
Minutes

Agenda item: 3
Drafted 20.02.20

Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 18 February 2020 at Fleetbank House, 2-6 Salisbury Square, London, EC4Y 8JX

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Present

Members

Jackie Ballard, Alan Benson, Safia Iman, Arthur Leathley (Chair), Karen McArthur, Laura Osborne, Abdi Osman

Secretariat in attendance

Tim Bellenger	Director, Policy and Investigation
Richard Freeston-Clough	Operations and Communications Manager
Emma Gibson	Director
Susan James	Casework Manager
Shahid Mohammed	Finance Manager
Luke Muskett	Committee and Public Liaison Officer
Joanna Simons	Chief Executive

1 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.

2 Chair's introduction and pre-meeting announcements

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting and made the standard safety announcements.

3 Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

4 Declarations of interest

There were no additional declarations of interest.

5 Minutes of previous meetings

The minutes from the Governance Committee on 5 November 2019, the Board meeting on 19 November and Policy Committee on 10 December 2019 were agreed by the Board and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

6 Chief Executive Handover Report (LTW611)

The Chief Executive said that she had run a briefing session for both London TravelWatch and Transport Focus staff about the GLA and its wider operating environment. It was agreed that this would be circulated to Board members.

On finance, the Chief Executive commented that she would normally be bringing the budget for next year before the Board during this meeting. However, this had been postponed to April to allow the new Director time to consider it.

The Chief Executive said that in terms of this year, the organisation was in a much healthier position financially. She stated that there would be a one-off cost to upgrade the CRM system which had been factored into the budget for 2019/20. For next year's budget, there would be a cost associated with migrating the IT system to Microsoft 365, though this would save the organisation money in the long term.

On staffing, the Chief Executive remarked that Keletha, David, Gytha and Sharon had now left London TravelWatch.

The Chief Executive referred to the Director, Policy and Investigation to give an update on safety. He remarked that there was little to add to what has been written in the report other than to say that John Cartledge would only cost the organisation for his fares when representing London TravelWatch. He added that it was positive

that lessons had been learnt from the Lewisham detrainment incident and were being implemented elsewhere on the National Rail network.

The Chief Executive thanked everyone for all the help she had received over the past year and said that the team was a great group to work with. The Chair thanked the Chief Executive for her fantastic leadership and the phenomenal work that she had done on behalf of London TravelWatch.

A member asked whether the 10% increase in the budget was permanent. The Chief Executive replied that it was a two-year settlement which also covered the organisation for the pay award in 2020/1. She added that there would be some savings coming through due to the IT upgrade though getting the cost of pay awards covered on a permanent basis would be something that would need to be negotiated with the GLA. The Chief Executive commented that Transport Focus had been successful in bidding for private contracts and hopefully this could be something that London TravelWatch could also have some success in. She remarked that doing so would not only add benefits in bringing in addition revenue but also mean that the organisation was not reliant on a single funder.

The Board agreed to note the report.

7 Revised Memorandum of Understanding with the GLA (LTW612)

The Chief Executive said that the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the GLA had been updated. The original dated back to 2010 with the last version published in 2014. The Chief Executive stated that the revised MOU now had a more constructive tone which reflected the improved relationship with the GLA. The new MOU also included reference to the new partnership with Transport Focus.

On recruitment, the text had been updated to reflect that there was now a joint Chief Executive in post. Anyone appointed to that post would have to be approved by the GLA in conjunction with the London TravelWatch Board, Transport Focus Board and the Department for Transport. The wording had also been updated to reflect that there was a new position of Director and that there was a recruitment process for that role.

The Chief Executive commented that it was important that the good work that had been done in strengthening the relationship between London TravelWatch and the GLA continued to be carried out in the future. A member remarked that it was positive to have a revised MOU and that Board members were aware of the document. The Chair asked how the work to continue to strengthen the relationship with the GLA would be captured. The Chief Executive replied that they had committed to sending them a satisfaction survey to gather their feedback. She said that it would also be important for the Chair to have regular meetings at City Hall and for all members of the Board to meet with members of the Transport Committee.

The Board approved the revised Memorandum of Understanding with the GLA and authorised the chair to sign it on their behalf. They asked the Director to incorporate feedback on current issues into future reports to the Board and to

make regular reports on progress with the implementation of the business plan. The Board wanted to ensure that the liaison requirements were met, and asked the Joint Chief Executive and Chair to report back periodically. Members asked the Director to consider giving relevant staff specific objectives next year in relation to relevant requirements and to ensure that the satisfaction survey is planned in good time

8 Collaboration agreement with Transport Focus (LTW613)

The Chief Executive thanked members for their comments on the collaboration agreement. She stated that the document included a number of different agreements that had been put into one paper. It set out the principles of how the two organisations would work together and could be referred to in order to find out what the different roles and responsibilities were between London TravelWatch and Transport Focus. The document also importantly included the data sharing agreement between the two organisations.

