
Chief Executive's report

Agenda item 7

Confidential

Date 15 October 2019

1. Introduction

This report provides an update on recent activity and plans for the next three months.

2. Staffing update and redundancy consultation

Since our last meeting consultation on the redundancy proposals has closed and a number of responses have been received from staff. These comprise a mixture of general comments and two additional requests for voluntary redundancy.

Other than the understandable wish to avoid compulsory redundancy from the staff member at risk of this, no objections were received to the proposals and several constructive suggestions were made about how we could manage workloads slightly differently.

As board members will recall, the proposals to reduce staff levels were predicated on our budget problems together with a reduced need for traditional admin support. The two operations support (admin) posts were proposed for redundancy and the 2020/21 budget bid to the GLA presupposed that we would reduce our costs by at least this amount.

Subsequent discussion with the GLA has highlighted concerns from some political groups about our proposal for increased funds next year and if it goes ahead there will be an expectation that further efficiency gains will be made in later years.

As such, the additional requests for voluntary redundancy provide a mechanism to avoid further compulsory redundancies in the future and to allow some breathing space for the likely transitional costs associated with the partnership with Transport Focus.

Bearing in mind this context, I have spoken to all staff members who responded, and, following consultation with the chair and discussion with Anthony Smith in relation to the potential impact on workloads next year, the following proposals have been confirmed:

Operations Support Assistants

- David Rose (full time): application for voluntary redundancy and retirement with effect from 31 December 2019
- John Wooster (part time): compulsory redundancy confirmed with (discretionary) extended notice period to 31 March 2020 to allow more time for job searching and assistance with CVs and interview skills
- The administrative workload has reduced in recent years with the increased use of technology and the work will be absorbed. In addition, John Wooster has been covering some work that is part of Fayza Patel's substantive role. Fayza is currently on maternity leave but will return on 1 April 2020

Governance Officer

- Gytha Chinweze (part time): application for voluntary redundancy accepted with effect from 31 December 2019
- Longer term, Gytha's governance work will be dealt with by Jon Carter's team at Transport Focus as there are multiple overlaps

Policy Officer

- Keletha Barrett (full time): application for voluntary redundancy accepted with effect from 31 December 2019
- Keletha's main focus is on rail performance and while this may cause a gap during the last quarter of 2019/20 a revised approach will be put in place from April in conjunction with Transport Focus colleagues

John Burgess has advised on these proposals throughout and met with a number of staff individually during the consultation process. John will be overseeing the HR process to implement these proposals.

3. Budget position

Board member will recall that we faced a major cash flow crisis earlier this year which was resolved by the release and immediate payment of this year's GLA grant following the approval of our progress report to the Transport Committee in July.

As I reported to the last Governance Committee, further analysis of the budget revealed substantial ongoing pressures arising from a mixture of factors including the cumulative impact of pay awards and an increase in employer's pension contributions. This meant that we were anticipating a deficit and further cash flow problem at the end of this financial year.

I am pleased to report that the GLA have provided assistance to cover this year's budget pressures and we have received a further payment of £95,000 which will

enable us to end the year in balance, including accounting for necessary redundancy payments. However, the position remains tight and ongoing close monitoring of the budget will be required throughout quarters three and four.

Turning to next year, despite the financial assistance provided by the redundancies outlined above we will still carry forward an underlying deficit. This will be resolved once our budget bid to the Transport Committee has been approved by the Budget Oversight Committee and incorporated into the Assembly's overall budget for 2020/21.

As discussed below, our business plan and budget bid for 2020/21 was considered by the Transport Committee on 9 October, as this report was being finalised with recommendations going onto the Budget Oversight Committee on 16 October which will recommend the overall Assembly budget. I am delighted to confirm that our business Plan and budget bid were unanimously approved by the Committee, showing that our relationship with the GLA is much improved. Whilst we must still get through the overall Assembly budget scrutiny process we can be hopeful of a positive response.

In view of this, my advice is that the outlook for the next year is much improved and the board can look forward with confidence to the next financial year. In the medium term there are a range of possibilities for greater efficiency and cost effectiveness including reduced office costs through co-location with Transport Focus, IT migration to a cheaper (and more reliable) supplier and the potential for cross subsidy from income generation through bidding for new work.

Taking this into account, board members are asked to discuss the financial position and confirm that they maintain the view that London TravelWatch remains a Going Concern.

The other matter to note is that Nigel Holden (Transport Focus Corporate Services Director) will take over our accountancy support in January to allow a phased handover from Sharon Carter who currently provides this on a shared service arrangement from the Fire Service. Sharon is anticipating an increased workload in the New Year so this will minimise our risks. In the meantime our finance officer, Sandra Ambo is starting to get to know her new colleagues and she will be visiting the Manchester office on 14 October.

A more detailed financial report will be made to the Governance Committee next month which will include the latest management accounts.

