



CCW

The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

**Severn Trent Water
Accountability Session
transcript**

9TH MARCH 2026

Attendance list

James Jesic	CEO of Severn Trent Water
Jonathan Ashley	Head of Economic Regulation at Severn Trent Water
Stephanie Cawley	Director of Customer Operations at Severn Trent Water
Jude Burditt	Director of Customer Solutions at Severn Trent Water
Joe Greenwood	Associate Director of Taylor McKenzie Research (TMck) – Lead facilitator
Rachel Onikosi	Independent Board Member for Consumer Council for Water (CCW) – Chair
12 x Participants	Water Voice Community Members under Severn Trent Water

CCW Chair: Good evening, everybody and thank you for joining us. Customers, you met me already some weeks ago; I'm Rachel Onikosi, I am a non-Exec Director of CCWater, I've been with the organisation since 2021, tonight's session is part of the Water Voice Programme. The purpose of Water Voice is simple but very important, to give customers a stronger, more direct voice in how their water company performs, communicates and improves. This session is about accountability. It's an opportunity for customers to question senior leaders from Severn Trent Water directly, about the issues that matter most to you, about where improvement is needed and about what will change as a result of this conversation this evening. I need to make some things very clear about this Accountability Session. It is a structured, customer-led conversation and focused on accountability, learning, agreeing clear and practical actions. It is not a complaints enquiry or a technical enquiry, and this is very important as we pursue tonight's conversation.

The topics covered this evening have been shaped by you, the customers, through ongoing surveys and discussions we've had through the Water Voice Panel, not by Severn Trent or CCW. This is important, it's your agenda this evening. Just to set the tone at the outset, I expect this to be a respectful but very challenging conversation, customers should feel free to speak openly and transparently about your experiences and expectations, equally, we expect clear and transparent responses from Severn Trent senior leadership team. As you know, the session is being transcribed and it will be published. A summary report will follow and the company will be expected to publish an action plan, responding to the commitments made. That transparency is absolutely key.

In terms of ground rules, we will take one person at a time, we'll keep conversations focused and we'll concentrate on forward looking actions, what will change, by when and how customers will know. I would like to introduce the people that are joining us tonight, perhaps we can start with the company, so James, please could you introduce yourself and your title, please?

James Jesic: Hello everyone, my name's James, I am the Chief Executive of Severn Trent.

CCW Chair: Welcome, thank you. Jon, can you do the same please?

Jonathan Ashley: Hi, I'm Jon from Severn Trent, I run the Economic Regulation team.

CCW Chair: Thank you. Customers, we're going to go around the room, I'm going to start with Community Member 1, please.

Community Member 1: My name's Community Member 1, I'm a customer in Worcestershire, I'm at the moment, happy enough with Severn Trent but there are items that concern me that I'd like to bring up with the Chief Executive and his representatives.

CCW Chair: I heard Community Member 1, did people hear him clearly?

James Jesic: Yes.

CCW Chair: Community Member 1, I know you're asking a question later, perhaps try and speak up, I did have to lean into hear you. Community Member 2?

Community Member 2: Hello, I'm a Severn Trent customer and I live in the Birmingham area.

CCW Chair: Thank you, Community Member 3?

Community Member 3: Hi, I'm also a Severn Trent customer and I live in Nottingham.

CCW Chair: Thank you, Community Member 4?

Community Member 4: Severn Trent customer in the Shropshire area.

CCW Chair: Community Member 5?

Community Member 5: I am a Severn Trent customer and I live not far from Shrewsbury, in Shropshire.

CCW Chair: Community Member 6?

Community Member 6: I live in Arnold, just out of Nottingham.

CCW Chair: Thank you, Community Member 7?

Community Member 7: My name's Community Member 7, I live in Colwick in Nottingham.

CCW Chair: Community Member 8?

Community Member 8: I'm Community Member 8, I live in a village near Uttoxeter in Staffordshire.

CCW Chair: Thank you, Community Member 9?

Community Member 9: My name's Community Member 9, I live in Leicester, in Leicestershire.

CCW Chair: Community Member 10?

Community Member 10: I'm Community Member 10, I'm a customer, I live in Arnold.

CCW Chair: Thank you, Community Member 11? Community Member 11, you're on mute at the moment. Let's give Community Member 11 a moment.

Community Member 11: I'm Community Member 11, I'm from Clifton and I'm a customer.

CCW Chair: Thank you, Community Member 12?

Community Member 12: My name is Community Member 12, I'm a Severn Trent customer on Birmingham.

CCW Chair: Thank you, we also have Joe Taylor from Taylor McKenzie, Joe, can you introduce yourself?

TMcK Facilitator: I'm unfortunately not a Taylor, I don't have the keys to the company. My name's Joe, hi everyone, I'm Associate Director at Taylor McKenzie.

CCW Chair: Thank you. I'm now going to hand over to Joe, who will explain how the session will focus.

TMcK Facilitator: Brilliant, thank you so much, folks, nice to see you all again and nice to have such a good turnout today. I'm going to spend a couple of minutes just going through how the session is going to work and I've obviously given you a little bit of an introduction to that, while we were waiting in the waiting room there, overall. I guess the first thing, Rachel touched on this already but the session we're having tonight is going to be transcribed. Now what's really important from our perspective with regards to that is that your names won't be in it, so you as customers will, I think we've just given you a number, I think it's Customer 1 through to Customer 11/12, so you won't be identifiable from anything that you say within the transcript.

Before we do publish these transcripts, you will have the opportunity to read them and if there's something in there that you said or that the transcript says that you said, that you don't want to be in there, then you can just let us know and we will remove that. We won't even ask why, it will just be gone. So if there is anything that you say tonight that, you know, sometimes you come off these calls and you're like, "Why did I say that?", if you don't want it to be in the transcript, it doesn't need to be. In the room today, I want us to use first names only, so you've all joined with your first name and panel member and please do address each other by that, obviously it doesn't apply to me or Rachel or anyone else but for you guys, if you can speak with first names only, that would be appreciated.

As I mentioned, you'll have the opportunity to review the transcript after this and the reason that we're getting these transcribed is it allows us to accurately reflect the discussion, and actions that are agreed on the night. It's not about looking at individual people's responses to questions or comments etc. Obviously, tonight we're going to be asking, you are going to be asking three questions of your water company, of James and of Jonathan and we're going to follow a pretty clear structure for each of these.

Customer will ask the question, so I think Community Member 1, we've got you up first, you'll be asking your question. We'll then give Severn Trent five minutes to respond to that question, it's going to be quite a structured five minutes, we'll have a little timer and things and obviously, if you start a point and need to finish it, we're not going to cut you off straightaway but once the timer is finished, that will be the end of the opportunity to feedback on the customer question.

We'll then have a period where the customers or panel members in the room will get to respond and react to the response, so they'll be able to give feedback on the response that you received and I guess discuss the response that you would have liked to have seen, if it does fall short or conversely, tell us what they liked about the response, etc.

We'll then work together as a group to define what we want to see as customer actions, so you'll remember about 10 minutes ago, a bit longer than that, I showed you that slide on the page and my colleagues will be in the background, kind of populating that based on the points that are raised by James and Jon and also by customers as well, towards creating these actions that we want to see at the end of the session. And we'll then obviously share that with you, we'll talk through it once it's created and make sure that the actions that we've raised accurately reflect what you guys as customers want to see Severn Trent go away and do. And then, we will give Severn Trent an opportunity to speak for a couple of minutes, once you guys have created your actions and at that point, it's really just about flagging things that Severn Trent feel are probably putting up red flags, if there's things there that are just not going to be possible for various reasons, as long as there's a good reason, then we obviously want to hear what that is, so that will be what that two minutes is reserved for. We don't expect you to have to go through each action that's raised, there'll be five or six ideally, there's quite a lot to get through.

I should also say that the session that we're having tonight is being made available for live viewing, so other panel members have had the opportunity to join, should they choose to and we've also got a room of other viewers from CCW, from OFWAT and I think we've also got Severn Trent staff, etc in there as well. I'm also going to be swapping the Severn Trent staff members throughout this for each question, which I'm definitely going to remember to do, so it's going to be very smooth. I think that's everything from me, Rachel, I will go back to yourself.

CCW Chair: Thank you. So let's start with the first question being asked by Community Member 1, could you ensure you speak clearly and loudly so the question's picked up by the transcript. The question should appear on the screen shortly.

Community Member 1: I've got it, a copy anyway.

CCW Chair: Indeed, go ahead Community Member 1, thank you.

Community Member 1: First of all, can I say thank you to the people from Severn Trent for being brave enough to answer these questions off the cuff. Basically, most of our bills have increased but we cannot see, as a panel, what difference that investment is making or how it will improve our water supply and infrastructure, either now or in the future. Where information is published, it is done so in millions of pounds and as such, it is difficult for anyone to see where our money goes. Proportionately, how is our money spent and what steps will you take to improve transparency and visibility of how that money is spent?

CCW Chair: Thank you. James and Jon, just before you respond, if I can ask you to be as specific as possible, setting out what is already in place, what is planned, what will change as a result of this discussion, by when those changes will happen and how customers will be able to see and measure progress. To the community members, please pay attention, write any notes based on their response because you may need to ask supplementary questions later.

Over to you, James or Jon, who's leading on the response, you have five minutes and what I'm going to do, when you've got two minutes left, I'll raise my hand, when you've got one minute left, I'll raise my hand. Over to you.

James Jesic: Thank you very much indeed, so I'll start and I'll hand over to Jon in a second. It's a great question, Community Member 1 and actually, believe it or not, something I've actually been wrestling with, on how do we provide far more clarity to people around the things that are affecting them locally? In a second, I'll get Jon to talk through our £15bn of investment, where that goes and the sort of things we're investing on, but just before we do that, one of the things that I've been wrestling to and Jon will hand back to me to summarise this in a bit more detail, is how do I bring to life, for instance, rather than speak "£15bn investment", how do I bring to life for you, Community Member 1, in Worcestershire, what's happening in your area? So I'll hand over to Jon now, who's going to chat through where the money's going in terms of the investment areas and then I can actually bring that to life a little bit more. I've actually got some specifics for Worcestershire, to help break that down a little bit.

