
Minutes

Agenda item: 4
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Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 28 November 2017 at 169 Union Street, London SE1 0LL

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Present

Members

Alan Benson, Richard Dilks, Glyn Kyle, Arthur Leathley (Chair), John Stewart

Guests

Chief Con Paul Crowther	British Transport Police (Item 8)
Sam Monck	Transport for London (Item 9)
Bob Blitz	Transport for London (Item 9)

Secretariat

Tim Bellenger	Director, Policy and Investigation
Janet Cooke	Chief Executive
Sharon Malley	Executive Assistant
Vincent Stops	Policy Officer

1 Chair's introduction and pre-meeting announcements

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting and made the standard safety announcements.

2 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Jackie Ballard and Abdi Osman.

3 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest in addition to those standing declarations recorded on the London TravelWatch website.

4 Chair's activities and Transport Focus update

The Chair said that he had met Howard Smith, Operations Director of Crossrail, and had held productive discussions on issues including signage. He had also met Rachael Maskell MP, the Shadow Minister for Transport, and, separately, Ellie Reeves MP about changes to transport services in her constituency.

The Chair said he had met Paul Crowther, the Chief Constable of the British Transport Police, and discussed some of the issues that may be raised in Mr Crowther's item later in the meeting. He had also attended a positive meeting with Assembly Members Keith Prince and Caroline Pidgeon, the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Transport Committee. As part of his work on the Board of Transport Focus he had undertaken induction activity in London and Manchester.

The Chair noted that members had recently received letters from the Rail, Maritime and Transport Union about London TravelWatch's position in respect of potential changes to ticket offices at London Overground stations. He said that no formal proposals had yet been received from London Overground and a response along these lines had been sent on members' behalf.

5 Minutes of the Board meeting held on 24 October 2017 and Governance committee

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 24 October 2017 were agreed and signed as a correct record, subject to amending the word "individual" to "an" in the fifth line of page two; deleting the word "between" in line six of page five; and changing "interesting" to "interest" in the first line of the seventh paragraph on page five. The minutes of the Governance Committee of 25 July 2017 were noted.

6 Matters arising (LTW566)

The Policy Officer (VS) said that he had updated his report on cycling to incorporate feedback and would send it to members once it had been proofed. He hoped it would be published before the Christmas break.

Action: Policy Officer (VS)

It was noted that the future consideration of winter resilience would focus on rail and Underground performance and would inform the assessment of preparations for winter 2018/19.

7 Key activities (LTW567)

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that a non-passenger section of the Gospel Oak to Barking route had been deleted from the electrification proposals for cost reasons. The passenger element of the electrification works should be completed in January 2018, with electric trains expected to be in service by May. It was agreed that officers would monitor the timetable of implementation.

Action: Director, Policy and Investigation

Members asked whether any issues of concern had been raised during discussion of the South West Rail timetable review. The Director, Policy and Investigation, said he had concerns that the service at Queenstown Road (Battersea) was proposed to be reduced from eight to four trains per hour, despite its location close to the Nine Elms development area. There was also a potential reduction of connectivity at Clapham Junction with the proposed withdrawal of some long-distance services.

In relation to works over the Christmas 2017/18 holiday, the Director, Policy and Investigation, said many closures would be in place across the network and risks, particularly for Great Western Railway, would be significant. Passengers should be encouraged to check before travelling, both during the period scheduled for works and also in the days immediately following as there was a possibility of snagging and continued disruption. The Chief Executive said that the Travel Demand Management Board had been successful in co-ordinating planned works but could still do more to manage unplanned disruption.

The Chief Executive said that the confidential round-table discussion on transport had been held with the Deputy Mayor for Transport, not the Rail Minister. It had been very encouraging that the Rail Delivery Group was interested in co-ordinating a piece of work on rail in London.

On the issue of research into bus occupant safety, the Policy Officer (VS) said that he hoped to begin work in February. The research would take approximately eight months to complete.

8 British Transport Police

Paul Crowther OBE, the Chief Constable of the British Transport Police (BTP), gave a presentation on policing issues affecting transport users in London.

He said that the BTP was organised into three geographical policing divisions. A very large number of passenger journeys was being policed and the disparate nature of those journeys meant that the identity of the community the police should engage with on crime prevention was not obvious. In addition, as the BTP was a national force, it had to link to around 380 statutory agencies across the country, which could be challenging.

Mr Crowther said that in the majority of cases, a criminal and a victim were known to one another. However, this was the not case for crimes on the transport

network. The BTP had access to 55,000 CCTV cameras on the transport network, but viewing and analysing those images could be difficult.

Mr Crowther said that BTP's budget was set by the Independent Police Authority then levied to transport operators. He noted that the BTP's budget had been increasing as the transport industry recognised the benefit of investing in policing. Geographical police forces generally took much longer to deal with incidents than the BTP. They were also more likely to close the transport network, whereas the BTP tried to take a more risk-based approach and sought to keep the network open.

