
Minutes

Agenda item: 4
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Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 20 November 2018 in Committee Room 2 at City Hall, The Queen's Walk, London, SE1 2AA

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Present

Members

Jackie Ballard, Richard Dilks, Glyn Kyle, Arthur Leathley (Chair), Abdi Osman, John Stewart (Deputy Chair)

Guests

Andrew Haines	Chief Executive, Network Rail (Item 8)
Stuart Giddings	General Manager – Customer Experience Programme, Arriva Rail London (Item 9)
Steve Headley	Senior Assistant General Secretary, RMT (Item 9)
Stella Rogers	Customer Experience Director, Arriva Rail London (Item 9)
Mel Taylor	Full-time Lead Officer, TSSA (Item 9)

Secretariat

Tim Bellenger	Director, Policy and Investigation
Gytha Chinweze	Governance Officer
Janet Cooke	Chief Executive
Richard Freeston-Clough	Operations and Communications Manager
Saphia Haffejee	Policy Officer
Luke Muskett	Committee and Public Liaison Officer
Trevor Rosenberg	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

The Chair stated that Alan Benson had said that he was unwell and was unable to attend the meeting.

3 Declarations of interest

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

4 Chair's activities and Transport Focus update

The Chair said he had had some interesting meeting at Transport Focus over the previous month. Ian Hanson, South East Stations Director for Network Rail, had given a presentation setting out the success of the 'one team' approach to stations where Network Rail and the operators worked as one to provide better customer service.

The Chair commented that he had attended the Transport Committee at City Hall on 13 November to discuss the business plan. He remarked that he had also conducted a day of interviews with potential candidates to fill the three board positions that would become vacant in the New Year. The Chair stated that they would be confirmed subject to the Secretary of State's approval.

The Chair said that the bus consultation meeting hosted by London TravelWatch 'went very successfully'. A member remarked that the meeting had been 'very useful'. The Chair agreed and thanked everyone involved for helping to put the event together.

5 Minutes of the Board meeting held on 23 October 2018

There were no amendments to the minutes of the Board meeting held on 23 October 2018. The Chair agreed and signed the minutes as a correct record.

6 Matters arising (LTW593)

A member asked if someone from the staff could send her a note to clarify how her local station could be made accessible for a low cost.

ACTION: Director, Policy and Investigation

7 Key activities (LTW594)

The Chair asked members if they had comments on any of the key activities which had taken place since the previous meeting. A member asked about the proposals for the Tramlink extension from Sutton to South Wimbledon. The Chief Executive stated that it was one option from several that were being considered by TfL. She remarked that they had been disappointed that they had not been informed about the consultation earlier and would be something that could be put to Gareth Powell when he attended the first Board meeting in the New Year.

The Chair remarked that he wished to thank everyone for the work that had been put into the Ruth Thompson memorial lecture and that it had been 'a great success'. The Chair stood down for the item with Andrew Haines and the Deputy Chair took over the role.

8 Andrew Haines, the new chief executive of Network Rail

Mr Haines opened his presentation by showing how the landscape of the railways in the UK had changed over time. Since privatisation in the 1990s, the numbers of passengers using the network had doubled, with London and South East region having seen some of the most significant increases. He remarked that one area that had seen vast improvement had been the levels of safety, demonstrated by the fact that there had not been a passenger fatality on the National Rail network since 2007. Mr Haines said that this did not mean the organisation was complacent and that when issues had arisen thorough investigations had been undertaken to understand what had gone wrong.

Mr Haines stated that there had been 'phenomenal investment' at London Bridge station which had resulted in improved services for passengers. There would also be further improvements in the coming years with the arrival of Crossrail and through the electrification of Great Western lines. He commented that the substantial amounts of re-signalling that had been put in place had gone in with minimal unplanned disruption.

One area that had not improved over time and was in fact deteriorating was train performance, particularly in London and the south east. The Public Performance Measure (PPM) used to measure train performance had fallen to its lowest level in 13 years and general performance overall had been on a downward trend for a decade. This coincided with falls to passenger satisfaction with the railways and could perhaps be a contributing factor to why recent growth had begun to slow.

Mr Haines commented that Network Rail had failed to develop a 'change capacity' to support its level of 'change ambition'. Structures, contracts and boundaries that were set up in the 1990s were no longer relevant to the amount of demand on the network and the landscape in terms of health and safety had changed drastically. Mr Haines said that he was highly supportive of the rail review being undertaken by Keith Williams and that the industry itself was asking for changes to the system. He said that putting the needs of passengers first would be essential.

Mr Haines remarked that Network Rail would not 'defend the status quo' or be 'protectionist' and that the organisation was committed to devolution. He

commented that despite its reputation for being an engineering company, Network Rail was a service provider and had a responsibility in ensuring passengers had a railway that ran in the most effective way possible.

