
Minutes

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Agenda item 4 c)
Drafted 18.4.09

Minutes of a meeting of the London TravelWatch Executive Group held at 6 Middle Street, London EC1 on 12 March 2009

Present

Sharon Grant (SG)
Lorna Reith (LR)
Gail Engert (GE)
David Leibling (DL)
Sarah Pond (SP)

Chair
Deputy Chair

Janet Cooke (JC)
Patti Tobin (PT)
Peter Ellis (PE)

Chief Executive
Director, Finance & Personnel
Senior Finance Officer (minutes 7 and 8)

Amy Cadney (AC)

Chief Executive/Chair's PA (temporary) – Note taker

1 Apologies for absence

There were no apologies.

2 Draft minutes of meeting held on 12 February 2009

After discussion the minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

3 Matters arising

3.1. First Capital Connect (FCC) Ticket Office Closures

SG updated the Executive on a meeting that she and the Director, Research & Development had with FCC regarding their revised proposals, noting that these now reflected the "twelve tickets an hour standard" which the DfT were now advocating. It was agreed that the correspondence relating to this would be copied to all Members for comment. SG said that London TravelWatch's actions had had a very positive effect as FCC had also reacted on a number of other issues.

3.2. PC replacement

It was noted that the order for these would be placed next week.

3.3. GLA Report

It was noted that all performance reports submitted to the GLA should be circulated to all members once agreed by the Executive and prior to publication. JC apologised for the late circulation of the recent report to the rest of the Board.

4 Chair's update

4.1. Passenger Focus

SG said that the Transport Committee had agreed to review the overlap of remit between London TravelWatch and Passenger Focus. JC & SG had met with Passenger Focus recently about this, it had been a useful meeting but their view was that, whilst happy to collaborate, their sponsor is the DfT rather than the GLA. Some discussion followed on areas of overlap and ways of working together.

4.2. Transport Committee

SG noted that the Transport Committee had also agreed to a review of how their remit could potentially overlap with that of London TravelWatch, and to revise the existing Memorandum of Understanding so that it was less prescriptive.

4.3. DfT meeting

SG advised that one of the things we had pressed for in a recent meeting was better links with the DfT in areas other than rail and they had seemed very willing to facilitate this.

4.4. TfL

SG and JC had had a very constructive meeting with Peter Hendy and Vernon Everitt. It had been agreed that we could collaborate more on research issues, and that London TravelWatch should be involved at a much earlier stage of their research in future.

4.5. Member Issues

SG reported that she had been asked to endorse a member's application for appointment to another public organisation and invited views on this. After discussion the Executive group concluded that this would not be appropriate and that SG should decline the request.

5 Chief Executive's report

5.1. Staffing / Casework Review

There was some discussion over the continuing high level of absence, due to a combination of holidays and certificated sick leave, and SP expressed particular concern at the impact of this on the casework team who had recently been operating at only half their usual capacity. Members agreed that it was imperative that this issue be resolved in order to improve our performance against our casework targets.

JC acknowledged this concern and confirmed that various strategies to address this were being prepared as part of the casework review. In the meantime we had managed to increase our capacity through the use of a temporary member of staff and by a part time member of staff increasing his hours.

SG suggested the need for a deputy for the Chief Executive but JC replied that the previous post had been unfunded from the end of last year. The restructure would enable the organisation to delegate more effectively and make better use of existing staff, however, it would take time to consolidate the review and reap the benefits. SG reiterated the need to consider securing extra resources in the short term.

JC confirmed that she would be updating SP and Daniel Francis on the progress of the casework review on the 25 March 2009. Members asked to be given an update on progress at the next meeting. **JC**

5.2. Business Plan

SG confirmed that she had asked JC to summarise the business plan objectives during next week's informal Board meeting.

5.3. Annual Review

In answer to a query, JC confirmed that the Communications Officer would be writing this year's annual review.

5.4. Survey of Passenger Opinion

JC read out the briefing which had been given to the consultants and agreed to circulate this. **JC**

6 Risk Register

JC tabled an extract from the risk register which had been updated to reflect discussion at the December meeting including an explicit item on governance risk which was being developed in accordance with the guidelines circulated by the Office of Public Management at the Board awayday in February. She confirmed her view that the organisation's approach to risk management was very strong, but that there was a need to improve the documentation of risk reviews (and changes introduced as a consequence) in order to provide a clear audit trail.

DL said he thought that mitigated risks should be ranked but wanted to reflect further on this. He asked whether the risk register could be brought formally back to the next meeting for review, JC said she thought this was too soon but suggested it be presented at the September meeting. **JC**

7 Reserves Policy

Members agreed to the proposals set out in the Senior Finance Officer's report which had been updated in accordance with their discussion on 22.1.09:

- i) No change should be made to the current practice of adding any annual surplus of income to the general reserve
- ii) A policy of active annual review of the reserve should be introduced with particular attention being paid to earmarking part of the general reserve for specific deferred expenditure
- iii) Any part of the closing general reserve not earmarked should be regarded as a cushion against exceptional expenditure, as set out by LAAP Bulletin 55.

8 Finance Report – February 2009

In answer to a query PE advised that our auditors, Grant Thornton, had agreed that we could show earmarked reserves on the balance sheet when this had been discussed with them at the recent audit planning meeting. PT confirmed that a new system would be introduced next year to ensure better budget management and encourage a better spread of expenditure across the year.

9 Board issues

JC distributed a list of meeting dates for 2009, amended to take account of the proposed new structure of the Board and its subsidiary bodies.

LR mentioned her recent meeting with JC and the Communications Officer about member involvement in local work with stakeholders, particularly local authorities, and updated the Executive on her current ideas which would be incorporated into her forthcoming report.

SP observed that there were clear expectations on us from boroughs with which we have current relationships and we would need to be very clear how we communicated any changes.

LR & SG stated that a forthcoming meeting with London Councils would be beneficial to this process also.

DL stressed the importance of a good the flow of information on local issues. He agreed that the present arrangements needed to be simplified because of the resource implications but urged against being too hasty in making decisions on this.

LR confirmed that she would produce a paper on this for informal discussion after the next Board meeting.

LR

10 Any other business

10.1. Website

JC informed the meeting that significant upgrading of the website was required and that a discussion paper on this was being prepared for the Executive. She proposed to commission the basic upgrade to the website as there would be a long lead-in time for this however she would wait until the Executive had had a chance to comment before confirming the extent of works to be undertaken.

JC