

Advisory Board meeting

2 April 2019

Notes

We held an Advisory Board meeting on 2 April 2019.

Present were Jakki Phillips (customer representative), and from People's Energy: David Pike (Chief Executive Officer), Karin Sode (Chief People Officer) and Kenny McIntosh (Chief Financial Officer). Erin Robertson (2019 employee representative) was absent from the meeting.

Former Advisory Board Members Nicola Megaw (legal specialist), Jaume Ferras Santin (marketing specialist), Peter Lederer (Chair), David Howe (technology specialist) were not present at the April meeting. It has been mutually agreed that the focus of the meetings should alter, creating more space for exploring what members and staff want and need, through our member and staff representatives. Additionally, in each meeting we will focus on specific areas of innovation and development. To that end, selected industry experts will be invited to pertinent meetings, to draw on their knowledge on specific topics such as renewable energy, social housing challenges, fuel poverty issues, information technology (e.g. in relation to Smart Meters), and business development strategy. For that reason, it has been mutually agreed that the former Advisory Board members, except the customer member and staff representatives, should permanently stand down.

TOPICS DISCUSSED

What do our Members want?

The focus of the meeting centered around initiatives required to better understand the wants and needs of our Members in order to improve customer service. These include looking at ways to increase communication which address and/ or avoid customer concerns/complaints and to host further webinars following up on the one in January (with a wider audience). Jakki was also keen to introduce a focus group, a Members' newsletter and more events like the Earth Hour event held on 30 March 2019, attended by some of our employees. Also discussed was the need for Member surveys to gauge the sentiment generally, but in particular prior to the next webinar so that we can target and address the areas that are of most concern during the event.

Overview from the Directors

We are investigating suitable CRM systems as opposed to email as a way of communicating more effectively and efficiently with Members, as the volume of email traffic and the complexities of communications mean that email is no longer a suitable medium. Finding a suitable CRM is taking some time as we need one that can specifically integrate with our energy industry software.

Having listened to feedback from Members we are in the process of revising and re-designing our website to bring a fresher more professional look, and to ensure information is easier to find and more readily available.

We are working on the introduction of Smart Meters and have engaged a Project Manager for the roll out, and an IT Systems Developer who will write an app ahead of our first trial in June.

Finance Update

We are coming out of the Winter period and into the Summer when we expect prices to be more favorable and finances more stable. Winters are tougher for all energy suppliers since customers pay a flat direct debit rate throughout the year but use a lot more energy during the colder and darker months, therefore some companies have gone under during the winter months. People's Energy are delighted to be in a sustainable position at this point. We are in a different position to those companies that have gone under, primarily given our trading relationship with a wholesale supplier that allows us to buy energy ahead of time and that way fix our cost and be less vulnerable to price fluctuations. To ensure we have a buffer for next Winter, and to be able to fulfil our promise to our members of returning profits, even if only small ones, in 2020, we are doing some careful analyses and modelling to establish the growth numbers and tariffs required to remain a stable business going forward. Part of this involves reviewing our tariffs on an ongoing basis. We currently (at the time of the meeting – this has since changed) have both a fixed tariff (with two months payment upfront) and a variable tariff. Jakki expressed concern that the fixed tariff, which is the cheaper of our two tariffs, is not fair as the two months payments upfront makes it available only to those that could afford these two payments in one go. We committed to altering the tariff or potentially pulling it from the market shortly. (Update 23/4/19: We have now pulled this tariff and are instead providing a fixed tariff with no upfront payment).

Member & Staff Engagement

On behalf of Members, Jakki discussed some of the feedback she had received. Some members are very happy with their service, but there are also several complaints that have been raised with Jakki.

Karin explained that our quick growth led to a substantial increase in emails and telephone calls. We increased staffing levels to accommodate, but in the crossover period the quality of service dipped as the new Membership Support Consultants needed training and coaching before being able to fully engage with Members. Karin highlighted that we are fully aware that the service has been less than we would want it to be over the past couple of months and that we are fully dedicated to changing that. In fact, the service levels are improving rapidly. To ease the back-log and limit inconvenience to Members we temporarily appointed the services of a secondary Help Desk team based out of Glasgow. We are now in a much more stable position with more Membership Support Consultants on the floor and have therefore brought all services back in house.

Some Members had raised issues with accessing the online portal. David confirmed the issue had now been resolved, and that Members can now easily request a new password online if it has expired by the time they seek to access the portal.

We have also increased training across both the Member Support team and the Success team. Additionally, we will actively be looking to acquire as much feedback from Members as possible - both positive and negative - and take corrective action to improve the levels of service in the areas that most require it before it reaches the complaint stage.

We appointed an IT Systems Developer Lead at the end of March and have a new Regulations and Compliance Manager joining at the end of April. We are currently interviewing for additional senior roles, including an Operations Manager and Partnership Manager.

Next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 4 June 2019