
Secretariat report

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Agenda item 8

LTW 344

Drafted 16.3.10

London Assembly Review of London TravelWatch

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To inform members of the London Assembly's intention to carry out a review of London TravelWatch.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report and consider how best to engage with the process.

3 Information

- 3.1 At the London Assembly (Mayor's Question Time) meeting on 24 February 2010 the following motion was agreed:

"This Assembly believes that the upcoming tenth anniversary of London TravelWatch represents an excellent opportunity for the Assembly to set up a cross-party review to look into its costs and procedures in order to ensure that it is best placed to deliver value for money and serve passengers' needs effectively over the next ten years.

We further resolve that the Business Management and Administration Committee be delegated the setting of precise terms of reference and membership of the review panel."

A copy of the letter from the Chair of the London Assembly confirming this is attached (appendix 1).

- 3.2 As members are aware, the Chair of London TravelWatch sent a letter (appendix 2) to every Assembly member in advance of the meeting reminding them of the important work that London TravelWatch does in representing the travelling public in and around London. The review itself was welcomed as an opportunity to demonstrate the value of this work.
- 3.3 A paper will go to the next meeting of the Business Management and Administration Committee on 24 March 2010 proposing the precise terms of reference and membership of the review panel. A copy of this paper is attached (appendix 3).

4 Equalities and inclusion implications

4.1 There are no equalities or inclusion implications in this report.

5 Legal implications

5.1 Section 247, 250 and 251 and Schedule 18 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 govern the relationship between London TravelWatch and the London Assembly. A number of the administrative functions of London TravelWatch are subject to the approval of, or compliance with guidance from, The London Assembly. The MOU sets out a way of working that should ensure that both the London Assembly and London TravelWatch know what each organisation expects of the other and how those expectations are to be delivered

6 Financial implications

6.1 There are no immediate financial implications arising from this report although the review itself will look into London TravelWatch's costs and procedures to ensure it is best placed to deliver value for money over the next ten years.

LONDONASSEMBLY

Chair of the London Assembly



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24 February 2010

Mrs Sharon Grant
Chair, London TravelWatch

6 Middle Street
London
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Dear Chair,

London Assembly (Mayor's Question Time) Meeting, 24 February 2010 - Motion

Thank you for your letter of 23 February 2010 regarding the proposed London Assembly review of London TravelWatch.

I write formally to advise that the Assembly, at its meeting earlier today, has now passed the following motion:

"This Assembly believes that the upcoming tenth anniversary of London TravelWatch represents an excellent opportunity for the Assembly to set up a cross-party review to look into its costs and procedures in order to ensure that it is best placed to deliver value for money and serve passengers' needs effectively over the next ten years.

We further resolve that the Business Management and Administration Committee be delegated the setting of precise terms of reference and membership of the review panel."

I understand that officers have already been in touch with you regarding taking this work forward. The next meeting of the Business and Management and Administration Committee (BMAC) will take place at 10.00am on 24 March 2010. I have copied this letter to Jennette Arnold AM, Chair of BMAC, for information.

Yours sincerely



Darren Johnson AM
Chair of the London Assembly

cc. Jennette Arnold AM, Chair of BMAC



London Assembly Member
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London
SE1 2AA

23 February 2010

Dear

London TravelWatch welcomes the motion tabled for Mayor's Question Time on 24 February, calling for a cross-party review our organisation's costs and procedures, as this will provide an opportunity to demonstrate the value of the work we undertake on behalf of London's travelling public.

In advance of your consideration of this motion, you may find it helpful to have the following general information about our role, and our thoughts on the strategic issues that might be considered by the review.

London TravelWatch is unique. It is the only such body set up by statute but sponsored by a regional tier of government in England – though it has served as the model for similar bodies recently established in Scotland and proposed in Wales.

The organisation has existed in various guises for almost sixty years, during which its role has expanded considerably. It is now tasked with representing travellers using all modes of transport in and around Greater London.

