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**Minutes**

Agenda item: 4  
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**Minutes of the Policy Committee meeting held on 25 February 2014 at  
Dexter House, Royal Mint Court, London EC3**

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**Present**

Members

Chris Brown, Richard Dilks, Glyn Kyle, Stephen Locke (Acting Chair of Committee in John Stewart's absence), Abdikafi Rage, Ruth Thompson

Guests

Helen Chapman	Taxi and Private Hire, Transport for London (Item 7)
Darren Crowson	Taxi and Private Hire, Transport for London (Item 7)
Andrew Miles	Consultation Officer, Transport for London (Item 7)
Paul Blackwell	General Manager, Dial-a-Ride (Item 7)

Members of the public and representatives from the transport industry

Secretariat

Tim Bellenger	Director, Policy & Investigation
Janet Cooke	Chief Executive
Susan James	Casework Manager (Item 10)
Sharon Malley	Executive Assistant (minutes)
Vincent Stops	Policy Officer

## Minutes

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

Stephen Locke welcomed members, officers and guests to the meeting and made the standard safety announcements.

### 2 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from John Stewart, who was at short notice unavoidably required elsewhere. In his absence, it was agreed that the meeting would be chaired by Stephen Locke.

### 3 Declarations of interest

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

### 4 Minutes

The minutes of the Policy committee on 10 December 2013 were approved and signed as a correct record, subject to amending the heading from "Consumer Affairs" to "Policy" and noting the attendance of Janet Cooke, Chief Executive.

### 5 Matters arising (PC023)

It was noted that Transport for London (TfL) had commissioned an independent review of Dial a Ride and that it would be useful for London TravelWatch to speak to those charged with conducting it. The Chair said he would raise this at future meetings with the Managing Director of Surface Transport. It was important for the review to consider other door to door services transport used by the public, not just Dial a Ride.

On buses, the Policy Officer said he went to a recent London Buses seminar, where TfL said that decision-making on buses would be more transparent in future. This was in direct response to London TravelWatch's prompting on the subject. It was agreed that the Policy Officer would circulate to members copies of the letters written by London TravelWatch following the bus scrutiny and bus seminar.

**Action: Policy Officer**

It was noted that wider bus-related issues were due to be considered by members at the April meeting of the Policy committee.

In relation to ticket vending machines, the Director, Policy and Investigation, said that the Office of Rail Regulation planned to launch a consultation on ticket vending at stations and London TravelWatch intended to contribute.

It was noted that the national passenger survey score for stations was now included in the National Rail performance report so this action should be marked as complete.

Members discussed the possibility of conducting a piece of work reviewing train operators' websites and their references to London TravelWatch and complaints procedures. The Chair said that he had briefly reviewed the London operators' websites and from an initial inspection found that four were good but the others were all poor, with one making no reference at all to London TravelWatch and another referring to it as a member-based user group.

It was agreed that a balanced approach was needed, as London TravelWatch should not seek out complainants, but consumers needed to be able to find it if necessary. The Chief Executive said that taking this forward with train operators would be a significant piece of work that would need to be included in the work plan. It was agreed that it would first be useful to carry out a small piece of background research in this area and the Chief Executive would discuss with the Casework Manager how best to take this forward.

**Action: Chief Executive**

## **6 Key activities (PC024)**

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that the Southeastern franchise direct award had been extended by four and a half years to 2018, which was a 50% extension on its original contract. London TravelWatch had emphasised at meetings about the franchise that the Southeastern metro service in London could not be allowed to stagnate in its current form. London TravelWatch expressed its desire for Southeastern services to serve passengers at least to the standard of other London metro franchises.

It was noted that there would be a significant timetable change for services from London Bridge in January 2015 as a result of the engineering works there. Current proposals would see a reduction of peak services on the Greenwich line. It was noted that this should be raised at the Ministerial meeting due to take place in March.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that there had been positive developments in relation to the proposals for night tube services and there would be further high-level briefings for officers on the implications for passengers. This would be the main focus at the Board meeting in June.

