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## Chief Executive's report

Agenda item 5

Date 12 February 2019

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### 1. General

Following a very hectic half year, I predicted last quarter that things might stabilise in quarter four - hopefully allowing us to catch up before the year end work arrives.

To a certain extent, this is the case. Despite several 'issues' over the move, we are settled into our new offices; the Rail Ombudsman scheme is up and running; and our new policy officer has not only started but is already making a noticeable difference.

Unfortunately our draft business plan for 2019-20 was rejected by the Transport Committee. The circumstances around this, and the work that will be needed to deal with the ramifications arising from it, mean that quarter four will not provide much of a respite.

### 2. Rail passenger ombudsman scheme

The new scheme went live on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> November and now deals with all qualifying appeals arising from complaints made on or after that date.

As we have done for the past two years, throughout quarter three we continued to put a lot of time into supporting the RDG (Rail Delivery Group) with the development of the scheme to help ensure it was designed in the best interests of passengers. This work continued into January as we signed off agreements and had regular conference calls but things have settled and this work now falls into the business as usual category.

Accordingly from the end of January 2019 the RDG have ceased to pay us the £4,500 per calendar month to reimburse us for the time we have had to spend on this. It is important to note that this was cost recovery not a fee and was used to meet the additional costs we had to incur to release staff time to participate in this. In particular, I had to progressively increase my own hours back from 0.8fte to full time to help find the time to properly deal with this.

We are still not clear what the impact of this will be on our day to day work – whilst the new scheme will take away over half of our non-TfL appeals work, we think it very likely that we will get a lot more enquiries and initial cases during the first few months of the scheme as a result of the publicity it will generate. We continue to monitor this closely but the real impact will not become clear until February at the earliest, when the eight week handling time for train companies expires.

### **3. Finance matters**

Unfortunately problems that we had in finalising the forecasts for the half year accounts continued after the last Governance Committee meeting. This was due to a combination of the office move in late November; major challenges with the major IT project Sharon Carter (our Finance Adviser) is leading for the London Fire Brigade; the need to agree with our auditors how they wanted us to account for the office move costs; and the fact that our Finance Officer was off sick for several weeks. This meant it became almost impossible to properly meet and review the forecasts. Clearly this is an ever present risk that can be the downside of employing several part time staff, although the benefits almost always outweigh any negatives.

It is unlikely that this 'perfect storm' of events will happen again but going forward we will set up short fortnightly meetings to try and ensure we have a defined time for us all to catch up.

We were notified at the beginning of February that our auditors, Moore Stephens, had just merged with BDO. As a statutory audit engagement cannot automatically transfer from one firm to another, Moore Stephens have accordingly written to resign as our auditors. We are expecting to get a letter from BDO advising us on the process for appointing them as our auditors in place of Moore Stephens. Paul Stephens will continue to act as our audit partner and we expect to have our usual pre-audit meeting with him in March. Paul will come to the May Governance Committee to answer questions on the draft audited accounts before they are finalised.

Continuing problems with the Business Plan mean that the Transport Committee has not yet formally approved our budget for 2019-20. Martin Clarke, Executive Director of Resources at the GLA, has written to confirm that there will be a full year settlement of our budget and, as such, London TravelWatch remains a going concern. This letter has been shared with the auditors.

### **4. GDPR**

We continue to make progress on implementing the GDPR requirements and expect to be fully compliant by the end of March when we have had our CRM database fully cleansed and anonymised. We also hope to include work that will mean this happens automatically in the future in accordance with our data retention policy.

Janet Cooke  
7 February 2019