Although its Chair and 12 board members are appointed by the Transport Committee of the Assembly, London TravelWatch is an independent organisation with no political affiliations or allegiances.

We represent passengers travelling by:

Bus
National Rail
Underground
Docklands Light Railway
Tram

Taxi and private hire car
River services and ferries
Dial-a-Ride

as well as:

Pedestrians
Cyclists
Motorcyclists
Motorists

The role of London TravelWatch

London TravelWatch's powers and functions are invested in it by law.

It is, for example, the statutory **appeals body** for complaints about transport operators in London. Members of the public, who are dissatisfied with the response to an initial complaint to a transport operator, have the right to refer their case to London TravelWatch for further investigation and resolution.

London TravelWatch is also a **statutory consultee**. Wherever there is a proposal to introduce, to vary significantly or to discontinue a service, whether it be bus, Underground, rail, or on major roads, we **must** be consulted. In particular, rail operators and the Mayor must give London TravelWatch notice of their plans for services and fares, and our response must be considered.

London TravelWatch also has a general duty to keep **under review, consider and make recommendations** on any matter affecting the interests of the travelling public in London, and to receive representations from the public on those matters.

The case for a London travel champion

London is a unique and challenging city in transport terms, and unlike any other in the UK. The sheer scale of travel is considerable, with 70% of all rail journeys in the UK beginning and/or ending in London, an enormous Underground system, and a bus network which is unequalled in its coverage and carries 40% of all bus trips in Great Britain.

The transport issues faced by Londoners are different from and more complex than those found elsewhere. The needs of people travelling into or through London may be different, too, from those of people who live and travel purely within the city. We work closely with Passenger Focus, the national rail and bus passenger body, to ensure that our roles are complementary – but its modal remit is narrower and it is not equipped to focus exclusively on the unique scale and complexity of London's transport systems.

The statutory powers that London TravelWatch has, coupled with its strong research base and expert knowledge of the system, rooted in its casework

experience and network of contacts, make it well placed to challenge transport providers to improve and adapt services, and to take into account travellers' needs and expectations.

Stakeholder relations are key to the success of a small championing body. London TravelWatch aims to work in partnership with TfL, and all other providers of transport services in London, to ensure that the voice of the traveller is heard at every stage of the policymaking process.

It meets regularly with TfL's senior staff and with each of the train operating companies which serve London. Policy and operational staff frequently attend our board and committee meetings. Also, our individual board members have links with allocated London boroughs, and we are in close contact with a large number of local and mode related travel groups.

How we work

Our **Board** focuses on key strategic policy issues such as the Mayor's Transport Strategy and the Thameslink project, as well as maintaining an oversight of the work of the organisation. More in depth work is carried out in committee.

Through its **Consumer Affairs Committee**, London TravelWatch oversees its complaints appeals system, dealing with upwards of 2000 cases per year. The handling of penalty fare appeals, and bus drivers' behaviour, are common causes of complaint. Success may take the form of compensation payments, or changes to policy or procedures by an operator.

From our casework, we are frequently able to detect emerging policy issues, and to take these forward at our regular meetings with TfL and the train operating companies. For example, we successfully took up with TfL the time allowed to Oyster pay-as-you-go users to complete journeys on the Underground without incurring a fare surcharge, and got it extended.

The efficiency of the complaints systems run by operators is monitored by London TravelWatch. They vary enormously and one of our strategic objectives is to encourage them to improve their complaints handling and approach to customer care.

We pursue the rights of passengers as consumers - for example, their right to timely and accurate information about services. This has led to us reviewing TfL and other operators' websites, and challenging the use of costly telephone tariffs for information services and complaints.