Community Member 1: Okay, thank you.

Jonathan Ashley: That's a great question, I feel a bit bad now because I'm going to read to you some of the pounds, million numbers that we're spending but at least it will show you the areas that we're going to be investing in. So a key thing that our customers said for the next five years was reducing spills into rivers, so we're going to spending £1.5bn on reducing spills into rivers. Also improve the health of our rivers, going to spend £1.1bn over the next five years on reducing phosphate and ammonia in our rivers.

To secure the water resources that we need for the long term, so you'll have secure water supplies all over the Severn Trent region for the next three years, we're going to spend £1.1bn on water resources. And then just to mention a couple more, we're going to be spending another £0.9bn, so nearly £1bn on wastewater treatment works, again that helps improve how we treat sewerage and cleaning up our rivers, and then nearly half a billion on improving the water environment more generally.

So those are the five big areas and the sort of huge amounts of money we're spending on it but as your question was about any specifics, I'll hand back to James so he can talk to you about what we're doing in Worcester, as a good example.

James Jesic: Perfect, thank you, Jon. So one of the things that I've been wrestling with, Community Member 1, is £15bn doesn't mean anything to anybody, does it really? Nobody on this call, me included, can visualise what £15bn can mean. One of the things I've been trying to do is how do we start to create far more localised bits of information for people to really get their head around, and I've literally been doing an internal roadshow within the company around the areas that we need to focus on and as part of that roadshow, we've actually been producing videos on a county by county basis. Now I don't think that goes far enough, if I'm honest, but it's certainly a step in the right direction.

So for instance, just for your benefit, in Worcestershire, we're investing £63m to replace 155 miles of pipe. Replacing that water pipe work does a couple of things, it reduces leakage, it reduces the risk of supply interruptions, but it also ensures a much more longer-term, resilient supply for the future. So much of our investment, you won't necessarily see a direct improvement as a result, it's about preventing issues occurring in the future, so that's what that £63m will do.

We've got a couple of big water treatment works in the Worcestershire area as well, so two in particular are Strensham and Mythe and I'm assuming you know very much about Mythe, a few years ago there was a lot of flooding challenges around that particular area. But Strensham, we're spending around £65m at that particular site and that's to improve the output from that works as we see population growth in the area, so that's so we can get more water out the site and just ensure that we can sustain the high levels of water quality we get.

And even then on the environmental side, so Jon referred to the, I think it was around £1.1bn on river health, just in Worcestershire alone, we've already improved 300 storm overflows, so that means that we'll be seeing less risk of a spill coming from those storm overflows going forwards in the future. So whilst it's nowhere near where I want it to be at the moment, there's a lot more we can do in the future and myself and the team are working on how can we make more information available, but then put it into a format where people actually go and access that information as well. We've got things already like the Spills Map which you can log on and you can see where spills are, but I do want to go much further in that space.

CCW Chair: Thank you, James, thank you, Jon, for that response. Turning back to customers, the next part of this session is not about asking further questions, it's about testing whether what you've heard is clear, credible and sufficient. Consider these four things: Do you understand what will change? Do you understand how it will be delivered? Do you know when it will happen? And does it go far enough? We'll capture your reactions and identify any gaps or areas where greater clarity or commitment is needed. Joe will guide this part of the discussion and make sure we draw out any specific actions that should now form part of the company's accountability plan. Community Member 5, I can see your hand is up.

Community Member 5: It was interesting to have all the amount of millions and billions, etc but it doesn't say-

CCW Chair: Community Member 5, just before you go ahead, Joe's leading this session, I was just introducing what comes next but I'm sure Joe's going to call you once he does his spiel to this session, thank you.

TMcK Facilitator: Thank you, and it's good to see that people are keen to talk, that's appreciated. So what I want to start off with is first of all, how we felt about the response. Community Member 1, I'd like to go to you because I got you to ask the question for me, so I'd like to really briefly tell me about what you felt about the response, what ticked the boxes for you, if anything and what would you like to see?

Community Member 1: Yes, okay. I think there's one thing we all know, that there's lies, damned lies and statistics in that order and if I may remind James that the question was about clarity. Now, I understood exactly what he was talking about, I understood all of it but once again, it came out as "billions".

Now I am aware or not aware of what £1bn are or is but my concern is that none of us, and I speak I hope for all of us, are aware of what that represents, £1.5bn out of what? If it's £1.5bn out of £3bn, you could say, "We're spending 50% on new facilities" but if £1.1bn is merely 1% of the amount that Severn Trent collect from us as customers, I would prefer to see and it's much more dangerous for a company, to say "These are the percentages of what we've invested in various parts of our network, and this is a proportion of whatever we received from our customers," and that was the underlying theme of my question, it's dangerous for a company to say, let's say, "We're 99% pure water", I've worked out a few figures and that means that in each year, you'll get 50 litres of water that isn't pure. Sounds wonderful but in actual fact, what does it show us? What does it tell us? And that's the important thing that I thought was the purpose of my question.

TMcK Facilitator: Community Member 1, can I just ask what that would look like for you for then? So you obviously want it in this percentage format of what you're paying, where does that live? Where does that exist for you to access?

Community Member 1: It must be available and I looked at the Annual Report before I say anything and it's no good telling us that "we've spent huge amounts of money" because it doesn't mean a thing, it just means that yes, you've spent that amount but where is the rest of it, if that's the word to use, where is the rest of it going? Is it going to the shareholders? Is it being held back? The figures are interesting and they're huge amounts and I'll be quite honest, they're beyond my comprehension, in fact, I find it write to £1.5bn in zeroes, but I want to know, as a comparison with any other organisation, how has Severn Trent spent our money? What percentage of the money that they receive from us is spent on storms, on new facilities? If it's 1%, then there's a lot to be desired.

TMcK Facilitator: Community Member 1, thank you so much for coming back. Community Member 5, I want to bring you in because you wanted to jump in as well.

Community Member 5: Yeah, all I was going to say, again like Community Member 1 did, you can talk in millions and billions and trillions, etc but again, what percentage of the money is going to clean up the rivers? Because the Severn River is absolutely atrocious.

TMcK Facilitator: Okay, so you want to see it as a sort of percentage, that seems fairly clear from that.

Community Member 5: Yeah.

TMcK Facilitator: Community Member 9, you've got your hand up and then I'll go to you, Community Member 6.

Community Member 9: I've heard what everyone has said and how they posed the question and reframed it, the takeaway for me was again that it went from billions to "Here is a very specific sort of project", I'm not describing it as niche, but it was an example project. That was, I think it was in Mythe, I think you said, and that gives something tangible for us to identify with. But that's sort of going from macro to micro view, so we've got this massive ball of money and then we've got a very specific project, is there a way of describing something in between as well? Where we can perhaps percentage or perhaps proportionately, how we're allocating the money? So it would be "Regional projects will receive" rather than jumping from one extreme to the other?

TMcK Facilitator: And how would that work, Community Member 9, in your view? How would you see that, as the customer? Or access that, may be a better word?

Community Member 9: I think, I mean access, on the top level, it could be published as a sort of list or diagram where you could see things broken up and then perhaps you could see it more regionally, or localised, so that the closer you got to home, I guess, the more appropriate those projects would be because I know we're in a conversation, but you've given an example, I've never heard of that place, it's not close to me anyway, I appreciate that. But there could be something local to me that still doesn't affect me and whilst the example's good, it doesn't alienate me but it doesn't bring me on board, it's just "Here's a place that we're doing something as an example." So perhaps if it went like a hierarchy, maybe I could see, you know, "We're spending £60bn", sorry if I've just increased that, "We're spending £60bn regionally in this area, we're doing these types of projects and this is our focus and here are some examples", you might be able to work your way through.

TMcK Facilitator: So sort of more granularity almost, that makes it feels relevant to you and where you are and that side of things, is that fair?

Community Member 9: Yeah.

James Jesic: Joe, if I may, a lot of these questions, I could answer now.

TMcK Facilitator: That's fine, James, we'll let you jump back in towards the end of that. I think it sounds as though it's maybe an issue of where this information is, fundamentally and I want to know, and Community Member 6, I'll bring you in here as well, I want to know, make your point for me if that's okay but I'm keen to know where this information needs to live, for you to access it and look at it.

Community Member 9: Can I just add, if every time you're giving me a piece of information, I'm immediately going to ask for the next piece of information, so if you give me the big figure, I'll say, "How is that in the middle?", and I think that was where you gave the large one and the local one, it immediately made me want to ask for the middle. If you gave me the middle one, I'd say, "How big a pot is that from?", so it maybe needs to be all of them and then we can move towards.

TMcK Facilitator: Cool, thanks, Community Member 9. Community Member 6?

Community Member 6: With all respect, I'm not sure that the question was really answered because our question was about how it's difficult for us to understand figures in millions, let alone billions, and our question was also about proportionately, as Community Member 1 mentioned, and improving transparency and visibility. I'm not sure that the answer actually addressed what we asked, it covered amounts of macro investigation, great, and some very local examples but I don't think it actually answered our question.

Community Member 1: I agree.

TMcK Facilitator: What was missing, Community Member 6, for you? What do you want to see? What do you want the guys to go away and provide you?

Community Member 6: Point 1 in the question was about our bill increase and what difference that's making, I didn't hear mention of that. I didn't hear a mention of helping us to understand figures that are in the millions of pounds. I didn't hear anything about proportionately, how our money's spent and apart from I heard about the Spills Map, apart from that, I didn't clock anything about steps to improve transparency and visibility. Also the videos by county, but that was all I heard on that.

TMcK Facilitator: So what do you want them to do then? You made that point about bill increases, how do they tell you what, how do they give you that information as a customer? It's not going to be tonight, so how do they make that clear to you, about that increase?

Community Member 6: I know my bill's about to go up but I haven't actually been told anything about it. I'd like to suggest that information about for example, maybe local investment, should be included in bills because the number of people who are actually going to specifically find a video about water investment in their county, I think is quite small. I'd prefer to see something, like everybody gets water bills, most people look at them, something included in that.

TMcK Facilitator: Right, we'll go to you Community Member 4.

