

**South Staffs Water
CCG 2012 Research Task Group
Teleconference, Thursday, 21st June 2012**

Participants:

Barbara Julye	BJ	SSW
Matt Lewis	ML	SSW
Rachel Barber	RB	SSW
Colin Greatorex	CG	Lichfield District Council
Christina Blackwell	CB	CCWater

Apologies:

Alison Cotton	Beechdale Housing
Ray White	CAB Walsall

1. Introductions

The Head of Customer Engagement (BJ) welcomed participants to the conference call and outlined the purpose which was to evaluate the proposals submitted by Blue Marble, MVA and Accent and agree which company should be contracted to conduct SSW's surveys for this year.

All agreed they had received a copy of the brief that was circulated to the consultant companies, an agenda and also copies of the submitted proposals.

BJ also explained that calls at SSW are recorded for training purposes, but those present will be reimbursed for this call that is charged at the local rate.

2. Evaluation of Proposals

2.1 MVA Positives

- This proposal went into the greatest detail of the three. It incorporated a number of options on research methods, including a mixture of quantitative and qualitative, the use of show cards and proposed online and face to face surveys.
- The proposal recognised the fact that there may be a need for different questions for business and domestic customers.
- The topics covered were more wide ranging than those proposed by the other consultants, including water quality and hardness, pressure and customer operational account management.
- MVA had also considered how the research would be combined into SSW's overall customer engagement programme, social tariffs, willingness to pay (which could be used to support next year's research on this), and the whole of the PR14 process.
- The quote is a fixed price.

2.2 MVA Concerns

- Members agreed that without telephone surveys, it may be difficult to encompass “hard to reach” customers and therefore, this may need further discussion with the consultancy.
- The use of email addresses supplied by SSW may be an issue, particularly as much of this data relates to unmetered customers.
- Due to the response rates to online surveys, the volume of surveys sent out in order to receive 400 replies may have to be much greater than face to face or telephone requests.

2.3 Blue Marble and Accent

- Blue Marble had suggested that there was no requirement for visual stimuli during the surveys, but members felt that some of the topics to be covered may be difficult to explain without such props.
- Blue Marble and Accent were very similar, both in numbers of household surveys and survey methods.
- Accent is experienced in the water industry, however, as a company, SSW has positive experiences with both Accent and MVA.

2.4

As MVA was the preferred option for all members, it was agreed that this consultancy should be invited to carry out the research.

3. Any Other Business

It was suggested that there may be some other water companies willing to share information and experience of customer engagement. As CCWater would be holding a water roundtable event in September to discuss wider customer engagement, the feedback from this event could be further considered at the September CCG meeting, by which time the current research should be underway. CCWater is also due to publish research over the coming months, which could be used for comparison.

4. Actions

1) BJ to write Terms of Reference for this task group ready for next week’s meeting. **Completed**

2) CB and CG to send feedback on the proposals to BJ. **Completed**

3) BJ to speak to MVA as soon as possible to confirm their availability to meet with us to discuss and agree the questions and the methodology in detail. **Completed**

4) BJ to email those present with the times and available dates for next session. A unanimous decision was made to meet face to face rather than through teleconference. **Completed**

5) Recommendations to be passed to the wider CCG group by 5th July, 2012.

Completed

6) BJ to feedback to the other agencies on their non-selection. **Completed**