

# Board meeting 19.01.21



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## Minutes

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Agenda item: 4  
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### Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 10 November 2020 virtually over Zoom

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#### Present

##### Members

Jackie Ballard, Alan Benson, Safia Iman (Item 1-7), Arthur Leathley (Chair), Karen McArthur, Laura Osborne, Abdi Osman (Item 1-9)

##### Guests

Andy Byford                      Commissioner, Transport for London

##### Secretariat in attendance

Tim Bellenger	Director, Policy and Investigation
Richard Freeston-Clough	Operations and Communications Manager
Emma Gibson	Director
Susan James	Head of Casework
Shahid Mohammed	Finance Manager (Item 12)
Luke Muskett	Committee and Public Liaison Officer

**1. Chair's introduction and pre-meeting announcements**

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting.

**2. Apologies for absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

**3. Declarations of interest**

There were no additional declarations of interest to declare.

**4. Chair's activities and Transport Focus update**

The Chair stated that there had been several discussions held with the London Assembly Transport Committee regarding the organisation's budget for the following year. Both he and the Director had put forward a compelling case for why London TravelWatch's work was vital for passengers, though they would have to wait and see how great the reduction in their funding would be over the coming months. They had also begun discussions with the office landlord to potentially sublet the office, which would save a considerable amount of money. The Chair added that they would continue to integrate with Transport Focus and make efficiencies where possible, though they had managed to reduce the majority of the duplication since the collaboration agreement was signed at the start of the year.

**5. Minutes of previous meetings**

The minutes were approved by the Board and would be signed by the Chair at a later date.

**6. Matters arising (LTW633)**

The matters arising were noted.

**7. Andy Byford, Commissioner of Transport for London**

Mr Byford gave a presentation to the Board describing his experience of working for transport authorities across the world and outlined his vision for Transport for London in the post-Covid world.

The Director asked whether by stating that there would not be any further delays or rises in costs for Crossrail this may make him reluctant to admit additional problems should they arise. My Byford said that he would be transparent whatever the status of the project. He added that there would also be mechanisms in place to hold him to account such as regular public appearances before the Elizabeth Line Committee. He commented that concealing such information would leave him 'dead in the water' with his reputation 'shot'.

A member asked what lessons London could learn from the other transport networks from around the world that he had worked in. He replied that the funding

model for Hong Kong, where the operator receives revenue for businesses built on top of and close to stations, would be a good one to replicate. He remarked that Toronto did integrated transport very well, and New York had a great level of public consultation. Mr Byford commented, however, that despite the tendency for people in the UK to downplay and criticise British industry and organisations, TfL was highly regarded internationally to the extent that other places across the world, such as in Sydney, have copied its model.

A member asked Mr Byford if he could comment on the current state of Hammersmith Bridge and for his thoughts on how bridges in London should be maintained in general. Mr Byford replied that despite the temptation to save money in the short term by deferring maintenance to a later time, in the longer run it would cost much more money and lead to major problems such as what had happened with Hammersmith Bridge. He added that things did become tricky when there was a discrepancy about who was responsible for maintaining particular bits of infrastructure.

In the case of Hammersmith Bridge, Mr Byford said that it was owned jointly between the two London boroughs: Hammersmith and Fulham, and Richmond upon Thames and they should have paid to keep it maintained. Despite this, TfL had reached out to try to find a solution, but the stumbling block was always the cost. He added that a ferry service had been procured in order to provide a crossing for at least some people until a longer-term fix could be found.

A member asked Mr Byford what his impression was of the culture at TfL and whether parts of it needed to change in order to fulfil his list of priorities. Mr Byford commented that it was a difficult question to answer as despite being in the job for several months, due to the pandemic he had not been able to meet most of his staff face-to-face. However, from the limited amount of feedback he had been able to get he believed that there was a good culture at TfL which was demonstrated by how proud people were to work for the organisation. He remarked that TfL had senior members of staff that could 'absolutely' double their salary if they were to go and work in the private sector. The fact that they didn't showed the level of commitment to the organisation and to their belief in public service.

A member said that there were rumours that TfL was considering raising the cost of bus fares, which would have a disproportionate impact on those on the lowest incomes who relied on the bus to get around the city. He asked what could be done to mitigate these effects as much as possible. He also asked that free travel for children and the over 60s be retained.

Mr Byford said that one of the conditions in the TfL funding deal was that fares would rise by RPI plus 1% but no decision had been taken about increasing fares by anything more than that. He remarked however, that due to Covid and the fall in passenger numbers, the Tube no longer had the money to subsidise the bus service, and difficult choices would have to be made. In terms of the concessionary travel for the under 18s and over 60s, Mr Byford said there was no mention of this in the second financial deal and he had no intention of pursuing it further.

The Operations and Communications Manager raised a question sent in from a member of the public via Twitter asking why TfL no longer produced a physical bus map. Mr Byford commented that he was not aware that TfL didn't produce a bus map but speculated that one might not be produced for the whole of the city as it would be too large. He said he would take the question away to ask his team and come back with a written response.

