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## Minutes

Agenda item: 5  
Drafted 27.06.15

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**Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 24 May 2016 at 169 Union Street, London SE1 0LL**

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### Present

#### Members

Chris Brown, Richard Dilks, Glyn Kyle, Stephen Locke (Chair), Abdikafi Rage, John Stewart, Ruth Thompson

#### Guests

David McNeill                      Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement, Transport for London  
Peter Fletcher                      Communications and Engagement Manager for Accessibility, Transport for London

#### Members of the public

#### Secretariat

Tim Bellenger                      Director, Policy and Investigation  
Janet Cooke                        Chief Executive  
Richard Freeston-Clough        Communications Manager  
Susan James                        Casework Manager  
Sharon Malley                      Executive Assistant (minutes)  
Vincent Stops                        Policy Officer (VS)

## 1 **Chair's introduction and pre-meeting announcements**

The Chair welcomed members and visitors to the meeting and made standard safety announcements.

## **2 Apologies for absence**

There were no apologies for absence. Janet Cooke sent apologies in advance for her anticipated lateness.

## **3 Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest in addition to the standing declarations.

## **4 Chair's activities and Transport Focus update**

The Chair said he had attended three Transport Focus meetings since the last London TravelWatch board meeting. On 15 April had had attended a meeting with Mike Brown, Transport Commissioner at Transport for London (TfL), and Vernon Everitt, MD of Customers, Communications and Technology at TfL, alongside Jeff Halliwell and Anthony Smith, Chair and Chief Executive of Transport Focus respectively. The meeting was intended primarily as an induction for Jeff Halliwell. It discussed devolution, investment and capacity problems in detail, as well as Transport Focus's research programme.

On 20 April he attended an informal Transport Focus board meeting which discussed its internal change programme, the implications of the Shaw report on Network Rail, the Department for Transport (DfT) report on the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) and the 2016-17 work plan.

He attended a second informal Transport Focus board meeting on 12 May which discussed updates on change processes and the spending review and considered a presentation by Leon Daniel, Managing Director of Surface Transport at TfL, on streets modernisation and possible implications for highways.

The Chair said he had attended various meetings in his role as Chair of London TravelWatch. He had met Lilian Greenwood MP, the Labour shadow transport secretary, and James Berry MP, the Conservative member of parliament for Kingston and Surbiton.

He had met Stephen Glaister, Chair of the ORR, whom he had briefed about the work of London TravelWatch. John Larkinson and Stephanie Tobyn, who lead on consumer affairs at the ORR, were also present, and he would be meeting them again shortly to follow up on actions.

The Chair said he had held an introductory meeting with Paul Plummer, the new chief executive of the Association of Train Operating Companies and head of the Rail Delivery Group, and had discussed future working relations between ATOC and London TravelWatch. He had also attended a reception for new members of the London Assembly following the recent Mayoral elections.

## **5 Minutes**

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 22 March 2016 were agreed and signed as a correct record, subject to the addition of the word "stations" after the word "of"

in the penultimate line of the final paragraph of Item 9 on page 6. The minutes of the Governance committee held on 9 February 2016 were noted.

## **6 Matters arising (LTW521)**

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said he was awaiting a further statement from Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) on their public proposals for the future of their ticket offices. He said that he believed GTR intended to broadly meet London TravelWatch's concerns, and that the DfT agreed that they should. This was a very positive outcome in response to London TravelWatch's work. However, members noted that there was still some uncertainty about GTR's plans and that the proposed four-week pilot was very short. The Director, Policy and Investigation, said he would be engaged in follow-up discussions over this and would report back on progress.

**Action: Director, Policy and Investigation**

## **7 Key activities (LTW522)**

Members noted that the potential pedestrianisation of Oxford Street may be a topic for early investigation by the London Assembly transport committee. The Policy Officer (VS) said that London TravelWatch had no in-principle objections to pedestrianisation but was keen to know more about how it would work in practice. He said that black cabs accounted for 37% of road capacity on Oxford Street but carried only 1% of passengers. He suggested that taxis should be excluded from Oxford Street and wondered whether there should also be reductions in the number of north-south streets crossing Oxford Street. He thought London TravelWatch should continue to support the prioritisation of buses, cycles and pedestrians.