Community Member 4: Just to follow up on Community Member 1's point, I fully agree that a number on its own doesn't mean anything to anybody really, and then to follow-up on Community Member 6's point as well, I think it has to be included in the bill, the information. When I get my council tax bill, they show me a percentage goes to, 25% goes to the Fire department, 25% goes to the Police, I don't see why Severn Trent or any water company can't say, once a year, say your water bill was £1,000 or whatever, 20% of that went to cleaning rivers, 25% went to infrastructure, 25% went to Directors' bonuses, I don't know, all that information, that's where I would like to see it. I'm not going to go look at a nice video that they put on the website or the YouTube channel or whatever, that's never going to find me, ever. Whereas if it's in my bill every month or once a year, I'm going to see it, I'm going to look at it, I'm going to understand it.

Community Member 1: Well said.

TMcK Facilitator: Community Member 3, you've got your hand up as well?

Community Member 3: It's kind of very similar to what Community Member 6 said about, I think, the very first bit of the question, about our bills going up. I think that's the bit that people care about and I guess I would kind of want some transparency on is this sort of project being entirely funded by increases in customers' bills? Or is there money being redirected within the company itself?

Because I almost feel like it's the company's responsibility to sort of provide this, if it's asking what customers want and then promising that, I think it should come out of their profit margins before it comes out of customers, or like it comes from an increase in customers' bills. And that's not to say that it shouldn't increase at all, I understand you can't just get money out of nowhere but I would be interested in seeing how much of it has sort of been redirected within the company, or if it was just sort of straightaway, it was like, "We'll just increase the bills to fund it."

TMcK Facilitator: Community Member 12, you had your hand up for a second and put it back down, I'm assuming that your point was maybe made but if you did want to jump in, please do.

Community Member 12: I'd say it was made by most of the people but for me, I think the thing it comes down to is a lot of these figures are stuff that you know, you hear all the time, right and never really transparent about exactly what each pound goes to. And similar to what was said by Community Member 3, is most of these projects being funded by our bills? Or is it outside investments from other sort of businesses, water's going to be used especially in the next decade or so by a lot of these data centres, right? Are they going to be able to be putting some money towards it or is it just our bills and then we're the ones that have to deal with the consequences?

TMcK Facilitator: I'll open up the floor again, if anyone else wants to jump in with any points on that before we keep moving?

Community Member 8: Can I just say something as well? How do I put my hand up? I don't know how to do that!

CCW Chair: Community Member 8, use your physical hand if you're in doubt, yeah?

TMcK Facilitator: Yeah, we'll see it, you're okay.

Community Member 8: I hear what people are saying. I'm also interested in, I'm just going to look to the side because I've got some notes here, I'm also interested if we're saying we're spending so much on, for example, reducing spills into rivers, within that information that we're requesting with our bill, I want to know the success of that as well. So if it's "We're spending this much money and we're going to do this within the next 12 months", what I'm also interested in is outcomes as well at the end. So what are the KPIs? What are the indicators to suggest that project has been successful and what are the success criteria, and are our rivers, for example, cleaner at the end? So as well as where does it go, it's outcomes from the end, of what's happened at the end of those projects.

TMcK Facilitator: Throughout this, you've told us what you want, you want to see, I'm going to show you everything that we've written, I can just see them typing so I'll give them a couple of minutes, you've told us you want to see that proportional breakdown and I think you've mentioned that it goes in the bill, to some extent, but I want to understand how that comes to life as a thing. If it was me, playing devil's advocate and I received that on my bill, I'm probably not looking at it and I want to understand your engagement with that kind of thing. Does anybody have an idea of where they would want to find this information? Is it a link on your bill? Is it something that's sent to you annually that tells you this stuff? What would we want to see? Those aren't the only two options, by the way. Go ahead, Community Member 5.

Community Member 5: Perhaps when they send the water bill, hopefully not via the email, that they put a leaflet in with where the money is being spent, what percentages are going into cleaning the river, you know, and so if you had a leaflet with that on then you've got something physical that you can actually look at. I hate reading on the laptop, I'm a physical book person that I like to have, which is why I printed off all the questions so that I can make my own notes; I don't like doing it on screen so it would have to be a physical paper.

CCW Chair: Just in relation to that, Community Member 5, I understand that on the back of the bill, there's a QR code and if you were to scan that, it might take you to a newsletter. I accept that may not be helpful for you, I understand, there is something in place to give customers extra information with the bill but perhaps we can discuss that a bit later, and ask James and Jon about that.

TMcK Facilitator: Community Member 4, we'll go to you for the final point and then I'll show some stuff on the screen for you?

Community Member 4: Yeah, just the point about the bill, I understand what you're saying but everybody here looks at their bill, before we joined this panel, I suspect nobody went to the Severn Trent website or very rarely did. So there's much more chance of people seeing it with the bill in whatever form that would take.

TMcK Facilitator: So it needs to be readily at hand, essentially, for it to be engaged with. I'm going to share my screen and I can show you some of the notes that have been being taken while we've been speaking. I'm going to zoom in on parts of this so don't worry if it looks a little bit scary to start off with. Can everyone see something?

Community Members: Yes.

TMcK Facilitator: So we've noted down here the points that James and Jon made, as they were talking through this. We've tried to capture the points that you guys have made as well during the last 10 minutes of discussion, so I'm going to focus on those and I'll outline what those are. This is titled, "What would the ideal water company response look like?", and this is where we're looking at trying to create actions off the back of what you have said.

We've got a point here around about "Explaining spending and investment plans with clarity, granularity and tangibility, diagrams, infographics, percentages and proportionate allocations, breaking spending down via region and at micro-level. Include information within customers' bills about investment at a local level and outcomes of this investment," Community Member 8, I think that was a point that you made, "incorporating success criteria and targets met."

"Accessible, physical information, for example, newsletters or inserts to postal material", but as well as that kind of digital thing as well, I think we want to capture in there, Ryan and Harriet¹, that there's nothing wrong with it being a digital option but it comes with that bill cycle, I think, was the point that you made.

"Clear definition of customer money reinvested in infrastructure and services, versus other costs." Community Member 3, that was your point around about how much of the money is coming from customers versus other sources, and then we've got a point around "Transparency on funding sources for investment plans", where the money comes from, etc.

I want to first of all give you a minute, if there's anything that's missing from here, Community Member 6, I'll go to you in a second but have a think, if we've captured what you've said accurately, if there's anything that you think we've not captured correctly or you want to change or you want to add, that's brilliant as well. Community Member 6?

Community Member 6: I just want to go back to what Rachel said about a QR code on the bill. I just pulled up my latest bill and there's no QR code to go to anything, I have digital bills, not paper bills, I don't know if that makes a difference.

CCW Chair: Sure, thank you for letting us know! It maybe that it's just on paper bills potentially. Yeah, I understand it's paper bills, thank you.

Community Member 6: That seems a bit silly, like why would people having paper bills get more information than people getting digital bills? Don't want they us to have digital bills because it's cheaper and better for the environment?

CCW Chair: Something which perhaps we can pick up, Joe.

TMcK Facilitator: Absolutely. Any other points we want to raise? We've given you some time to have a read of the points that were raised here, any changes, additions that you want to see? Anything that you want to be written, I don't know, differently, more clearly, anything like that? Do we all agree with the points that are here? Is there anything that we disagree with? I'm going to take silence that we're all delighted with this.

Community Member 8: It's fine with me.

Community Member 10: Yeah, I think it's all good.

¹ Taylor McKenzie Co-Facilitators, present to take notes and record key points from the Accountability Session.

TMcK Facilitator: In terms of timescales for this kind of thing, if we go back to Community Member 1, your point around wanting to see this as a percentage and have this an accessible way, I'm not expecting the water company to be able to agree to any timescales that we set really clearly here and obviously, we don't understand the process that it has to go through to do any of this stuff, but I want to understand from the customers, how long you expect to wait to see this kind of change, if that's okay? Community Member 1, I'll go to you first.

Community Member 1: I would be the first to say that I don't think a timescale of an extended period would actually assist, to my eyes, it's the thoughts that the panels have got now and we would like them answered, I'll be fair, immediately. Now I cannot really see when the next amount of bill – or rather, the next tranche of bills goes out – why some attempt, even if only one part of Severn Trent's operation, why can't just one single item be illustrated, illuminated on each bill? It doesn't have to be everything all at once, it can be a gradual process, beginning if you like with the next bill, where somebody says, "We have spent X amount of, or X percentage of our income on this particular item" and I think that would probably help because each one of us would just read it, next ones would come the next one, next ones after that.

So by extending a timescale, I don't want the whole thing done at once, I think that would be unfair but to turn a set of figures into a percentage is a matter of 10 seconds on a computer, to alter the bill, fair enough, it can be done, I don't know how bills are produced, I mean physically. Digitally, it can be done straightaway, so my real thing is just set a short timescale so that somebody, Severn Trent is forced into taking immediate action to bring out what we've already said we need to know now, and we perhaps regret that we haven't been told before.

TMcK Facilitator: What's "short", Community Member 1, in your mind?

Community Member 1: I would expect to see something, let's be honest, with our next bill. "Yes, we've looked at this and we can tell you that this much," to all customers, "is what we've spent on this particular item, on this particular service, on this particular item that we wish to cover." It doesn't need it, it's a line on the end of the bill, highlighted if you wish but it's one single bill. If you kept going through all the things that Severn Trent do, probably I would expect it to be finished by nine months, I wouldn't expect to see a year before they could produce figures because by then, the figures will be out of date.

TMcK Facilitator: Community Member 6?

Community Member 6: I think kind of immediately is maybe a little bit idealistic and I think we might be slightly underestimating, you know, like for example, to put something on the bill, I'm sure it has to go through multiple layers of approval and lawyers and all kinds of things. So I would expect maybe within six months, a commitment to including something with both digital and paper bills, like Community Member 1 said, it doesn't have to be everything, could be different on each bill, just something to make it clearer to people.

TMcK Facilitator: Does anybody else want to add anything before I hand back to Rachel, to keep things moving? Community Member 9?

