

TRANSPORT FOR LONDON

CORPORATE PANEL

**SUBJECT: TFL'S COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY AND CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT**

**DATE: 23 FEBRUARY 2010**

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**1 PURPOSE AND DECISION REQUIRED**

1.1 This paper responds to the Panel's request for a broad overview of the activities of Group Marketing and Communications (GM&C). The Panel will be given more detail on the principal areas of activity in subsequent papers, including: the overall objectives of the communications strategy; stakeholder engagement; the provision of customer information; and future marketing and research strategies, including how TfL is making use of advances in digital technology to communicate.

**2 BACKGROUND**

2.1 It is essential for TfL to have in place a robust communications and customer engagement strategy to promote the need for continued transport investment, to support the delivery of the Mayor's Transport Strategy and other policy objectives and to keep customers informed. As a publicly funded organisation under the chairmanship of the elected Mayor, TfL is rightly subject to intense scrutiny from a range of stakeholders seeking to ensure that we deliver effectively and demonstrate clear value for fare and tax payer money.

2.2 The scale of the communications challenge is substantial. TfL is one of the largest transport authorities in the world supporting the needs of over 7.6 million Londoners and millions more visitors. Transport is at the centre of daily life in London and is crucial to its economic success.

2.3 This means that, working in close collaboration with the Mayor's team and other partners, our communications must reach out to a wide range of audiences: customers, including those with special interests; political stakeholders and other points of public accountability; business; the media; myriad representative organisations; and, of course, TfL's 28,000 employees and around 50,000 employees of TfL contractors.

**3 STRATEGY**

3.1 All communications activity is aligned to the Mayor's Transport Strategy and TfL's Business Plan and supports the delivery of the outcomes set out in these documents:

- (a) Supporting economic development and population growth;
- (b) Enhancing the quality of life for all Londoners;
- (c) Improving the safety and security of all Londoners;

- (d) Improving transport opportunities for all Londoners;
- (e) Reducing transport's contribution to climate change and improving its resilience;  
and
- (f) Delivering for the London 2012 Games and securing a lasting legacy.

3.2 Each outcome is taken to a more granular level through communications 'themes' around which media, public affairs, marketing and customer service activities are planned and delivered through our central communications team and the modes, including Crossrail. The current themes include:

- (a) Protection of TfL's financial settlement;
- (b) Delivery of the investment programme, including Crossrail, Tube upgrades, London Overground and the bus network;
- (c) Delivery of a revolution in cycling and walking;
- (d) Smoothing traffic flow;
- (e) Delivery of our 2012 obligations;
- (f) Industrial relations; and
- (g) Improving customer information.

3.3 In addition to this proactive activity, we must also support the information needs of transport users and the day-to-day operational demands of a complex and highly visible integrated transport system. This means responding to large numbers of enquiries every day from the London Assembly, the media, customers and others.

3.4 The overall approach to communications must be founded on the strong underlying delivery of services and investment by TfL. Any attempt to present TfL in a way that is at odds with the reality of what is delivered on the ground would damage trust and credibility in our stakeholders. TfL therefore aims to be known for the effective delivery of:

- (a) Day-to-day transport services;
- (b) Major capital programmes, in partnership with the private sector, on time and on budget;
- (c) Value for money for fare and tax payers;
- (d) High standards of customer care; and
- (e) Honesty, transparency and a preparedness to listen to those we serve.

## **4 DELIVERY**

4.1 TfL's communications and customer engagement strategy is delivered collaboratively by Group Marketing and Communications (GM&C) and colleagues in the modes. It calls on the direct involvement of the Mayor, Commissioner and many TfL staff who act as the organisation's representatives or spokespeople.

- 4.2 The respective communication responsibilities of GM&C and the modes are based on pragmatic considerations. Where there are economies of scale, such as with contact centres, or a business need to have a clearly defined control system in place, as with the Press Office, then this tends to be centralised. GM&C also manages all key corporate communications, such as the Business Plan and issues affecting the whole of TfL. GM&C also acts as a centre of excellence and source of specialist advice.
- 4.3 Other communications responsibilities are handled at the closest point of service delivery. For example, it is appropriate that the many public consultation exercises on bus service changes are handled by the experts in Surface Transport and local political and other activity across the Tube by London Underground's specialists.
- 4.4 These arrangements are co-ordinated through extensive day-to-day collaboration, a TfL-wide 'grid' of announcements and activity and through regular meetings and formal planning processes. There will be instances, such as with construction impact mitigation at Tottenham Court Road, where GM&C will bring together relevant colleagues across the organisation to ensure co-ordinated planning.
- 4.5 GM&C comprises four divisions which work in an integrated way with common objectives, but each focusing on a different audience. Progress is constantly reviewed with TfL senior management and the Mayor's team. In addition to extensive day-to-day contact, a fortnightly strategic communications meeting with the Mayor's press and other advisers examines major opportunities and risks and puts delivery plans and mitigations in place.
- 4.6 Short descriptions of each area of GM&C are at Appendix 1.

## **5 OUTCOMES**

- 5.1 TfL's reputation remains strong across all main audiences with a continuing trend of improvements in net favourability and awareness as measured among the public and other audiences. For example, an Ipsos/Mori poll in 2009 revealed that 58 per cent of the public in London hold favourable views towards TfL.
- 5.2 Support for TfL's case for transport investment remains strong among the public, business and politicians. The 2009 ComRes poll of business stakeholders indicated that 88 per cent of businesses believed that they should actively support TfL's case. A 2009 Ipsos/Mori survey of politicians showed that around 90 per cent of MPs support the current level of investment in the Tube.

