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## Minutes

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Minutes of a meeting of the London TravelWatch Executive Group held at 6 Middle Street, London EC1 on 24 June 2010, 14.00 – 16.30 hrs

Present:

Sharon Grant (SG)                      Chair

David Barry (DB)

Gail Engert (GE)

David Leibling (DL)

Lorna Reith (LR)

Janet Cooke (JC)

Chief Executive

Peter Ellis (PE)

Senior Finance Officer (minute 5)

Gytha Chinweze (GC)

Executive Assistant

### 1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Patti Tobin (PT) Director, Finance & Personnel.

### 2. Minutes of meeting held on 20 May 2010

The minutes of the last meeting were signed by the Chair as a correct record of the meeting.

### 3. Matters arising

There were no matters arising from the last meeting.

### 4. Chair's update

SG reported that the recent South London line meeting was well-attended and chaired by Sir Alan Greengross. A paper had been circulated with several options for moving forward. Option 7 was advocated as potentially the most viable. She reported that funding and income generation were still key issues.

After a discussion on casework staffing, members asked JC to work with managers to further analyse volumes of work being done and to identify any further training needs, making sure that appropriate arrangements were in place for the regular and systematic gathering of management information.

SG expressed her concern about the direction of communications in general and the need for a different approach so that London TravelWatch was seen to present a different slant to other organisations; one which was geared towards the users' point of view. SG proposed that at the end of each committee meeting, the Chairs, as part of a standard agenda item, should identify publicity-worthy issues and work with the Communications Officer to develop these into press releases.

The anticipated Green Paper on London government was discussed. SG explained that this would give more powers to the Mayor across the board, including transport matters, and saw this as a good opportunity for London TravelWatch as the voice for transport users to argue for an enhanced function.

On the London Assembly Review, SG informed members that she would be meeting with members of the review panel shortly for an interview but had no indication as yet as to whether they wished to meet with the Board. There was some discussion about the possible outcome of the review. Regarding accommodation, members restated their concerns that moving to City Hall appeared to be the favoured option and thought that this would have implications in terms of the independence of London TravelWatch. SG observed that London TravelWatch had continuity, a history and organisational knowledge which politicians do not have and suggested that members develop a list of issues where London TravelWatch's approach might differ from that of the politicians, to illustrate this point. **ALL**

At the recent meeting with Sir Alan Greengross, he had expressed his support for London TravelWatch and had suggested that SG organise a meeting to help make the case for an independent London passenger body. **SG**

SG had attended a recent Transport meeting which had been useful. London TravelWatch's response to the Transport Committee of the Assembly's investigation into Accessibility of London's transport network had been used at the meeting, and yet London TravelWatch had not been acknowledged for this. SG would write to express her dissatisfaction about this omission. **SG**

SG, after consulting with members, agreed that the minutes of the meetings held in February 2010 and September 2009, subject to a confidential note she had made of a private discussion which she would file separately from the main minutes, were now approved.

SG informed members that recently there had been an issue in London TravelWatch's relationship with Transport for London's senior staff after a press release had publicised London's worst performing bus routes. Members agreed that, though London TravelWatch worked closely with Transport for London, it remains an independent body and has the right to publish such information as long as it is factually accurate. Transport for London had responded robustly to the publication.

SG reported that she had attended the London Assembly Transport Committee meeting and not the Transport for London Board meeting because it coincided with the Assembly meeting. SG stated that there were several topics at the Transport for London Board meeting which were of interest to London TravelWatch, for instance on surface transport, trends in passenger demand and the status of the Jubilee Line

upgrade. SG requested that the dates of future meetings of the Board of Transport for London and London Councils be included in the work plan for officers to monitor items of interest. JC

## **5. Finance report**

PE presented the monthly financial summary report. He explained the variances in the budget and the reasons for these. He informed members that the solvency position remained adequate with a surplus of current assets over current liabilities and forecasted that a positive bank balance will be maintained during 2010/11.

## **6. Chief Executive's report**

JC presented her report and updated members on the London Assembly Review of London TravelWatch; current Freedom of Information/Data protection requests and also staffing issues.