We are the first port of call for several thousands of queries from travellers each year on a wide variety of transport issues, and we have an important role in signposting the travelling public to appropriate sources of help

Through our **Fares and Ticketing Committee**, we bring the passenger perspective to bear on fare structures across all modes, as well as zoning and

changes in fare levels. This includes taxi and tram fares, discounts for particular categories of user, the increasing use of ticket machines, and of course Oyster. London TravelWatch has worked closely with TfL over many years on the process of “Oysterisation”, consistently raising glitches in the planning and implementation stages.

On behalf of passengers, our **Transport Services Committee** now systematically monitors the performance of the transport providers across a range of appropriate criteria, including reliability of service. It also considers responses to a wide range of consultations, on service changes, on rail franchise specifications, and on national policy issues such as taxi licensing or penalty fares where there is a specific London dimension. We home in too on particular passenger frustrations, e.g. the use of replacement buses, and achieve numerous changes to service delivery.

London TravelWatch responded to some 70 consultations in the first six months of this year. For example it submitted detailed evidence on the proposal for the “extended Circle Line”, and has undertaken a major piece of work on the proposed withdrawal of the South London Line service. This committee also oversees evidence given to enquiries by the Transport Committee of the Assembly, and to the House of Commons Transport Select Committee.

Finally our **Access to Transport Committee** raises a wide range of operational and policy issues which affect ease of access to transport in its widest sense. These include the ease with which passengers can reach hospitals and healthcare facilities, and passenger convenience at major interchanges, such as step free access and signage considerations.

This year too, for example, our initiative has secured agreement to fund a walking route between Euston and the new St Pancras stations, by working with Camden Council and industry stakeholders.

Facing the future

London TravelWatch faces a number of strategic challenges, if it is to continue to develop its role as an effective voice for the travelling public of London. We suggest that a cross-party review might well focus on the following:

- The strategic and statutory role of London TravelWatch – what emphasis should we place on our many statutory functions, and what balance should we strike in our work between the short, medium and long term concerns of passengers
- Resources for research, communications and networking – our budget for 2010/11 is just £1.4m. There are 8.7 billion journeys made in total in London each year – our budget provides us with less than 0.02 pence per million journeys. Passenger Focus, the national body has a budget of £8.5m for only 3.7 billion journeys, which equates to 0.23p per million journeys.

- Understanding the respective roles of Transport Committee and London TravelWatch, and knowing the boundaries.
- How can the Mayor and Assembly best empower London TravelWatch to represent the interests of the travelling public? Could it be better respected, encouraged and engaged as a respected partner in developing and discussing transport issues?

We look forward to working with you to agree the review process.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S.M. Grant". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S' and 'M'.

Sharon Grant
Chair, London TravelWatch
Tel: 020 726 9985
e-mail: sharon.grant@londontravelwatch.org.uk

cc:

Boris Johnson, Mayor of London
Leo Boland, Chief Executive, GLA
Mark Roberts, Executive Director of Secretariat, GLA
Kulveer Ranger, Advisor for Transport, GLA
John Bennett, Head of Special Projects and Elections, GLA

London TravelWatch's area



Subject: Review of London TravelWatch

Report Number: 11

Report to: Business Management and Administration Committee

Date: 24 March 2010

Report of: Executive Director of Secretariat

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Committee agree that a review of London TravelWatch be carried out with terms of reference as outlined at paragraph 2.5.
- 1.2 That a 'working group', consisting of John Biggs AM, Darren Johnson AM, Caroline Pidgeon AM and Richard Tracey AM be established to undertake the review and submit a report to the Committee for consideration.

1. Background

- 1.1 At its meeting on 24 February 2010, the Assembly agreed the following motion:

"This Assembly believes that the upcoming tenth anniversary of London TravelWatch represents an excellent opportunity for the Assembly to set up a cross-party review to look into its costs and procedures in order to ensure that it is best placed to deliver value for money and serve passengers' needs effectively over the next ten years.

We further resolve that the Business Management and Administration Committee be delegated the setting of precise terms of reference and membership of the review panel."

