

**Portsmouth Water**  
**Stakeholder discussion guide – 45 minutes FINAL**  
**Pulse 1 (priorities) Dec-Jan 2021**

**1. Introduction (2 minutes)**

*Thank you for participating in this early stage of consulting stakeholders as Portsmouth Water prepares for the future.*

*As part of developing a 5-year plan, Portsmouth Water must consider the long term too. This includes ensuring that it will continue to be able to provide water to all its customers in several decades' time.*

*This is a new way of planning, where the 5 year plan is a stepping stones to long term planning.*

*This interview is an opportunity to give us your views on a number of broad issues to help Portsmouth Water identify the priorities of its stakeholders. Portsmouth Water is also canvassing its customers. The overarching objective is to anchor its future plans in what matters most to the people of Portsmouth and its surrounds.*

*I have a discussion guide that I will take us through – but this research is qualitative in nature and designed to be conversational.*

*Before we start I will just reiterate the details of the research, as set out in the email we sent to you:*

- *Blue Marble is an independent research agency*
- *The research session is being conducted on the basis of anonymity and in accordance with the Market Research Society Code of Conduct.*
- *No personally identifiable information will be passed on to Portsmouth Water or anyone else*
- *The session will be audio-recorded so that the research team can listen back to the interview afterwards for analysis purposes. The recording will be securely deleted once the project is completed*
- *The purpose of the call is only for the research described*
- *You can change their mind about us using their personal data at any time*

*Blue Marble researcher to ask respondent to confirm if they are happy to go ahead on this basis.*

**2. Stakeholder context (10 minutes)**

- *Before we start, can you tell me about your role and the organisation you work for/represent?*
- *To help us understand your interests and priorities, what challenges or issues (within your role) are most pressing in terms of:*
  - *The impact of the Covid pandemic?*
  - *The needs of specific groups or demographics in society (probe on who they are and what their particular needs are)*
  - *The environment*
  - *The local economy*

**3. Perceptions/relationship with Portsmouth Water (10 minutes)**

- *How would you describe your relationship with Portsmouth Water? (How close or distant? Are your objectives aligned or in conflict?)*

- Explain how you interact with them: meetings, directed communications, what you see or hear in the media etc.
- Are you also a customer of Portsmouth Water?
- How would you describe Portsmouth Water, its performance and reputation as a water company?
  - Are there areas that you see as particular strengths...
  - ... or weaknesses/areas you'd like to see improved?
- In general, what do you expect of Portsmouth water in relation to:
  - Responding to the Covid pandemic
  - Serving the needs of specific groups or demographics in society
  - The environment
  - The local economy
- NB – if not clear that the stakeholder knows this, moderator to clarify that PW is a water-only company.

#### 4. Developing a business plan (20 minutes)

*[If needed: Like other water companies in the UK, Portsmouth Water submits a business plan every 5 years. This provides a plan for what it will do over the next 5 years – including what its priorities will be, where it will invest customers' money and how it will aim to maintain or improve the service that it provides. As part of this 5-year plan, Portsmouth Water must consider the long term too. This includes ensuring that it will continue to be able to provide water to all its customers in several decades' time.]*

- Before looking at some specific areas for potential investment, what future investments would you like to see Portsmouth Water making?
- What principles would you want to see in terms of how it prioritises competing needs?
  - For instance, how would you prioritise a) keeping bills the lowest in England; b) assuring long term supplies (resilience); and c) environmental ambition?

*SHOWCARD: Here are a number of investment areas they will be consulting customers on. From your perspective as a stakeholder, how important is each – and what are the considerations you would like to raise with Portsmouth Water. Let's start with the area that you feel most strongly about...*



*(BM researcher: let stakeholder guide the order using the showcard – and cover at least 5 in each interview)*

- a) Investing in improving water quality** *water quality is high with 99.9% of the water samples meeting strict water regulations. On rare occasions the chlorine treatment, used to kill harmful bacteria, can affect the taste and smell.*
- How important is it that PW reduces instances of unusual taste and smell?
  - What are the considerations from your (stakeholder) perspective?
- b) Fixing leaks:** *Portsmouth Water is one of the top performing UK water companies for low leakage rates, and has reduced leakage by a third since 2017. But despite this, millions of litres of water still leak from its 3,300 km network of pipes each day. A wholly leak-free network is impossible to achieve with today's technology.*
- How important is it that Portsmouth Water invests more to ensure leaks are minimised?
  - What are the considerations from your (stakeholder) perspective?
  - Should investment be to reduce leaks at any cost... or is it acceptable to reduce leaks only in so far as it is economically efficient to do so (i.e not cheaper to let leaked water seep back into the water table)
- c) Doing more to help those struggling to pay?** *Portsmouth Water already helps over 10,000 people in genuine need each year by reducing their bill. They could do more to help these people, but it would mean asking other customers to pay a little more to help.*
- How important is it that PW do this?
  - What are your views on the current schemes and provision for customers who are struggling to pay
  - Awareness of proposals for a national social tariff being proposed by CCW: would they support this?
  - What are the considerations from your (stakeholder) perspective?
- d) Doing more to support local communities and improving local environments:** *PW does more in than just providing water e.g . raising money for local charities, establishing new woodland near the Havant Thicket reservoir site, and improving biodiversity at our sites.*
- How important are these types of initiatives?
  - What are the considerations from your (stakeholder) perspective?
- e) Helping customers find ways to use less water:** *On average, Portsmouth Water customers use up to 20% more water than people in other parts of the South East. Using less water can have lots of benefits like avoiding water shortages, reducing impact on the environment, and keeping bills lower by reducing the cost of investment to supply more water.*
- How important is it for you that we help you find ways to save water in your everyday life?
  - What are the considerations from your (stakeholder) perspective?
- f) Invest in new ways to supply water:** *PW's region is officially 'water stressed' - there's a risk of not having enough water to satisfy demand in a severe drought. Most of the drinking water currently comes from chalk under the South Downs, but taking more water from here to increase supply would harm the ecosystem and wildlife.*
- How important is it for PW to invest in new ways to supply water?
  - Probe on new supply options e.g. Havant Thicket, desalination, water recycling
- g) Customers receive bills based on the water they use:** *At the moment some customers pay fixed rates for water no matter how much water they use, while others pay based on a meter reading of how much water they use.*
- How important is it for you that **all customers receive a bill based on the water they use?** (Support would continue for customers who genuinely struggle to afford their bill)
  - Probe on support for metering generally – and the pros /cons of smart metering specifically

- What are the considerations from your (stakeholder) perspective?

**h) The lowest water bill:** Portsmouth Water have the lowest bill for supplying water of any water company in England and Wales. Last year our average annual bill was £104, which is £90 less than the nationwide average.

- How important is it for you that **bills are kept as low as possible**?
- What are the considerations from your (stakeholder) perspective?

Portsmouth Water is encountering a number of upward financial pressures including preparing for carbon zero, meeting new environmental standards such as abstracting less water; modernising its billing system; and continuing to maintain and improve its performance through its assets, reducing leakage and so on

- In light of the financial pressures faced by Portsmouth Water, what would be an acceptable increase in water bills over the next 12 months?

### **5. Finally... (3 minutes)**

*PW will be consulting stakeholders throughout the next 18 months.*

- If there is one message we should take back to them, can you summarise this now?
- Would you be willing in principle to be approached again when the plans are beginning to take shape?
- As part of the process, there is a short consultation survey running on social media and when possible, shared by local organisations to capture the views of residents and businesses in the PW region. Would your organisation be happy to share a survey link with its followers/customers/members? (copy of survey content available).

Thank and close.