
Minutes

Agenda item: 4
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Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 23 October 2018 at 169 Union Street, London SE1 0LL

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Present

Members

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

Guests

Mike Brown	London's Transport Commissioner, TfL (Item 10)
Stella Rogers	Customer Experience Director, Arriva Rail London (Item 8 and Item 11)
John Saynor	Chair, West Hampstead Amenity and Transport Group (Item 11)
Mel Taylor	Full-time Lead Officer, TSSA (Item 11)
Brian Whitehead	Relief Regional Organiser, RMT (Item 11)

Secretariat

Tim Bellenger	Director, Policy and Investigation
Gytha Chinweze	Governance Officer
Janet Cooke	Chief Executive
Richard Freeston-Clough	Operations and Communications Manager
Susan James	Casework Manager
Luke Muskett	Committee and Public Liaison 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

There were no apologies for absence.

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 meetings at Transport Focus over the previous month. Ian Hanson had given a presentation setting out the success of their one team approach for stations in which operators and Network Rail worked together to provide a better customer experience. Staff would also wear one standardised uniform so that both teams were available to assist passengers. Since the changes, Victoria's approval ratings had improved substantially, with the plan to extend the model to London Liverpool Street – which London TravelWatch could help in assisting with.

The Chair added there had been discussions between London TravelWatch and Transport Focus regarding conducting research with Porterbrook Leasing Company to discover what passengers wanted from trains prior to their design. The Director, Policy and Investigation said that Transport Focus had made the arrangement with Porterbrook and that the work would begin shortly.

The Chair concluded that he, the Chief Executive and the Director, Policy and Investigation had met with Stephen Hammond MP. Mr Hammond had previously worked as the Transport Minister in Government and continued to be 'plugged in to transport issues', which London TravelWatch 'could push for in due course'.

5 Minutes of the Board meeting held on 24 July 2018

There were amendments to the minutes of the Board meeting held on 24 July 2018. On the third line of the third paragraph on page 3 the word 'recently' was inserted between 'not' and 'engaged'. On the seventh line of the same paragraph the word 'it' was replaced with 'future closures'. In the second sentence of paragraph 2 on page 7 the sentence was reworded following the word 'devolution' to state 'as the organisation was neutral and instead was trying to promote the benefits to passengers that had come about from the TfL model'.

On the fifth line of the fourth paragraph on page 8 the word 'in' between words 'communities' and 'such' was omitted. Finally, within the first sentence in the third paragraph on page 10 the words 'a no deal' were inserted before the word 'Brexit'.

The minutes from the Governance Committee were also noted. The Chair agreed and signed the amended minutes as a correct record.

6 Matters arising (LTW589)

There were no comments on the outstanding matters that had been completed.

7 Key activities (LTW590)

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 central London bus proposals that were discussed during the meeting with TfL. The Chief Executive said that it had been 'a very engaging meeting' and that both Mr Powell and Mr Hobbs had 'stayed for the best part of two hours' despite the fact the meeting was only scheduled to last for an hour. Bus service changes were discussed but this could not be relayed in a public forum at that stage.

The Director, Policy and Investigation said in regard to the festive closures discussed at the TDM meeting in July, TfL had said that there would be fewer closures on the London Underground than the previous year. However, there would be no services between London Victoria and Brighton for approximately 10 days whilst a junction was renewed at Battersea. He added that most people would be diverted through London Bridge. The Gatwick Express would also not be running.

The Chair asked when the festive works were due to start. The Director, Policy and Investigation said that they were scheduled to begin on 23 December and be finished by 2 January. There would also be closures around Paddington and Euston. The Chair asked how confident the operators were that the work would be completed in the timeframe they had set. The Director, Policy and Investigation replied that operators were 'conscious of problems in the past', particularly in light of the previous works that had taken place at Finsbury Park. He added that Clapham Junction would be more able to cope with the additional loads of passengers going through the station as it was more used to handling large numbers of people.

A member commented that in previous years operators had failed to make it known that they were not going to be finished completing their festive works until the last minute. He asked if London TravelWatch staff could ask them, if they felt they were likely to be delayed, that they make people aware a few days before so they had enough warning. The Chief Executive remarked that when there had been significant closures in the past the organisation had been given daily updates on the works. The member said that a similar arrangement would be useful as 'if they are not telling the world' London TravelWatch ought to be.

