LONDON
TRAVELWATCH

Time: 10:15 – 13:00

Minutes of Members Event 20.05.26

Venue: Europoint, 5-11 Lavington Street, London SE1 0NZ

Attendance: Tricia Hayes, Chair (TH), Richard Hebditch (RH), Eddie Lynch (EL), Lara Sonola (LS), Susan Stockwell (SS), Priya Khullar (PK)

Apologies: Tiffany Lam (TL)

Secretariat: Michael Roberts (MR), Susan James (SJ), Sonya Dallat (SD), Alex Smith (AS), Catherine Williams (CW), Emily Bastin (EM), Shahid Mohammed (SM)

Guests: n/a

1. Chair's introduction, apologies, minutes and matters arising from private board meeting 18.03.26

Tricia Hayes (TH) opened the meeting and the minutes of the Public Event meeting on 20th March 2026 were approved. Actions from the previous meeting were discussed and updated and reflected in the revised action log.

2. Chair's update

- TH said that the main business of the meeting was to review the product of the evidence gathering stage of the London TravelWatch Strategy Review, starting with a presentation by SD on the key findings.
- TH advised that a recruitment campaign for new Board members would commence shortly to replace those whose terms are due to conclude at the end of the year. TH encouraged members to share this opportunity within their networks.
- MR confirmed that the Collaboration Agreement between Transport Focus and London TravelWatch has been approved for the current business year, with potential changes to its format expected next year as Transport Focus assumes its new passenger watchdog responsibilities.

Action: TH and MR to share the Collaboration Agreement with the Board for their information.

3. London TravelWatch Strategy Review

- TH and SD gave an overview on the Strategy Review which would underpin LTW's business plans for the three years from April 2027. SD briefed the Board on two sets of initial intelligence gathering work – a survey by Yonder (a research agency) and a questionnaire sent out to LTW's own newsletter subscribers.
- Yonder had received 1500 responses, and 500 responses had been received via LTW's own newsletter. While these groups had different characteristics (the Yonder group was a representative sample) responses had shown a lot of similarities across

both respondents. The overall message from the feedback was that London TravelWatch's current work programme was already addressing many of the issues of most concern to users. These included slow bus speeds, inaccessible tubes, expensive and over complicated train fares and safety around walking and cycling. Reassuringly, value for money, reliability, safety, faster buses and better information needed on services, were all current issues that LTW's work was already focussed on.

- Beneath this high-level finding, the survey work had identified some important and informative differences between the needs and concerns of different categories of user. SD referred to LTW's recent podcast with John McGeachy, Age UK Campaigns Manager, who had referred to better communication being crucial to their clients. SD said some interesting points had come up on a deeper dive into the research data, such as passengers wanting to pay by cash on buses and tubes in the 25–44-year age group. The 18-24 age groups used buses more frequently and were also the age group who had most concerns over lack of value for money on public transport, possibly due to finding the tube too expensive but the buses unreliable and too slow.

The Board welcomed the results of the survey work which had provided a valuable resource for the future strategy. In discussion the following points were made about the findings of the surveys and what these might mean for the future strategy.

- RH agreed that the survey work had thrown up some important new insights, some of which appeared to differ from the assumptions of transport professionals. For example, the survey work highlighted the importance of cost in driving travel behaviour for some groups of passengers. The findings on some passengers' continuing preference for using cash and how they access information were especially significant, as professionals often assume such information is easily available via Google and apps. These insights highlighted the importance of LTW's role. RH added that while transport professionals are knowledgeable, the findings suggest that without LTW, they may not focus on the areas that matter most to some of their customers.
- PK asked if TfL carried out their own similar research and if the results from the LTW surveys had yet been shared with them. SD said the research had not yet been shared with TfL but confirmed that TfL did conduct their own research. MR added that TfL measured passenger satisfaction levels and assessed 20 factors on its headline scorecards.
- SS said that the findings gave LTW confidence that it is focusing on the right priorities and reinforced its existing evidence base. This was welcome. However, a key challenge remains in understanding future transport needs and how these might change over the three-year strategy period.
- SS added that the issue of cash usage should be explored further, with LTW remaining evidence-led and guided by customer feedback as society becomes increasingly cashless. TH noted that around 250,000 Londoners did not have bank accounts. AS added that support for cash use was particularly strong among younger passengers, who often used it to budget during the cost-of-living crisis. However, there was a practical problem in that TfL evidence showed that cash bus payments significantly increased boarding times.
- LS agreed that passengers may prefer to use cash as a way of managing their budgets and that LTW should consider the evidence it is gathering in the context of ongoing cost-of-living increases. Younger passengers, in particular, face a range of financial pressures and may view transport as one of the few areas where they can reduce spending, compared with fixed costs such as rent. LS said that contactless payment can make budgeting more difficult, given the application of daily and

weekly caps, and suggested that pre-paid cards could offer a more manageable alternative to cash.

