

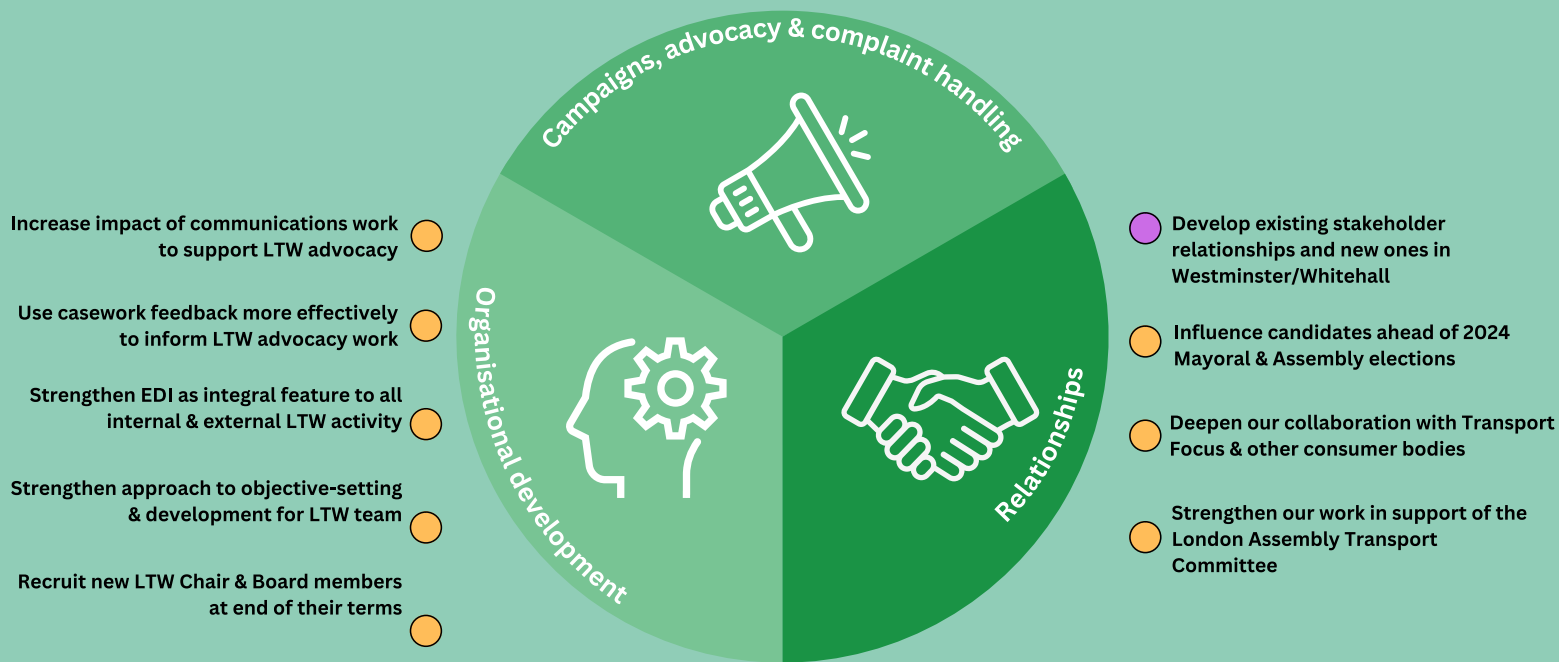
Chief Executive's report

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Agenda item: LTW715

Drafted: 12 July 2023

- Promote greater borough level commitment to bus improvements
- Seek better deal on public transport fares & services
- Improve processes for handling complaints
- Call for better TfL roads' policies and measures
- Seek adoption of LTW recommendations on personal security & digital exclusion



- Completed or going well
- Underway or ongoing
- Not going well
- Not started
- No longer applicable

## **1 Overview**

At the end of Q1, work is underway on one or more elements of all our business year priorities, apart from developing existing stakeholder relationships and new ones in Westminster/Whitehall. Further detail can be found in the individual reports covered elsewhere in the agenda. A review of progress against objectives as we approach the half-year point is planned for the September Board meeting.

Since my report to the last Board meeting in May, my key areas of activity have involved ongoing development of senior level relationships with transport providers; reaching out to broader consumer groups; working with the London TravelWatch team and others to prepare for consultations on ticket office changes; and working on significant internal matters, such as recruitment of a new Chair and considering options once our current office lease ends.

## **2 Campaigns & advocacy**

In May, I chaired the panel session at the TfL event marking the first anniversary of the publication of their Bus Action Plan. London TravelWatch had been instrumental in making the case originally for such a plan. The event involved representatives from councils, stakeholders and TfL: our participation signalled the continuing importance to us of measures to improve the attraction of buses, not least through our ongoing bus alliance work.