David McNeill, Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement at TfL, said that the pedestrianisation of Oxford Street should be considered in the context of the wider West End, including the two-way upgrade of Baker Street and the removal of the Tottenham Court Road/Gower Street gyratory. He noted that some bus routes have already been removed from Oxford Street but that the released street capacity had been taken up by black cabs. TfL was looking at options including pedestrian-only islands along part of the street.

Pedestrianisation would have a radical impact on buses. Removing buses onto Wigmore Street was politically sensitive because of the presence of local residents. Mr McNeill thought a consultation on the issue was likely at the end of summer.

He said that there was very little support from traders for full pedestrianisation. Some parts of Oxford Street did not have rear loading facilities so needed to have vehicular access to the front. The ownership of Oxford Street was very fragmented, unlike Regent Street, most of which was owned by the Crown Estate. This made it more difficult to gain a consensus view on the best approach for Oxford Street as a whole.

Mr McNeill said TfL would need to settle the detail of the consultation with the new Mayor of London. He thought it likely, given the continued growth of London, that something would need to change as the status quo was not sustainable. He noted that there was opportunity to obtain high returns from investments in the public realm and that rationalising the 45 separate waste collection contracts on Bond Street would also be beneficial to the public.

Members expressed a concern that London TravelWatch should be involved in future discussions relating to Oxford Street. Mr McNeill said that the New West End Company was the formal body for these discussions.

On the separate issue of Travel Demand Management, the Chief Executive reported that a recent TDM board meeting had considered a pilot scheme for customer information during disruption. The aspiration was to provide standardised information across all modes. She said she would circulate a briefing note about the meeting.

**Action: Chief Executive**

The Policy Officer (VS) said he had taken part in a visit to view Cycle Superhighways alongside groups including Living Streets and cycle trainers. The focus had been on safety and the design of the highways.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that he had attended a Network Rail meeting on the West Midlands and Chiltern route. He said that other than his contribution there had been very little focus on metro services on the route. He said he had followed this up and there was now some consideration of diverting services to Old Oak Common to increase capacity.

On the DfT meeting about surface transport access to airports, the Chief Executive said it had been positive. She and the Director, Policy and Investigation, had been invited to a meeting held the previous week about Network Rail's study of a possible southern rail access route to Heathrow, where they had made various arguments in support of the southern rail route. The board agreed that this proposal could bring important benefits and should be kept in play.

Members asked how the works at London Bridge station were progressing. The Director, Policy and Investigation, said he was not aware of any slippages. He said that in August, as the next phase, the London Bridge platforms to Cannon Street would be closed and the Charing Cross platforms re-opened. There would be difficulties in getting from Greenwich to London Bridge and capacity on alternative routes was being modelled.

The Policy Officer (VS) said that he had been invited to attend a meeting with young people in Greenwich with learning disabilities and that it had been a useful event.

The Chief Executive said that the meeting with Lilian Greenwood MP had been productive and that she had been very engaged about London TravelWatch's work. David McNeill said that she had been very interested in passenger representation when he had attended a separate meeting with her.

Members asked whether there would be changes to the bus network in response to the introduction of Crossrail. The Director, Policy and Investigation, said this was not yet known. Crossrail would be introduced in phases so changes to buses would be likely to happen gradually. There would be changes to night bus patterns in response to the forthcoming introduction of the night tube, as had previously been discussed.

The Chair noted that the list of key activities gave a strong sense of the amount of work undertaken by officers and the wide range of policy issues to which London TravelWatch needed to contribute.

## **8 Accessibility on the transport network (LTW523)**

The Director, Policy and Investigation, presented a report about accessibility on the transport network, covering a variety of accessibility issues.

He said that there had been much progress with implementing accessible bus stops across the London area but some authorities were not taking advantage of planned pavement works to raise kerb heights. Officers had raised this with authorities where they had observed problems.