- LS also highlighted structural constraints, such as in parts of South London where passengers are more reliant on trains, which are often more expensive than other modes. In addition, LS questioned the assumption that increasing bus speeds would necessarily lead to higher usage. MR responded that while there is supporting evidence at an aggregate level, its relevance at route or area level may be less certain.
- EL raised concerns about the safety risks posed by e-scooters and bicycles being used on pavements and expressed surprise that this issue was not more prominent in the survey findings and had not been given more prominence in the London Assembly Transport Committee's *Quality Street* report. EL emphasised the need for clearer language and stronger legislation in this area.
- LS noted the increasing prominence of personal security as an issue shaping travel choices. She said she would be interested in seeing actual crime data statistics and added that people's perceptions could be shaped by social media but differ from reality. AS wondered whether rising concerns could reflect transport-specific issues more generally, such as the recent Huntingdon train attack. AS said, she would be interested on the Board's thoughts on the right focus for future work on personal security as LTW had focussed on violence against women and girls but could potentially carry out work on anti-social behaviour more broadly.
- PK noted continuing underreporting of some categories of crime driven by a lack of trust in the reporting processes, something which had come up at the Mayoral Task Force meetings. RH noted that although crime was an important topic LTW would need to prioritise the issues it could realistically address in a small organisation and on a tight budget.

TH thanked SD for an important and interesting presentation, which had supported a rich and creative discussion between Board members. She said that the discussion had provided a number of high-level steers for the next stage in the work, as well as suggesting the must-do areas of focus for the future strategy period.

The key strategic steers were:

- The overall message from the survey work has been to confirm that LTW was already working on most of the topics of most interest to transport users. While there would need to be some changes for the next strategy period, there would also be a lot of continuity.
- LTW's strategy should continue to champion the interests of those segments of users who most needed its support. It should challenge assumptions about different passenger segments, ensuring their characteristics are well understood and their interests effectively represented. TH added that this provides a strong example of how LTW can take practical action to support passengers.
- The future strategy should have a continuing focus on personal security, though there was still work to be done to work out the exact focus of this work and how it could best add value to that of other organisations.
- LTW should continue to champion a truly customer-focused approach that considers wider factors shaping travel satisfaction beyond the physical network.
- LTW should be forward looking and flexible in its future strategy, alert to the impact of new modes and behaviours – for example the changes to the use of streets and pavements which had been raised by EL.

Pulling this together, TH suggested that the future strategy should definitely focus on:

- **Enhancing Bus Travel**
  Improving the experience of travelling by bus continued to be a high priority for many Londoners, especially those with most dependence on public transport. This includes reliability, accessibility, affordability, and journey comfort, all of which are critical to maintaining and increasing ridership.
- **Personal Security and Safety**
  There were two elements to this: responding to the clear evidence on how security concerns were affecting user confidence, and also the impact on safety of new modes of transport. Transport systems must adapt to ensure that passengers feel safe at all stages of their journey, particularly in less regulated or newly developed mobility services.
- **Challenging Assumptions About Passenger Needs**
  LTW should draw on its evidence base to debunk outdated assumptions about the views and preferences of different transport user groups. This should include identifying who benefits most from initiatives and ensuring that policies are targeted effectively toward those with the greatest need.
- **Future proofing the customer offer**
  The sector must draw on lessons from the past while embracing future opportunities. A key priority is maintaining a customer-focused approach, ensuring that services are designed around passenger needs rather than being driven primarily by supplier or operational interests.

- The Board then moved on to discuss the findings from the surveys on LTW's overall approach and operating model. As a small organisation, it was important for LTW to focus on the areas where LTW can have the greatest impact, ensuring that effort and resources are directed towards the most pressing challenges.
- MR said the survey results indicated a need for LTW to raise its profile, secure better funding, and strengthen its influence on policy.
- RH asked which approaches had been most successful in enabling LTW to influence decision-makers and improve transport delivery. The team reflected that success had come from a combination of approaches, including advocating for increased investment in renewals and maintenance; engagement on major projects such as Euston Station; speaking out through the media; influencing bus policy and changes to TfL's approach; and work on personal security, particularly following the Sarah Everard case. Additional examples included highlighting the lack of information on the cheapest fares in National Rail enquiries and on Southeastern services through casework, as well as contributing to the reversal of some ticket office closure proposals.
- SS said LTW was limited at times by funding and a possible way of increasing it might be to investigate offering services or research outputs on a paid basis to other industry stakeholders. MR and TH said it would be a challenge but might be worth looking into further to see if it would be a possibility.
  TH said that a key LTW strategic objective for Rail Reform is ensuring that this truly delivers good results for customers in London. EL cautioned that the future impact of rail reform on LTW was not known, and that the organisation should remain alert to risks in this space.