Community Member 9: We have outlined that we would like some changes and I think the point was just made about the expediency that could occur within, I think we also have to understand the difficulty it might be to change models or present things in a different manner and it might be that a middle ground would be struck, where what we've requested wouldn't be possible particularly in the sense that we've said it, but there might be a way of meeting it halfway, which I think is more realistic than "Here's what I want" and

everyone's going to say a different thing anyway. So there might be some way that they could adapt rather than adopt a whole new method, if that makes sense.

TMcK Facilitator: Rachel?

CCW Chair: Thank you, so James and Jon, we've got the actions on a screen, I know James, you were keen to address some of the points that were raised by some participants. Starting with the actions themselves, is there anything you'd like to say about these actions? Are they feasible?

James Jesic: To be honest, Rachel, I could have addressed all those questions throughout the whole thing because we actually provide a fair amount of detail to customers, in terms of where their bill is going. You've already mentioned the QR code on the bill, granted that doesn't work for everybody but we have included leaflets in the past which show, "For every £1, this is the breakdown" which in effect gives a percentage. That percentage goes into what we spend on the environment, how much we spend on providing clean water, how much we spend on taking wastewater away, how much money is spent on repaying debt and also what goes to investors from an improvement perspective, so all of that is available.

We will challenge ourselves in terms of how readily available we've made, how clear that is in terms of electronic bills and the paper bills that are sent out. We've certainly looked at providing leaflets before, the challenge with leaflets is it just adds to the cost and we found in our surveys, most people throw it away, so we've always been a bit reticent around providing a load of leaflets, particularly as it costs about £1-2 per additional post that we put in place, so we do try and manage bills from that perspective, by not sending them out unless we need to.

But taking I think Community Member 5's point on board, that some customers would like that, we can certainly do far more work to try and understand who wants to retain a paper bill process and we can always add things to that, but of course, we have to see how that pans out.

In terms of Community Member 1's point around us putting up bills, how much of the bill goes onto investment, to be quite frank, the bills that we receive from a Severn Trent perspective, do not cover our whole investment, we have to borrow money to make this £15bn investment, I won't go into all the specifics again, we have to borrow money to make that investment, improve the environment, improve the resilience. In many instances, the bill money, a proportion of that bill money goes back into, if you like, paying back the interest payments on that investment or in some cases, paying dividends. Now, whilst there's been a lot of noise around dividends and criticism of dividends, the purpose of a dividend really is to pay somebody back for the investment they've given, so it's a bit like a mortgage repayment whereby you're charged interest in your mortgage, it's similar to how we work. We effectively borrow money from investors in order to invest and improve, and then the customers will see that our bills have to go up for that increased level of investment but that's just to pay a dividend in order to get something for your money. Nobody would put their cash in a bank account and not expect interest payments, it's exactly the same sort of process.

I understand what everybody is asking for in terms of transparency and all that sort of stuff, a lot of it we do provide, we will just challenge ourselves on how we provide it more but as I say, it would have been much easier if I could have said that as we went through the process.

CCW Chair: Indeed, very helpful, I think it's come at the right time, I think it was good to have the discussion. Looking at the actions then, let's be quite clear, Action A², James and Jon, are you saying that you do that already and therefore, you don't need to do it now? Because I think the issue is customers are saying they haven't received it.

James Jesic: No, I'm saying we do it but what we will do is we will challenge ourselves on how accessible and how visible that is.

CCW Chair: Excellent, thank you. In terms of the others, B³, C⁴, D⁵ and E⁶, are there any amendments to those actions that you think are required, based on your response?

James Jesic: So I think D and A are broadly the same, if I'm honest, I think B, in terms of investment at a local level, there's a lot more work that we can do at that but that will take us time to get to that level of granularity and detail. There is some stuff available but it depends on the specifics of what people want. So that's something we would have to go away and work up over time and that's already in our plans, and transparency on funding source for investment plans, I think I've just covered that really but that really falls under A, B and C, it will come out with clarity in there. I think many of these actions are actually quite similar.

CCW Chair: Thank you. In relation to B, you said that might take a bit longer, can you give an indication of how long it will take to deliver that action?

James Jesic: I actually think Community Member 1 made a really good point around starting to do that, so we do do that already and we can point to some of that in terms of what we do. In terms of the rest, we will, as we get more level of information, we can break that out.

There's always lots of stuff we do in the media and in local newspapers and all that sort of stuff, but we will have to take it away and understand what sort of timescales we could commit to. I think the challenge with that, it's never finished, there's always something else we're investing in, so it's difficult to put an end timescale on it because we just start improving it as of, with immediate effect really.

CCW Chair: Sure, I think my challenge to that James would be some type of indication, if it's 12 months, say so, if it's 18 months, say so.

James Jesic: It's difficult because it's to the level of information that people want. So put us down for 12 months and we'll improve it over the next 12-month period and I guess, we can have one of these in 12 months' time, people can challenge us on whether, or people can give a view on whether we've answered that to the right level of detail or not.

CCW Chair: So Action B, 12 months it might take to deliver on that.

James Jesic: Yes.

CCW Chair: With a potential update. Excellent, thank you. Jon, would you like to add anything before I ask customers a follow-up question?

² Explaining spending and investment plans with clarity, granularity and tangibility – diagrams, infographics, percentages and proportionate allocations. Breaking spending down via region and at micro-level.

³ Including information, within customer bills, about investment at a local level & outcomes of this investment – incorporating success criteria and targets met.

⁴ Accessible, physical or digital information e.g. newsletters or inserts to posted material

⁵ Clear definition of customer money reinvested in infrastructure & services, vs other costs.

⁶ Transparency on funding source for investment plans – where is this money coming from e.g. money derived from customer bills vs company savings or outside investment

Jonathan Ashley: Rachel, yeah, helpful feedback from the customers and we do have a really cool diagram in percentages in the shape of glass, the one that James was talking through, so it is really made to be customer friendly so no, nothing else to add.

CCW Chair: Now to the customers, having heard Jon and James's explanation regarding the actions, do you feel it's reasonable and proportionate? I'm looking at hands, anyone want to say anything on that? Are we happy with the response?

Community Member 1: Can I say that my thoughts are that once again, it's 12 months and let's be honest, let's hope the figures have changed or improved and if it's over 12 months or even coming up to 12 months, you're looking at, shall I put it simply, next year's figures and they, to my eyes, it's now, six months, nine months, would bring it within this current year, move it to 12 and we're already looking perhaps before it's finished, at next year's figures and you know, they may be better, they may be worse but what we want to know is what our bill this year produced and so therefore, I would like to know at least by the end of the year, what those figures were or are and you know, to say "give us 12 months", yeah, sure, if it's December 29th, December 30th, but if it's January 5th, it's another new year.

CCW Chair: Thank you, Community Member 1, I've heard that. James, if we were to adjust that timescale for delivery, would that cause you some concern?

James Jesic: No, I mean it's a really fair challenge from Community Member 1, I've perhaps not made myself very clear in terms of we will provide granularity on the bill itself, Jon referred to the glass that we show that shows how are pounds broken down. So that will give at high level, where that spend is going, so that's available now and we can make that available now. I think the specifics about localised areas, I mean you can reduce it by six months if you like, we can provide that, it's a really good challenge from Community Member 1 and I appreciate the feedback.

CCW Chair: Should we say then, for Action B, delivery would be six months?

James Jesic: Absolutely fine, that's absolutely fine.

CCW Chair: I'm going to take Community Member 6's question or point, please.

Community Member 6: Just to say that I've seen, I don't remember seeing the water glass infographic on my bills, I've just checked a couple of years' worth of bills, I don't see it. But I have seen it on the Water Voice Panel and I did think it was a good way of getting the information across, so that kind of easy to understand, kind of proportionate breakdown, I'm all in favour of that.

James Jesic: That's helpful, thank you, Community Member 6.

CCW Chair: Thank you, yes, that was nice. So we can see the actions, we can see the timescales, and we can see the final response from the company. They've been agreed, let's move onto the next question.

TMcK Facilitator: Jon, I'm going to say "bye" to you and I'm going to bring in Stephanie, is that correct, James?

James Jesic: It is, yes, it should be Stephanie. Thanks, Jon.

Jonathan Ashley: Bye. [Leaves]

CCW Chair: Hello, Stephanie, welcome. Everybody knows each other, could you please introduce yourself and what you do at Severn Trent Water, please?

Stephanie Cawley: Of course, I'm Steph and I'm Customer Operations Director.

CCW Chair: Thank you, and just to say, we have our next question from Community Member 6, can you just quickly introduce yourself for Stephanie, as in where you live?

Community Member 6: I'm Community Member 6, I live in Arnold near Nottingham.

CCW Chair: Grateful, that's all. Okay, let's ask the second question.

Community Member 6: Issues some of us have raised with Severn Trent have gone unresolved and there's a lack of consistency in how your communication, with calls regularly going unreturned and customer service being unresponsive and unhelpful. What concrete changes will you make to ensure that customer problems are genuinely resolved and properly managed, and that customers are communicated with properly, from the start to the end of their query?

CCW Chair: Thank you, Community Member 6. For Stephanie's benefit, in responding, it would be very helpful if you could be as specific as possible, setting out what is already in place, what is planned, what will change as a result of this discussion, by when those changes will happen and how customers will be able to see and measure progress. Again to the community, pay attention and write your notes for any supplementary questions you raise later. Over to James or Stephanie, whoever wants to lead on this, please.

James Jesic: Yes, so I'll start and then I'll hand over to Stephanie to call out some specifics. I think first and foremost, I accept we haven't always got this right as a company in terms of our response and the way we've kept customers informed on progress on particular issues. I've been in post for a couple of months now and one of my big objectives as Steph will support, I'm sure, is how do we improve the customer experience when they contact us and make sure that we do keep customers updated on any particular issues, or make sure we answer their queries properly? So we definitely acknowledge that this is something we need to improve as a business.

Steph will cover what she's doing from an operational perspective in a moment but one of the big things we're doing, we've invested in a new customer billing portal called Kraken, if anybody is an Octopus customer, it's the same system that they use. That will really help in terms of the provision of support that we can give customers when they ring through, specifically for any billing enquiries, so that will definitely improve from that perspective and I'll hand over to Steph now, and she can call out some specifics from an operational front.