In terms of roles, Governance, which had been covered by Gytha, would be taken over by Jon Carter and Michelle Jackson; Luke would be helping out at Transport Focus for one day a week, and over the longer term Louise from Transport Focus would be taking over HR responsibilities from John Burgess. Casework from Transport Focus would be taken over by London TravelWatch and a company used by Transport Focus called Ventrice would take incoming calls for London TravelWatch.

The Chief Executive said that the majority of shared services would be covered by the strategic value calculation of staff hours spent between the two organisations but invoicing would take place for two specific areas; firstly the 10% contribution towards Anthony Smith's salary as Accounting Officer and Chief Executive of London TravelWatch, and secondly the Director, Policy and Investigation's continuing work as the Safety Officer for both organisations.

The Board voted unanimously to approve and agree the Collaboration agreement and authorised the chair to sign it. They asked that a copy be sent to Ed Williams, our liaison officer at the GLA. The Board thanked Jon Carter for all his hard work and assistance. They agreed to review the agreement and arrangements in six months' time

9 Appointment of Joint Chief Executive (LTW614)

The Board voted unanimously to approve Anthony Smith as the new Chief Executive of London TravelWatch.

10 Management Accounts and Outturn for 2019/20 (LTW615)

The Finance Manager said that the accounts were looking positive to the end of March and to the end of December. It included the additional in year income of £183,000 from the GLA and made provision for all redundancy payments required in 2019/20. Accommodation costs were slightly lower than had been expected and there should be a surplus of around £2,000 by the end of March. The Chief Executive remarked that the accounts to March also included provision for an

upgrade to the CRM system which would cost approximately £11,000. The Chair asked whether there would be a financial report at each Board meeting. The Finance Manager confirmed that there would be.

11 Casework report (LTW616)

The Casework Manager said that alongside the collaboration work the team had been doing with Transport Focus there had been a number of issues with the Rail Ombudsman, particularly with regard to them not knowing when other organisations would join the scheme. Other areas of focus included the request from passengers for a refund for their season tickets during the South Western Railway (SWR) strike in December. She remarked that after speaking with the stakeholder manager at Transport Focus she had been told that SWR were in serious deficit and would not likely be offering refunds voluntarily. Therefore, it would be up to the Department for Transport to offer compensation in a similar way that it had done during the May 2018 timetable changes.

The Casework Manager remarked that Eurostar had come through a difficult phase and would soon be running trains directly from Amsterdam, which would likely increase bookings. She stated it was difficult for the company as they had been at the mercy of the French rail strikes, though they had tried to warn passengers as early as possible. Of the people that had been unsuccessful in having their complaints handled by Eurostar London TravelWatch had been able to step in and resolve problems through the appeal process.

The Casework Manager commented that the time it took to refer to the Rail Ombudsman was too long. However, a trial scheme had been proposed which would shorten the length of time for referral from eight weeks to four. She remarked that it was likely that the reduction in referral time would see the number of appeals increase from what was a very low number when compared to what had previously been handled by London TravelWatch and Transport Focus.

A member asked whether the Ombudsman did a survey of how successful it had been. The Casework Manager replied that they did so once a year and had celebrated the fact that they came back in favour of the passenger in 50% of cases. However, this compared to an average of around 70% when the appeal process was handled by London TravelWatch or Transport Focus. A member suggested that the Board formally noted its concern that the number of appeals were down on what was expected.

A member asked whether the Board should formally note its concern with regard to the inclusion of 30 London Underground stations that were due to be included in the Rail Ombudsman scheme. The Casework Manager replied that by law they would be included in the scheme and there was nothing London TravelWatch could do to prevent this. However, they would be meeting with the ORR to discuss whether all types of complaints would be referred to the Ombudsman or if it would be only for specific things such as accessibility issues.

12 Impact of our influencing activity report (LTW617)

The Operations and Communications Manager said that in future the communications work would be distinguished between inputs and outputs and there would be attribution rating to determine how much influence London TravelWatch had in achieving an outcome for passengers. He remarked that press coverage had been quieter than usual though they had managed to get a piece in the Metro in December regarding the Christmas engineering works.

On social media, the Operations and Communications Manager said that tweets were getting a good engagement rate of 1.4%. London TravelWatch would also tweet about meetings with the mayoral candidates and would be using those tweets to try and secure meetings with the other candidates.

In terms of the website, the Operations and Communications Manager remarked that the numbers of unique visitors had grown to 25,000 in October and November and 21,000 in December. The most popular webpages included information on Oyster, which continued to remain popular, and the Freedom Pass. Popular news stories included the proposed closure of Watford Underground Station and the piece on rail fare unfairness across the network.

13 Any other business

There was no other business.