- 1.2 During the debate on the motion, Assembly Members raised questions about London TravelWatch's statutory duties and discretionary powers; the relatively large proportion of the Assembly's budget which goes to London TravelWatch (around 20 per cent in 2009/10); and the potential for saving money through sharing of support services such as accommodation. Members also discussed the way passengers' views were used to inform GLA and TfL decision-making and how the respective roles of the Assembly and London TravelWatch could be examined with a view to making this process more effective.
- 1.3 In advance of the debate on the motion, the Chair of London TravelWatch wrote to all Assembly Members welcoming the review as an "opportunity to demonstrate the value of the work we undertake on behalf of London's travelling public". The full letter is attached as an appendix to this report.
- 1.4 The purpose of this paper is to set out some brief background information on London TravelWatch; and a proposed methodology and terms of reference for carrying out the review.

- 1.5 Section 247 of the GLA Act 1999 provided for a new body, the London Transport Users' Committee (LTUC). London TravelWatch is the operating name of LTUC. The functions, operations and duties of London TravelWatch are set out in the GLA Act and other legislation. For example, London TravelWatch took over the responsibilities of the London Regional Passengers Committee which were set out in the London Regional Transport Act 1984 and the Railways Act 1993, as amended. London TravelWatch is also a statutory consultee under other legislation such as the Heathrow Express Railways Act 1991 and the Channel Tunnel Act 1987.
- 1.6 The duties and powers of London TravelWatch are complex and will be examined in detail as part of the proposed review. They are broadly summarised in London TravelWatch's annual report as:¹
- responding to consultations on transport issues;
 - investigating complaints brought by people who are dissatisfied with responses they have received from service providers and seeking redress on their behalf where appropriate;
 - monitoring trends in service quality; and
 - representing the travelling public in discussions with opinion formers and policy makers.
- 1.7 Under section 251 of the GLA Act 1999, as amended, the Assembly may issue directions or guidance to London TravelWatch and London TravelWatch is required to exercise its functions in accordance with any such guidance or direction. Under section 247 of the Act, and after consultation with the Rail Regulator, the Assembly appoints the Chair and other Board Members of London TravelWatch. The Assembly may, after consultation with the Secretary of State for Transport, make arrangements for London TravelWatch to be provided with accommodation.² Responsibility for discharging the responsibilities and functions of the Assembly in relation to London TravelWatch has been delegated to the Transport Committee under its terms of reference.
- 1.8 The Assembly is also the primary funder of London TravelWatch. Under Schedule 18 of the GLA Act 1999, the Assembly is responsible for defraying the salaries and pensions of London TravelWatch's Board members and staff and its operating expenses. In 2009/10, the Assembly provided funds of £1.6 million to London TravelWatch, 98 per cent of the organisation's total income.³

2. Issues for consideration

- 2.1 The motion agreed by the Assembly proposes a review of London TravelWatch's costs and procedures to ensure that it is best placed to deliver value for money. It is proposed the review consist of four broad and linked workstreams. The aim of these workstreams would be to examine the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of London TravelWatch and, where appropriate, how elements of its representative role are discharged by other bodies such as the Transport Committee. The workstreams would comprise desk-based research analysing information and documents provided by London TravelWatch on its budget and operation; a series of structured interviews with staff and Board members; consultation with other

¹ London TravelWatch Annual Review 2009

² Paragraph 9 of Schedule 18 to the GLA Act 1999, as amended.

³ Ibid. LTW receives a small proportion of its income in the form of bank interest and from Passenger Focus in payment for consultancy services.

relevant bodies; and a comparative analysis of functions with relevant organisations. Further details of these workstreams and how they might be carried out are set out below.

1. London TravelWatch's statutory functions, duties and powers

This would involve a desk-based analysis of the relevant legislation to establish what functions London TravelWatch is required to carry out; and which functions it has the power to carry out. Advice would be sought from the London Assembly's legal adviser and the work would build on a previous summary of the relevant legislation by officers at London TravelWatch. The views of the Secretary of State for Transport would be sought in the light of his statutory role as consultee in relation to certain Assembly functions relating to London TravelWatch.