Stephanie Cawley: Yeah, I completely echo what James says, we've got a way to go on this. What we want to do though is make sure that we do things properly, right first time, so we give a really smooth journey, and you don't have to wait on us to call you back or you don't have to chase us because we're doing things really speedily.

The first thing we've done over the last 12 months is we've brought in extra teams, which means that if you have a problem with us, we should get to you faster and we should fix it, right first time. We know that when that does happen, we do a good job of it and we get great customer feedback. We also know that when things fall off the happy path and they're not going very well, which is about 10% of the time, which is 10% too much, absolutely, we're not great then at keeping customers up to date with what our processes are.

So we're very clear about what happens internally but we appreciate that that can be new, confusing, complicated to customers who are waiting for their leak to be fixed or their sewage pipes to be repaired in the road. So in the short term, we're putting in place

processes whereby we would contact you at points through the process, to tell you what's going on. In the longer term though, we'd like that to be much more automated.

We've tried some things in the past, we use a system called VYN, Video Your Notes, where a crew will send a video, we can send that to the customer. Not everybody likes that so we know we haven't quite got that right, we've toyed with the idea of a bit like an Amazon driver, you can see when your engineer's going to turn up or what's next in your journey, that doesn't always work in a reactive business either.

So we've got to get that right and we've love your feedback on some of the things that we could be doing in that space. What I would say though is that we're working really hard to upskill all of our people, so when you contact us, we've split our teams. James already said, we've done lots of work in the billing space, we split our teams into waste and water, so you get to speak to somebody who really understands either your water issue or your waste issue, and that's relatively new and we hope that that will make a difference too. But definitely more to do in this space and we'd love your thoughts.

CCW Chair: Grateful, thank you very much, Stephanie. Customers, I hope you've taken your notes, you've heard the company response, again I want you to think about these things. Do you understand what will change? Do you understand how it will be delivered? Do you know when it will happen? And do you think this does enough. I'm going to hand over to Joe to lead on this session.

TMcK Facilitator: Thank you very much, thanks for that response, guys, as well. Community Member 6, as I did with the last question, I'll go back to you since you were the question asker and I just want to get your take on the response first of all, what was positive from your perspective? If there's anything that you'd want to see improved as well from what they've said?

Community Member 6: Sure, I think first of all, I'd like to acknowledge I really appreciated the honesty of your response, acknowledging that yeah, it doesn't always go right and that there is room to improve because like for some of the people on our panel, when things have gone wrong with customer service, it's had a really serious impact on their life and is still doing at the moment. So it was positive to hear that you've been trying different things, seeing what works, maybe what doesn't and having the extra people and the upskilling, that all sounds positive. I think I'd like to know a little bit more specifically, what your future plans to improve are and also, it's quite a specific question but I'm not on the new billing portal because I'm a Water Sure customer, I have to use the old one, so does that mean that any customers in my position, customer service wouldn't be able to benefit from the Kraken advantages?

TMcK Facilitator: So you need some clarity on that, Community Member 6, fundamentally as a customer, as to what the implications of that are. I'll open up the floor to any other thoughts on this and I'll get you to think back to the briefing session because you all told me stuff that had happened when it came to customer service, and issues that many of you had had and obviously, this is your opportunity to sort of highlight that and tell us a little bit about what you want to see improved as a result of your experience.

James Jesic: Sorry to come in, just to address Community Member 6's first question, everybody will be on our Kraken system eventually, so honestly, literally in the next couple of months, so nothing you won't receive as well. I think when you're trying to create an action, effectively it will all be addressed.

Community Member 6: I appreciate that, thank you.

TMcK Facilitator: Community Member 5, you've got your hand up so I'll go to you first.

Community Member 5: I think it's great that you've split it between sewage and water.

Community Member 2: And billing.

Community Member 5: And billing. I only have, I don't have any sewerage issues because I'm on a septic tank, so mine is mainly all to do with water. But when I ring up and try to speak to somebody, in the past, I'm not saying it's going to happen in the future, but I'm being fobbed off, basically saying, no they can't come, "This is your problem", and when I say, "I need to speak to your manager", it's only when I've done that, that I've actually got some actual response.

TMcK Facilitator: Community Member 5, tell us what the improvement then is, that might sound stupid but in an ideal world, what does that experience look like for you?

Community Member 5: Well, when I ring up, because I've suddenly got water coming up out of the ground, that I ring up and say, "I know that you're able to test where the water leak is", I'm not disputing it's not my problem because it's on my property but my argument is, I am on a water meter, that water has been leaking for 10 months without me knowing and when I ring up to ask for somebody to come out, all I'm asking is can they come out and tell me where the leak's coming from? And that took me two months to get that into perspective, to get somebody out, by which time, I'd lost nearly £400 worth of water that I'm having to pay for. I took over the account for my house after my husband died. Now, they only tell you, you can have one leakage allowance on a property, the bill is in my name, so as far as I'm concerned, I'm a new customer and so I'm sort of having to argue with a chap on the line, to get somebody to come out to tell me where the water is coming from, so then I could get it sorted. But why didn't they contact me when they knew my water usage had gone up every month, going up and up and up, and nobody contacted me?

TMcK Facilitator: So it sounds as though it feels as though it should be a more proactive process, if there is an issue specifically like that, Community Member 5, where you want somebody to, it just doesn't look like your normal usage?

Community Member 5: Yeah.

TMcK Facilitator: Thank you so much for that, and Community Member 7, I'll go to you.

Community Member 7: I actually think Community Member 1 was before me.

TMcK Facilitator: Sorry, okay, Community Member 1, I'll go to you first and we'll go back to you, Community Member 7, thank you.

Community Member 1: Just a quick point, I noted that James said of all his teams are being trained so that they know everything about whatever problem the customer originates. My thoughts are will the people who we speak to have the authority to decide what the action will be? Because if I'm able to give an example, you ring the police, you ring 999, they don't say, "That's very interesting, I'll go and have a word with the Chief Constable and see if we can send a police officer," straightaway, police officer, because those people who answer that 999 call have got the authority to deal with it and what bothers me is the team may know all about what the problem is, but they need to say "Yeah, we'll send somebody within 10 minutes".

Now that may be an impossibility but the point is they are owning the problem and you know, all the comments that have come up so far are examples of where that hasn't happened, somebody said, "I'll pass it on" or "We'll have to look somewhere else" or "Someone will be in touch." Give the people who answer the phone the authority, yeah, there's always somebody who will cheat you but basically, no, they're ringing up because

they've got a problem, they want an emergency answer and that's where I would think you are an emergency service. No water is an emergency, so I'll leave that thought for consideration.

TMcK Facilitator: Thank you, Community Member 1. Community Member 7, on you go.

Community Member 7: So in terms of your customer services and the different types of contact options that you have, my point kind of touches on Community Member 1's, when you call up, you get through to someone that almost doesn't seem trained or have the authority to deal with your issue, and that can get really frustrating. I can appreciate that you've made a lot of changes, for example, I think the idea that you've got a WhatsApp chat to be able to speak to people is really great.

But in the past, I've contacted someone by WhatsApp, it wasn't probably until the next day that they got back to me and when they got back to me, I wasn't able to take their correspondence at that time and then obviously, your advisors need to close something that's inactive for a certain amount of time.

That leads to more frustration because then I have to get back in contact with you to go over the same issue and I just think maybe could there be more of an assigned one-to-one case manager, that can sort of keep in the loop with you, whether that be via email or something like that? Having to constantly deal with different people for the same problem can be quite frustrating, especially when it's a complex issue and I think that you've got the skeleton of really great modalities in place but then you're kind of hit with people with very poor training, and I appreciate you said that you're upskilling. But I just think that for me, that's where the main improvement needs to be, it's caused me a lot of frustration.

TMcK Facilitator: So a single point of contact then, I suppose, somebody who owns that ownership thing, we'll definitely record that.

Community Member 7: Or that issue, you could be assigned to somebody when you call up to a certain specific team, I know that there's sewage water billing but then there's issues within that, that you need to be passed onto like a complaints manager because a customer advisor is not trained to handle complaints the way a complaints manager is, it's very different.

TMcK Facilitator: Community Member 6, we'll go to you and then I'm going to share what we've been jotting down, on the screen.

Community Member 6: I'd like to echo what Community Member 7 said about WhatsApp because that's a problem I've experienced as well and I think that would probably be quite a, a fairly achievable action point. I think they have like a 48 hours or something and they can respond at any time, and then you're at work or asleep or doing whatever, and the window closes really quickly, it's not enough time for people to get back to you and then you have to start again. And Community Member 7, I know from the forum that you've had this problem as well on WhatsApp, having copied and pasted responses that don't actually answer your question. There's stock responses and it's like someone's not really reading your question, they're just putting something that's kind of related to your question.

Community Member 7: It frustrates you more in a way, you know, like you're just kind of another number, you're not being dealt with.

Community Member 6: And the other one I wanted to ask/suggest is do you have anything like mystery shoppers who test out your customer service, and then give you feedback on it? Because if not, I think that might be really useful. You mentioned getting 90% positive feedback but I don't know if I'm alone in this but it takes quite a lot for me to complain

about something, I don't want to get people in trouble if it's just they were a little bit rubbish, I'll still give the Uber driver five stars because I don't want to cause them any problems, even if it wasn't actually five stars. So for me to say that wasn't good enough and actually complain, it has to be really, really bad. So I would take the 90% thing possibly with a pinch of salt, I don't know if anybody else would agree with me on that.

TMcK Facilitator: Thank you so much. I'm going to share what we've jotted down so far, so no pressure to the writing team. Hopefully you can all see what's on my screen. So let's focus again in on this ideal response, a couple of acknowledgements that you added in first of all was that the honesty and transparency around, that it's not perfect and "we are looking to improve" is appreciated, positivity felt around innovation and upskilling efforts.

Looking for faster response times, send out of help, for example, engineers to come out more quickly after issues raised by a customer and I suppose, a feeling of being taken more seriously, I think was Community Member 6's point as well, when she was raising issues.

Proactive leak detection, a lot of us are on smart meters, surely there's something that can mean that when it has gone up loads, the usage has gone up loads, can you guys flag it rather than us have to wait months until-

Community Member 2: The bill turns up.

