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## **Secretariat memorandum**

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LTW402

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### London Assembly review of London TravelWatch

#### **1 Purpose of report**

- 1.1. To update the Board in respect of the London Assembly's review of London TravelWatch.

#### **2 Recommendation**

- 2.1. Members are asked to note the report.

#### **3 Background**

- 3.1. In October 2010 the London Assembly published its review of London TravelWatch and made recommendations relating to London TravelWatch's future (see Appendix 1). Among the recommendations were that London TravelWatch's functions should be transferred to the London Assembly, London TravelWatch's staff should be relocated to City Hall, back office functions should be absorbed within the GLA, rail-related work should be transferred to Passenger Focus, and London TravelWatch should cease responding to borough consultations relating to streets and should not respond to any large-scale consultation to which the Assembly also planned to respond.

#### **4 Implementation of recommendations**

- 4.1. Although London TravelWatch disagreed with many of the recommendations and set out its objections in a response dated 15 December 2010 (see Appendix 2), it has worked collaboratively with representatives from the London Assembly to consider how best to take them forward.
- 4.2. An Implementation Group consisting of the Chair and Deputy Chair of London TravelWatch supported by the Chief Executive of London TravelWatch, and from the Assembly, the Chair of the Transport Committee plus the Chair of the Budget Committee, the Executive Director of Secretariat, Head of Corporate Services and Head of Special Projects, has met regularly since the review.
- 4.3. Abolition of London TravelWatch**
- 4.4. The Assembly's principal recommendation, that London TravelWatch should cease to exist as a separate organisation, cannot be progressed without specific legislation.

Bob Neil MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, wrote to the then Chair of the London Assembly, Dee Doocey AM, in November 2010 to confirm that the government did not intend to introduce new legislation. An attempt was made to abolish London TravelWatch by means of an amendment to the Localism Bill in the House of Lords. This did not receive government support and, after debate, the amendment was withdrawn. In the absence of any legislative change, London TravelWatch remains an independent organisation set up by Parliament to represent the interests of the users of all modes of transport in London. The Assembly has a continuing duty to fund its activities.

#### **4.5. Accommodation**

4.6. In relation to accommodation, London TravelWatch has, in accordance with the London Assembly's wishes, given notice that it will vacate the premises in Middle Street in order to relocate in August 2012 to cheaper accommodation.

4.7. At the time of writing, arrangements for London TravelWatch's future accommodation are still being finalised.

#### **4.8. Back office functions**

4.9. The London Assembly recommended that London TravelWatch's back office functions should be absorbed within the GLA to save costs.

4.10. During 2011-12 London TravelWatch entered into detailed negotiations with Passenger Focus about the possibility of outsourcing its HR and finance work to Passenger Focus. Unfortunately in July 2011 Passenger Focus decided it could no longer consider this option.

4.11. Meanwhile, London TravelWatch had also been undertaking its own very comprehensive review and as part of this questioned what work was essential to its role and identified different ways to deliver it. Following the review London TravelWatch reduced its staffing complement by a third, with a particular focus on different delivery of back office functions while maintaining its core activity.

#### **4.12. Rail-related work**

4.13. The London Assembly recommended that National Rail-related work should be outsourced to Passenger Focus under a service level agreement. London TravelWatch strongly opposed such a move as the integrated nature of transport in London meant that passengers would be significantly disadvantaged if consumer passenger representation of rail was split from other modes.

4.14. However, London TravelWatch did investigate in detail the possibility of working more closely as a whole with Passenger Focus, for example by means of a jointly-owned subsidiary organisation ("Paxco") to which the staff of both bodies would be transferred. Despite the best intentions of all parties, it became clear that London TravelWatch would not be able to make the level of savings required under this model. The Board was also concerned that that it did not give adequate safeguards for London passengers. It should be noted that London TravelWatch and Passenger Focus maintain a good working relationship and will continue to collaborate where appropriate to ensure the best outcomes for passengers and avoid duplication.

