
Secretariat memorandum

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Work of the Policy and Investigation team

1 General

- 1.1. This paper gives an update on the activities of the Policy and Investigation team, confirming how these fit with the London TravelWatch business plan, explains the approach taken by the team in carrying out their work and sets out proposals for future research projects.

2 Background

- 2.1. London TravelWatch has had to reorganise its activities to reflect the reduced staff and budget resources that have been available in the past two years, as well as the reduced membership of the Board.
- 2.2. During this reorganisation the former Research and Development team was renamed Policy and Investigation which it was felt better reflected the actual activity of the team. The majority of team activity focuses on supporting the Board in areas of policy; by responding to public consultations, by monitoring key aspects of operator performance and by assisting the casework team on matters that have a specific policy implication.
- 2.3. In a typical week it estimated that the breakdown of time spent on key activities is approximately:-
- Responses to statutory consultations (including franchises and responses to Assembly scrutinies and Transport Select Committee investigations) 35%
 - Performance monitoring reports 10%
 - Assistance to casework team/media work 5-10%
 - Preparation of material/support for Board meetings 15- 20%
 - Meetings with operators/authorities 20%
 - Pro-active research 5-10%
 - The Director spends approximately 15% of his time on corporate management activity
- 2.4. A modest budget (circa £35,000) has been allocated most years to enable a small but targeted amount of primary research to be carried out to supplement our evidence base. As well as this externally commissioned research we undertake a small amount of research internally using our own staff.

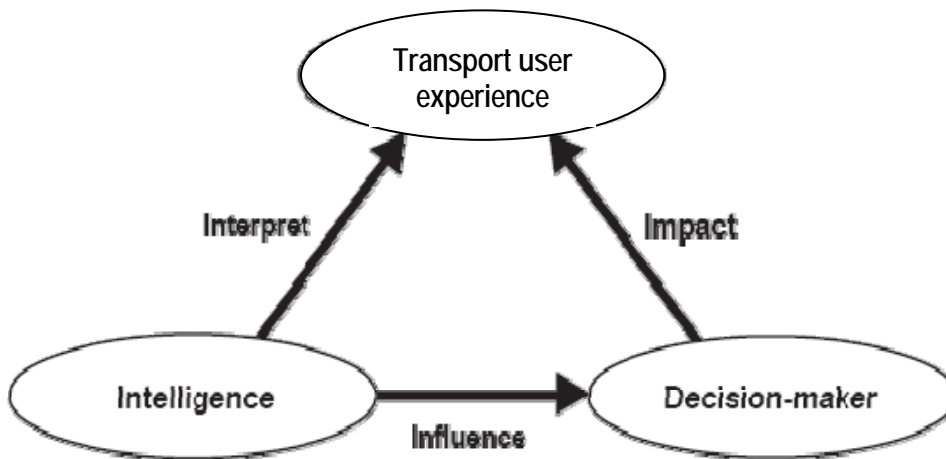
- 2.5. The organisation has never had the capacity or resource in terms of finance or staff time to operate a large scale primary research programme, particularly when other organisations such as Passenger Focus, the Office of Rail Regulation or Transport for London have had significantly greater resources to achieve these aims. Indeed, even if resources on this scale were or had been available to us it would have probably meant we were duplicating much of the work of these other bodies. Instead, we aim to input where possible into the work of these wider bodies to ensure that user interest is included in their work, or where appropriate a London aspect is included in their work.
- 2.6. The staffing establishment of the team has been reduced over the past two years from 5.75 to 4 full time equivalent. In addition individual staff members have changed and there has been a reorganisation of roles within the team. This reduction in capacity (and to an extent capability), has meant that the team's ability to take on additional activities (particularly at the request of individual Board members) has significantly reduced. The reduction in the number of Board meetings has also led to a reduction in work for the team. Members have previously noted that the amount of outstanding items for all committees in 'Matters Arising' has significantly reduced.
- 2.7. The business plan process, reinforced through the staff appraisal process, has been developed significantly in recent years. This means that staff activities are now captured and quantified in a way that perhaps they had not been in the past. Individual staff objectives are now better aligned to those of the business plan.
- 2.8. The reduction in discretionary activity has enabled the team to protect its core activities of providing responses to statutory consultations, supporting the activities of casework and promoting user interest through meetings with operators and providers.
- 2.9. In the feedback to the London Assembly as part of their review of London TravelWatch, over 90% of respondents said that London TravelWatch responses to consultations are informed and useful. In addition a majority of respondents said that our consultation responses effectively represented the views of passengers, and that we chose only those consultations to respond to where we could add value and address issues from a passenger perspective. This is important as we are often the only organisation responding solely on their behalf.
- 2.10. As we spend such a high proportion of our time responding to major consultations it is particularly pleasing that this area was most highly rated in terms of added value by stakeholders ranging from franchise bidders and TfL to individual user groups. In the past two years we have concentrated on raising and maintaining the standard of such consultation responses. This included the establishment of the Policy Assistant post to develop a new focus on collating, presenting and interpreting statistical information.
- 2.11. The net result of these changes to our method of operation is that we have been able to achieve significant improvements for passengers both in short and long terms, at individual case level and also more collectively. Operators and authorities have included our recommendations/aspirations in their plans for stations, franchises, information systems etc. Smarter and more focused working has enabled us to make a demonstrable difference for transport users with fewer resources. However, we are now at the stage where we cannot cut back on any of this activity and still be able to meet our statutory obligations let alone carry out proactive work.