TMcK Facilitator: -it becomes a big issue. Yeah, exactly. Improving the customer service journey, particularly via digital channels, where communication is typically interrupted and customers have routines to work around. And the final point was around assigning a dedicated staff member for customer issues, so I suppose a named point of contact, single point of contact that deals with issues there.

A couple of minutes here, is there anything that we feel is missing from the list that we've created here? Is there anything that feels incorrect, that we've not captured correctly, that you would like us to change? Or are we happy with what we've got? Community Member 2?

Community Member 2: I just think that the issues that Community Member 5 had and I had similar were a while ago, for me it was probably two, three years ago, so I really can't comment now on how that would be dealt with, so I just wanted to point that out. It might not be fair us to say that's how it is nowadays because I don't know.

Community Member 5: Can I just say, this was only a couple of months, sort of four or five months ago? It's quite ...

Community Member 2: Recent.

Community Member 5: Recent and you know, on my own, having lost my husband, I'm having to deal with everything and the last thing I need is to be fobbed off.

TMcK Facilitator: Community Member 6, we'll go to you finally and then we'll move onto the next part.

Community Member 6: Yeah, maybe it's just because it's not a very good idea or something but like the mystery shopper idea, that's something I thought of that's not mentioned. And I think for F⁷, it's not necessary for a lot of issues, I think it's only for more complex issues like Community Member 7 or Community Member 5 has dealt with. It's obviously not necessary for simple things and working around when individuals are at

⁷ Improving the CS journey, particularly via digital channels where communication is typically interrupted and customers have routines to work around.

work, off work, is difficult but for more complex issues, then I think it definitely would be really helpful.

TMcK Facilitator: Rachel?

CCW Chair: Thank you. Stephanie and James, there are some actions that we can see specifically, C⁸, D⁹, E¹⁰, F¹¹ and G¹². Is there anything you want to say about those points, they're actions? Anything you think you do already or want to talk to me about these things?

James Jesic: Absolutely, I'll say a few things and I'm sure anything I forget or Steph wants to add to, I'm sure she will. On the mystery shopper by Community Member 6, I think it's a really good point, we've actually got 10,000 mystery shoppers that Severn Trent already use, so we do do that. I'm not necessarily saying we've necessarily fixed all the issues yet, it's a good challenge by Community Member 6 and something we're absolutely doing.

I think this piece around a specific customer, sorry, when I say mystery shoppers, all of our employees are actually mystery shoppers, if you know what I mean, so all Severn Trent employees are generally customers, so we use those as our mystery shoppers, just in case anyone thought we actually employed 10,000 mystery shoppers, we use our workforce.

Just in terms of the other points here, there's a really good point about the dedicated teams. When the Kraken system's in, as I explained earlier, every customer will be on Kraken, the way that we will set up is that we will have these what we call pods internally, and each pod will look after only 10,000 customers, broadly, that might increase slightly but effectively, each pod will look after a group of customers. So anybody who raises a particular issue from another area, they will be speaking to the same group of people more broadly, but we're also looking at how do we have a specific individual who may be able to pick up, to Community Member 6's point actually, the more complex stuff? So that's a really good point. I'll let Steph say something around the proactive leak detection piece?

Stephanie Cawley: Absolutely, so I'm really sorry, Community Member 5, to hear about your husband. Obviously, for customers that have got a smart meter, we do look at the data and we do try and proactively jump in with a solution. I think we probably recognise that we haven't always got that perfect and actually, we're doing some work to join up better across the organisation, so if the billing team identify the problem, then one of my operational team can go out. I would absolutely expect us to be offering plenty of support, particularly if somebody's had a horrible situation that they're dealing with, so I think we should take that away and look and see is there more that we can do on that front.

I just wanted to pick up on the WhatsApp one as well, we completely recognise that we can improve in that space, we know that the service at the moment isn't brilliant. It is getting better and we're aiming to reply within 10-20 minutes and that's something we're going to work on in the next few weeks, and we also recognise the cut and paste issue, so we're on with that as well and that's been picked up.

The final thing, completely agree with Community Member 1's point about people being empowered to push the button on emergency work. We know a lot of the things that can go wrong on our assets can impact customers in a terrible way, internal sewer flooding is one of those. If a customer reports an internal sewer flooding, a leak or a pollution, we'll be

⁸ Front-line CS staff empowered to drive action

⁹ Faster response times and send-out of help, and issues being treated according to severity – i.e. engineers to come out more quickly after issue raised by customer.

¹⁰ Proactive leak detection – water meters used both to save water, and save customers wasted money.

¹¹ Improving the CS journey, particularly via digital channels where communication is typically interrupted and customers have routines to work around.

¹² Assign a dedicated staff member for more complex customer issues – a personal point of contact

there within four hours and the people who take the call push the button on that, they don't have to ask for permission, they don't need to go to anyone else, they should be coming out to you straightaway.

CCW Chair: Thank you, Steph, hopefully that's helpful.

James Jesic: I must say if I may, Rachel, I just saw that Community Member 9 suggested we employ teenagers for WhatsApp, it's a great suggestion but unfortunately, they don't use WhatsApp anymore, my teenager won't go anywhere near it, she's all Snapchat and what else.

CCW Chair: Was that in the chat, was it?

James Jesic: Yes, I saw it come up on the chat.

CCW Chair: Okay, thank you for that. We've heard a response from the company so customers, looking at the actions there, specifically I think we have, C and D has slightly changed now, frontline CS staff empowered to do what?

TMcK Facilitator: The three dots are moving so something will appear soon!

CCW Chair: Okay. Looking at D, E, F and G, I think the company have spoken about that, there was some things under way but is that a fair response to actions being developed and taken away? And if so, in terms of timescales, James and Steph, very briefly, timescales when you can deliver these things?

James Jesic: I think the pods are already in place so in terms of specific customer groups, so that is just a function of when the customers are on the new system, which should happen over the next couple of months. We have to do a very gradual transfer of customers onto the new system and upskill the staff in the new system, so I suspect that will be completely finished by the end of the summer and that's a function of when customers are transferring across, that's the first thing.

CCW Chair: So maybe July? Should we say July?

James Jesic: We're in a holiday period for everybody and that includes customers as well, so can we say the end of August? Is that okay?

CCW Chair: Yes, absolutely.

James Jesic: And then in terms of the 10,000 mystery shoppers, they're obviously Severn Trent employees, they're already in place and let me be clear as well, our employees are our most critical customers in many instances, so we get a lot of good feedback from that, again we just keep working on that. That's already in place.

CCW Chair: If it's already in place, it shouldn't really go away as an action, that's what I'm trying to deal with.

James Jesic: Exactly, that's what I'm already scratching that. So in terms of the reducing WhatsApp response to 20 minutes, that is going to take us a period of time, it's certainly an ambition we've set ourselves but I think it will probably take us around six months to get to that number. We will see improvements quickly but to get to 20 minutes, it will probably take us six months.

Community Member 5: Can I just ask, how many people are in these pods to take all the questions or calls?

James Jesic: I can't remember the exact number, to be honest, do you know, Steph, off the top of your head?

Stephanie Cawley: No, I'm afraid I don't but we can easily come back to you on that one, Community Member 5.

Community Member 5: Okay.

James Jesic: It's come back to me, there's 12 people in each pod, now remember they look after a couple of thousand customers each, 10,000 people each and of course, they don't all ring in at the same time, we do get varying calls coming in at different periods. But the way the pods work is if one pod is getting a lot of calls from a particular area, we may have an issue on in that particular area, the other groups will step in and support as well. But on the whole, you will be speaking to the same sort of people, so that should be vastly improved and apologies again for the issues you've been suffering, I'm sorry to hear about your husband.

CCW Chair: Just one question before we move onto the third question is James, what is a pod? So I don't make any assumptions, just so that customers don't make any assumptions, essentially.

James Jesic: A pod is basically a group of individuals who we are, it's the same team, it's like a team, that's what a pod is. So we've got 12 individuals in their team, we call them a pod. Does that make sense?

CCW Chair: Indeed, thank you. Let's move onto the third question being asked by Community Member 7 ...

TMcK Facilitator: Sorry, I'm just going to swap the participants around again if that's okay.

CCW Chair: We are bringing somebody in, that's right.

TMcK Facilitator: Thank you so much.

James Jesic: Thank you, Steph.

TMcK Facilitator: I'm bringing in Jude.

CCW Chair: It should be Jude, that's right.

Jude Burditt: Hi, good evening, everyone.

CCW Chair: Good evening, Jude, welcome. For the benefit of the customers, could you please introduce yourself and what you do at Severn Trent, please.

Jude Burditt: I'm Jude Burditt, I'm Director of Customer Solutions, so it's a similar role to Steph's but I look after billing primarily, and our technology.

CCW Chair: We're grateful, thank you. We have a question being asked by Community Member 7, if can you say what area you live in, I'd be grateful.

Community Member 7: Hi Jude, I'm from Nottingham, specifically Colwick.

Jude Burditt: Hi, Community Member 7.

Community Member 7: Hi, nice to meet you. So we have a question here. It is difficult to find clear, up-to-date information about the services you offer and the support available to

your customers. This is made worse by poor user experience we face when using your website, which will be worse for vulnerable customers less able to access to these resources. What steps will you take to make access to information easier for those who need it, and how will you address issues with the website experience?

CCW Chair: Thank you, Community Member 7. Jude, for your benefit, when you respond, please be specific as possible, setting out what is already in place, what is planned, what will change as a result of this conversation, by when those changes will happen and how customers will be able to see and measure progress. Again, community members please take notes and listen very attentively. So who's leading on this, Jude or James?

James Jesic: So I'll give you a quick overview if I may, Rachel, and then Jude will cover all the specifics. So thank you for the question, Community Member 7. As you rightly say, we do have and provide a lot of support for customers, particularly those from a vulnerable perspective. Now we've actually got two aspects, we've got something that we call the Community Fund and that's like a, the best way to think about that is a charity pot of cash that community groups can apply for to then help their local communities, and we put aside £2m a year for that.