It was noted that the principle of accepting Oyster cards at Gatwick Airport station had now been accepted by all parties and it was hoped that implementation would take place later this year. The March Board meeting would consider surface transport access to airports in more detail.

## **7 Taxis (PC025)**

Helen Chapman, from Taxis and Private Hire at Transport for London, gave a presentation on black cab licensing and charges. She said that there were currently 22,000 licensed all-London black cabs and around 3,500 suburban black cabs. This represented around one-third of all taxis in England and Wales.

Ms Chapman said that taxi fares were regulated, with an annual consultation on changes to the fares structure taking place in Autumn followed by a proposal to the TfL Board in Spring for changes to be implemented in April. This model had been in place

since the 1980s and took into account the cost of running the taxis and allowing for a profit for drivers.

Darren Crowson, TfL, said that one of the base costs included in the model was insurance and this was the most difficult to establish as there was a great deal of variation across the industry. The consultation set out the list of costs that were considered in the model and members might find it worthwhile to review them.

The Chair said it was unusual for pricing to be based purely on cost-plus as this did not incentivise efficiencies from drivers to pass on to the customer. It did not differentiate between fixed costs, such as garaging, and costs that increased with miles driven, such as fuel and depreciation. It also did not look at fares from a consumer perspective or take account of other market conditions, such as the cost of competing modes of transport.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that the taxi index related to fares set by the metre but it was possible for passengers to negotiate a fixed fare. It was not always obvious to the passenger that this was an option. Ms Chapman said that TfL did not collect data on the extent of negotiated fares and information on this was not on the fare card in taxi cabs.

Mr Crowson said that from April 2014 the cost to passengers for card payments would be limited to the actual cost incurred by drivers to process them. TfL was due to conduct a review of card acceptance in taxis during 2014 to consider whether to mandate card payments in all taxis.

The Chair said it would be useful for TfL to talk to the UK Cards Association when considering the acceptance of card payments in taxis, in order to fully understand the cost implications for drivers of accepting cards. He thought it would also be useful for TfL to consider NFC contactless cards and mobile payment options such as Pingit, which were becoming more widely available.

Ms Chapman said that TfL was considering removing the extra charges for taxis from Heathrow Airport, introducing fixed fares from Heathrow to central London, and changing the date of the fares revision to January instead of April to match the other fare revisions in TfL.

The Chief Executive said that the previous London TravelWatch board had highlighted the need for passengers to have more information within cabs on their consumer rights and how to complain. Ms Chapman said that this was in cabs but acknowledged it could be difficult to read.

It was noted that the fuel duty surcharge was, in practice, very rarely invoked as fare increases to accommodate rising fuel costs were agreed as part of the annual fares revision. A member asked whether the drive towards more environmentally efficient cars affected calculations relating to fuel costs. Mr Crowson said it did not affect the fares calculations at present although this might change in the future.

The Policy Officer said that London TravelWatch was keen for more information to be available to passengers on identifying the driver. Ms Chapman said that this was something to take forward in future.

It was agreed that consumer pressure in the area of taxi fares and passenger rights would be welcome and London TravelWatch would respond to the TfL consultation on card payments in due course.

Members moved on to consider the Capital Call scheme, with the Director, Policy and Investigation, presenting a report on proposals from TfL for its withdrawal. The scheme supplemented the Taxicard scheme in some London boroughs and had been pencilled in for withdrawal as TfL felt there was no longer need for a supplementary provision in those boroughs.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that Transport for All opposed the proposed withdrawal as some people with disabilities still found it difficult to use unadapted taxis. He said that London TravelWatch had concerns about the proliferation of different door to door services and would welcome a strategic review of their provision.

Andrew Miles, Consultation Officer for TfL, and Paul Blackwell, General Manager of Dial-a-Ride, responded to the presentation. Mr Blackwell said that the arrangements around Taxicard were complicated, with TfL having now become the dominant funder but the boroughs administering the scheme and operating different provisions in relation to approval and operation. Mr Miles said that the Taxicard service in the 10 boroughs that also had Capital Call was now good enough to be able to absorb the needs of those Capital Call users.

