
Minutes

Agenda item 4

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Date: 23 July 2019

Minutes of a meeting of the London TravelWatch Governance Committee held at 5-11 Lavington Street, London SE1 0NZ on 14 May 2019, 10:30 – 13.30 hrs

Present:

Members

Arthur Leathley (AL)	Chair, London TravelWatch
Alan Benson (AB)	
Jackie Ballard (JB)	
Safia Iman (SI)	
Karen Mcarthur (KM)	
Laura Osborne (LO)	

Secretariat

Tim Bellenger (TB)	Director of Policy & Investigation
Gytha Chinweze (GC)	Governance Officer
Richard F-Clough (RF-C)	Operations & Communications Manager (item 6)
Susan James (SJ)	Casework Manager (item 6)
Joanna Simons (JS)	Interim Chief Executive

Paul Clark (PC)	Senior Statutory Auditor, BDO LLP (item 7)
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1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Abdi Osman.

AL welcomed Joanna Simons to her first meeting as Interim Chief Executive. She said that she was pleased to be here. She explained that the format of the meeting remained the same but she was interested in the views of members as to how to do things in the future.

2 Minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2019

The minutes were agreed and signed as a correct record.

3 Matters arising

These were noted.

4 **Notes from the Chairs' Group held on 5 March 2019**

These were noted. TB informed members that the item on the Sandilands tram investigation will be dropped from the agenda for the Policy Committee meeting on 11 June because of sensitivities around a potential coroner's inquest. The safety item will focus on the Lewisham stranded trains recommendations. Network Rail and Southern have been invited to give presentations.

TB asked members how they had got on with the transport experience day he had arranged for them as part of their induction. Some members were yet to complete this. AL said that if their itinerary did not work for them they could arrange their own or speak to TB about it.

Members asked for the notes of the Chairs' Group meetings to be sent to them as soon as they were cleared by the Chair, to keep them abreast of what is happening. Members were reminded that they were welcome to attend these meetings, if they were available.

Action: GC

5 **Interim Chief Executive's report**

JS updated members on general matters, the business plan and its interplay with the budget, the annual accounts and audit, the Rail Passenger Ombudsman scheme, the accounts, GDPR and conflicts of interest.

JS said that the reports for this meeting had been produced well and on time. She said that there was potential to streamline some of the information as there was a lot of monitoring information. She informed members that the performance report had been prepared as a draft to be incorporated in a progress report to the Transport Committee, probably in July. She informed members that the Chair had received written confirmation that full funding will be confirmed once the Assembly had approved the business plan for the second half of this year.

The Chair said that the business plan would form part of the private discussion by members after the meeting. Members agreed that the annual review would be delayed to the autumn.

JS said that preparations for the audit had progressed well however the timetable had been very tight, given the timing of this committee. The organisational information and board report had been updated but the accounts were still in draft form. She said that the final accounts would include the auditor's feedback. She noted that a close eye would need to be kept on the cash flow due to additional costs that had been incurred.

JS said that the impact of the introduction of the rail passenger ombudsman scheme was still working its way through the system. She anticipated that the overall impact would be clearer by the summer and that it could have a significant impact on the casework team which will require a review. She said that the casework team manager is working to identify the extent of our remaining sources of evidence and what else is also available from other agencies. She will also look at impact in terms of outcomes achieved.

JS asked members to note her declaration of interests. It was agreed that there would be an extra item on future Governance Committee agendas for declaration of interests and that future reports to the committee would include recommendations for members.

Action: GC

6 Quarter 4 performance reports for monitoring

Members noted the workplan 2018-19. AL asked TB to follow up on signage and accessibility in and around London Bridge station and the step-free access improvements on National Rail discussed at the Board meeting in October. Members were pleased that signage had improved at Victoria station, following our intervention. JS said that most items will have to continue but there would be an opportunity for members to discuss work that had not yet started and there may be scope for some change.

Members noted the workplan activity on passenger engagement. They commented that there appeared to be a fragmented approach to this and that we need a framework for where this activity fits in with the big picture. Members commented that we need an engagement strategy on general and specific topics which addresses broad groups of users and looks to work with other organisations where we can data share cheaply.

Action: TB

RF-C presented the report on the impact of our influencing activity. Members were pleased with the report and after discussion asked for a section to be included on how we celebrate wins and for ideas on how we can make optimal use of YouTube.

Action: RF-C

SJ presented the casework report. There was a discussion about potential changes to casework as a result of the ombudsman scheme. SJ informed members that London TravelWatch and Transport Focus will meet with the Ombudsman in a joint approach to discuss some concerns with the scheme. She said that it was likely that the workload of the casework team would change next quarter. She will provide members with more information on this.

Action: SJ

TB presented the safety report which covered 'trap and drag', poor communications, stranded trains and user worked crossings. He said that there had been no major incidents in the period however vigilance has to be maintained. TB said that he will be incorporating safety issues in his response to a paper on the future design of trains.

Action: TB

Members noted the HR report.

7 Draft annual accounts

Paul Clark, Senior Statutory Auditor from BDO LLP was welcomed to the meeting. He said that this was not a statutory audit as London TravelWatch is not a company. He said that for the purposes of the accounts he had adopted a materiality level of £1100 and a 'deminimis' level of £550. He said that the accounts were a first draft and would need to be re-worked and re-issued.

PC said that he needed to confirm that there were no dilapidations from London Fire Brigade. He said that employee costs had increased by about £55,000; £35,000 of which related to temporary staff employed in the year.

PC said £51,000 had been spent on the office move. He noted that the staff had reduced by 10% but salaries had also increased by 10%. He said that the budget overspend in the year was because the move was funded out of resources we did not have and there has also been a staffing overspend in the same period. He said that, for four years, London TravelWatch has had a standstill budget which was in effect a cut budget and that cashflow will be the priority for the next 12 months. He explained that there were general reserves of £41,000 which was a going concern issue which will need to be addressed with the GLA. He said the auditors had received the letter of comfort from the GLA and that if London TravelWatch's income were to come in on the first day of the month it would cover this.

PC said that the timescale was for the accounts to be signed off in June and sent to the GLA in July. He asked for it to be checked when the GLA required the accounts.

JS said it was important to understand what information the Board had when they made decisions and the impact it has on finances and what needs to be done about it. She said that as part of the budget settlement, there needs to be a discussion on how much extra time can be allocated for the Finance Officer.

Action: JS

8 Draft London TravelWatch annual performance report to the GLA

Members noted the report and the overspend on the budget for the period.

9 Draft meeting dates for 2020

Members noted the dates. The Chair said that there was only a requirement to hold four public meetings in the year but we currently hold ten. (Postscript – the Rules of Engagement only require us to hold a minimum of two board meetings per year). There was a discussion on whether there should be a reduction of the number of these meetings. It was agreed that some more work needed to be done on priorities and the item will be brought back to a future meeting.

Action: JS

10 Any other business of which advance notice has been given

There was no other business.