The Chair asked about the Christmas Steering Group involving Great Western Railway. The Director, Policy and Investigation said that there were significant projects being carried out during the period. One was in Southall which would have an effect on services coming through Paddington station, and the other was

in Guildford, which would affect trains running between Reading and Gatwick Airport.

The Chair enquired about the meeting that was held with the ORR and particularly the item on personnel changes that had been discussed. The Chief Executive commented that Joanna Whittington had left her role as the chief executive and John Larkinson had stepped in on an interim basis until the position was filled. Stephen Glaister would remain on the board but would step down as Chair at the end of the year. Declan Collier, the former chief executive of London City Airport, had been appointed as his replacement.

A member asked if anything useful had come out of the events at both the Labour and Conservative Party conferences. The Chief Executive that she had some interesting discussions with a range of people from the transport industry and had agreed to hold meetings with Midlands Connect, Transport for the West Midlands and transport minister Nusrat Ghani MP.

8 Implementation of the Gospel Oak to Barking line electrification

The Director, Policy and Investigation gave a verbal update on the completion of the Gospel Oak to Barking electrification, which had been mentioned previously in the matters arising document. There was a plan for a phased withdrawal of the current diesel trains that were in operation, which would be replaced with new electrified units that drivers would be trained on. He added that he believed that there would be some additional replaced bus services being introduced during peak times to deal with the change over.

The Director, Policy and Investigation stated that he had noticed that Stella Rogers from Arriva Rail London was sitting in the public gallery and asked if she wished to add anything to the item. Stella Rogers stated that Arriva Rail London understood the frustration of its customers and the need for the new trains to be introduced efficiently and effectively. The company's priority was to ensure that the units were robust and able to run to the timetable as advertised. She added that she would be meeting with passengers that used the line that day to hear their feedback.

A member asked when all the new electric trains would be in place and if all the drivers would be fully trained in time to operate them. Ms Rogers replied that it was subject to the works being completed with bombardier which was still a 'work in progress'. Drivers would begin their training in early November with a gradual transition from diesel to electric trains beginning after that. The member asked if there would be the same numbers of trains on the line as operating at the present time. Ms Rogers replied that in terms of improved capacity, the amounts of seats available per train would go up from 120 to 250, and the amount of standing capacity would rise from 211 to 489 passengers.

9 Step-free stations in London (LTW591)

The Director, Policy and Investigation presented his report into step-free stations in London. The main body of text explained the history of step-free access across the capital and where policy has been directed in terms of accessibility. He stated that

alongside this, in the appendices, included a list of stations that had been made known to London TravelWatch which could be easily made step-free for minimal cost.

The Director, Policy and Investigation remarked that from 2019 a £300 million programme was being introduced by the Department for Transport in which operators could submit bids in order to improve accessibility at their stations. The fund was available nationwide, and it was expected that the money would be spread evenly amongst the different regions of the UK. London TravelWatch had been invited to comment on the matter and had been asked to support a bid from TfL.

With regards to the bid made by TfL, the Director, Policy and Investigation stated that the organisation had taken a different approach to London TravelWatch in how the money should be targeted. In particular, TfL proposed to direct the money in areas of concentrated planning developments, which would also rely on external funding from section 106 agreements. Only two stations that TfL had proposed (Gunnersbury and Hackney Downs) appeared on London TravelWatch's list of stations to be converted.

A member commented that she regularly used West Dulwich station and could not see how it could be converted to be completely step-free by the introduction of ramps as there did not appear to be the space to do so. The Director, Policy and Investigation said that it would require cooperation with local authorities in order to accommodate a ramp next to the public footpath. The member enquired how the station had made it onto London TravelWatch's list. The Director, Policy and Investigation replied that the stations had been decided after feedback the organisation had received from the public over a number of years. The member asked that they be double-checked to ensure that the stations on the list were still relevant.

ACTION: Director, Policy and Investigation

A member enquired what the timings would be on making the London Underground step-free. The Director, Policy and Investigation stated that the Access for All schemes were still in progress and others had been deferred from the control period. The schemes that had not yet started would 'be going in up until the 2020s'. The member asked if London TravelWatch could expand on the list of areas where it was felt there was a lack of alternative step-free stations. The Chief Executive said that it was something the organisation could look into and report back to the Board in approximately nine months' time, and it would be included in the Board's forward plan.