JC confirmed that an advertisement had been placed for a full-time Casework Officer, for the period August-March 2011 inclusive, to fill the vacancy which will arise at the end of July. Also that Poonam Tamana (Policy Officer) will be seconded to the Casework Team to provide an additional resource for the Casework Manager over the summer. In addition to this, she was proposing to advertise for a part-time replacement for the post of Senior Committee Officer.

JC informed members that the Communications Officer had met with Transport for London to discuss the forthcoming surgeries; six venues had been identified for the next year. Transport for London would organise the bus which would be used for the surgeries and liaise with the local boroughs. London TravelWatch would focus on communication with users. These will be branded as joint surgeries. Kingston, Southall, Richmond and Wandsworth were among the locations identified. It was anticipated that the programme would run once every two months and details would be circulated to members when the programme was finalised. Members requested that in order to ensure strong branding of London TravelWatch, other advertisements should be covered, for instance those on the side or back of a bus. JC

## **7. Sickness absence/attendance management report**

Members discussed the Sickness Absence Management Review report compiled by an external consultant from the Consultancy Services of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, as requested by the Executive Group in April 2010. The report reviewed, benchmarked and reported on London TravelWatch's sick absence statistics, attendance management practices and organisational procedures and made recommendations which members discussed at the meeting.

Members agreed to accept the recommendations made in the report and asked JC to ensure that these were implemented. JC confirmed that an action plan for addressing these would be developed and brought back to the Executive Group before being incorporated into the Work Plan.

In response to a query, JC confirmed that the cost of the study was £4,500. Members commented that this was an important report and offered value for money.

## 8. Annual performance report to GLA 2009-10

JC presented London TravelWatch's performance monitoring report to the GLA to March 2010 which was discussed. Members made recommendations for changes to the draft report. JC agreed to make the necessary amendments and bring the report back to the July meeting of the Executive Group, prior to submission to the Transport Committee. JC asked members to send any further comments to her, prior to the meeting.

**ALL**

## 9. GLA guidance on budget/business plan submission for 2011-12

Members considered the GLA guidance report and agreed to convene an extraordinary meeting of the Executive to discuss this item in detail before 19 July 2010 when the draft business plan would be submitted, prior to a meeting with the Transport leads. The proposed date of the meeting is Monday 12 July 2010, subject to members' availability. JC will confirm the date with members after consultation with members' diaries.

**JC**

JC recommended that a broad brush business plan should be submitted to the Transport Committee on 7 September 2010, followed by a more detailed business plan in November 2010 which will incorporate recommendations from the Review of London TravelWatch.

**JC**

## 10. Board issues -

- a) **General** - The group were reminded that a half day Awayday had been scheduled for 28 June 2010.

Members were informed that SG had triggered the member appraisal timetable and will proceed with this.

**SG**

- b) **Forthcoming Board meetings** – The next meeting of the Board will be held on 6 July 2010, this will be a full day meeting with Hugh Sumner attending at 3pm. The meeting will have an Olympics focus and will take place in Greenwich. Local user groups and MPs will be invited to attend.

### c) Key issues arising from committee meetings

- SG asked members to ensure that research results and work produced by their committees were available on the website, for example, London TravelWatch's recent response to the London Assembly's Transport Committee investigation into Accessibility of London's transport network.

- Members asked for a speaker to be invited to attend a future meeting of the Transport Services Committee to discuss the results of the trial of motor bikes using bus lanes. **LR**
- DB reported that Bryan Davey will provide an update at the next Consumer Affairs meeting on the new software system. Members agreed that casework would be a good source of news stories and asked officers to capitalise on this. **JC**
- Members were informed that Ofcom was holding a consultation on non-geographic telephone numbers and London TravelWatch had made a submission to this.
- DL agreed to check what London Underground was doing to monitor staff availability where ticket offices were unmanned. **DL**
- GE informed members that she had attended the recent GLA meeting which had been useful and which included a discussion on the difficulty that people with visual impairments had in making complaints. JC agreed to look into the matter further. **JC**

#### **d) Draft Board and Committee dates 2011**

The draft Board and Committee dates for 2011 were circulated. Members were asked to send JC their comments on this. **ALL**

#### **11. Any other business of which advance notice had been given –**

There were no further business matters.

**GC**