We've then got a very attractive affordability process which people can get help with their bills, and I'll let Jude cover that in a second and how we publicise it. And then we've got something called our Priority Services Register, so these are people that perhaps are in a vulnerable position, either with a particular disability in some cases or need some particular needs, and those individuals give us information so that we know in the event of a particular incident happening or perhaps they need their bills sent to them in a different style, we can provide that sort of service. So those are the three buckets that we have and I'll let Jude cover off the specific support and the stuff around the website, but acknowledging that again, we do need to improve that.

CCW Chair: Jude, just before you respond, Joe has a timer on his screen so please check that for timings. You have three and a half minutes, Jude.

Jude Burditt: Thank you, Rachel. Thank you very much for the question, Community Member 7. Vulnerable customers are really important to us, actually we have a whole team focused on vulnerability, whether that's financial vulnerability or some physical vulnerabilities. As James said, obviously we look to register people on our Priority Services Register, you can do that online, we do that when we speak to customers individually as well.

We have made some changes to our website quite recently, James mentioned earlier that we've moved across to the Kraken system, that's the system that Octopus use and in that process, we rebuilt our portal and what we identified was that the portal that we inherited as part of that purchase, wasn't quite as thorough and broad as the portal that we had previously. But we had made that decision and we've moved forward and so we've spent probably the last six months, trying to add to the capability there, trying to look at the journeys that weren't quite as slick as they used to be, we looked at the way people were logging on, that's recently changed so that we can try and increase our cybersecurity actually, that's very necessary. And we also know that some customers have had some issues where we've changed the account number, so we're fully aware that there have been some problems with our portal.

Having said that, we work really hard to a particular standard in terms of trying to make sure that for vulnerable customers, we have the right type of set-out, so for visually impaired and for all types of condition, we try to make sure that we've got the right information, in the right format. And I'm really afraid, the standard escapes me at the

moment but I know that we have met that and we continue to meet that, so we do take it really seriously.

We're really focused on the portal, the reason being that actually, the majority of our customer contact comes through that route and what I can see is that the satisfaction level with the portal, since the end of last year, has really grown and so again, we're seeing satisfaction levels in the high 70s, nearly 80%. Now I know that would suggest that 20% of our users are not as happy as they want to be and that is really our aim, to get that as high as possible, whilst not forgetting those customers that are contacting us on more traditional channels.

CCW Chair: Thank you, Jude. To the customers, you have been taking notes and we considered these things before. Do you understand what will change? Do you understand when it will be delivered? And does it go far enough? Joe, over to you to lead on this session.

TMcK Facilitator: Thank you very much, Community Member 7, as I've done with the other questions, I want to go back to you first of all and understand your take on the answer that you received there.

Community Member 7: So I do see that there is this sort of gradual improvement with the website, when I look at the website for Severn Trent last year compared to this year, I can see that there's structural changes and it's a lot more organised. I've joined the Priority Services in the past because I have lots of long term health conditions, I sort of signed up to the Priority Services Register, mostly because I was using a lot of water at one stage because I have long term health conditions that require me to use quite a lot of water.

I signed up for it and I didn't really know what next, it just kind of felt like okay, there's this register but then I couldn't find any support on the website and I have visited that page again, as of recent and I find it's definitely more organised. But I think it could do with things like being a bit more focused on the customer's problem and the solution, so I know you've got a list of things like emergency water delivery, advanced notice, doorstep security, and I tried to click on them and I think that maybe hyperlinks to these things would be really good, so that it's not someone clicking on it expecting a solution and then there's no answers, almost? I think more links to getting things solved would be really helpful.

TMcK Facilitator: So what happens when you click on that link, Community Member 7? In an ideal world, what would that link do, the water one, the delivery one, you said, for example? What would happen if you clicked on that?

Community Member 7: I think the emergency water delivery is about if your supply is interrupted and you'll get bottled water directly to your door as a priority.

TMcK Facilitator: So it would be about facilitating that or about giving you information about that?

Community Member 7: Yeah, actually click on it and then getting that process done, you know? Some sort of way to register when your water was interrupted and when you might get a delivery of that water, just direct action to the problem would be really helpful, I think.

TMcK Facilitator: Community Member 5, you had your hand up for a little bit, over to you.

Community Member 5: Obviously, as I say, before my husband used to deal with everything and I am on certain priority registers, but I don't know whether I'm on the Severn Trent one, is there some way that I can easily check that online?

TMcK Facilitator: So you want to be able to check if you are registered or not currently?

Community Member 5: Yeah.

TMcK Facilitator: Okay, that's an easy takeaway, brilliant. Community Member 6, you've got your hand up as well?

Community Member 6: I wanted to clarify, Jude, you were mentioning a lot about portal, is that for when you're logged in, if you have been moved onto the Kraken system?

Jude Burditt: Do you want me to answer you now? Is that okay?

TMcK Facilitator: Can you want to go back on that really quickly, Jude, that's okay.

Jude Burditt: So we have two portals that are live, one if you're on the old system and there's just a few thousand customers left on that, and one if you're now migrated into Kraken, which is the vast majority, and they are very similar in look and feel, you should be able to do mainly the same things on either.

Community Member 6: Thank you for clarifying that because I think when we discussed before, a lot of our issues with the website were not specifically once you're logged into your account, they're more about the general information on just the public-facing website before you login. One of the issues that we've had is about, I had this as well, was about the page that's encouraging you to sign up for a smart meter and then you actually can't unless you're in the right area, but it took me contacting customer services to figure that out.

TMcK Facilitator: What's the solution from your perspective there, Community Member 6?

Community Member 6: I'd like maybe some more user testing of some of the pages, to make sure that it's clear and that customers are finding the right information. I think also that might cut down on some of the customer service queries, if people can answer their own questions. I'm particularly interested in the affordability schemes that are offered and there is a really good decision tool for helping people see what they're eligible for, but you have to go about it in a very specific way to find that. If you go on the Help & Support main menu, it has a "Help paying your bill" and then it has a list of all the different schemes and the list of schemes is really overwhelming with all the different things.

So I would like the decision making, support finder tool for that to be made kind of front and central so that it's much clearer for people, it's a great tool, it's just quite hard to find and loads of people on our panel were eligible for support but they'd never heard of any of the schemes and the website was too hard to find what they might qualify for.

TMcK Facilitator: So something that makes that process a bit more simple, effectively and to see what you are eligible for online. Who else wants to jump in here? I'm looking at the more quiet people on the group so far, Community Member 3, Community Member 9, I don't know if you want to jump in on this at all, Community Member 4, Community Member 10?

Community Member 3: I personally haven't really had any sort of particular issues that I've needed the service for so I don't have a lot to say on it.

Community Member 10: I'm the same, I've not experienced that myself so I don't have much to say on that topic.

Community Member 9: Most of the issues I've had, being notified of the potential for an interruption to service or a damaged water quality that I've never then encountered, and sat there going, "Oh, okay." So thank you for not having ... yeah.

Community Member 3: Thanks for the water!

TMcK Facilitator: Anything else to add on this one before we move on? Community Member 7, you've got your hand up again?

Community Member 7: I just wanted to say, sort of touching on what we said with the previous questions about people finding it difficult to report issues on the website, for things like leaks or billing issues and things like that, I think maybe for people who are more vulnerable and might struggle to approach you, perhaps if there could be clearer sort of what to do guides on the website, that are very direct, easy to find and also just very straightforward, email, phone number, contact details for specific groups, possibly if those groups could be dedicated to people that are vulnerable and if those people can be trained to understand those types of special needs and scenarios, I think that would be really helpful.

Community Member 9: Can I just chip in, thinking about that? I teach at a university and sometimes it even works, but we've got this whole DSA thing where people have identified with the conditions that might require consideration or attention, are sort of pre-acknowledged and stored, which might actually streamline the process because if you're in a position that you have to reiterate who you are and demonstrate and prove, it can be really frustrating, and very problematic. Whereas if you were sort of, I hate to say it but it's almost like getting your loan approved before you buy your car kind of advert, but here it's a "Hi, it's me, I'm letting you know I have a problem and I'm on your register" and then they have that kind of front of the queue approach, or specialist immediately.

Community Member 7: Yeah, that's a really good idea, I think.

TMcK Facilitator: Let's have a look at what we've written so far, I think the guys will be catching up a little bit but that is okay, no pressure for them.

[Shares screen]

Just for the sake of time, I want to show the five things that we've highlighted here. So looking for straightforward guidance on support offered with the Priority Service Register, make benefits customer focused, incorporate hyperlinks, accessible language and things, so Community Member 7, that was your point about being able to access specific things, click on stuff that you read when you're looking at it.

Continuing to improve user experience, delivering a more personalised user service on the portal, particularly in dealing with support and service disruption issues. Make it extremely easy to know if registered with PSR, dedicated a web page or some way to look to see if you're registered as a customer or not, and make affordability scheme support page simpler to navigate, limit number of links on page.

So you're looking for a bit of clarity overall and the ability to access more information where required, some of that with a slightly cleaner user experience fundamentally but I want to make sure we've captured your thoughts in this section, if there's anything we've missed, please put your hand up and let us know. Community Member 6, you can go first.

Community Member 6: I just want to clarify for E¹³, I think that was the point I raised and I'm not sure I made it clear enough, I think the main problem is not about the number of links on the page, it's that on the menu, there's a dropdown and it lists about seven different schemes and unless you click on "Help with paying my bill", then you have to look at each scheme individually and it doesn't direct you necessarily to the support finding tool. So I want to just try and clarify that a little bit.

¹³ Make affordability scheme support page simpler to navigate – the support assessment tool should be presented front and centre, prompting customers to consider their own eligibility.

TMcK Facilitator: So it's about helping you find the right place initially rather than ...?

James Jesic: If I may, Joe, Community Member 6, as I took your action, what I wrote down on my page, I thought you articulated it really well actually, so your point was move the assessment tool to the upfront piece, it doesn't really matter what the schemes available are was your point. It's the fact that the assessment tool will make that decision for you and send you to the right point in the web page, that's what I took from what you said, is that fair?