2. How London TravelWatch fulfils its role

It is proposed to map those activities undertaken by staff at London TravelWatch against its statutory functions and examine those which provide general support to these functions.. This would therefore build on the work carried out under the first part of the review. A desk-based analysis of all job descriptions and London TravelWatch's work programme would be supplemented by interviews with staff and Board members.

3. A review of London TravelWatch's role relative to other bodies

This would also build on the analysis of London TravelWatch's statutory functions by examining the roles fulfilled by other bodies which carry out similar and potentially overlapping functions. Relevant organisations include Passenger Focus which works closely with London TravelWatch on a number of issues; the London Assembly itself, particularly its Transport Committee; and the London boroughs which are also consulted by the relevant transport authorities about changes to services in their areas. Views would be sought from representatives of each of these bodies. The aim of this workstream would, in part, be to examine how effectively passengers' views are represented by these various bodies and identify opportunities for improving this representative role.

4. Ensuring value for money

Value for money is a key element of the motion agreed by the Assembly. It is intended to approach this part of the work based on the principles and guidance set out by the National Audit Office for its value for money audits of public spending bodies. The various components of this include a detailed examination of the organisation's objectives and its use of available resources to deliver those objectives. The work would be structured around a series of questions intended to develop an understanding of strengths and opportunities to improve the organisation's economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The aim would be to develop a number of recommendations intended to improve value for money.

This workstream would also build on the recent work carried out across the GLA and functional bodies as part of the shared services programme. It would concentrate on each of the functions and support functions of London TravelWatch with a view to identifying areas where economies of scale through sharing of services could deliver value for money.

It would also look at the extent to which lessons might be learned from practice in other organisations by benchmarking performance in certain areas. In many respects London TravelWatch is a unique organisation operating within a specific legislative framework.

Many of its functions though, as described in its business plan and other documents, are delivered by other public bodies. For example, there are a number of transport and non-transport statutory bodies with a remit to investigate complaints from members of the public. There may be potential for benchmarking London TravelWatch's operation and performance of various functions against those delivered by comparable bodies.

- 2.2 It is proposed that the review would be carried out over the next few months with a view to presenting a report to the Committee in the summer. In addition to the interviews with Board members and staff proposed, the views of London TravelWatch would be sought throughout the process. The role of the informal working group would be to provide a steer to the work of the review and develop proposals for the report. The report would contain recommendations for consideration by the Committee and, if appropriate, the full Assembly. Depending on the outcome of the review there may be implications for the Memorandum of Understanding between London TravelWatch and the Assembly's Transport Committee.
- 2.3 Work would start on the review during April and May with a view to presenting initial findings to the working group after the May 2010 local elections. It is intended to complete the review in time to inform the Assembly's consideration of its 2011/12 budget following publication of the Mayor's budget guidance, expected in July 2010. The 2011/12 budget is expected to be tight in the context of the anticipated retrenchment in public spending following the recession and the increase in the level of government debt. It is unlikely that the scale of this retrenchment and its effect on GLA budgets will be known by the time of the publication of the Mayor's budget guidance and therefore a number of scenarios may need to be planned for.
- 2.4 The review would be led from the secretariat drawing on support across the GLA and in particular the finance and HR functions within the GLA's Department of Resources.
- 2.5 The proposed terms of reference for the review are:
- To undertake a detailed examination of the functions, resources and performance of London TravelWatch;
 - To examine the role of London TravelWatch and its relationship with other relevant bodies and, where appropriate, to benchmark its various functions against the operation and performance of other comparable organisations as appropriate; and
 - To make recommendations intended to improve the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of London TravelWatch.

3. Legal implications

- 3.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this paper.

4. Financial implications

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this paper.

Background Documents: None
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