He said that Access for All funding had been reduced, which meant less funding for minor accessibility works at stations. In addition, some schemes that had been announced as funded had now been withdrawn or were expected to be incorporated in Network Rail's main investment programme.

The Policy Officer (VS) said that the London Assembly Transport Committee's report had been useful and timely. He highlighted the points raised in the report and London TravelWatch's support for them.

Members noted their concern about the withdrawal of Access for All funding and questioned how this affected the Mayor's commitment to accessibility. David McNeill, Director of Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement at TfL, said that the Mayor was committed to the accessibility target for TfL, London Underground and London Rail. However, he was concerned that the plans for devolution were stalled as accessibility works were likely to be incorporated into the overall Network Rail budget rather than falling under the Access for All head. Turn-up-and-go accessibility assistance, staffed stations, staff training and so on were all connected to devolution. Therefore he would encourage continued London TravelWatch participation in the devolution debate. The Director, Policy and Investigation, noted that London TravelWatch research showed passengers agreed on the need for investment in accessibility across the board.

Members noted that boroughs and TfL should work together to resolve accessibility issues. Mr McNeill said that boroughs were seeing significant reductions in funding and it was difficult for them to make investments. TfL was developing a toolkit for boroughs to help them and was trying to switch the focus of some of its own staff from London-wide activity to a more local level.

Members discussed the new road layouts at places such as Elephant and Castle, which posed problems in accessibility terms. They noted that the approach to turn-

up-and-go accessibility assistance at stations varied by operator and that there was not enough join-up at interchanges.

It was noted that some people have difficulty walking on tactile paving and it was important to provide gaps in tactile paving for people to walk through. Peter Fletcher, Communications and Engagement Manager for Accessibility at TfL, said that there were plans to consult on the best approach to the use of tactile paving.

Mr Fletcher agreed that there could be difficulties with turn-up-and-go at interchanges between National Rail and TfL services. Devolution to TfL would address some of these problems. Mr McNeill said that TfL supported the presence of staff at stations to assist passengers to board and alight safely. He was concerned by the trend on the part of National Rail operators to reduce the number of staff at stations.

Mr McNeill said that the new Mayor had noted the concerns about bus stop bypasses and that Guys and St Thomas's NHS trust was seeking a judicial review over the siting of a bypass at a bus stop outside the hospital. He said that the Mayor was keen to look at whether there was a better way of balancing the competing interests.

The Chief Executive said that London TravelWatch was strongly supportive of devolution but that passengers should not have to wait for devolution to happen before they could book assistance at stations. It was important they could have confidence that they would be able to complete their journeys and TfL allowing them to book assistance would give them this confidence. Mr McNeill said TfL believed it was better to offer a seamless turn-up-and-go service but that TfL had no influence over the approach taken by train operators.

The Policy Officer (VS) said that historically TfL had not been part of the bookable service known as Passenger Assist as it had offered its own turn-up-and-go assistance service. However, if TfL were to join Passenger Assist, it would ease co-ordination between TfL and other operators. Mr McNeill agreed to look into this, but noted that he wanted to resist any pressure to move to the lowest common denominator.

Members agreed that accessibility was an issue of broad concern and there should be a co-ordinated approach across the transport network. It touched on a variety of areas of current discussion, such as proposals to redeploy staff at stations and use of hail and ride sections of bus routes. Mr McNeill said that TfL had developed streetscape design standards for use in the Royal Docks and he would send these to the Policy Officer (VS).

The Chair thanked Mr McNeill and Mr Fletcher for their attendance and useful contributions to the debate.

## **9 Transport for London performance report (LTW524)**

The Chair invited Mr McNeill to remain for this item, which reviewed the performance of TfL modes of transport.

The Policy Officer (VS) said that the report now included more passenger-focused metrics and he highlighted the new elements of the report. One new measure was on pavement obstructions, which showed that Southwark council had the poorest approach to enforcement, followed by Islington.

Mr McNeill said that A-board obstructions on pavements were concentrated in areas of commercial activity. Some A-board owners were thoughtful but some were not and that they had different approaches to enforcement. The Policy Officer (VS) said that enforcement should not be discretionary as this could lead to resentment by those who were targeted. A zero tolerance approach was best.

