
Confidential Minutes

Agenda item: 14
Drafted: 06.09.16

Confidential minutes of the Board meeting held on 19 July 2016 at 169 Union Street

These minutes are in addition to the public minutes of a meeting of the Board on the same date. The Board 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 this part of the meeting.

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1. Minutes and matters arising
2. Southern Rail
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Present

Members

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

Secretariat

Tim Bellenger

Director, Policy and Investigation

Janet Cooke

Chief Executive

Sharon Malley

Executive Assistant

1 Confidential minutes of the meeting on 24 May 2016

The confidential minutes of the Board meeting held on 24 May 2016 were agreed and signed as a correct record. There were no matters arising.

2 Southern Rail

The Chair said that the situation relating to Southern Rail was serious and was receiving a lot of political attention. The Mayor had called for operational involvement by TfL and a Guardian article had made critical comments about DfT official Peter Wilkinson by name.

It was agreed that, in the short term, London TravelWatch should focus on calls for compensation and better information for passengers.

But the Board also noted some serious underlying issues. GTR's management appeared to have stopped caring and the current situation could not be allowed to continue. Staff morale was very low and there was a loss of faith in top managers. The Policy Officer (RN)'s observations about the role of the DfT were revealing.

In the longer term, if TfL were to be brought on board with the DfT's support, there may not be the need to call for franchise removal. There were also lessons to learn in relation to specifying future franchises.

The Chief Executive noted that London TravelWatch should be careful when making public declarations about GTR's management capacity as this could put London TravelWatch's reputation at risk.

It was agreed that London TravelWatch should seek to establish TfL's detailed view on Southern, particularly around whether it would be willing to work alongside Southern or whether it would only be prepared to take full control. The Chief Executive said she would raise it at the regular update meetings she attended with TfL managing directors.

It was agreed that more transparency at the DfT was important and that the DfT should not seek to shield franchises from scrutiny under the guise of commercial confidentiality. The Policy Officer (RN) said he had been told by the DfT that the future basis for franchises would be quality rather than cost but there was a very limited evidence base for this, which made accountability difficult.

The Chief Executive noted that London TravelWatch risked losing its influence if it pushed too hard. It was agreed that London TravelWatch should continue to emphasise the need for improvements that benefit passengers, with a short-term focus on passenger information, compensation and the proper operation of the new reduced timetable. Longer term, the focus should be on the introduction of TfL management to the operations side of the franchise, along with calling for a review or independent investigation into what went wrong, including the roles of parties concerned, to prevent it happening again.

It was agreed that London TravelWatch should not call for removal of the franchise. This would not necessarily address the underlying cause of the problem, and would open London TravelWatch up to accusations of naivety. Investigations should focus on the passenger interest and how passengers could be better served in future.

3 Meeting review

Members agreed that the bus presentations had been interesting and informative with useful strategic detail. The item on bus performance was significantly enhanced by the fact that the TfL officers stayed to discuss it. The Chief Executive said that it had been important to keep the bus performance item on the agenda because members had said at the previous meeting that they would keep it under review.

It was noted that TfL's thinking on bus stations did not appear to be very sophisticated and that London TravelWatch should return to this in future.

Action: Executive Assistant

Items of reputational risk had been highlighted during the Southern Rail discussion. No other risks or media issues were identified.