In relation to the previous point, Mr Haines said that within the London context there was an 'accountability fog' that made it difficult to implement change. To address this, he suggested that activities be devolved from the centre to routes so that operators had the ability to alter things in times of disruption. He added that the role of the System Operator (particularly for London and the South East) would help to provide both cohesion and clear processes and policies.

Mr Haines said that the System Operator would also be key in ensuring that the Elizabeth line was delivered effectively. He remarked that he had been in discussion with TfL's Commissioner for Transport, Mike Brown, to understand what global best practice was in this regard. Network Rail would be looking at the scope for the devolution of more rail services, though this would be a decision that would be taken by elected representatives.

Mr Haines stated that he had spent most of his life working in the London area and had been encouraged by some of the schemes that had been introduced to improve London Liverpool Street and Euston stations. He commented that he felt that Clapham Junction was 'an embarrassment to our industry and country' which would need a radical intervention to fix. Mr Haines suggested that with the potential for Crossrail 2 being agreed to go ahead, there could be opportunities to put the case for a larger redevelopment at the station.

With regards to other improvements to stations, Mr Haines remarked that the railway to the north of East Croydon station was highly complex and that unlocking it would provide a 'vital artery' to the south of the country. Mr Haines commented that the upgrades to the stations that he had set out were 'big, bold and expensive' and that he would 'fight' to get the projects funded under CP6. He concluded that high street retailers would 'love to have' the level of growth that the rail industry had seen and that tackling the issue would be 'the fundamental story of the railways' over the following decade.

The Chair asked what Network Rail stating that it was a service provider rather than an engineering company would mean for passengers. Mr Haines replied that the message was to reinforce that passengers would be put first with regards to any decisions undertaken by the organisation. At a recent event, which was attended by over 350 business leaders, Mr Haines remarked that several people had come up to say they had not heard such a message coming from Network Rail previously.

A member remarked that although Mr Haines had demonstrated how performance had declined, he had not given any projections for how this would improve in future. Mr Haines stated that Network Rail had reached a point where 'targets are spurious' and had repeatedly failed to be delivered upon. He said that it would be 'arrogant' for him to give any projection before understanding why performance had been on a downward trend. However, Mr Haines suggested several factors would likely have played a role including timetables that had failed to keep up with the level of congestion on the system, station log times which were no longer relevant and the significant increase in reactionary delays.

The Chief Executive said that she was encouraged by what Mr Haines had said with regards to decentralising decision making away from Network Rail and for his praise for the concession model run by TfL. However, she asked whether someone would be held accountable at Network Rail when problems arose. Mr Haines replied that if the organisation did devolve powers to the operators then it would be the individual TOCs that would be responsible for the decisions they undertook. He added that holding one individual responsible in a highly centralised system would not work to the benefit of passengers.

A member asked whether there was anything Network Rail could do to ensure that passengers were having an impact on the decisions being made by the organisation. Mr Haines remarked that train operators were 'a good proxy' to understand passengers' needs in some instances. He added that engaging with passenger focused organisations, such as London TravelWatch, would also help to further this insight.

The Chair asked Mr Haines if changes could be implemented now rather than waiting for the current rail review to be completed by Keith Williams. Mr Haines replied that he was 'determined' not to wait and wished to start introducing reforms as soon as possible. He added that Mr Williams would not be looking at the root causes of poor performance, which was something Network Rail would be investigating.

The Chair asked whether the timetable changes that were due to be introduced in December would be implemented successfully, and not lead to the disruption that was witnessed back in May. Mr Haines replied that the infrastructure was in place and ready for the timetable rollout. He remarked that he could not give an 'absolute assurance' that no problems would arise, though if they did it would not be through 'a lack of attention' from his side.

The Director, Policy and Investigation commented that works had been undertaken at stations west of Paddington in relation to Crossrail, though this had now stopped. He asked for an update on the situation. The Director then asked about services into Euston station and the needs of passengers when this is not available due to engineering works such as HS2, specifically as there was no provision to turn around services at Watford Junction. The resulting effect would be that passengers would have to use a lengthy bus replacement service.

Mr Haines replied that there was a funding challenge with regards to the Crossrail west stations mentioned which were actively being reviewed with Mike Brown at TfL. He remarked that the issue of turning around services at Watford Junction was not something he was directly aware of but it was something he could take away and come back to him on.

ACTION: Committee and Public Liaison Officer

9. Consultation on the proposed closure of 51 London Overground ticket offices (LTW595)

The Director, Policy and Investigation introduced his report outlining the consultation on the proposed closure of 51 London Overground ticket offices. Of the 51 ticket

offices, London TravelWatch would object to the closure of 24. He brought the Board's attention to paragraph 6 which referred to the mitigating measures for those stations that London TravelWatch would not object to being closed. If there was anything further that the Board needed clarity on, he stated that he would be able to answer this for them.

