

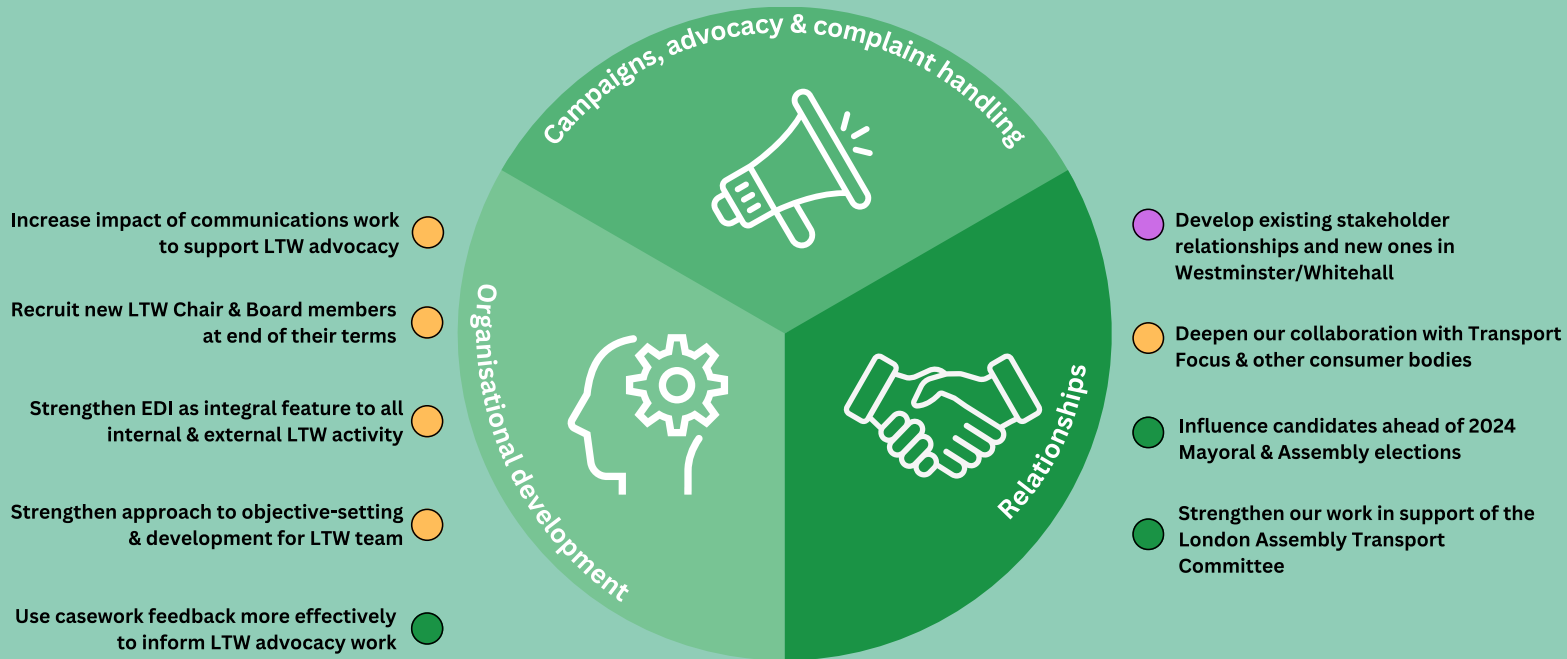
Chief Executive's report

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Agenda item: LTW725

Drafted: 2 November 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- No longer applicable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

The summary of progress against business year priorities in the above infographic reflects the same status ratings as those used in the half-year review discussed at the Members' meeting on 20th September. Six priorities are at green (completed or going well), seven at amber (under way or ongoing) and one at purple (not started).

I have continued to devote the overwhelming bulk of my time since that meeting working with the team to finalise our responses to the proposals to close ticket offices. Now that that work has been completed, I would expect to focus on developing a strong working relationship with the incoming Chair (particularly, but not just on, forward planning for the organisation); engaging with the new Transport Focus senior team; promoting our priorities in the run-up to the May 2024 London elections; and supporting our advocacy on fares.

