RETAIL ENERGY CODE

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REC CHANGE ISSUES GROUP
I0189 EXTRAORDINARY CHANGE ISSUES GROUP MEETING MINUTES

MEETING	**RECCHIG_24_18901**
DATE	**20 November 2024, 10:00**
LOCATION	**By teleconference**

Presenter	Representing	Initials	Role
Caroline Freimuller	REC Code Manager	CF	ChairChair/Lead Change Analyst
Anton Moden	REC Code Manager	AM	Performance Assurance Lead
Glenn Sheern	REC Code Manager	GS	Subject Matter Expert
Nathan Chaplow	REC Code Manager	NC	Performance Assurance Expert
Harry Firth	REC Code Manager	HF	Secretariat

Full attendee list available upon request.

1. INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed attendees to the REC Change Issues Group (CIG) Extraordinary I0189 meeting.

2. CONFIRMATION OF AGENDA

The Chair invited any additional items of business for consideration during the meeting, but no items were raised.

3. I0189 – VOICE OF THE CONSUMER

AM and NC provided an overview of the issue to attendees. NC outlined how the Code Manager currently uses the Smart Meter Installation Survey (SMIS) and other Consumer feedback to help assess to what extent the REC Mission Statement is being met as well as protecting Consumer interests and driving continuous improvement within the Code. NC advised of how the SMIS is currently used by DESNZ to monitor and improve customer experiences with smart meter installations. NC noted that this current level of Consumer data is limited and represents just one area of the overall Consumer experience.

AM presented 3 potential options for developing the voice of the Consumer to attendees.

Option 1: Update the SMIS, addressing issues with the questions:

AM advised that this option would involve reviewing and revising existing questions and analysing response data to ensure that the SMIS is clear and effective.

Option 2: Replace the SMIS with a broader metering survey and a switching survey:

AM advised that this new metering survey would provide a more comprehensive evaluation of customer satisfaction than SMIS currently does. AM advised that a switching survey would offer specific reasons into customer reasons for changing providers and highlight where current systems and processes could be improved.

Option 3: Centralise the survey, with RECCo driving this directly as a collective body:

AM advised that a more centralised approach led by RECCo would lead to standardised data collection to help pinpoint improvement areas tailored to REC needs.

AM asked attendees to provide feedback on the above options or to provide alternate solutions.

Attendees generally advised that they felt Option 3 could be the most efficient solution, noting that Suppliers currently have to procure individual parties to carry out the SMIS.

Attendees advised that the rollout of a centralised survey would be key to avoid a drop in customer engagement, noting that customers are already asked to complete a lot of surveys to help measure consumer satisfaction. AM responded that as part of the design process, the cadence and frequency of a centralised survey would need to be discussed further.

A Supplier representative noted that the SMIS is different for domestic and microbusiness customers, so any change to surveys would need to reflect the different types of Consumers.

A Supplier representative advised that currently some Suppliers fall below the quarterly SMIS threshold and a centralised survey would allow for increased data collection across all parties. They added that work will need to be done to ensure that a centralised survey targets the correct customers to ensure the quality of individual Consumer data does not decrease.

A Supplier representative queried whether the metering and switching surveys in Option 2 would be separate. The Chair confirmed this and added that a switching survey could work similarly to the SMIS, where customers who have switched to an individual Supplier during a set period of time will be surveyed.

A Distribution Network Operator representative queried whether a broader metering survey would be appropriate, noting the wide range of customer interactions in the metering process.

A Supplier representative that a broader metering survey would be useful, particularly in non-domestic sectors where smart metering is less prevalent.

A Citizens Advice representative advised that a broader metering survey would align with current customer engagement trends, adding that Citizens Advice are receiving more enquiries about ongoing metering issues and less enquiries on issues regarding metering instalment

which is covered by the existing SMIS. They also advised that Citizens Advice would be in support of a switching survey, noting that switching numbers are currently on the rise.

A Citizens Advice representative advised that REC working closely with SEC and other Energy Codes on smart metering could allow for greater efficiency and transparency for dealing with consumer issues.

A REC Code Manager representative advised that for Option A, it would be beneficial to reach out to various stakeholders including Consumer groups for feedback as part of a potential SMIS review.