- 2.12. The appendix details the research that London TravelWatch has undertaken in recent years either commissioned using its own resources or in collaboration with others.
- 2.13. In addition we publish on a quarterly basis our analysis of National Rail and TfL performance. Analysing performance in this way and also looking at complaints statistics gives an informed basis to our discussions with operators and with TfL, as well as providing an evidential base for responses to public consultations. Previous use of the statistics to identify problem areas has enabled us to target 'offending' bodies and encouraged them to take action to correct these.
- 2.14. A good example of how this work makes a real difference for transport users was our analysis of accessible bus stops and which highway authorities were failing to meet targets. We contacted the relevant authorities and following an amount of public comment many of the worst offenders have improved their performance such that the number of accessible bus stops in London is now greater than was envisaged by the TfL business plan. This has not only improved accessibility to the bus network for people with disabilities, but, through the application of bus stop clearway orders, has contributed to improving the overall reliability of the bus network as a whole. This illustrates how our expertise can usefully feed into the activities of other organisations
- 2.15. Recently we have expanded this analysis to cover TfL's complaints data. This will in time greatly expand our capability to scrutinise TfL's operations. .

3 Getting results

- 3.1. The work described above and in the appendix demonstrates how with a very small team and budget we have nevertheless been able to make a significant impact on behalf of transport users by concentrating our resources where we can make the most difference.
- 3.2. This achievement can be attributed to the methods of working that we have used in recent years. These include effective partnership working, a systemic approach to problem solving, data collection and interpretation, knowledge application and a holistic approach to gathering intelligence on developments within the transport industry.
- 3.3. In terms of a business model, our method of working could be considered close to that of intelligence-led policing. Jerry Ratcliffe¹ defines this approach well:
'Intelligence-led policing is a business model and managerial philosophy where data analysis and crime intelligence are pivotal to an objective, decision-making framework that facilitates crime and problem reduction, disruption and prevention through both strategic management and effective enforcement strategies that target prolific and serious offenders'.
- 3.4. Radcliffe's model (adapted) in the figure below illustrates the process:-

¹ Ratcliffe, JH (2008) **'Intelligence-Led Policing'** (Willan Publishing: Cullompton, Devon)



- 3.5. Obviously in the case of London TravelWatch the 'criminal' environment has been substituted with 'Transport user experience'.
- 3.6. This intelligence led approach means that for example, we will always try to use a variety of different sources, which we interpret and then use to influence decision makers. Our sources include:
- Evidence from casework
 - Evidence directly gathered by staff and members using the system
 - Analysis of industry produced statistics, research and other information
 - Understanding of the industry's own interpretation of its data
 - Contact with industry players
 - Direct contact with users through activities such as transport user surgeries
 - Contact with the media, including social media
 - Contact with stakeholder interests outside of the transport industry and in government
 - Where other sources of intelligence are not available, to produce or commission our own targeted research, by a variety of means.
- 3.7. Central to this approach is the maintenance of personal and institutional knowledge, through for example reading of journals, horizon scanning, site visits and regular contact with operators. This means that we are not dependant on a singular source of data from which we can identify or interpret problems with the transport network.
- 3.8. We also use intelligent commissioning to ensure that we squeeze the maximum value out of our external research budget, for example by analysing existing data or using our expertise to properly target survey activity on areas which we anticipate are most likely to present problems (for example in the mystery shopping of London Underground ticket office opening hours and the Oyster incomplete journeys research).
- 3.9. The approach also enables us to respond quickly to emerging issues but our greater emphasis on specific areas of activity or projects means that we have less opportunity to be side tracked into areas are not directly relevant to London transport users.