4. Relationship with the GLA

Good progress continues to be made in relation to our working relationship with the GLA and we are now actively engaging with Assembly Members and their support staff on a number of fronts:

- Transport News is being send round daily to an ever increasing number of subscribers

- Susan has held briefing meetings on casework support for both the main party groups' support teams (Labour and Conservatives) and Mark Morris (Lib Dem research officer) has visited the office for a similar briefing
- We are starting to get casework referrals and requests for help
- Richard is working with the communications team and has agreed a protocol for sharing information
- Tim and his team are starting to work more closely with the scrutiny support staff and we are beginning to help shape scrutiny reviews and to more actively provide evidence for forthcoming investigations
- We are getting feedback that the 'mood music' about us has changed and is improving
- Ed Williams, the Executive Director of the Secretariat has continued to be extremely helpful and supportive

The next steps with the GLA are to revise the MOU (with consequent legal advice on the actual partnership) and to deepen our emerging new working patterns.

Dependent on the outcome of the Transport Focus search for new office accommodation, the GLA may also be able to relocate other staff into our current office if it becomes available. In the meantime we will explore ways of bringing the two staff teams closer together within the constraints of the existing accommodation.

5. Business Plan

As discussed above, this was considered by the Transport Committee on the 9th and our budget bid will go onto the Budget Oversight Committee on the 16th October. Now that the plan has been approved, we will turn this into a more detailed workplan for next year.

6. Partnership with Transport Focus

Good progress is also being made with our partnership with Transport Focus:

- Task force meetings continue with helpful challenge and steers from board members
- Back office developments are taking place with (as above) accountancy support moving over from January; liaison beginning on HR and payroll (where we share a provider); initial meetings taking place to compare notes on risk registers and governance issues
- A number of joint staff events are being scheduled, we are joining in with the weekly TF telecom round up; staff are spending time in each other's offices

- Vikki Maxfield has been appointed by TF to help with change management and she is in the process of meeting staff and Anthony is extending his coaching facility to a couple of our senior team to provide some support for the change
- We are continuing our joint working on a range of issues including ombudsman issues, penalty fares, climate change consultation, etc.
- The next big task will be to draft the partnership agreement next which will go to the task force in the first instance

7. Recruitment of new Director

Now that we have the support of the Transport Committee, we can go ahead with recruitment for the new director. The plan is to advertise by the end of October / beginning to November to ensure that an appointment can be made by Christmas. The GLA are considering whether we can use one of the contracts they have with recruitment agencies to manage the process, (hopefully free to us), failing which Transport Focus have a contract with an agency that we could use for help with the administration (although this would cost).

It is proposed that the recruitment panel comprise the following:

- Our Chair and one of our other board members
- The Chair of the Transport Committee (or deputy)
- The Chief Executive of Transport Focus
- With Ed Williams, Executive Director of the GLA Secretariat and an HR advisor in support

Full details have yet to be worked through but it will be important to have a thorough assessment process so that we can be sure that the successful applicant can cope with the demands of the role. Having looked at the budget and existing pay rates / comparability it is proposed that the appointment should initially be made at a spot salary of circa £70,000 with a review after one year. This is at a lower level than the previous chief executive and reflects the fact that the joint chief executive will be the Accounting Officer and carry the formal accountability.

A draft job description is attached at Appendix 1 and members are asked to comment on this and the proposed process so that we may have approval to proceed. You will note that the staff responsibility is shown as 10; this is because our main support staff will be nestled into professional teams at Transport Focus.

The roles carried out by our HR advisor John Burgess and Finance Advisor Sharon Carter will transfer to Nigel Holden's team as he carried the professional responsibility for finance and HR. Likewise, Sandra Ambo's professional reporting line will be to a full time accountant which will significantly reduce risk. Sandra will of course, continue to support London

TravelWatch's accounts. With Gytha leaving Jon Carter's team will pick up responsibility for Governance. Formal staff consultation will of course be required as we develop the thinking but the intention is that the director's primary roles will be in relation to relationship management, strategic direction / coordination and communications and public affairs.

8. Forthcoming meetings

We have three further meetings left in the current cycle plus the annual lecture on October 21st. The chair's group have considered this and recommend that the November 5th Governance Committee goes ahead as usual, that the November 19th board meeting is held in private and focuses on board development and assigning board champions for different areas and that the December 10th Policy committee also goes ahead as usual with guests, followed by a staff / board Christmas event. Thereafter the format would be revised as below.

9. Board plan for 2020

Following our earlier discussion, the proposal for next year is for a more streamlined process, with fewer, but more substantive meetings. Consultation with the board has indicated that Mondays and Fridays should be avoided and we have also liaised with transport focus to make sure that there will not be a clash with their dates.

- Tues Feb 18: all day : LTW meeting first then joint event with TF board afterwards to bring the full boards together
- Tues April 14 (NB this is just after Easter but Transport Focus already have a meeting on Tuesday 2st)
- Tues June 16
- Tues 15 September
- Tues 10 November
- Tues 19 January 2021
- Tues 16 March

Plus

- 1 x LTW only away day early summer, date to be confirmed once the new director has been appointed; and
- 1 x joint event with Transport Focus on Tues 21 July to launch / celebrate the partnership

Board members are asked to consider and approve the proposed plan.