Community Member 6: Yeah, thank you, if I could just illustrate that so for example, my grandmother who's recently passed, was eligible for Water Sure. It would never have occurred to my parents to click on "Help pay the bill" because – they were her carers and lived with her – because they can pay their bill, but she was still eligible for that support. So the one place that has the support finding tool, people may think "I can pay my bill, I'm not in debt", but they do still need that help and it could be more accessible for them.

James Jesic: Yeah, I thought it was a really good point, thank you.

TMcK Facilitator: That's great, thank you. Any other points we want to raise about what we've got here? Community Member 7?

Community Member 7: So this is not something I've experienced but there were some people in the group that raised concerns about poor communication during service disruptions and things like that ... I don't know what type of modality could be best for something like that, in my head, something that comes up is text notifications, sort of subject to the area that you're in, if you know a customer's in that area. But the question is, would you consider improving how customers are informed during outages and incidences? And in the theme of vulnerable people, make that as easy as you can for them to get.

TMcK Facilitator: So more kind of proactivity on that?

Community Member 7: Yeah.

James Jesic: I also think that's a really fair action, Community Member 7, you're right, there is a text message service, one of the problems that we have is not all customers like us to have their phone number to text them, which is people's own choice. But there's definitely more that we can do in that space, we're actually looking at communication during incidents, this month we're going to have a big session on how we improve that going forward so I think it's a really good shout.

Community Member 7: It could be something on your app, like an area ...

James Jesic: We haven't got an app at the moment, we've got a portals, there's a web portal but we don't have an app so at some point, we will look at whether we have an app as well. That's not something we're committed to, we need to look at the cost and what the appetite might be but I think it's a fair shout.

TMcK Facilitator: Community Member 8, I think you had your hand up briefly?

Community Member 8: It's linking in a little bit with what Community Member 7 said but also just going back to, I mean there's been a lot of talk about the website and about making that easier, thinking about the website and thinking about potentially customers who might need some help etc., I don't know that the website is the most feasible way for some of those customers to be accessing that help. So I just wondered if, it's just going round in my head, just brainstorming a little bit, I'm just wondering if there could even be

something that goes out with bills to say, “Are you eligible for such and such?” and just a bit of information in that way. My parents are 79 and 81, it would never, ever occur to them to go onto a website to see if they could potentially get any help, I didn’t even know this was available – because it doesn’t apply to me, I wouldn’t necessarily think about it and I just think something they would notice, that wasn’t necessarily – and they’re pretty savvy on computers compared to a lot of people their age, don’t get me wrong, but it wouldn’t occur to them to go on. So I just wonder if there’s lots of ways that have been mentioned to make the website better but I do wonder if this needs to be advertised a little bit more widely than that, as well.

TMcK Facilitator: That’s a great point, Community Member 8, we’ll try and capture that within what we’ve got here. Thank you so much, Rachel, I’ll go back to you to finish off, we’ve got 11 minutes or so.

CCW Chair: Thank you, Joe, just an opportunity for James or Jude to make any comments about what we can see from A to F, you’ve mentioned some of those things as new points have been introduced, James, but anything else you would like to say? Are they fair actions? Are they feasible to work towards and timescales, please?

James Jesic: First of all, a really, really useful session and I think the direct feedback from people on the usability of the website in particular has been invaluable and definitely something we will work on. I think the points, particularly Community Member 7 and Community Member 6 made around the specificity of the website, making it clearer but also this eligibility tool I think is really good feedback, and we will take that on board. I don’t want to commit to an action because Jude will understand the timescales of moving this stuff far better than I will, as our resident tech expert, so that’s really good.

On the PSR and affordability, that’s something we do actually monitor as well and I’ll let Jude just give a bit more colour onto those.

Jude Burditt: So fundamentally, most of the things you’ve asked for, these are really good things, really happy and I think there are many things that we can begin to make happen. If I take the first one, just to try and hopefully make you feel a little bit more comfortable, Community Member 8, around making awareness for either the Priority Services Register or the affordability support more available, we do do quite a lot in that space, so actually we do quite a lot in that space, so actually with every bill that’s just gone out for this recent bill season and we’ve given information around affordability support, so we have something called The Big Difference Scheme, Water Sure and a whole range of financial support, so those are mentioned on the physical bills, on the electronic bills and obviously links on our website.

But what we also do around affordability and specifically is we’re out in the community quite a lot, this is something that we’re super-proud of and just in this last financial year, we’ve allocated a further £25m to The Big Difference Scheme and sometimes, that’s where we automatically approach customers that we believe are in some kind of financial detriment and sometimes it’s where we’re in amongst them and we’re talking through the schemes.

So we do that in a range of ways and of course, finally on affordability, you can absolutely call in. So if you’re not a website user, many of the conversations and in fact all of the affordability support conversations end in a telephone conversation at the moment, and we can’t complete online. So we really do try hard to make sure that anybody who can’t afford their bill gets the help that they can from us.

In terms of continuing to improve the user experience of the portal, that is 100% our team’s aim. I can promise you that week on week, month on month, we’re making small changes

to the portal to make it better, we have a really great dedicated team in that space and I'm confident that we'll do that. It's been really great to hear feedback about, I'm going to describe it as perhaps some of our vulnerable customers but also our neurodiverse customers, and I'll make sure that we extend our research on that and see what we can do to adopt more of the right practices. I think that's probably C¹⁴ as well as B¹⁵.

In terms of PSR, again you can certainly read about the PSR online. In order to check whether you are registered, you need to be logged on because it's a kind of GDPR thing, actually there's quite a lot of sensitivity about some of the categories of PSR, so you'd have to be logged on or just go through Data Protection when you ring up and speak to us and we'll be able to tell you. At any time, if somebody feels that they have a condition or a concern that might be something to be included on the PSR, then that's a conversation that we're regularly having with customers, so they'll often tell us or something or we'll hear something that allows us to think there might be a challenge there, and then we'll adopt people onto the PSR register.

And then there's a new guaranteed service standard which means we are obligated to let those people who have been adopted onto the register, know, and so they'll get a communication straightaway.

One thing came up I think in discussion and that was around making sure in the event of a problem, that we did get bottled water to people. So just to reassure you, once you're on the Priority Service Register, if you're on that for something, say for kidney care or for dialysis, if there's an outage in your area, you don't need to tell us anything, we will come to you with that water, that's our commitment. If you're off water in the area and you don't have those conditions, then we would, after a certain length of time, we would make sure water was available nearby to you. But if you have a medical condition that you're dependent on water, then it will be our job to get to you, once we're notified of that, then that's what we would make happen for sure, and we take that really seriously in any incident. Our Number 1 group of people are our Priority Service Register participants.

Affordability scheme, so the great news about the affordability scheme is it is on Stage 2 actually, so last year, if you'd have used it, you'd have had to login to each type of offering and put all your details in to know whether you qualify, and if that was a no then you'd have to go onto the next one, and we've changed that login screen now, so you put one set of information in and then it suggests to you which is the most appropriate type of usage.

I definitely take the point Community Member 6, that we could do even more to make that front and centre and we will take that action, that should be relatively easy for us to commit to and as a result, hopefully we'll get more people registered for that.

We will have a Phase 3 on our affordability portal and that will be around making sure that you can both start and complete your application online. We know for some of our customers, actually completing our application in a discreet way is really important to them and they're actually put off when it gets to the point where they maybe need to speak to someone personally, so we're just working on that at the moment and that will be with us by the end of the year, so it will be another enhancement to the portal. But I'll certainly go back and make sure that we are highlighting affordability support earlier on, on our main website where it is also, but also if you're logged in as a user.

¹⁴ Delivering a more personalised user service on the portal – particularly in dealing with support and service disruption issues

¹⁵ Continuing to improve the user experience on the portal

CCW Chair: Thank you. Jude, we have three minutes left for the session and I really want to keep to time. If you want to say something in relation to Action F¹⁶, do so but I think we've heard quite a bit.

Jude Burditt: I think James covered that, we definitely do get a text message out and we happily message people if we've got their details.

CCW Chair: Indeed. Can we agree, six months for these actions to be completed? Looking at James and Jude? Is that realistic?

Jude Burditt: Some of the portal ones are not realistic because we have to do some additional work on there. B is done, that's happening all the time. Personalised use, I would like to take away actually, C, I think there's a real opportunity for us, we talked about pods earlier and dedicated service, I'd like us to take away and have a look at maybe we could have a vulnerability pod, so that customers that identify themselves as vulnerable, we could route into a group of people who had greater training, greater empathy with the needs of those groups, but that might take six months in order to [inaudible] that.

CCW Chair: Let's say except for I think B, the rest potentially could be as six-month delivery, is that fair?

Jude Burditt: Yes, I think so, hyperlinks should all be fine, yeah.

CCW Chair: Thank you. Customers, anything to say on the company response?

Community Member 10: I think everything's been really clear.

CCW Chair: Good, thank you. We've now come to a close, we've got actions formed for the very last question so thank you to all. I do need to read out some next steps, before I do that, Joe, is there any last comments you would like to make?

TMcK Facilitator: No, just thank you so much to everyone for taking part and thank you to the guys at Severn Trent as well for your engagement, it's been good.

CCW Chair: Excellent, so we've covered a number of important themes and we've agreed a set of clear actions in response to the issues raised by customers. These actions have been captured as you've seen during the live session, and will form the basis of the actions to be delivered by the company. A full transcript of the session will be published on the CCW website within five working days, that's 16th March. Before publication, an early draft will be shared with participants so you can review it and raise any concerns relating to personal comments. A plain English summary will be published within 10 working days and that's by the 23rd March.

Severn Trent Water will also publish its action plan within 28 days, setting out how it will deliver the commitments agreed tonight, by the 16th April. Customers will then be asked whether that action plan accurately reflects what has been agreed and CCW will monitor progress and report publicly on delivery. The process is designed to ensure transparency and follow through, not just discussion.

Finally, can I thank everybody for your time, thought, to James and your senior leadership team, your honesty, that's really appreciated and we're really grateful for you being here. We've come to the end of the session, thank you so much.

Community Members: Thank you very much indeed, everybody. [All]

¹⁶ Improved communication means during outages and incidents e.g. postcode-level text messages

CCW Chair: Enjoy your evening, bye bye.

[CLOSE]

CCW

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