

Portsmouth Water Customer Advisory Panel – Part 1

Focus Group Discussion Guide

Section 1: Introductions & About the Customer Advisory Panel (10 mins – slides 2, 3 & 4)

Reminder of self and Blue Marble – independent market research company who run research on behalf of organisations.

Reminder of data protection – this session is being audio/video recorded but everything you say will remain confidential and we only use these for internal research purposes.

Session duration: 90 minutes in total, finishing promptly by [INSERT TIME].

Session rules: Cameras on, please go on mute when you are not speaking to avoid background noise, speak one at a time, I want to hear from everyone this evening, we have a lot to cover so I might move you on at times, use the chat function to share your thoughts on any questions you don't get to answer verbally.

Introductions: Let's start by going around and introducing ourselves to each other – please tell us:

- your first name
- where you live
- who you live with (if you're living with anyone at the moment)
- and what words/phrases you would use to describe what water means for you in your daily life

Note for interviews with businesses: Intro to focus on information about their business (where they are based, sector, size etc.) and throughout the conversation moderator to remind participants to share their views from a business perspective.

I'd now like to share with you **some information** about this research programme and its aims.

Water companies are required to make **long-term (25 year+) and short-term plans** (5 year 'to do' list) that outline their priorities, how they will invest customers' money, and how they will aim to maintain or improve the service they provide.

You have been selected to **participate in Portsmouth Water's Customer Advisory Panel** of customers and future customers, acting as representatives of Portsmouth Water's wider customer base. This is an important research programme as Portsmouth Water wants to get your **feedback and thoughts** on its strategy and plans as it works towards the future.

The panel will get together for a **total of 4 times** over the course of this research programme; in May, October, November, and early stages of 2023.

During our sessions we will be looking at **Portsmouth Water's long term 25-year strategy** as well as its **short term 5-year business plans** for this period.

Before we talk about Portsmouth Water and its plans, I would like to show you a **quick diagram of the water cycle**, that explains **how water companies work** to provide you with water services.

Section 2: Introduction to Portsmouth Water and the challenges it is facing (25 minutes – slides 5, 6, 7 & 8)

*I'd now like to hear your **thoughts** on Portsmouth Water.*

- Which of you have **heard of Portsmouth Water** before today? What do you know/have heard about them?
- What do you think Portsmouth Water **do**?
 - What services do they offer?
 - Where do they operate geographically?
- What are your **overall thoughts** on Portsmouth Water as a company?
 - What, if anything, is Portsmouth Water good at? Why?
 - What, if anything, should it improve?
- **Current PW customers:** How would describe your **experiences** with Portsmouth Water?
 - Can you share any positive examples?
 - Can you share any examples of when things went wrong, and Portsmouth Water's reaction to this?
- What are your **expectations** of Portsmouth Water as your water provider?
- To what extent, if at all, does Portsmouth Water **meet** these expectations? Why/why not?
- What, if any, **challenges** do you think Portsmouth Water is facing?
 - Which, if any, of these challenges are long term?
 - And which, if any, are short term?
- Which, if any, challenges are most **concerning** from your point of view? Why?

*I'd like to share some **key information** about Portsmouth Water as a company.*

Portsmouth Water supplies clean drinking water to **around 750,000 people**, across an area of **868 square kilometres** – stretching through Hampshire and West Sussex, from the River Meon in the West to the River Arun in the East.

Many people don't realise that **water companies charge different amounts** depending on the **improvements** they need to make, **business efficiency** and **regional factors** (geology of the area, how dispersed the population is). Ofwat controls the amount water companies charge customers. **PWs average bill** in 2022/23 will be around **£ 106** per year, (but remember you also pay a waste bill for Southern Water too).

The regulator also measures how **satisfied** customers are and each company receives a score. PW has **the highest levels of satisfaction** for the industry.

Events like **burst water mains** can put homes out of water from time to time. The regulator measures this for all companies giving **a score of average numbers of minutes lost per household** (of course most households never experience no water, but a few can be out for hours at a time). PW has the **best score** in the UK on this measure with an average of 2 minutes per household.

There is also a **league table for leakage** – that is the water that is lost after it has been **collected and treated**. The league table shows the progress companies are making in

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reducing leaks: PW displays again the **best performance** among water companies with **10.6%** reduction.

- What, if anything, is **new or surprising** about the information I just shared with you?
- How do you **feel** about Portsmouth Water now after seeing this information?
 - What, if anything, **has changed** about how you feel about Portsmouth Water after seeing this information? Why?

*I would also like to share further information about the **challenges** facing Portsmouth Water.*

In the Portsmouth area, there are two main sources of fresh water. The majority of water supplied to houses and businesses is taken from **ground water** and **springs** at Havant and Bedhampton. Water is also taken from the **River Itchen**.

Although Portsmouth is surrounded by sea water, this isn't currently used. It is very salty and would mean higher costs and water bills if this type of water was to be filtered and treated enough to make it drinkable.