**ACTION: Committee and Public Liaison Officer**

The Director asked what thought had been given to what the transport network in London would look like post-pandemic and how things could be improved to help passengers travel around the city more easily. Mr Byford said that his analyst team were considering five different scenarios ranging from there being a quick return to normal to London being changed fundamentally forever. He remarked that he thought the reality would likely be something in-between the two and as a result TfL may need to provide more bus services in local town centres such as Wimbledon or Morden.

A member asked Mr Byford once the pandemic was over whether he would accompany him on a trip on the network to show what his experience was like as a wheelchair user. Mr Byford said that he would be very happy to do so.

**8. Director's report (LTW634)**

The Director presented her report. The Chair asked, despite the pressures on incoming budget cuts, that some money be reserved in order to deal with unexpected events that London TravelWatch may need to respond to. The Director replied that doing so would be a sensible approach, especially as they did not know what would be included in the next TfL deal which would replace the current one when it expired in March 2021. She added that Mayoral election would also be taking place the following year, and that London TravelWatch had to be agile in order respond to any policy decisions that came out of that, particularly if there was a change of Mayor.

A member asked how many people had used the office in between the two lockdowns, and about the likelihood that it could be sublet. The Director replied that three people had taken the opportunity to use the office, which was the maximum allowed due to the need for social distancing. The Operations and Communications Manager said that they had held good discussions with their landlord with regards to getting the office sublet and had engaged a commercial property agent who had put the office on the market. The agent was bullish about the prospects of getting the office sublet and had successfully managed to sublet similar sized offices in the area. He said that if there was any progress, he would send an update to members so that they were aware.

Another member asked whether there was any prospect of the GLA using the office as it was now confirmed that they would be moving out of City Hall. The Chair said that despite early discussions suggesting this could be a possibility, it seemed that in fact the GLA would be moving staff into the London Fire Brigade Headquarters in Union Street, where London TravelWatch used to be based. For

that reason, he said that the likelihood that they would want to take over the lease for the current office seemed quite remote.

**9. Safety report (LTW635)**

The Director, Policy and Investigation presented his report. A member asked why there was no mention of the Imperial College London evidence which showed that on two occasions when they had tried to find traces of Covid-19 on the Tube they had been unable to do so. The Director, Policy and Investigation replied that at the time of writing he did not have that evidence before him, though commented that it was reassuring that no traces were found, and this would help encourage passengers back onto public transport.

The Board accepted the recommendations from the report but asked for more detail regarding the research from Leeds University.

**ACTION: Director, Policy and Investigation**

**10. Casework report (LTW636)**

The Head of Casework presented her report and gave a verbal update on cases handled in the period after the quarter. In recent weeks, calls coming into Ventrice (the organisation that handles telephone enquiries for London TravelWatch) mainly concerned people not wearing face coverings, though this had since dropped off unsurprisingly as the UK went back into national lockdown. The most contacts the Casework team were receiving were with regard to penalty fares as some northern Train Operating Companies (TOCs) started issuing them again in September and October.

Another issue the team have been handling involved people who had bought advanced purchased tickets from retailers, who were not being offered the same level of flexibility to exchange their tickets compared to those who had purchased their ticket directly from a TOC. Due to the number of cases the team were receiving on this issue, the Head of Casework went to the RDG (Rail Delivery Group) to seek a resolution. The RDG resolved the problem and passengers that bought an advanced purchased ticket from a retailer can now change their ticket free of charge and travel later.

The Head of Casework said that she had noticed some things on Eurostar's website that she was not happy with and had written to them requesting an explanation.

**11. Impact of our influencing activity report (LTW637)**

The Operations and Communications Manager presented his report. He provided an update on the current figures for people who had filled out London TravelWatch's future transport survey, which at the last time of checking was at 864 with every London borough represented. He added that 441 had left their email addresses to join the digital community, which meant the organisation was close to the original target of gaining 5,000 sign ups. The Chair asked, given the

number of times they had appeared on LBC, whether it was worth suggesting to them of having London TravelWatch on in a regular slot each month. The Operation and Communications Manager said that they could definitely consider suggesting that and would have a discussion with the team about it.

**ACTION: Operations and Communications Manager**

**12. Finance report (LTW638)**

The Finance Manager presented his report. A member asked whether it was the Board that had decided to change the reserves policy. The Finance Manager confirmed that they had made a collective decision to reduce them to £45,000. Another member asked whether the reserves policy was still the right one given the spending climate the organisation would be moving into. The Chair said that they would look at it closely when submitting a budget bid for next year, though the current mark was likely the minimum threshold that it should be so as to allow for flexibility to react to unforeseen events.

Another member stated that he had noticed in the report that there were lower staff training and development costs. He asked whether the organisation was ensuring that staff were receiving the right training and support in the pandemic. The Director commented that the fall in that specific budget was made following a request by the GLA to make in-year budget savings. She remarked that there had been some underspend in other areas of the organisation, so there was potential to put some money back in to the staff training budget. However, so far no one had come to her requesting specific training that they had not been able to manage.

**13. Board meeting dates 2021**

The dates were noted by the Board.

**14. Any other business**

There was no further business to discuss.

**15. Resolution to move into confidential session**

It was resolved, under section 15(2)(b) of schedule 18 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999, that by reason of the confidential nature of the item(s) to be discussed, it was desirable in the public interest that the public should be excluded for a section of the meeting.