10. Presentation by Mike Brown, London's Transport Commissioner

(Please see Appendix A for Mr Brown's speech to the Board)

The Chair asked how Mr Brown's 'vision for expansion' aligned itself with the financial challenges facing TfL. Mr Brown replied that there had been 'a huge amount of misreporting' with regard to TfL's financial situation. At present, the current deficit was 'well under control' and in line to be making a surplus by 2021/22. There had been new developments that would alter projections slightly,

such as the delay to Crossrail. However, the organisation was in discussions with the Treasury on ways to remediate the additional cost.

Mr Brown stated that TfL had made 'very significant inroads' to their cost base, which previously had 'a huge amount of duplication of back offices functions'. He remarked that he knew this as it was the area of the organisation he had previously worked in. At present, the only area of TfL that was making a surplus was the Underground and the DLR, which within three to four years would 'be the most efficient metro system in the world'.

Mr Brown remarked that that year had been the first financial year where their operating subsidy from the Government had been reduced from '£700 million to zero'. He commented that it was an 'insane situation' where passengers using public transport were subsidising the road maintenance of London. Mr Brown added, 'it is nuts and I say it everywhere I go'. However, he stated that he was confident that the projects that had been outlined for investment would be delivered upon.

A member agreed that the situation where rail passengers were subsidising road maintenance was did not make sense. He first asked how London TravelWatch could help to highlight this 'daft situation'. Secondly, he asked whether TfL would be entitled to compensation from Network Rail for causing the problems that had delayed the electrification of the Barking to Gospel Oak line. Mr Brown replied that on the first point, he would happily provide a response as to how London TravelWatch could help put TfL's case forward for the return of their operational subsidy from the Government.

ACTION: Committee and Public Liaison Officer

Mr Brown said he wished to put on record 'my sincere apologies for the users of that route waiting for increased capacity'. He commented that he did not believe that there was anything in the contract with Network Rail that entitled TfL to compensation from them as he had checked previously. Mr Brown remarked, however, that he would double-check this and come back to London TravelWatch with an answer.

ACTION: Committee and Public Liaison Officer

A member asked what TfL's vision was for buses. He stated that the subsidy provided for buses 'is huge' and was the most used method of public transport. Despite this, passenger numbers in central London had been falling in recent years. He added that road pricing was of particular interest to London TravelWatch and could be used to help assist bus policy. Mr Brown replied that, as the member was aware, TfL was looking at bus routes in central London and proposing to make plans so that they were more optimised for the amount of users they served. With regards to road pricing, TfL was aware that this had been put in the Mayor's Transport Strategy though did not have a clear policy on it at that time.

A member asked if Mr Brown could ensure that if Crossrail 2 were to go ahead all stations along the line would be step-free, as opposed to the current project where only the central section was fully accessible and western and eastern sections had

gaps. Mr Brown said that it was 'a very good point' and that if Crossrail 1 was done again it would have been one of the things they would have changed. He added that he would go back and revisit it with the team to ensure that in the plans for Crossrail 2 all stations were completely accessible.

ACTION: Committee and Public Liaison Officer

With reference to a question that had been said previously, a member asked if there had been any research done by TfL into what was contributing to the decline in bus passengers in central London. Mr Brown replied that the advance in technology had encouraged people to make 'very instant, real-time decisions' on what method of transport they planned to use. He added that the private hire market had 'proliferated', which was also having an impact on buses. Mr Brown commented, however, that in comparison the use of bus services outside of London had seen a massive decline. He stated 'I am not going to allow that to happen in London, I can assure you'.

A member asked Mr Brown whether he could relay any additional information on the feasibility and potential timeline for making the Central Line station at Bank step-free. Mr Brown replied that he could not be more specific other than to so that he was 'absolutely mindful' of the need to have full accessibility at Bank. He added that he had asked that it be a priority for the business plan, and TfL would be discussing it with the Deputy Mayor for Transport at an upcoming away day.

The Chair thanked Mr Brown for attending and for his contribution to the meeting.

11. Proposed closure of 51 London Overground ticket offices (LTW592)

The Director, Policy and Investigation presented his report which gave an overview of the consultation process which London TravelWatch had undertaken to consider the proposed closures of 51 London Overground ticket offices. He stated that given the response from the public, staff would not be able to provide members with a comprehensive recommendation until the information had been properly analysed. Therefore, an extension had been requested in order to complete the additional work, with plans to present the final report to members at the next Board meeting at City Hall on 20 November.

