

# Subject: London TravelWatch and Transport Focus – Changes to Governance Arrangements

<b>Report to:</b>	<b>Transport Committee</b>
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Executive Director of Assembly Secretariat</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>11 January 2022</b>
<b>Public Access:</b>	<b>This report will be considered in public</b>

## 1. Summary

- 1.1 The Boards of London Travel Watch and Transport Focus have agreed further changes to their governance arrangements, following consultation with the Chair of the Transport Committee and the Department for Transport (DfT). Whilst the majority of current arrangements will remain in place, the organisations will no longer have a joint Chief Executive.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 **That the Committee notes the changes and resultant amendments to the Collaboration Agreement between London TravelWatch and Transport Focus;**
- 2.2 **That the Committee agrees the relevant changes to the associated MoU between London TravelWatch and the Committee; and**
- 2.3 **That the Committee endorses the appointment of Emma Gibson as London TravelWatch Accounting Officer, and that her job title will change from Director to Chief Executive.**

### **3. Background**

- 3.1 London TravelWatch and Transport Focus agreed new governance arrangements in 2020. These arrangements were set out in a Collaboration Agreement and were designed to: deliver cost savings and efficiencies through the sharing of back office functions; deliver performance improvements for both organisations through the sharing of information and expertise; and provide more robust leadership and governance for London TravelWatch following a period of significant change.
- 3.2 Both organisations consider that these arrangements have, in the main, worked well and there is broad agreement the shared services aspects of the Agreement (IT, HR, finance, and complaints handling) should be preserved. The Chairs of both bodies now, however, consider that the Joint Chief Executive (JCE) and Accounting Officer role (currently held by Anthony Smith) is no longer necessary, and risks negatively impacting the effectiveness of both organisations.
- 3.3 Both Boards have agreed that they should revert to separate Chief Executive and Accounting Officer roles. They recommend that Mr Smith will remain as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Accounting Officer for Transport Focus. Emma Gibson, currently Director of London TravelWatch, will take on Accounting Officer responsibilities for London TravelWatch. The London TravelWatch Board has proposed that her job title becomes Chief Executive.
- 3.4 The Chair of the Transport Committee met with the Chairs of TravelWatch and Transport Focus and Mr Smith in December to test these proposals and to understand any implications. The recommendation put forward reflects the growing strength and capacity within London TravelWatch and a view from the Board that additional experience and support at the leadership level is no longer required. Against this backdrop, both the CEO and Director consider the joint arrangement create a conflict of interest for them as leaders of bodies with distinct functions, distinct audiences, and distinct reporting arrangements (and given Transport Focus' reporting line into the DfT). They have been clear that the proposed approach will allow both organisations to operate free of these constraints whilst retaining the strong benefits of close collaboration. Crucially, it is anticipated that a separation of these roles will enable London TravelWatch to take a proactive stance on key passenger issues.
- 3.5 In discussion, the Chair of the Committee tested the potential risks of this approach and in particular whether there would be any reduction in information or research provision to TravelWatch. The Chairs of both organisations offered full assurances that current lines of engagement would continue and highlighted the following points:
- Arthur Leathley (Chair, London TravelWatch) would continue to be a Member of the Transport Focus Board;
  - Information flows would continue as now, with no changes to the information available to either organisation;
  - A recent mapping exercise confirmed that there are currently 40 regular contact points between the two organisations – under the proposed changes, only one of those (the relationship between the Chief Executive and Director) would change;
  - The Collaboration Agreement Review Group established to provide oversight of the effective operation of joint working would continue to meet as now; and
  - Neither organisation has ruled out a return to a shared leadership model in the future, should strengthened leadership be required again. A further planned review of the Collaboration Agreement, due in March, would allow a further opportunity to test the position.

## **4. Accounting Officer and Chief Executive Role**

- 4.1 Appointments of London TravelWatch staff, including the Chief Executive, are a matter for the London TravelWatch Board, in consultation with the Chair of the Transport Committee. Reflecting this approach, the Committee were involved in the recruitment of (and asked to endorse the appointment of) Emma Gibson as Director in December 2019. The Committee subsequently endorsed the Board's decision to appoint Anthony Smith as joint CEO in February 2020.
- 4.2 The Chair of London TravelWatch has confirmed the Board's intention to alter Emma Gibson's job title from Director, to Chief Executive. This will ensure she has appropriate standing in engaging with other organisations and will provide a clear demarcation between the previous and proposed arrangements. In practice they do not anticipate any substantive shift in responsibilities. This reflects the fact that Ms Gibson was responsible for the majority of work relating to finances and accounts and was fulfilling Accounting Officer duties on a day to day basis. The Board will consider any implications for terms and conditions in the usual way, and noting that London TravelWatch will no longer need to meet the costs of the Joint Chief Executive role.

## **5. Changes to the Collaboration Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)**

- 5.1 In practice, the proposed changes are minimal and focussed on articulating the change in arrangement at the most senior level. A tracked version of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Committee and London TravelWatch has been provided for the Committee's information and approval.

## **6. Legal Implications**

- 6.1 The Committee has the power to do what is recommended in this report.

## **7. Financial Implications**

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications to the GLA arising from this report.

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### **List of appendices to this report:**

Appendix 1 – Proposed Revised London TravelWatch and Transport Focus Collaboration Agreement

Appendix 2 – Draft Memorandum of Understanding between the Greater London Authority and London TravelWatch (Revised January 2022)

### **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**

List of Background Papers:

None.

## Contact Information

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