## **6 VALUE FOR MONEY**

- 6.1 Since March 2008, GM&C has identified a number of cost reductions to save approximately £68m over the Business Plan period to 2017/18.
- 6.2 Initiatives implemented to date include reducing the number of Press Officers by 25 per cent. Further savings have been delivered in all other areas of GM&C. In addition, there is an ongoing programme to deliver technological improvements in TfL's Contact Centres which will improve customer service while significantly reducing costs.
- 6.3 In addition to these direct savings, GM&C also acts as a 'gatekeeper' for all customer information spend across TfL which includes the modally held budgets on marketing, research and stakeholder engagement. This spend has been reduced by £20m per

annum, including reductions to fund an additional 440 Police Community Support Officers.

## **7 RECOMMENDATION**

7.1 The Panel is asked to NOTE this report and, in addition to a paper on the approach to stakeholder engagement coming to the Panel on 25 May, consider receiving further papers on:

- (a) The overall objectives of the communications strategy;
- (b) Future marketing and research strategies, including on how TfL is taking advantage of advances in digital technology; and
- (c) The long-term strategy for TfL's contact centres, particularly on delivering greater value for money through better technology and multi-skilling of staff.

## **8 CONTACT**

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## **GROUP MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS – STRUCTURE AND PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES**

### **Press Office**

One of the busiest in the country, the TfL Press Office operates 24 hours a day every day of the year. The major challenge is to balance our proactive agenda alongside the need to meet the numerous demands for information from the media. The Press Office also tends to take the lead in co-ordinating our communications at times of disruption – e.g. our plans for overcoming weather-related disruption or a major incident on the network.

The Press Office receives well over 60,000 telephone enquiries annually, as well as many thousands of emails. It serves around 25 national and pan-London print titles, 200 local newspapers, 30 community titles, 40 London radio and TV channels, all major newswires, 50 trade media and around 120 websites. It is increasingly engaging with web-based and social media (e.g., bloggers, Twitter, Facebook).

Enquiries range from the operational (e.g. engineering works and closures, incidents such as a bus crash or industrial relations), to delivery of our Investment Programme and all areas of transport policy.

The Press Office is not simply reactive. In collaboration with the Mayor's team and Group Marketing, it develops and delivers integrated campaigns in areas such as Teen Road Safety, London's Cycling Revolution, the London Underground Investment Programme, Tackling Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour and Safer Travel at Night.

In 2009, the TfL Press Office was recognised by both the Chartered Institute of Public Relations and the leading industry journal, PR Week, as one of the leading PR teams in the country.

### **Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement (PASE)**

PASE co-ordinates TfL's engagement with: Parliament; the institutions of the EU; London TravelWatch; key opinion formers in business, think tanks, charities and campaigning organisations; visitors to TfL; and TfL staff.

This activity is largely geared to supporting the case for continued heavy public investment in London's transport system. The team helps TfL understand the views and perspectives of our stakeholders so that these can be taken into account as TfL and the Mayor develop transport policy.

PASE co-ordinates TfL's responses to Mayor's Questions (around 2,500 per year), and the overall management of TfL's relationship with the London Assembly, dealing with 2,350 correspondence enquiries from Assembly Members last year.

A detailed report outlining stakeholder engagement activity is scheduled for the next Corporate Panel meeting on 25 May 2010.

## Group Marketing

Group Marketing is responsible for the development and implementation of marketing policy and strategy to support the Mayor's Transport Strategy and Business Plan outcomes. This activity is a key driver of behavioural change – e.g. encouraging more walking and cycling, reducing road deaths and injuries and reducing the use of illegal minicabs. Regular customer research helps TfL respond to the needs of customers.

Group Marketing ensures timely delivery of accurate customer travel information using the most relevant media. Channels such as online, mobile, print and poster circuits are used to ensure TfL's customers can access the right information, at the right time, and in the right format.

The nature of communications is constantly changing with ever-increasing demand for real time information. TfL has to continuously adapt its communications activity and utilise new media technology. A digital communications strategy is currently being developed and will be brought to a future meeting of the Panel.

The marketing team has received numerous awards in recognition of the outcomes delivered by its campaigns.

## Group Customer Services

The customer service teams are at the front line of delivering information and services to our customers. This includes:

- (a) **Oyster Customer Service Centre**, handling nearly a million customer calls and 135,000 items of correspondence per year (lost cards, refunds, charging enquiries), generating more than £34m in Oyster card sales;
- (b) **Travel Information Contact Centre**, operating 24 hours a day every day, TICC handles 3.4m travel enquiries per year;
- (c) **Travel Information Centres at key stations**, positioned at six key 'gateways' into London (Liverpool Street, Euston, King's Cross, Heathrow, Piccadilly Circus and Victoria), these serve visitors and residents with information and tickets for transport and leisure (e.g. the sale of tickets to London's attractions). They receive almost 2 million customer visits per year, with ticket sales totalling £18m;
- (d) **Lost Property Office (LPO)**, receives over 185,000 lost items, more than 120,000 telephone calls and 62,000 items of correspondence per year. Almost 35,000 customers visited the Baker Street office in the last year;
- (e) **Customer Relations** receive around 3,000 calls and 53,800 items of correspondence each year. The team deals with formal complaints correspondence from London TravelWatch and manages a large percentage of the Freedom of Information requests made of TfL; and
- (f) **Data Maintenance Unit and Real Time teams** provide support for 'Journey Planner' ensuring travel information is correct and timely. The Journey Planner website receives more than 652m hits providing more than 900m travel solutions per year.