Some **big, long-term challenges** are already having an impact on Portsmouth Water – and are likely to have a bigger impact in the future.

The first is **climate change**. The water sources we rely upon today are under threat from climate change. For example, nowadays heavier rainfall is more likely and much of this water hits the ground but doesn't get absorbed. In the future, many water sources won't provide as much as they do today, meaning there will be less water available to supply people, produce products and provide healthy environments where wildlife can thrive.

We are looking ahead to understand the long-term needs of the rivers, streams and underground sources that provide these important habitats and the water we all use. This includes forecasting where water companies and others might need to take less, so more water is left in the natural environment, reducing the impact of climate change and keeping them healthy (i.e. providing a good habitat for wildlife).

The second is **population growth**. In the future, we will also need to supply water to more people, as the population of the region continues to grow. Alongside the other water supply companies in the South East, Portsmouth Water has recently been categorised as being “water stressed” because it is becoming increasingly difficult to provide enough water for everyone's needs. Portsmouth Water must provide the water needed for the future and increase the resilience of our water supplies, so they don't fail during severe droughts and other events that could affect the region.

Portsmouth Water is planning ahead, developing a plan for addressing these long-term challenges.

- To what extent, if at all, were you **aware** of these challenges before today?
- How **concerning**, if at all, do you find them?
- What, if anything, do you think Portsmouth Water **should be doing** about these challenges?

Section 3 - Getting your thoughts on Portsmouth Water's long term plans (50 minutes – slides 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14)

*In order to help us get a better understanding of Portsmouth Water's plans, I will be sharing some information **on the reasons behind Portsmouth Water's long term planning, how PW is***

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going to **achieve its plans**, and **what specifically it is going** to do to achieve each of these plans.

Why

We pride ourselves on delivering excellent services, low bills and support to our community. But as we look forward, we face our biggest challenge in over 160 years of providing water to the area:

- The impact of changes to our climate
- The needs of the environment
- A growing population
- And increasing customer expectations

So we need to change our approach today to meet the challenges of tomorrow:

- Ensure our aging infrastructure continues to deliver wholesome, reliable water to our customers
- Decarbonise how we operate to limit our impact on climate change and meet the UK pledge to reach net zero by 2050
- Significantly reduce the amount of water we take from rivers to protect their unique biodiversity.
- Specifically, protect our unique chalk streams like the River Test and Itchen in Hampshire, and the Meon, Ems and Lavant in West Sussex

All this has to be achieved while ensuring that our bill is affordable to all our customers; for this generation and the next.

- What are your **initial thoughts** on the information I just shared with you?
 - To what extent, if at all, does this make sense?
 - What, if anything, is unclear?
 - Do you have any questions based on this?
 - What, if any, concerns do you have based on this?
- Which, if any, **words or phrases** do you **like** from this? Why?
- And, which, if any do you **dislike**? What?
- What are your thoughts on the phrase '**wholesome water**'?
 - What do you think it means?
 - How does this phrase sound to you?
- To what extent, if at all, does this information include **jargon**? If so, where?
- Overall, to what extent, if at all, do you find this plan **acceptable**?
- How, if at all, **ambitious** do you think this plan is?
- To what extent, if at all, does this plan feel **aligned** with your expectations and priorities for Portsmouth Water? Why?
- Is there anything you feel **uncomfortable** with? If so, what?

How and what

For each slide, moderator to repeat the following set of questions:

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- What are your **initial thoughts** on the information I just shared with you?
 - To what extent, if at all, does this make sense?
 - What, if anything, is unclear?
 - Do you have any questions based on this?
 - What, if any, concerns do you have based on this?
 - Which would you want to see implemented soon (the short term to do list)? Which can be implemented later in the next 25 years? Why do you say this?
- Which, if any, **words or phrases** do you **like** from this? Why?
- And, which, if any do you **dislike**? What?
- To what extent, if at all, does this information include **jargon**? If so, where?
- Overall, to what extent, if at all, do you find this plan **acceptable**?
- How, if at all, **ambitious** do you think this plan is?
- To what extent, if at all, does this plan feel **aligned** with your expectations and priorities for Portsmouth Water? Why?
- Is there anything you feel **uncomfortable** with? If so, what?
- (Slide 12) What are your thoughts on the phrase '**lowest cost**'?
 - What do you think it means?
 - What are your thoughts on Portsmouth Water talking about using their lowest costs?
- (Slide 13) What are your thoughts on the word '**innovation**'?
 - What do you think it means in the context of water?

Summary (5 minutes)

- Looking back at Portsmouth Water's **overarching plan and reasons for making long-term plans** (slide 10), to what extent, if at all, do you think PW will **achieve the aims** set out here, based on the information you have seen so far? Why?
- What **questions or concerns** do you have based on everything we have discussed today?
- Is there **anything else** you would like to say to Portsmouth Water before finishing?

Thanks and close