Rail was a very low crime environment. There were 16 crimes per million passenger journeys, 0.7 of which were categorised as serious crimes. There had been five murders to date in 2017, which was relatively high compared to average, and 290 suspected suicides. In addition, the BTP had been involved in 9,546 suicide prevention mental health incidents and made 1,837 life-changing interventions. There had been 8,451 trespass incidents and 48 trespass fatalities. There had been a total of 52,235 recorded crimes during 2017 to date.

Mr Crowther noted that there had been an increase in the number of reported sexual offences on the network, which may be due to an increase in the proportion of offences being reported. It could be difficult to pursue some of the reported offences because sometimes reports did not include enough detail to take further. However, it was positive if more people were able to report incidents so that figures about levels of crime were more robust.

Mr Crowther said there had been some increase in levels of hate crime and that there were spikes after terrorist incidents. In the BTP's remit, hate crime was mainly directed towards rail staff, which the BTP took very seriously.

The terrorist threat to the transport system had been at 'severe' since 2014. Many terrorist incidents centred on transport systems. The BTP took a strategic approach to responding to threats, based on risk assessments and attack methodologies. Over the summer of 2017 the threat level was raised twice to 'critical', which put a strain on police resources. The BTP sought to respond in ways that included increased police visibility to reassure the public.

The BTP had been called upon in response to several serious incidents during the course of 2017, including the Croydon tram derailment, the terrorist attacks at Manchester, Westminster and London Bridge, and the fire at Grenfell Tower. BTP officers responded to serious incidents on the transport network on a daily basis and so were experienced in dealing with other challenging situations.

Mr Crowther said it was important to respond proportionately to incidents and take a risk-based approach to issues such as bomb threats or unattended items. The aim was to provide transport staff with the confidence to respond appropriately to security threats. The BTP also deployed armed officers when necessary and used behavioural detection techniques to spot suspicious activity.

Mr Crowther said that the "see it, say it, sorted" campaign, led by the Department for Transport and supported by the BTP, Rail Delivery Group and now Transport

for London, empowered the public to report suspicious behaviour or activity. The campaign had led to an increase in reports by the public and also by rail staff.

Having had 11 years of crime reduction in the UK, there was now an increase in crime levels across all forces. The rise on the railway was less than elsewhere, and started from a low base, but was still an increase.

Mr Crowther said that demand for policing was forecast to increase significantly. He was squeezing all the available resources currently available to him and was just meeting demand, but there would be difficulties if demand did increase in the future.

He said he hoped to move from being seen by the rail industry as a supplier of a service to more as a strategic partner. He thought the BTP should be involved at a franchising level and had been discussing this with the Department for Transport. The BTP could also act as strategic lead on issues such as the development of stations, such as Victoria, rather than having the management of space being the responsibility of several different agencies. This was aligned with the BTP's desire to see stations as the centres of communities.

Members asked whether Mr Crowther was confident about the future of the BTP. He said he was not aware of the Metropolitan Police in London having ambitions to take over the BTP role in the capital and the BTP's view was that the transport system needed network-wide management.

Mr Crowther said that a new SMS text reporting system allowed passengers to send discreet reports of incidents as they happened. This has been successful and led to dramatic change in the traffic received in the control room. However, the reports sometimes lacked detail and were occasionally out of remit. The BTP was considering whether extending the reporting options by offering an app would be beneficial.

Members noted that BTP announcements on the transport network had to fight against other background noise, including regular announcements about train services and standard information. There was a fear that important police announcements could get lost. Mr Crowther said that it was difficult to get the balance right in this area.

Members asked about disability hate crime. Mr Crowther said levels for this were very low but they may be under-reported. The BTP had looked at ways to improve this but it was difficult. There was work across the network by transport providers to improve accessibility but interventions were largely physical and did not always address issues of mental health or risk of self-harm. Rail staff were encouraged to talk to passengers who seemed to be at risk of self-harm as interventions had been shown in some cases to lead to permanent diversion from self-harming thoughts.

Members thanked Mr Crowther for his thoughtful presentation. The Chief Executive said she hoped to be able to assist with efforts to ensure a single agency such as the BTP was able to take responsibility for transport hubs. This was an issue that London TravelWatch and the BTP could work on together.

9 Oxford Street proposals (LTW568)

The Policy Officer (VS) gave a presentation on implications for buses of Transport for London's proposals for pedestrianisation of part of Oxford Street. He said that there had been ambitions to reduce buses on Oxford Street for some time and in 2016 some buses were removed as part of rationalisation relating to the introduction of Crossrail.

The Policy Officer (VS) said that Oxford Street was an important bus corridor and his report focused on 'hardship' for bus users resulting from the proposals, in the same way that would be done if rail services were removed.

