment and doesn't include further wider support also offered. The company has new initiatives as part of its performance commitment target, where they help a number of extra customers in different ways. YW signposts to external organisations, such as debt charities, income maximisation opportunities.
- l) The company still provides face-to-face doorstep visits for those customers who may be struggling and offer other ways to provide support and bill reductions. They are also looking at how to implement initiatives like home visits and money saving advice in different ways which customers can access.
- m) The company has introduced a new breathing space initiative for customers who are referred through that legislation, customers who come through the government's breathing space are reaching out for 60 days of respite which the company provides from the customers' perspective. The company is hopeful that this is a way for customers to engage with them, build trust, give the respite support, but also help them then engage for a bill reduction for the future.
- n) The company further explained how bills have been capped and more support has been provided to customers to lower their bills more.
- o) The company expanded on the Community engagement work that it has been doing. Is has been collaborative with external organisations across its region to make sure it provides financial and non-financial support to customers and has seen a significant increase in that in the last year.
- p) The company explained that following the breathing space initiative, it works with the organisations who are referring through this and asks them to inform customers at the point of referral, that they can reduce their bill in the future when they come back to be a water customer with the company. YW then follows up with correspondence during the breathing space as it comes towards the end to offer customers that additional support.

- q) Forum member highlighted a point about the demography of the customers and receiving support and where they are coming from. Is this reaching all our communities, is YW getting there into the depth of need, and meeting everybody's requirements. Company explained that they are not accessing everybody who needs it however it does quite a lot of affordability modelling based on income thresholds. There is probably 300 to 400,000 households that the company's credit reference data would suggest that potentially within that demographic. YW explained it does not focus on a certain type of customer, segment or geography rather it look at whether the customer meets the criteria and will provide the support they need.

Action 3: Forum members to send through any questions they may have for Angie Nock.

5. Proposed structure of the PR24 Business Plan

- a) Slides were presented on the structure of the business plan, including key messages and how they are developing as the company start to build momentum in terms of developing the business plan itself.
- b) Structure of business plan at PR19 didn't correlate with Ofwat's methodology.
- c) The company have been working with Baringa, a consultancy firm who have a lot of experience with price reviews. YW is working with them to unpick what Ofwat require and to understand with YW can create a plan which lands well with the regulator.
- d) Two key lessons learned from PR19 were that the plan YW created didn't hit the mark in some cases.
- e) The first one was looking at the structure of the business plan and why this happened. The structure of the business plan at PR19 didn't correlate with Ofwat's methodology, there was a lack of consistency. The company have now worked with Baringa to look at Ofwat's structure ensuring that the business plan is understandable and usable for various teams across the price review.
- f) The second lesson learned was that although within the executive summary the company had some great key messages, they weren't necessarily clear and consistent throughout the business plan.
- g) The company understood it needs to identify quite early on what it wants to say and what it needs to reiterate throughout the plan itself.
- h) A slide was presented with a breakdown of the business plan, outlining that it consists of a guide to reading the business plan, appendices, financial models, data tables, data table commentaries, reconciliation models and the Board assurance statement.

Action 4: Danielle Skilton to forward the slide pack to Naila for circulation to the Forum.

- i) The company outlined what the main business plan will cover and how it has proposed to set that out. This consists of 3 steps, setting the context, building the detail, and closing the loop. These were then explained in detail to the Forum.
- j) The business plan will focus on the message of 'supporting our customers, in a thriving environment'.
- k) The Forum pushed back on the wording of 'thriving' as it may not be too realistic and too ambitious. The company reassured this is a long-term ambition.
- l) The company highlighted several key messages that it will look to build on as the plan develops, these being to look at the 25 year ambition, understanding our customer priorities and making sure these are delivered and addressed, the challenge of affordable bills for customers now and future generations, delivering outcomes that also are stretching and ambitious across all areas of service, then ensuring the company has a balance of risk and return and that the company remains financially resilient.
- m) The company clarified to the Forum that the 25-year business plan is being developed currently and this will be completed prior to finalising the business plan however there will be some overlap with a piece in parallel with a slight head start on the 25 year plan.
- n) The Forum expressed interest in being consulted at an early stage for this.

6. CoG Update

- a) The Forum chair gave a brief update on this as most had been covered previously.

Action 5: Andrea Cook requested documents to be sent to YW admin to be circulated to forum.

- b) Forum chair stated that similar message of challenge sessions was presented and the assessment of where Yorkshire Water is that it still needs to improve in terms of where the outcomes are. However, the majority of companies fell into this category. There were a few which were leading but the majority of companies need to do more.

7. DWMP Event

- a) YW chair provided a reminder for stakeholder event will be held in Bradford.

8. AOB

- a) Forum chair requested to have formalised meetings set up with environment sub-committee and expressed importance of running these again, and to also have formalised meetings set up for the affordability and vulnerability sub-committee. YW chair clarified that the company will look at engaging with this to provide a final response.
- b) Forum member requested whether there has been any progress at looking into administrative support for report writing and minute taking for subgroups. Forum chair and YW chair have discussed separately at looking at a solution with this, a call with Chris Offer and Forum chair and potential report writer to be set up to discuss this further.

Action 6: Naila to liaise with Chris Offer and Andrea to set up this meeting (Forum chair not available on Tuesday and Thursday morning).

Next meeting

23rd February 2023 via Microsoft Teams

Actions

Summary of actions: 17 November 2022

No.	Action	Status	Due date
1	Action 1: Forum chair requested members to send comments to Company (Paul Chapman) in order to pull all comments together in terms of an overall response from the forum.	Forum	
2	Action 2: Company to share information from Ofwat as it is released on published final methodology.	Company	
3	Action 3: Company to circulate final plan to forum once complete and Forum to send in any questions they may have.	Company & Forum	
4	Action 4: Company to provide a view of the business plan for the forum following the final methodology.	Company	
5	Action 5: Forum to send in any questions it may have to the company once a view of the business plan has been shared.	Forum	

6	Action 6: Head of regulation to discuss internally to ensure the environmental subgroups are back in the diary again.	Richard Hepburn	
7	Action 7: forum member requested whether there could be admin support provided from the company for capturing minutes etc. Head of Regulation to look into this and provide a response.	Richard Hepburn	
8	Action 8: Head of Regulation to follow on the action for the report writer and provide update.	Richard Hepburn	
9	Action 9: Head of Regulation to look into Forum chair's request for having meetings with relevant individuals as needed (Public Value Committee / Dame Julia Unwin).	Richard Hepburn	

Summary of actions: 19 January 2023

No.	Action	Status	Due date
1	Action 1: Oliver Spoor to send slides to Naila to be circulated to the Forum	Oliver Spoor / Naila Hussain	
2	Action 2: Paul to provide Andrea with tender for / recruitment tender for public.	Paul Chapman	
3	Action 3: Forum members to send through any questions they may have for Angie Nock.	Forum	
4	Action 4: Danielle Skilton to forward the slide pack to Naila for circulation to the Forum.	Danielle Skilton / Naila Hussain	
5	Action 5: Andrea Cook requested documents to be sent to YW admin to be circulated to forum.	YW attendees / Naila Hussain	
6	Action 6: Naila to liaise with Chris Offer and Andrea to set up this meeting (Forum chair not available on Tuesday and Thursday morning).	Naila Hussain	