In June, following an introductory meeting with Alex Williams, TfL's Chief Customer and Strategy Officer, I wrote to him seeking clarification regarding three aspects of the proposed expansion of ULEZ: the plans to improve the attraction of sustainable transport modes, the accompanying package of targeted financial support, and the place of ULEZ within a broader transport strategy to improve transport services in outer London. I hope to have a response in time for the Board meeting.

I have continued to urge RDG to address the misleading presentation of fares for national rail journeys in the Greater London area, as displayed online on National Rail Enquiries' and TOC websites. Following yet further delay by RDG, a meeting to work through the issues has now been arranged and I will report back at the Board meeting.

### 3 Relationships

In addition to my regular and useful monthly meetings with each of the 4 political leads on the Assembly's Transport Committee, I have met senior figures (some for the first time) from major transport providers in our area, such as Network Rail, Govia Thameslink (GTR), Southwestern Railway (SWR), Southeastern, Arrival Rail and TfL. Topics discussed have included service performance and ticket offices; and in the case of SWR and TfL, these have involved visits to their operations' control centres.

In the same period, I have also met several consumer groups to establish whether there are potential areas of common interest. Some of these have been transport-specific organisations, such as Campaign for Better Transport (fares was identified as a possible topic for joint work) and the RAC Foundation (we both appeared at the same Transport Committee enquiry on smart road user charging). I also have regular meetings scheduled with Transport for All: ticket offices was the main topic of conversation at our last meeting.

I have also reached out to non-transport specific consumer groups and have now met representatives from Which?, Citizens Advice and the Consumer Council for Water. This has helped me gain more of an understanding of the wider consumer agenda; and it has been interesting listening to the experience of at least one of those organisations in deciding when (and when not) to adopt an activist approach when representing the interests of consumers. I have also taken the opportunity in these meetings to refer to London TravelWatch's potential need for future office space. There are more organisations with whom I am keen to develop relationships, but this is set to be a less active area over the next couple of months as I support the team in our work to manage the ticket office closure consultations.

I joined the May meeting of the Transport Focus Board for a "blue skies" discussion about the potential future relationship between our two organisations and emerging big issues in transport. I suggested that we needed to keep working on giving more shape and purpose when supporting each other in areas of insight where we have shared interest; and the three big issues on which I focussed were reallocation of scarce road space, social issues associated with transport and the nature itself of consumer advocacy in transport. I will be meeting Anthony Smith soon for an update on Transport Focus' organisational "reset".

Finally, I have now met all London TravelWatch board members individually apart from one. I am grateful to members for sparing their time to share their

thoughts on experience to date and ideas for the future. Members have raised a wide range of issues, some of which were covered in the discussion at the last Board meeting about future ways of working. Others topics have covered potential areas of future London TravelWatch work, such as climate change, and reviewing global good practice and complaints handling activity; and organisational issues, such as the scope for leveraging additional resources and carrying out a skills audit of current Board members.

#### **4 Complaints handling**

I have joined Susan in discussions with Transport Focus colleagues regarding the joint review of how we handle their casework: we have agreed some helpful refinements to our approach (see the report on casework elsewhere on this agenda). Susan and I have also worked on a single, consolidated passage of text to replace the disparate website references to how we handle appeals. The aim is to make things clearer for visitors to our website: the text is nearly complete and the next stage will be to mock up how this will appear on the website and to test on a number of people (including any Board members who would like to help) before going live.

#### **5 Organisational development**

A long list of candidates for the role of London TravelWatch Chair has now been interviewed by the recruitment consultants Veredus. A short list, agreed with the political leads on the Assembly Transport Committee, will go to final panel interview in early August, prior to selecting a preferred candidate and then securing approval from the Secretary of State for Transport.

I have now formally approached our landlord to provide a proposal for us to consider in view of the end of our current lease later in the year, while exploring a number of other potential options at the same time. A fuller update will be provided in confidence to Board members.

In May, we held an internal wash-up meeting to consider the outcome of our facilitated team workshop on EDI held in April and the subsequent report sent to us by our consultants. We have agreed a set of internal next steps over the next few months and are starting to take them forward.

The annual pay awards for the team (progression along the pay scale and annual cost of living award) have now been agreed with the Assembly secretariat and reflected in colleagues' June salary payments. A cost of living

award for Board members has been agreed with the Chair (in line with the Chief Executive's award) and is due to be reflected in the July payments.

## **6 Future Board meetings**

The next meeting of the Board is as a Members' Event on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> September and, depending on how things progress with recruiting Arthur's successor, this is due to be his final meeting in the Chair.