The Policy Officer (VS) said that some councils have resisted calls to prioritise A-board enforcement as they said they received few complaints about pavement obstructions. However, London Councils had supported London TravelWatch's position and had written to boroughs to call for increased enforcement. The aim was to provide information to local campaigners so that they could take the issue forward in their own areas.

Members discussed the colour-coded map of boroughs included in the performance report. It was agreed that the colours would be revised to make it clear that those currently coloured purple were not worse than those coloured red. In addition, the description of how the borough ranking had been derived should be clarified to highlight the evidence base used by London TravelWatch to make its assessments.

**Action: Policy Officer (VS)**

Members agreed that they were not comfortable with the apparent tendency to relax targets for Streets when they became too hard to meet and that London TravelWatch should resist any further attempts to relax targets. The Policy Officer (VS) said that the intention was for the Streets targets to revert to previous levels following the implementation of the roads modernisation programme, although members expressed doubt as to whether this was realistic. Mr McNeill said that there would be reduced road capacity in future and that TfL had struggled to cope with some of these changes. TfL needed to reflect on whether it had sought to make too many changes too quickly. The Policy Officer (VS) said that London TravelWatch had called for a staged approach to major street works from the outset.

Members noted with concern the Policy Officer (VS)'s observation that bus performance was declining. In previous quarters the report had highlighted three or four poor-performing routes but this quarter there were 15, which was a symptom of the congestion problems already discussed.

Members restated their belief that TfL should specify in advance the dates on which it would release its performance data, rather than being dependent on the board meeting schedule. David McNeill said that historically some data sets had been owned by particular TfL board committees but that a timetable and standard format would be helpful.

Members noted that complaints about Dial A Ride driver behaviour were higher than expected. Mr McNeill said he was not aware of the reasons for this but the

service was small compared to other modes so it was possible that the complaints related to a single rogue driver.

The Chair thanked Mr McNeill for his contribution to this discussion on TfL performance.

## **10 Casework performance report (LTW525)**

The Casework Manager presented a report on the performance of transport operators in responding to casework and noted that there had been a dramatic increase in the number of initial casework contacts. She had tried to find out the cause of the increase but there did not appear to be any identifiable pattern and it was not always possible to ask the passengers themselves why they had contacted London TravelWatch.

Members noted that it may be worthwhile to investigate reverse-optimisation for London TravelWatch's website, so that it did not appear at the top of searches containing terms such as "travel enquiries".

### **Action: Communications Officer**

The Casework Manager said that the central TfL team did try to respond to casework within 10 days but London Overground had 20 days in which to respond. It was generally preferable that complaints were investigated properly rather than glossed over quickly, which meant that they could sometimes take longer to resolve.

The Casework Manager outlined successful outcomes for passengers following London TravelWatch's intervention, including a refund for a passenger who had had problems with an Oyster card and an investigation into a Dial A Ride complaint that led to a change of policy.

Members asked whether the Casework Manager had noticed a change in the quality of staff at the TfL call centre. The Casework Manager said that TfL attempted to deal with staffing problems when they became aware of them but it was not always easy to identify when things were going wrong. Members thought there may be a high turnover of staff, leading to call handlers not having adequate knowledge of their products. The Casework Manager said that TfL had moved from department-based call handling to joint customer services, which meant there was greater join-up across complaint handling but a loss of experience and detailed knowledge of particular areas.

It was noted that there were very few complaints about the Docklands Light Railway and that even though the DLR was un-gated it resulted in very few penalty fare complaints. The few complaints that were received about the DLR were well handled.

The Chief Executive said that senior train operator staff praised the casework team for their fair approach. She said that operators engaged well with the casework team as they knew that London TravelWatch only brought forward valid cases.



**11 Any other business**

There was no other business.

**12 Resolution to move into confidential session**

It was resolved, under section 15(2)(b) of schedule 18 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999, that by reason of the confidential nature of the item(s) to be discussed, it was desirable in the public interest that the public should be excluded for a section of the meeting.

During the confidential session, members considered priorities for the new mayoral term and reviewed the meeting.