Action: TH to reflect with the LTW team on the outputs from this discussion, and to convene a follow up discussion with the Chief Executive and a smaller group of Board members to consider draft strategic objectives and success factors, as well as organisational and financial issues which had not been covered in detail during this conversation. This follow up discussion should be held before the next Board meeting on 15th July, 2026**.**

4. CEO Report

Michael Roberts (MR) briefed the Board on his recent activities:

- **TfL asset health** – MR, TH and AS had met TfL to discuss asset health, which had provided valuable insight into their approach to risk assessment and allocation of resources. MR flagged a cross cutting concern around the health of some of London's bridges. This issue has attracted significant media attention but there is currently no clear institutional framework in place to manage the risk or ensure that there is proper funding in place. LS said that it could be a topic for a possible campaign, and all agreed it should be on LTW's radar.
- **Southeastern** – MR, AS and Alex Robertson at Transport Focus had met the MD, Steve White and they had covered a range of important issues, one of which was inaccurate advice which was given to passengers on their website about the cheapest available fares. Southeastern had since amended the information on their website, and MR had asked if through the rail reform platform, they could encourage other TOCs to do the same.
- **The Rail Reform Bill** - TH and MR had met Transport Focus and had a first discussion on putting together a Memorandum of Understanding setting out the future working relationship between the two organisations post-rail reform.
- **Office lease** - MR had recently met the landlord regarding the current lease which was due to end in November.

5. Campaigns and Advocacy Report

AS introduced her regular update:

- **Personal security research** - TH had attended the Mayor's Task Force which was now being supported by a steering group which AS attended herself. The Yonder work on reporting which AS was leading could potentially be an important deliverable for the Task Force.
- **Value for Money** - AS was arranging a roundtable meeting in June with attendees across the industry and other stakeholders to discuss how to use the research outputs most effectively.
- RH said the Dashboard papers had been interesting and asked if future papers could be shared with the Board.

Action: AS to share the next Dashboard paper with the Board.

6. Communications Report

SD introduced her regular update:

- **Media coverage:** SD reported that media coverage had been quiet due to the pre-election and Easter periods. Social media engagement had been lower than usual but the topics getting most interest were around disruptions such as tube strikes, and major train stations closed over a bank holiday. Both of these gave LTW's engagement a boost and raised awareness of the organisation.
- **Podcasts:** SD said that episode 6 had been launched and thanked LS for taking part in the interview with Age UK. It had been interesting to engage with an organisation outside of the transport industry and the view numbers were very

positive. SD said she would share the statistics at the next meeting and that the next episode would be a compilation of the best parts of all episodes. SD added that if any of the Board had any suggestions for new topics or contacts that would be interested in appearing in podcast to let her know. TH said that it would be useful to look at how the podcast and the other new comms channels which had been created, can be tied into the new strategy themes.

Action: SD said she would share statistics at the next meeting on Podcast views.

7. Casework Report

SJ introduced her report.

- SJ reported that she had spoken with representatives from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, who have oversight of some of LTW's appeal cases relating to TfL. It was noted that some of their cases closely mirrored LTW's own, particularly in relation to road users, and discussions had taken place on how to make sure that everyone was clear about who should be doing what.
- SJ discussed the length of time some casework remains open and the factors contributing to this. While Eurostar typically responds to queries within 48 hours, other cases can take up to six months to resolve and require significantly more effort, including reviewing extensive email correspondence and technical information. Although resource-intensive for the team, this work can lead to positive outcomes.
- LS suggested creating an internal table to track which operators respond most quickly and which deliver the most positive outcomes. TH added that this could also provide strategic insight into which operators are most responsive in handling appeals and whether this reflects broader cultural issues in customer service across the industry.
- EL commented on LTW's number of Google reviews, noting that it was currently low and with low scores. He asked whether there was a way to encourage passengers who provide positive feedback on their cases to also leave a Google review. SJ responded that this would involve asking customers to complete the customer satisfaction survey as well as submit a Google review. She would consider what it might be sensible to do.

8. Finance Report and Budget 2026/27Annual budget:

SM highlighted some of the points in his report which covered two sets of accounts, one for the full year up until the end of March 2026 and the other to the end of April. He talked the board through the overall financial outcome for 2025/26.

- The end year financial outcome was overall in line with expectations and previous forecasts.
- The pay budget at end year reflected a variance to reflect the movement in outstanding annual leave at year end in comparison to previous year.
- On fixed overheads, there were two main variances; on property service charges and HR consultancy.
- Project spend had been achieved to budget at the end of the year. TH congratulated the team on having delivered on projects.

9. Risk Register

The board noted the following two live issues on the risk register:

- Risk on Rail Reform – potentially should come off the risk register by the end of the business year once legislation is in place.

- Statutory Duties – increase in FOI requests and responding to those in a compliant way

10. AOB

None

The meeting closed at 1.00pm.

Date of next: Public Event Meeting on Wednesday, 15 July 2026 at 10.00am