#### **4.15. Consultations**

- 4.16. In response to guidance from the Assembly, London TravelWatch has significantly reduced the number of borough council consultations it responds to. However, there is still a need for a strategic response to issues such as highway and traffic management proposals affecting bus routes, where routes cross borough boundaries. London TravelWatch is the best-placed organisation to address these issues. These consultations require only a small amount of officer time but are an important aspect of the work that London TravelWatch carries out on behalf of London passengers.
- 4.17. In respect of large-scale consultations, and where circumstances permit, London TravelWatch will consult with the London Assembly before deciding whether it is desirable to respond to such consultations.

#### **4.18. Performance monitoring report**

- 4.19. London TravelWatch disagreed with the Assembly's view that this should be discontinued and has argued that it is important that there is an independent scrutiny of operators' performance from the passenger's perspective. The popularity of this item on London TravelWatch's website confirms its benefit. It is also useful in highlighting areas of concern and has enabled us to take these forward on behalf of passengers, leading to improvements to transport in London. Officers are working with TfL to streamline the production of this report.

#### **4.20. Buses**

- 4.21. In response to direction from the Assembly, in Summer 2011 London TravelWatch removed its telephone number from notices in buses advising passengers on how to lodge comments and complaints.

#### **4.22. Board members**

- 4.23. London TravelWatch has expressed concern about the continuing vacancy on its Board and the implications that this has on its governance. At its meeting in June 2012 the Transport Committee of the Assembly will agree arrangements for recruiting new board members and the Chair of London TravelWatch will write in advance to recommend that the number of members should increase to eight.

### **5 Equalities and inclusion implications**

- 5.1. No equality impact study was carried out in respect of the London Assembly review. However, London TravelWatch expressed concern about the equalities implications of the "Paxco" proposal for its staff.

### **6 Legal powers**

- 6.1. Section 248 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 places upon London TravelWatch (as the London Transport Users Committee) a duty to consider - and where it appears to the Committee to be desirable, to make recommendations with respect to - any matter affecting the functions of the Greater London Authority or Transport for London which relate to transport (other than of freight). Section 252A of the same Act (as amended by Schedule 6 of the Railways Act 2005) places a similar duty upon the Committee to keep under review matters affecting the interests of the

public in relation to railway passenger and station services provided wholly or partly within the London railway area, and to make representations about them to such persons as it thinks appropriate.

- 6.2. Schedule 18 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 says that the London Assembly may, in consultation with the Secretary of State for Transport, make arrangements for London TravelWatch (as the London Transport Users Committee) to be provided with office accommodation.
- 6.3. Schedule 18 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 empowers London TravelWatch (as the London Transport Users Committee) to appoint staff, to remunerate members and staff, and to pay pensions to the Chair and staff.
- 6.4. Section 247 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 requires the London Assembly to appoint a Chair(man) and up to 24 other members of London TravelWatch (as the London Transport Users Committee). In making these appointments, it is required to have regard to the desirability of ensuring that, between them, the members of London TravelWatch represent the interests of those who use passenger transport facilities and services in Greater London and those who use rail transport facilities and services in the wider area over which London TravelWatch has a remit. Under Section 14 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 (as amended), regard must also be had, in appointing members, to “the desirability of the Committee ... including one or more persons with experience of work among, and the special needs of, disabled persons and to the person or persons with that experience being or including a disabled person or persons.”

## **7 Financial implications**

- 7.1. As a result of its staff restructure, London TravelWatch has made significant savings that will enable it to reduce its budget requirement while still preserving its core work of casework, policy and investigation. Its budget for 2012-13 will be £1.2m, a reduction of 25% from 2009-10 (£1.6m) and it has identified how to make further savings in 2013-14 which will enable it to reduce its budget requirements to around £1.1m, which compares favourably with the savings expected under scenario 3 of the London Assembly’s review report.