A member asked how many responses London TravelWatch had received. The Director, Policy and Investigation replied that there had been over 7,000 comprising of emails, postcards, online surveys, petitions, physical letters and more. He added that there had also been a high response from passengers that self-identified as having a disability, which reflected the passenger usage of the station and was a strong validation of their consultation process.

The Chair asked how the numbers of responses compared to the consultation that was held to close the London Underground ticket offices. The Director, Policy and Investigation replied that the organisation had received 'roughly around the same volume of responses'. However, in the case of the Underground closures, that had involved nearly 300 stations compared to the 51 that were under consideration this time around.

The Chair invited Stella Rogers, Customer Experience Director at Arriva Rail London to explain Arriva Rail London's case for the closures that they had proposed. Ms Rogers stated that it had not been her intention to address the Board and that members would have to 'bear with' her. She stated that the purpose of the changes was to provide a greater customer experience for passengers and also adjust to the new ways in which people were purchasing tickets.

Ms Rogers stated that Arriva Rail London had organised site visits with their union representatives and was very keen to listen to their views. They would also be very interested to read the London TravelWatch report to see what their passengers had fed back. She commented that there had been some 'misleading things in the press' so she had not been surprised that some passengers were concerned about the proposals.

Ms Rogers confirmed that Arriva Rail London had no intention to destaff any station and wished to put people out onto the station floor so that they were more readily available to passengers. She remarked that the company had invested heavily in ticket vending machines and that there would 'always be more than one machine at every station'. She concluded that Arriva Rail London 'genuinely believe [the changes] will be of benefit to our passengers' as otherwise they would not be proposing to go ahead with them. The Chair thanked Ms Rogers for her time.

The Chair invited Brian Whitehead, Relief Regional Organiser at the RMT, to present his case against the changes proposed by Arriva Rail London. Mr Whitehead read out the report that had been submitted to London TravelWatch during the consultation process. He began by saying that the RMT union was there to protect members' jobs, though in this case the changes would also pose a risk to public safety and cause problems for people with accessibility needs.

Mr Whitehead stated that although he believed passengers would like to see staff present on the station he did not believe that coincided with a wish to have the ticket office closed. He remarked that the proposals were not about making staff more visible but instead about 'cynical cost cutting' that over time would see staff levels reduce. Mr Whitehead added that the statistics put forward to support the case for closing the ticket offices were not accurate as they excluded transactions for oyster cards, which at some stations would be fairly high. The Chair thanked Mr Whitehead for his contribution.

The Chair invited Mel Taylor, full-time lead officer at the TSSA union, to set out her case against the proposals made by Arriva Rail London. Ms Taylor remarked that the TSSA had already submitted a written submission to the consultation, though wished to emphasise some of the key points from it. She commented that similar commitments with regard to staffing levels had been made when the proposals were made to close ticket offices across London Underground. Despite this, staffing at many of these stations had reduced, and in some cases was down to only one member of staff available across the entire station.

Ms Taylor said that the reductions to single staffed stations on the Underground had undermined their commitment to make staff visible and readily available to provide information to passengers. She stated that she was aware of the cuts to TfL's

funding and the obvious need to make efficiency savings where possible. However, she remarked that this should not come at the expense of reduced staffing or in a reduction in safety standards for the travelling public. The Chair thanked Ms Taylor for her contribution.

The Chair invited John Saynor, Chair of West Hampstead Amenity and Transport group, to present his case to the Board. Mr Saynor stated that the London Overground had been a 'massive success story'. Passenger numbers had increased '30 times at some stations over a period of 20 years' and performance was 'consistently high'. He remarked that when the ticket offices were closed on the Underground staff were gradually reallocated and could not be seen on several stations. He stated, 'our fear is that the same thing could happen here'.

Mr Saynor stated that a number of passengers would be unable to use ticket machines to buy their tickets, either because they had a disability or were unable to purchase the ticket for their specific journey. He added that he agreed with Mr Whitehead from the RMT that the 12 transactions an hour criteria, set out by the Secretary of State, did not include oyster top-ups, which were significant at some stations. Mr Saynor commented that maintaining a relationship with customers was important even if that was 'an old fashioned concept'. He concluded by stating that 'at least at the busier stations, the ticket offices should be saved as much as possible.' The Chair thanked Mr Saynor for his time and comments.

The Chair thanked everyone who had contributed to the item on the ticket office closures and for all the members of the public for coming to the meeting.

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.