It was suggested that the users of Capital Call may have particular needs that Taxicard could not meet and TfL agreed this would need to be looked at carefully.

Members were concerned that this issue was being examined independently of the other door to door services available to Londoners with accessibility problems. In particular, members were aware that Dial a Ride would be reviewed shortly and they agreed that Capital Call, Taxicard and Dial a Ride should be considered together rather than piecemeal. It was agreed that London TravelWatch's response to the Capital Call consultation would be along those lines.

**Action: Director, Policy and Investigation**

## **8 National Rail performance report (PC026)**

The Policy Assistant presented a report on the performance of National Rail for the period October to December 2013. She said that all operators' performance had been poor during this period because of severe weather conditions, with Southern having the worst performance. Southern was more affected by problems of fallen trees and landslips than other operators, and also had to cope with upgrade works at Brighton and London Bridge as well as works south of Croydon and at Gatwick.

The Policy Assistant said the report now included data relating to the National Passenger Survey (NPS). The survey showed that London passengers were more dissatisfied with value for money for train services than those in other parts of the country, which could be attributed to the higher fares in London and the absence of alternative forms of transport.

Members noted that the NPS data analysis added new value to the report and on this occasion the report merited greater prominence on London TravelWatch's website.

**Action: Communications Officer**

It was noted that the report should be clear that the data related to the National Rail Passenger Survey as distinct from the surveys of other modes. It should also be clear that passenger satisfaction related to specific journeys rather than train operating companies.

**Action: Policy Assistant**

Members thanked the Policy Assistant for the useful and informative report.

**9 Transport for London performance report (PC027)**

The Policy Officer presented London TravelWatch's report into TfL's performance for the period October to December 2013. He said the report format had been amended so that it no longer included red/amber/green triangles to show performance direction and included more comment rather than simply reporting on whether TfL's Business Plan targets had been met.

The Policy Officer commented on the performance of TfL's modes over the relevant period. He said that for London Streets, the increase in traffic volumes would affect bus performance and the cycling targets were not being met. Buses were performing well and the number of accessible bus stops had increased. Transport for All had recently complimented London TravelWatch for the work done in this area.

London Underground's performance was good, as was the Docklands Light Railway's. However, there were continuing concerns about DLR ticket vending machines, which should be kept under review.

Tramlink's performance scored highly but its value for money scores were going down. This may be due to some routes not yet being fitted with new trams, unplanned service disruption and overcrowding. Overground performed well with complaint numbers down.

Dial a Ride's satisfaction scores were high but this masked problems relating to the difficulty of making ad hoc bookings. Satisfaction with the cycle hire scheme was varied but currently at a higher level than at any previous point.

Members noted that the 2012 TfL Travel in London report said that 37% of journeys in London were by private car, with more private car trips in outer London than inner London. This was a much lower proportion than in the rest of the UK.

**10 Casework report and update (PC028)**

The Casework Manager presented a report about the performance of the casework team during the period October to December 2013. Members noted that many complaints related to problems of consequential loss, in particular if transport to airports had been delayed and passengers had missed flights. Passengers were often unaware that they could not claim for consequential losses and the Casework Manager believed it would be beneficial if operators were more clear on their websites about liability in the event of consequential loss.

Members were concerned to note that the National Rail enquiries website described some fares as “cheapest available” when in fact, using Oyster, the fares could be considerably cheaper than those listed. The Chief Executive agreed to raise this with the Association of Train Operating Companies and then take forward as appropriate.

**Action: Chief Executive**

Members thanked the Casework Manager for the report and the continued excellent performance of the casework team.

**11 Any other business**

There was no other business.

**12 Resolution to move into confidential session**

The meeting resolved, under section 15(b) of schedule 18 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999, that by reason of the confidential nature of the next following item/s, that it was desirable in the public interest that the public should be excluded from the meeting.

In confidential session, members considered research on interchanges and casework handling and also reviewed financial or reputational risks posed by the meeting.