A member asked what the current practice was with regards to monitoring CCTV and whether there was a requirement for London Overground to have more than one ticket machine available on the station. Stella Rogers from Arriva Rail London said that each station would have a minimum of two ticket machines for passengers to use. With regards to CCTV, Stuart Giddings from Arriva Rail London commented that many of the ticket offices currently allowed staff to monitor the security footage live, though this was not the only form of surveillance. He added that footage from the cameras could be accessed remotely at the company's control centre as well as at their offices at New Cross Gate.

The Deputy Chair stated that he had concerns with regards to the capabilities of the machines and whether passengers would be able to access the tickets they wished to purchase as easily as they had done via the ticket office. He remarked that in London TravelWatch's submission they should request an assurance that these points be addressed and resolved for passengers.

A member commented that some of the ticket offices that London TravelWatch had said it would not object to closing had very high numbers of people using the station. The Director, Policy and Investigation replied that if there had been on average less than 12 transactions made at the ticket offices per hour the advice from the Secretary of State would be not to object to the closure, regardless of footfall (thus setting aside any objection from London TravelWatch). The member stated that Southbury station fitted the criteria of having on average over 12 transactions at the ticket office per hour but had not been included in the list of ticket offices to be kept open. The Director, Policy and Investigation said Southbury's exclusion had been a mistake and would be added to the list.

A representative from the RMT Union said that he did not agree with the Director, Policy and Investigation's interpretation of the guidance set out by the Secretary of State. The Director, Policy and Investigation replied that the organisation had significant experience of undertaking similar processes in the past and had a good understanding what would and would not be accepted by the Department for Transport.

A member asked if the ticket machines used by Arriva Rail London were fully accessible for wheelchair users. Mr Giddings replied that it would depend on the individual though the machines were compliant with the latest accessibility and health and safety regulations.

The Deputy Chair said that he was concerned that at very large stations passengers may find it difficult to find staff to assist them with any issues they had. Ms Rogers said that the organisation would be assessing its staffing levels at all of its stations and allocate the appropriate number of people accordingly. Steve Headley from the RMT Union warned London TravelWatch from taking such assurances about staffing from Arriva Rail London and added that statistics had shown that violence witnessed at stations across London had been on the increase.

The Chair asked representatives from Arriva Rail London whether they could guarantee that there would always be at least one ticket machine working at the stations they operated. Ms Rogers replied that she could not give such a guarantee in case there is a rare incidence when both machines failed at the same time. However, she added that the company would be fined £25 per hour whenever one of their machines became faulty, so there would be strong financial incentive to get the problem resolved as soon as possible.

A member asked what would occur following the meeting and how could London TravelWatch keep pressure on Arriva Rail London and TfL to ensure that the mitigating measures it had suggested were delivered upon. The Director, Policy and Investigation replied that following the meeting London TravelWatch's submission would be sent to the Secretary of State to consider. Once a decision was made an arbitration process would likely begin in order to implement the mitigating measures.

Mel Taylor from the TSSA stated that she was also concerned about the levels of staffing that would be available at stations if the ticket offices were closed. Although Arriva Rail had previously committed to ensuring that stations were staffed at all times this could mean only one member of staff working on the station at one time. She remarked that in large stations this would prevent passengers from receiving the customer service they required an adequate time timeframe. There could also be problems in terms of additional danger to passengers and staff with only one member of staff working on the station.

The Board agreed that London TravelWatch would object to the closure of 25 out of the 52 proposed ticket offices (**Brondesbury***, Bush Hill Park, Camden Road, Carpenders Park, Clapton, Dalston Junction, Dalston Kingsland, Hackney Central, Hackney Downs, Homerton, Honor Oak Park, Imperial Wharf, Kensal Rise, **Kensington Olympia****, Shepherds Bush, Shoreditch High Street, Silver Street, Southbury, St.James Street, Surrey Quays, Turkey Street, Watford High Street, West Hampstead, White Hart Lane and Wood Street).

The Board then agreed that London TravelWatch would not object to the proposed closures of ticket offices where it was demonstrated that the numbers of transactions per hour, including Oyster and other non-regulated products, was less than 12 per hour. This would be subject to the implementation of mitigation measures to inform passengers and staff of the functionality of ticket machines, and also to ensure that services such as Passenger Assist / Turn up and go for people with reduced mobility were delivered consistently.

London TravelWatch would write to the Secretary of State to express concern that the process that these closures were subject to, when originally put in place in 1995 did not envisage its use in today's travelling environment. As such it did not consider issues such as the total usage of a station, the complexity of fares and tickets that require detailed knowledge for a passenger to buy the most appropriate ticket for their journey and the deployment and knowledge of station staff available to passengers. Therefore, London TravelWatch would suggest that on the basis of this evidence that there is a substantive case for reform of this process.

The Chair thanked everyone in attendance for giving up their time to speak on the matter.

**Post meeting note – Brondesbury subsequently withdrawn (with reluctance by London TravelWatch) to enable our Access for All scheme to proceed)*

***Post meeting note – Kensington Olympia subsequently withdrawn after recalibration of data*

12. Any other business

There was no other business.

13. 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.