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**Minutes**

Agenda item:  
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**Minutes of the Consumer Affairs Committee meeting held on 12 February 2013 at Dexter House, Royal Mint Court, London EC3**

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**Present**

Members

Richard Dilks, Glyn Kyle, Stephen Locke, Abdikafi Rage, John Stewart (Chair), Ruth Thompson

Guests

Trevor Hill	Retail and Commercial Manager, London Overground
Peter Kalton	Head of Infrastructure and Projects, London Overground
Will Layton	Customer Services Manager, Docklands Light Railway

Matt Winfield	Stakeholder Engagement Manager, Transport for London
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Secretariat

Tim Bellenger	Director, Policy & Investigation
John Cartledge	Safety and Policy Adviser (from Item 7)
Janet Cooke	Chief Executive
Richard Freeston-Clough	Communications Officer
Sharon Malley	Executive Assistant (minutes)
Susan Parham-McCance	Casework Manager (Items 7-8)

## Minutes

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

The Chair welcomed members, officers and guests to the meeting and made the standard safety announcements.

### 2 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Josephine Channer.

### 3 Declarations of interest

Richard Dilks declared that his job at Which? involved engagement with bodies and organisations relating to ticket vending machines (item 7) and the Government's fares and ticketing review (confidential session). He would take part in the discussions on these items but not make any decisions or conclusions.

### 4 Minutes

The minutes of the Consumer Affairs committee held on 16 October 2012 had been agreed as a correct record at a meeting of the Transport Services committee on 11 December 2012. They were noted.

### 5 Matters arising (CAC042)

#### 5.1 Review of customer satisfaction survey

The Chief Executive said that London TravelWatch's customer satisfaction questionnaire needed updating and that once it was updated it would be circulated to members for review.

**Action: Executive Assistant**

### 6 Actions taken (CAC039)

It was noted that officers had responded to Transport for London's (TfL) consultation on changes to the operation of the central congestion charging area. Members agreed policy perspectives on issues such as congestion charging and these perspectives enabled officers to respond to consultations in line with them.

## 7 Ticket vending machines

Trevor Hill, Retail and Commercial Manager at London Overground (LOROL), gave a presentation on the ticket vending machines (TVMs) used at Overground stations. He said that LOROL used TVMs from two different manufacturers, Shere (now owned by Atos) and Scheidt & Bachmann (S&B). The Atos machines were located on North London Line, the East London Line and the Barking to Gospel Oak line. S&B machines were located on the line from Watford to Euston and from Clapham Junction to Willesden. He said that most stations had at least two TVMs and many also had ticket offices.

Peter Kalton, Head of Infrastructure and Projects at LOROL, said that LOROL was the organisation that ran London Overground services for TfL. The services had seen significant expansion since 2007, with journey numbers increasing from 405 per day to over 1,000.

He said that there were 21 S&B machines in LOROL station and 94 Atos machines. There had been a consistent growth in the volume of tickets sold by machines so that now more were sold by machine than through ticket offices.

Across the whole fleet, the availability performance of the ticket machines was deteriorating. Previously the concern about TVM reliability had focused on the S&B machines but recently the downtime for Atos machines had increased dramatically. Atos were now not meeting the service level agreements specified in the contract for repair times.

The reasons for the faults were not unusual but the problems were in the length of time it took to fix them. LOROL had invested a significant amount of management time to manage the Atos contract and there was now a more flexible approach to fixing machines, such as working in the evenings. In addition, Atos had worked on fixing coin jams, getting engineers to faults more quickly, improving relationships with station staff and making improvements to hardware.

Will Layton, Customer Services Engineer at Docklands Light Railway (DLR), gave a presentation on TVMs on the DLR network. He said that there had been a steady increase in the levels of transactions and complaints. Two-thirds of transactions were now on Oyster. At its highest level, there were 1,000 complaints per four-week period, which Mr Layton said was unacceptable

There was a difficulty in assessing the true level of customer dissatisfaction as the system recorded short change voucher reclaims as complaints and there was no way to distinguish between them and true complaints about service.

A large proportion of complaints about Oyster transactions related to them not being completed properly, with the passenger not properly touching the card to the reader at the end of the transaction. Marketing work was underway in order to improve passengers' understanding of the need to touch the card on the reader after topping it up. Mr Layton said that going forward he was seeing some success in solving the problems of ticket jams, and was increasing the amount of float in the machines and improving the maintenance programmes.

Peter Kalton said that the amount of management time invested in managing the relationships with the TVM providers had increased and that the figures for the latest period did show some improvement. However, maintaining this trend did depend on Atos also continuing to work on improvement.

The Chair raised the problem of passengers trying to top up Oyster cards using cash payments, which were then lost because the passenger did not touch the card reader at the end of the transaction. Peter Kalton said that this was a greater problem with Atos machines than S&B machines. A considerable amount of research had been carried out into why this problem was occurring and Atos had sent data to LOROL for their review. It was difficult to see a solution but one possible improvement would be the introduction of new Oyster pearl devices with stronger fields that could read cards from a greater distance.

Will Layton added that when top-up transactions were paid for on cards and then failed to complete the money would be refunded back to the card. When it was paid for with cash the cash would come back out of the machine. Consideration was being given to what the timing should be on returning cash following incomplete transactions.

He said that when LOROL received complaints they were taken seriously and investigated thoroughly. It was noted that staff at stations needed to be made aware of the complaints process so that people who have experienced problems with machines understand how to make complaints and are not simply told there is nothing that can be done.

Peter Kalton said that because the train performance in LOROL was very high staff were able to focus resources on other areas such as TVM performance. There were more complaints about TVMs than about train performance.

Peter Twigg of ATOC said that there was an opportunity for ATOC members to discuss issues such as TVM performance at its industry forums. The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that in London TravelWatch's regular meetings with train operators, he would ensure that TVM reliability was discussed.

The Chief Executive said London TravelWatch identified this issue following its analysis of TfL's complaints data, which was released after requests from London TravelWatch. It was a good example of how London TravelWatch could spot trends and work with operators to resolve problems.

It was noted that there passengers sometimes had difficulty understanding which tickets were valid on which routes and what the terms on the tickets actually meant. Peter Twigg said that inconsistencies had developed over the years as each train operating company developed its own language about ticket validity and work was now taking place to try to introduce more consistency into the wording. If tickets had restrictions on their validity, there should be more clear ways of showing that to passengers.

It was agreed that it would be useful to see a written update on these issues from the visitors in six months' time.

**Action: Executive Assistant**

## **8 Casework report and update (CAC040)**

The Casework Manager presented the report on casework performance. She said that the length of time London Buses was taking to respond to enquiries from the Casework team had reduced dramatically but that London Underground's response time had increased. She noted that these were averaged figures and that sometimes a small number of cases could skew the averages.

It was agreed that it would be useful, as far as possible, to contextualise the complaints figures by reference to the number of journeys carried by each operator.

### **Action: Casework Manager**

The performance against targets was reviewed. It was noted that the figures for Target 3 related to the length of time it took for operators to provide a satisfactory, final response. There may have been correspondence between the operators and the caseworkers during that time but only the final response was reported.

It was noted that the casework performance report was published quarterly whereas the customer satisfaction report was published twice a year. This was to ensure the customer satisfaction report included a reasonable sample size.

It was noted that where the casework performance report identified areas of concern for particular operators, these would often be raised at high level bilateral meetings between London TravelWatch and the operators.

## **9 Any other business**

There was no other business.

## **10 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 the Government's fares and ticketing review.