The Chair invited attendees to vote on a poll for their preferred solution out of the above 3 options. Out of 9 responses, 6 preferred Option C, 2 preferred Option A and 1 preferred Option B.

A Supplier representative asked what information gathered from the SMIS is used for, whether this would change with the proposed centralised survey, and whether said information is collected elsewhere. They noted the Consumer engagement data already collected by Ofgem and Citizens Advice. AM responded that this survey would help to quantify the voice of the Consumer over several key areas and noted the large number of customers under REC parties.

AM advised that the Code Manager had identified 5 possible measurable outcomes to the survey that are within the scope of the REC, to allow for a more-rounded view of Consumer sentiment on current processes.

- Prepayment top ups, vend accuracy and data quality
- Safe conduct of meter works
- Customers can switch rapidly, and issues with switches are resolved rapidly
- Maintenance of accurate meter data, shared with retail participants
- Manage exits/ Supplier of Last Resorts.

The Chair asked attendees to provide feedback on the above outcomes or to provide additional areas of focus.

A Supplier representative advised that additional area of focus for the survey could include change of tenancy, energy theft and third-party intermediaries (TPIs), noting the latter is the subject of live changes within the REC. AM agreed with the inclusion of TPIs, subject to said live changes being implemented.

A Citizens Advice representative advised that more could be captured on ongoing metering issues for Consumers, such as in-home display faults. AM advised that this would be out of scope for REC. They added that the SMIS is governed by DESNZ, and the Code Manager will have to engage with DESNZ over any changes to the SMIS. AM advised that discussions can be held with DESNZ over how Consumer data on ongoing metering issues is currently captured, and how this information can be improved or used with greater efficiency outside of the REC.

A Citizens Advice representative noted the inclusion of prepayment meters within the outcomes and stressed the importance of engaging with vulnerable consumers.

A RECCo representative suggested that Safe Isolation Providers (SIPs) should be included as a measurable outcome. AM responded that they believed this is partially captured as part of the Safe Conduct of meter works outcomes but agreed that information on SIPs could be drawn out more.

NC provided an overview to attendees of how this survey will be used, highlighting six key areas:

- Identifying Consumer Needs and Expectations – providing valuable insights into consumer needs regarding the REC
- Driving Stakeholder Engagement – helping to facilitate discussion and collaboration to gather diverse perspectives
- Monitor Performance – the regular collection and analysis of data to help identify trends within party performance and address declining performance.
- Enhancing Customer Experience – a consumer-centric approach will help to align improvements with their needs.
- Informing Policy and Process Change – Survey can inform the continuous refinement of processes to enhance effectiveness and efficiency.
- Demonstrating Accountability and Transparency – By collecting and analysing consumer feedback, the Code Manager are actively listening and acting on Consumer voices to improve the REC.

A Supplier representative queried whether a centralised survey to establish a rank on Suppliers is the best use of resources, noting the similar information already collected by various other organisations. AM responded that separate to this issue, the REC have already committed to establishing an independent league table of Suppliers and other parties. They added that the survey will be expected to inform all areas of the REC, with a particular focus on informing policy changes.

AM advised that monitoring performance will be informed by this survey as a secondary outcome but added that key context such as customer base are included in this process. A Supplier representative asked what areas are considered fundamental and standardised across Suppliers. AM responded that the REC has focused on introducing processes on various areas of the Consumer journey which can make it difficult to mandate minimum expectations for Consumers as these processes are nuanced to different customer types. They added that an alternate solution to the Voice of the Consumer issue would be to go through each of these processes and set minimum expectations, but this would be an extensive exercise. AM added that the survey would help to identify which processes need to be changed and prioritised, allowing for a more targeted approach to help with Consumer concerns.

Next Steps

The Chair and AM advised that Option C appears to be the preferred option amongst attendees, the Code Manager will work on developing this solution further and will communicate any updates with all stakeholders. The Code Manager committed to establishing an on-going Working Group to allow stakeholders to feed into solution development. AM added that a future Workgroup meeting will focus on some of the concerns raised regarding a centralised survey and working to resolve these issues, including more detail on how this survey would be utilised.

4. AOB

The Chair invited attendees to provide AOB. None was raised and the meeting was closed.