
Minutes

Agenda item 4

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Minutes of a meeting of the London TravelWatch Governance Committee held at 5-11 Lavington Street, London SE1 0NZ on 12 February 2019, 10:30 – 12.45 hrs

Present:

Members

Arthur Leathley (AL)	Chair, London TravelWatch
Karen Mcarthur (KM)	
Laura Osborne (LO)	
Abdi Osman (AO)	

Secretariat

Tim Bellenger (TB)	Director of Policy & Investigation
Gytha Chinweze (GC)	Governance Officer
Janet Cooke (JC)	Chief Executive
Richard F-Clough (RF-C)	Operations & Communications Manager (item 7)
Susan James (SJ)	Casework Manager (item 7)

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Jackie Ballard, Alan Benson and Safia Iman.

The Chair welcomed new members to the meeting and asked all to introduce themselves.

2 Minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2018

The minutes were agreed and signed as a correct record subject to including the word 'not' under item 9 to read 'the business plan had not been agreed'.

3 Matters arising

In response to a question from the Chair, JC explained that the business plan and six month accounts had both not been submitted to the Transport Committee, on the advice of the Executive Director of Secretariat of the GLA.

The Chair reported that Alan Benson had been appointed as Deputy Chair of the Board following John Stewart's departure.

4 Notes from the Chairs' Group held on 30 November 2018 and 23 January 2019

These were noted. In response to a member query, TB confirmed that the report on safety on buses was not yet ready to be circulated publicly. He said the Policy Officer will send members a note on the key findings of the research. He also reported that TfL would be hosting a seminar in March on this topic.

Action: TB

It was noted that the 'Interchange Matters' event would be held on 19 February 2019. JC confirmed that the Board member induction will take place on 1 March 2019. The Chair said that it would be good for returning members to also attend this.

5 Chief Executive's report

JC updated members on general matters, the Rail Passenger Ombudsman scheme, finance matters and GDPR.

JC explained to members that London TravelWatch is a second stage complaints body and continues to be the appeals body for Eurostar. She said that TfL rail modes will come into the Rail Passenger Ombudsman scheme on 1 April 2019. In response to a member query about how the scheme was being promoted, JC said that station notices are being changed and there is also signposting to the scheme through the Train Operating Companies' complaints handling. She reported that the Train Operating Companies have introduced an extra level internally before complaints go to the scheme which is a positive move for passengers.

The Chair asked JC whether she was satisfied that the finance arrangements London TravelWatch has in place was adequate. JC said there had been a delay in circulating the last quarter's accounts to members due to the office move and staff sickness. However, she said that the shared service arrangement with the Fire Service is a cost-effective deal that works well and that as Accounting Officer she was satisfied with the level of support she was receiving. She said that the cost of the office move and the Ombudsman scheme was reflected in the nine month accounts.

JC said, regarding GDPR, that the casework team will keep information for a number of years and then anonymise it. She explained that she is getting quotes for a company to come in and do this work in late March and then see if this can be done automatically in the future.

Action: JC

6 Finance report Q3

JC presented the report. She said that this was the fourth year that London TravelWatch had operated a standstill budget. She explained the variances in

the budget and said that staff expenditure accounted for the biggest variance, followed by accommodation costs.

JC said London TravelWatch makes allowances in its budget for cost of living increases and that its terms and conditions are analogous with those of the GLA. She said that there was an overspend on supplies and services due to an increase in IT costs resulting from changing the system for GDPR and also in organisational development costs, following the recent restructure.

JC said that the office move cost was £25k more than the initial forecast. She explained that London TravelWatch's policy on reserves was to maintain free operating reserves of approximately £50k.

7 Other quarter 3 performance reports for monitoring

JC presented the report on the work plan. TB said members also receive a regular report on meetings attended by officers at Board meetings. He added that London TravelWatch is consulted as a body on a lot of matters and there was a scheme of delegation which governs how it works which allows officers to use delegated powers to respond to consultations, except when the matter falls outside the scheme.

It was noted that a report goes to the Transport Committee twice a year which explains our progress against the work plan objectives. It was noted that most of the work was on track. Members were informed that discretionary pieces of work are deferred when we are required to do work of higher priority, for example, the work on London Overground and Underground ticket office closures. Members made some suggestions to the content and presentation of the work plan which were noted.

RF-C was introduced to the meeting. He presented the report on the impact of London TravelWatch's influencing activity. Members asked for more information on stakeholders and the contents of meetings with them, and how much time people spend on the popular pages of our website. Members also asked whether the website could be refreshed more often and the cost of making changes to it.

Action: RF-C

SJ was introduced to the meeting and presented the casework report. She confirmed that delays and fares are the biggest issues for passengers. She said that most complaints are about poor performance and fare increases and involve the bus, tube, Oyster and cycling. She said that she would know better what impact the Rail Passenger Ombudsman scheme has had on casework at the end of the quarter. SJ said that the team was getting a steady level of cases for Eurostar. In response to a member query she said that she was satisfied with the preparations that Eurostar was making for Brexit.

TB presented the safety report. He said the themes during the period included 'Trap and Drag', poor communications, stranded trains and user-worked crossings. TB said that the period had been quiet but there had been close calls or near misses in safety. In response to a member query TB said that trains

with pull-down windows from the 1970s will be phased out by the end of this year, except on Heritage Railway or private charter stock.

JC presented the HR report. It was noted that sickness absence figures had improved in the last ten years. JC said that training was done internally and through other opportunities for on the job training.

8 Office move – November 2018

JC presented the report. She said that critically we had moved to save money and costs are fixed at the current premises for five years. She said that we had found savings that we had not anticipated, staff prefer it and it has led to a different but positive way of working. The Chair said that JC had done well to secure premises in Central London and also make savings. He was pleased that staff are enjoying being in the office and congratulated her on succeeding at a difficult project.

9 Conflicts of interest

JC said that this was an outstanding item from the autumn Board meeting. She stated that the important point to note when it comes to declaring interests was that this was not a judgement on an individual's personal integrity but what is perceived by people on the outside. She added that the GLA puts a paper to every meeting of the Assembly about conflicts of interest.

Members agreed that it was good practice for them to declare their interests annually and at the start of each meeting of the Board, to say what has changed that is topic-dependent or whether they have any new conflicts of interest. The Chair said members should err on the side of caution when declaring their interests.

10 Any other business of which advance notice has been given

There was no other business.