2 Campaigns & advocacy

The team's recent work on proposed ticket office closures has been summarised in the Campaigns and Communications reports, and will be discussed more fully elsewhere in the agenda for this meeting. As with other members of the team, I have been involved in many aspects of the work, in particular helping to shape key arguments for the final letters and engaging at senior level with key players in the process (see below for more on the latter).

The team has combined amazing diligence, resilience and resourcefulness to secure a highly favourable outcome. As with any project of this sort, we will take the opportunity to review what went well and what we can learn from. We will also need to consider what consequences might now arise in terms of industry and Government policy for rail in our remit, and the implications of those consequences for passengers as well as for our own ongoing work.

3 Relationships

Virtually all of my engagements recently have supported the team's intense series of working-level meetings with key players involved in the consultation on ticket office closures. The most significant of these have been with:

- the senior management team at Transport Focus, to share intelligence and ensure as far as appropriate that our two organisations had a common, robust and well-justified set of positions on the TOC proposals
- the senior management team at Rail Delivery Group, as well as officials and the Minister at the Department of Transport, to keep them briefed on the process and our generic concerns with the TOC proposals, while vigorously maintaining our independence of view
- key stakeholders such as the political group leads on the Assembly's Transport Committee, to keep them briefed on the process and general issues arising from the TOC proposals, while vigorously maintaining our independence of view.

The fact that we objected to all of the proposals in our remit is likely to have put some strain on our relationships with the industry and the Department. As part of our internal review, we will also need to consider what if anything this means for our work ahead.

In terms of Transport Focus, we will need to cultivate new relationships with senior figures in the organisation. Alex Robertson joins as CEO on 15th November (Anthony Smith is due to leave some time in December), supported by a new-look team of directors which is being created as part of the wider reset of Transport Focus. I have an initial meeting with Alex on 20th November, as well as the latest meeting of CARGO (the joint group which reviews the collaboration agreement between the two bodies). We also have a special joint meeting of the two Boards on 19th December and it would be useful to discuss how we would like to use and prepare for that meeting.

4 Complaints handling

I have had to review, according to our processes, how the casework team handled an appeal following a complaint from a member of the public. I concluded there was no reason to uphold the complaint. The casework team also receive and triage Freedom of Information (FOI) requests and I carried out a review of our handling of one FOI request. This had been instigated, under the arrangements supporting FOI, by a member of the public who was not satisfied with the response we had given to his original request for information related to the ticket office closure proposals. I concluded that we did not hold the information he sought (beyond that which we had already provided) and signposted the individual to sources of some of the information which were already in the public domain.

5 Organisational development

The process of confirming with the Secretary of State for Transport our preferred candidate for the role of London TravelWatch Chair is still in play. That in turn has also had a knock-on effect on filling the two other Board places which are due to become vacant on 31st December. An update will be provided at the meeting.

Our current lease for the office runs out in the first week of November. Signature of the new three-year lease, agreed in principle in the summer with the landlord, awaits the conclusion of discussions about the fine print between the two teams of solicitors. This should be possible in time, but if discussions cannot be concluded by the end date, our solicitors have advised that we can make use of a contingency arrangement (tenancy at will) to continue to occupy the office.

With regard to our budget for 2024/25 and confirmation of our policy on reserves and on funding of annual cost-of-living awards, we understand that Assembly Group leaders support our approach. Confirmation of this is expected very shortly.

Due to the recent heavy workload linked to the ticket office closure proposals, we are not as advanced as we would normally be in preparing our annual business plan for endorsement by the Assembly's Transport Committee. We have agreed with the Committee to present our plan for discussion at their session on Monday 18th December (see separate paper and agenda item on this topic).

6 Future Board meetings

The next meeting of the Board is a special joint session with the Transport Focus Board on Tuesday 19th December 1100-1400, and is being held at Broadway House, Tothill Street, London SW1H 9NQ (near to Transport Focus' office in Westminster).