- 3.10. The breadth and quality of our evidence base is therefore our strength, and gives us a good reputation amongst decision makers and other stakeholders. Maintaining this reputation is the key to our ability to make a difference for passengers and transport users. It should also be noted that our approach in relation to the transport industry is different to that of other players, and as such this gives a unique perspective to our work.

4 Current activities

- 4.1. As part of the business plan or as follow up from previous activity, Members have previously agreed that the following pieces of work primary research should be carried out this year. It should be noted that almost all our research activity has been scheduled during the second part of the year to take account of other priorities relating to the Olympic and Paralympic Games and the office move in the first six months.
- Follow up to our work on Oyster incomplete journeys, and passenger understanding of the use of Oyster cards
 - Follow up to our London Underground booking office mystery traveller survey.
 - Looking at passenger experiences of claiming compensation.
- 4.2. We will also follow up our previous work on walking and interchange looking at specific locations and working with different parties to find solutions to problems identified focussing particularly on major London interchanges where major works are in progress to ensure that the needs of transport users are taken into account and protected both during construction and subsequently. This will include Paddington, London Bridge, Victoria, and Kings Cross stations and their environs. We will also continue to take forward our previous work on pavement obstructions and associated enforcement activities with a view to developing a campaign to encourage local authorities across London to do more to improve accessibility.
- 4.3. We would expect to do a lot of this work ourselves, working in partnership with other organisations as appropriate.
- 4.4. In addition, we have an outstanding aspiration to investigate passenger priorities for improvement on the Underground in the same way that we already have information about passenger priorities for improvement on the buses and national rail. We have already been supplied with a significant amount of material for this by London Underground but unfortunately work had to be suspended on this project in the period between Poonam Hayer leaving us and Robert Nichols joining. Subsequently the large volume of work associated with rail franchising meant that capacity was not available to progress this further. However, the 'pause' in government franchising activity may now allow the opportunity to reinvigorate this work.
- 4.5. We have been asked by the Department for Transport to produce a good practice guide to altering public transport services during major one off events building on the lessons learnt during the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Primarily, this would be aimed at train operators and we will involve Passenger Focus to ensure national reach.
- 4.6. The 2013/14 business plan proposes new research activity be focused on:

- Perceptions of value for money amongst public transport users across London, something that could be used as a benchmark should the Mayor get further influence over rail in London.
- Transport user attitudes to the travelling environment covering vehicle and boarding point cleanliness, graffiti, and trackside / roadside rubbish / litter and vegetation management.

5 Maintaining and improving our policy and investigation capacity

- 5.1. As noted above, the strength of the 'intelligence led' approach to our work is that it interprets and acts on information from a variety of different sources. This means that it is essential that the team as a whole maintains its knowledge awareness, so as to provide expert opinion/analysis. The role of the Policy Assistant in analysing statistics and data produced by others can be developed more, and we are currently looking at ways of doing this.
- 5.2. Ensuring that we are aware of, and are responding to appropriate public consultations is also an important area, where we need to ensure that a transport user voice is heard. We have identified that this is an aspect of our work which could be improved, and where we need to take a more systematic approach. We plan to recruit a 'policy intern' for six months through the accredited University of London scheme to develop a framework for doing this.
- 5.3. Meeting with the industry is a major part of our ability to achieve results for passengers. We have very good contact with most senior figures, however, our contact with lower levels of management could be improved and we are considering how best to do this.
- 5.4. The office move has been instrumental in enabling a much closer working relationship between the Casework and Policy & Investigation teams, resulting in much more sharing of knowledge.
- 5.5. Finally, we plan to change our approach to commissioning external research to cut down administration and hopefully achieve better value for money. We have developed a 'framework' contract to cover a variety of different activities over a period of several years. An added benefit of such an approach would also be that we would be able to conduct new research quickly should we need to respond to an emerging issue.

6 Recommendation

- 6.1. Members are asked to note the report.

7 Equalities and inclusion implications

- 7.1. London TravelWatch's research projects take account of equalities and inclusion issues on an individual basis.

