



## **SSC WRMP customer and stakeholder research for the Water Resources Management Plan**

### **Methodology**

#### **1. Overview**

In July and August 2017 SSC commissioned a comprehensive programme of qualitative and quantitative engagement with a broad range of its customers and stakeholders, the findings of which will be used to inform the WRMP and business plan. The research consisted of three elements in both South Staffs and Cambridge:

- 1) Two phase deliberative workshops with household, non-household SME's and future customers.
- 2) Roundtables with stakeholders and large business customers.
- 3) An online survey with household customers.

Customer Panel feedback was sought and taken on board throughout the project at various stages:

- Input into the design of the initial workshops.
- Input into the design of the second stage workshops.
- Following direct observation of some workshops.
- Specific drafting points within the online survey.

Wherever feasible, feedback from the customer panel was incorporated. Where not possible, the reasons for this were discussed and explained. A report covering all Customer Panel feedback and questions was produced, providing a full audit trail of all such input.

#### **2. Deliberative workshops with customers**

Full day workshops were held, each with around 30 customers, in both Walsall and Cambridge in early July, and participants were reconvened to half day workshops three weeks later. At each workshop customers were split into four tables:

- Two tables with household customers.
- One table with non-household customers.
- One table with future customers (i.e. younger people who were not yet bill payers but who lived in the area.)

A broad range of customer types were purposively recruited to attend the workshops. Targets were agreed and worked to in terms of socio-demographics that broadly matched the make-up of the local areas. Workshops also included customers in

vulnerable circumstances (e.g. people with disabilities or people on lower incomes). A full breakdown of the demographics of attendees can be found in the full report.

A deliberative (informed dialogue) approach was taken, which provided participants with the information and time to build their knowledge and understanding of the issues and enable them to come to a considered viewpoint. This approach enables participants to give their unprompted spontaneous views initially, then explores how and where views shifted when provided with further information.

The workshops followed an agenda and comprised a mix of plenary sessions, table discussions, and individual and group exercises. The sessions were led from the front by Community Research, and each table was moderated by an independent facilitator from Community Research. Feedback from the tables was also shared with the room in order that customers heard different viewpoints. Information was provided via presentations, animations, quizzes and handouts, largely developed by Community Research based on information provided by SSC. A full set of materials accompanies this document.

The workshops in each region followed the same format, with materials adapted to reflect the different areas.

The first workshop aimed to explore customers' views on core WRMP components and consisted of:

- Spontaneous discussion and voting to understand key priorities for customers.
- Spontaneous and informed discussion and voting on metering, leakage, customer restrictions and water efficiency.
- Initial discussions around resilience, environment and options for the future.

At this session, participants had handheld voting devices to allow for live voting around customer priorities and views on different issues.

The second workshop was intended to inform SSC's strategic investment options by testing views on the options and co-creating the solution to SSC's strategic challenges. It consisted of:

- Discussion and voting exploring response to each of the demand management and supply side options.\*
- A 'Top Trumps' exercise, whereby participants were tasked with developing their own plans from the options discussed, with a target volume of water to achieve and budget within which to do this.
  - They were also provided with asset management options to include in their plans at this stage.

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\* To keep the exercise manageable, nine (South Staffs) / ten (Cambridge) options, amalgamated and simplified versions of SSC's whole suite of investment options, were introduced.

At the reconvened sessions, in addition to the core project team, subject matter experts from SSC were available to answer questions from participants about the different options.

Data from the sessions was captured via audio recording, facilitator notes, individual worksheets, flip charts and key pad voting. Additionally two of the four workshops were filmed and one was visually minuted.

### **3. Roundtables with stakeholders and large businesses**

In early August, half-day roundtables were held in Walsall and Cambridge, each with 11 participants made up of representatives from a range of stakeholder and large business organisations. A full list of these organisations can be found in the main report. The session was split into two group discussions, each facilitated by moderators from Community Research.

Reflecting the higher levels of engagement and knowledge of the subject matter these participants had, these roundtables were much shorter in length than the customer workshops. These sessions largely followed the same format as the reconvened workshops, with participants also tasked with putting together their own plans.

### **4. Quantitative survey with customers**

Later in August, a 15-minute online survey was conducted with 305 customers in the South Staffordshire region and 207 customers in Cambridge. The purpose of this quantitative exercise was to provide a robust measure of the spontaneous views coming out of the customer workshops. An online survey (as opposed to a telephone survey) was chosen as the best approach as images could be shown on screen.

As it was not possible to use SSC's own customer lists, sample for the survey came from a research panel (Research Now's Valued Opinion Panel). It was not possible to achieve quotas exactly to match the demographics in each region and so final data was weighted to reflect these.

The questionnaire was designed to replicate the main topic areas from the qualitative research and covered:

- Customer priorities.
- Views on metering, leakage, customer restrictions and water efficiency (where possible matching the voting questions from the workshops.)
- Attitudes towards the different investment options (pared down to six in Cambridge and seven in South Staffs.)
- (In South Staffs only) preferred treatment works option.

In addition to comprehensive testing by staff at both Community Research and SSC, the online survey was subject to a cognitive pilot with 5 customers, to ensure that it was clear, comprehensible and user-friendly. The recruited customers (2 from Cambridge and 3 from South Staffs) filled in the draft online survey and then took part in a

telephone interview to run through their views about how easy or difficult they had found it to complete. Following the pilot some changes and adaptations were made prior to a 'soft launch'. After the first 50 completed responses, data was checked before proceeding to a full survey roll out.

## **5. Analysed data**

The research generated a considerable amount of data that has been analysed to inform the final research report:

- Workshops
  - Comprehensive facilitator notes and quotes based on audio recordings.
  - Key pad voting from first sessions.
  - Individual voting on options.
  - Final plans.
  - Evaluation questionnaires.
- Roundtables
  - Comprehensive facilitator notes and quotes based on audio recordings.
  - Key pad voting from first sessions.
  - Individual voting on options.
  - Final plans.
- Survey
  - Data tables.
  - Verbatim responses to open-ended questions.