He said that nine routes were significantly affected by the proposals. The rationale for the proposals was that the introduction of Crossrail and improvements to the Underground would provide alternative transport options for passengers. However, the Policy Officer (VS) noted that costs for using Crossrail and the Underground were higher than buses. He also noted that passengers try to avoid changing buses if possible and that there was an 'interchange penalty' when single bus routes were split into two.

The Policy Officer (VS) said that there was no principled objection to changing services on Oxford Street but these proposals would have a significant impact on passengers. In general terms, there would be benefits for public realm and also for users of Crossrail and Underground services.

The Policy Officer (VS) said that it was important to look at the proposals in the context of Central London as a whole and that conditions for buses should be improved. This could mean closer management of taxis, minicabs and private vehicles.

The proposals would lead to many passengers' journeys being broken when previously they had been able to make their journeys without needing to change. The reduction in bus routes in 2016 had created 17,000 of these broken journeys per day. The new proposals would create an additional 45,000 daily broken journeys.

The Chair invited Sam Monck and Bob Blitz from TfL to the table. Mr Monck acknowledged that the proposals involved compromise but highlighted the improvements they would bring to air quality and pedestrian permeability. He said that some stakeholders would oppose the use of Wigmore Street for bus services so if London TravelWatch supported this as an option it would be important to say that in its consultation response. He said that TfL was looking at accessibility options in the Oxford Street area for people with mobility impairments.

Mr Blitz said that significant improvements would need to be made to the Park Lane bus stands and interchange as a result of the proposals. He said that the Hopper ticket allowed bus passengers more flexibility to change buses without paying additional fares.

Mr Blitz said that patterns of ridership change over time as a result of natural churn and it would take some time for final journey patterns to emerge. TfL was seeking

to learn from the 2016 changes and apply that to the new proposals as far as was possible.

Mr Blitz said that work was underway on implications for private hire vehicles (PHVs). Reduction of road space on Oxford Street would mean it would be difficult for passengers to move from buses to PHVs, but the rise in use of PHVs was a general trend so it was difficult to isolate the impact of the proposals on PHV use in Oxford Street. More was planned to enable use of taxis from the rear of stores.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that buses were a fully accessible mode of transport but the Underground stations were not fully accessible. He asked whether any modelling of displacement of young people travelling free using Zip cards and unable to use other forms of transport would be carried out.

He noted that the bus stops on Park Lane were chaotic and difficult for drivers to service, with stops too close together and no supervision of passengers. Increasing the number of passengers using this interchange would be problematic.

Mr Monck said that accessibility improvements would be made and noted that retailers were keen to see the changes. The Director, Policy and Investigation, noted that the Central line had fewer accessible stations than any other and that the Bakerloo line was also poorly served by accessible stations. Mr Monck said that the Elizabeth Crossrail line followed a similar alignment to parts of the Central line so offered an accessible alternative for some passengers. The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that Oxford Circus Underground station was not planned to be made step-free so passengers travelling from Victoria station to Oxford Street were reliant on the 390 bus.

Mr Monck said that north-south traffic would be permitted to cross Oxford Street but no traffic would be permitted to travel along it. There would be many interventions across the area to make it easier for pedestrians to get around, including new green man crossings.

Members questioned whether the phasing of works was too quick. Mr Monck said that there was never a steady state and that the streetscape was always changing. TfL hoped to complete the works quickly and to fit in with other works already underway.

Due to commitments elsewhere, Mr Monck and Mr Blitz left the meeting.

The Policy Officer (VS) said that London TravelWatch should set out the issues raised by the proposals so that decision-makers had information at their disposal when considering how to proceed. Members noted that bus passengers appeared to be the most adversely affected by the proposals. TfL should consider bus priority more generally across the central area. London TravelWatch should explicitly support the use of Wigmore Street as an alternative bus route as a counter to likely opposition from some stakeholders.

The Chief Executive said London TravelWatch should call for a survey of bus passengers to understand their views on the proposals.

Members said there should be separate mitigations for people trying to make through journeys along Wigmore Street and people who were seeking to reach Oxford Street itself as they had different needs.

It was agreed that London TravelWatch would respond to the TfL consultation in line with the observations made at the meeting.

Action: Policy Officer (VS)

10 Victoria Station (LTW569)

The Director, Policy and Investigation, presented a report to update members on works at Victoria Station and the surrounding area.

Members welcomed the useful report. They said it would be important for the transport industry to pick up the learnings from the works to improve the way works were carried out in future.

Members asked whether buses and taxi ranks would be restored to their original positions when the works were complete. The Director, Policy and Investigation, said it was currently unclear and noted that some bus routes might be better left in their current position rather than moved again.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that London TravelWatch had a remit over Victoria Coach Station as it was a TfL asset. Its connectivity with Victoria station was important for users and it would be detrimental for users if that connectivity was lost.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that he intended to maintain contact with the Victoria station upgrade team, as well as those in Crossrail 2 with responsibility for Victoria, to create a forum that brought together all Victoria's transport operators.

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 reviewed the meeting.