8 Legal powers

- 8.1. 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 it to be desirable, to make representations with respect to – any matter affecting the services and facilities provided by Transport for London which relate to transport (other than freight) and which have been the subject of representations made to it by or on behalf of users of those services and facilities. Section 252A of the same Act (as amended by Schedule 6 of the Railways Act 2005) places a similar duty upon it in respect of representations received from users or potential users of railway passenger services provided wholly or partly within the London railway area.

9 Financial implications

- 9.1. London TravelWatch's budget includes specific provision for research.

In the last few years, London TravelWatch has produced a number of pieces of research, either commissioned using its own resources or in collaboration with others. These have included:-

Cycling in London, May 2009

This was member led research that included visits to various cycling schemes and a survey of stakeholders. It has established the Board's position on cycling which is unique in so far as we aim to represent all modes. In this case we were particularly careful to consider the views of vulnerable pedestrians (elderly and disabled) in coming to our views on cycling.

***London Bus Passenger Priorities for Improvement, May 2010**

Commissioned externally alongside similar work from Passenger Focus on national bus passenger priorities. It has formed the evidence base for responses to a number of policy initiatives, in particular to the retention of the bus network at its current extent; and to preserve programmes aimed at improving the customer service offering for buses. It has also been used to show the importance to bus passengers of journey time reliability and consistency, in relation to street design and management issues, and helped to justify our inclusion in the Mayor's Roads Task Force representing the interests of bus passengers.

Passenger attitudes to First Class Travel, July 2010

Commissioned externally, this met a long-standing aspiration of the organisation, and had been included in previous business plans. This research has subsequently been taken up by Virgin Trains, East Coast, Greater Anglia, Chiltern, Southern and First Capital Connect; Bidders for the West Coast, Great Western and Thameslink Southern Great Northern franchises have incorporated the research into the bids for their franchises. As a direct result of the research some additional capacity has been released on London commuter services and first class traveller issues no longer form a regular part of our casework. Passenger Focus were asked to join in this research but declined on the basis that the research was not then deemed relevant to long distance passengers although they are now planning to conduct similar research of their own.

Station Standards in London, November 2010

Internally produced, but brought together significant proportions of London TravelWatch policy in one document. Has been used to inform new schemes such as the Waterloo Balcony scheme completed in 2012.

***Passenger attitudes to compensation, June 2011**

London TravelWatch contributed to this work commissioned externally by Passenger Focus. This work helped justify the decision to introduce Delay Repay compensation arrangements to Southeastern in 2011, and to include a requirement to improve conditions for Delay Repay in the new franchises for Great Western and West Coast when finally awarded. It will also help us with our response to any proposals to alter the arrangements for compensation on TfL services when this happens.

Incomplete Oyster Pay As You Go journeys, July 2011

The problem of passengers incurring maximum journey charges is reflected in casework and also highlighted by the London Assembly, this piece of work enabled much greater scrutiny of the issues. Given the amounts of passengers money (over £60m per year) that are involved, its impact on value for money for passengers, and the significant increase in requests for refunds that occurred after our report was published this has been an extremely valuable piece of work. Following publication it got excellent media coverage, as a result of which TfL reported a 10% rise in the number of passengers seeking refunds. Subsequently this report has been used by TfL to justify major changes to the way in which Oyster inter-relates with passengers, such as the presentation of statements, making it easier for passengers to identify where they have been overcharged and how to get reimbursement of any over payment for the journey made. It has been used to justify our stance on other smartcard projects.

Analysis of 2011 figures of incomplete journeys incurred showed a significant fall in the number of such instances at central London stations especially the major rail termini. However, this was offset by an increase in incomplete journeys in Outer London mirroring the increased take up of Oyster and confirms the need for further work to be carried out on this subject.

Walking and Interchange in London, September 2011

This was member led research looking at passengers' experience of many aspects of interchange both within stations and with the wider street environment. It has established the Board's position on many aspects of interchange in London and spawned further work on highway obstructions and a survey of station to station interchange on foot.

Mystery traveller surveys of London Underground booking offices, February 2012

Commissioned externally, but agreed in previous Business Plans and guided by the Board as a priority. These surveys were instrumental in raising the profile of this issue both publicly and with TfL.

Will everyone get to the Games? June 2012

This mystery traveller survey of accessible routes to Olympic and Paralympic Games venues was conducted in May 2012 in association with Transport for All. Immediate problems identified by this survey were taken up with operators / authorities who in most cases took steps to rectify them quickly.

**These were pieces of work where there had been a long term aspiration in the Business Plan to tackle these subjects, and joint working with Passenger Focus enabled them to be commissioned*