10. Christmas

As indicated above, we have a joint staff / board Christmas event planned for the 10 December. As some board members will be aware, the office is currently closed between Christmas and New Year and generally staff are asked to take two of these three days as annual leave. In view of the difficult year the team have had, Arthur has authorised waiving the requirement to take annual leave this year as a small thank you to the team for all their hard work and commitment.

11. Recommendations

- 1 To note the results of the redundancy consultation, to thank the staff leaving for their hard work and contribution to London Travel Watch and to note the board's regret that the budget position has necessitated losing good staff
- 2 To note the progress with our relationship with the GLA; the improved financial position this year and outlook for next year; and to confirm the board's view that we continue to be a Going Concern
- 3 To note the progress on our partnership with Transport Focus and to receive a further report on the draft partnership agreement
- 4 To approve the draft job description and plan for recruitment of a new director; and to delegate final sign off to the interim chief executive in consultation with the chair
- 5 To consider and approve the meetings plan for 2020/21
- 6 To note the arrangements for office closure over Christmas and to diary the joint staff / board event after the Policy Committee on 10 December

Joanna Simons
Interim Chief Executive

Appendix 1



DRAFT JOB DESCRIPTION

Job title:	Director
Grade:	spot Salary £70,000
Reporting to:	Joint Chief Executive
Staff managed:	10
Finance managed:	Budget for London TravelWatch is £1.1 million

Job Purpose

- 1 To make a difference for transport users in and around London by planning, directing and co-ordinating the delivery of our work and ensuring joined up, consistent and pro-active stakeholder management.
- 2 To be the highly visible 'face' of London TravelWatch, representing transport users through broadcast and social media, speaking at conferences and similar events, promoting focused and influential work with local and national stakeholders and to identify and pursue service delivery issues to bring about improvements.
- 3 To be the main advisor to the London TravelWatch board and Greater London Authority and to lead the staff team, and to manage financial and other resources in line with appropriate delegated authority

Key Tasks and Responsibilities

1. Lead the team to provide the organisation with a clear strategic direction that guides London TravelWatch towards achieving its mission and goals.
2. To manage the relationship between London TravelWatch and the London Assembly and Transport for London, and other key stakeholders and opinion formers. Ensuring that: information is shared; politics are managed appropriately; channels of influence remain open and productive; effective responses are made to consultations and requests for commentary on policy.
3. To ensure that London TravelWatch maintains a portfolio of relevant research which is focused on the transport user. In particular, to ensure that opportunities to advocate transport integration are identified and that pressure is put on transport commissioners and providers to take meaningful steps towards such integration.
4. To be the principal spokesperson for London TravelWatch, to the extent permitted by any difference of approach – Transport Focus, engaging with the media as and when required. To developing the strategy for communication and public affairs in conjunction with the wider communications team.
5. To ensure that London TravelWatch has proper procedures and resources in place to handle effectively and efficiently the appeals made by London's transport complainants (dissatisfied with the response of the operator concerned), so that satisfactory resolutions to their complaints are achieved and policy implications arising from casework are considered and progressed.

6. To lead the provision of advice to the Board Members on strategy and policy, decision-making, governance issues, and financial and performance matters. Ensure the production of an annual business plan; and co-ordinate the production of reports, including annual report.
7. To contribute to the preparation of the London TravelWatch budget; and ensure that London TravelWatch has sound financial management and that it accounts effectively for its activity and outputs.
8. To work with European Passengers Federation to ensure that the needs and aspirations of London's passengers and transport users are fully taken into account in respect of relevant developments at European level.

Skills and Competencies

Experience: essential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experienced communicator and spokesperson • Demonstrable experience of influencing strategy • Credibility in stakeholder management
Experience: desirable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience in a comparable role, including experience of successfully leading a co-ordinated programmes across several teams and successfully securing the commitment of staff and stakeholders
Knowledge base	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad and deep understanding of how public policy is influenced, developed, and put into practice operationally. • Understanding of how consumer organisations give their customers a voice and advocacy on issues which affect them • Ability to rapidly to develop a working knowledge of transport issues
Leadership and Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to shape the development of organisational, see that these goals are understood within the organisation, and that staff focus on achieving them • Understanding of disciplines of performance management, getting the best out of others, and developing staff • Ability to align others to particular courses of action and to hold them accountable for their part in it
Team work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to work well in a participative and collaborative way with colleagues • Ability to build teams from diverse professional backgrounds
Relationship building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to build and maintain effective working partnerships at senior level with a wide variety of organisations which are stakeholders in transport issues • Ability to build alliances and consensus in groups with diverse agenda
Integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity to model professional integrity and to foster it in others
Political understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective grasp of political direction affecting current and future transport economics; and of the underlying agenda in transport stakeholder organisations London TravelWatch is trying to influence – who holds what power, and who is connected to whom
Influencing ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to push forward the London TravelWatch agenda and be convincing to others in discussion and public debate, in national and European contexts
Communication skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity to make very clear oral and written presentations
Analytical thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to make logical connections and inferences from complex data and information; to determine logical priorities for action
Big picture thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity to conceptualise complex issues; to see the big issues affecting transport in the region around London, and to retain the complexity whilst seeing the details in context
Managing pressure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to work to tight deadlines and cope well under pressure