
Confidential Minutes

Agenda item: 16
Drafted: 27.11.17

**Confidential minutes of the Policy committee held on 26 September 2017 at
169 Union Street, London SE1 0LL**

These minutes are in addition to the public minutes of a meeting of the Committee on the same date. In that meeting 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 this part of the meeting.

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Present

Members

Jackie Ballard, Alan Benson, Richard Dilks, Glyn Kyle, Stephen Locke, Abdi Osman, John Stewart (Policy Committee Chair)
Arthur Leathley (London TravelWatch Chair designate)

Secretariat

Tim Bellenger	Director, Policy & Investigation
John Cartledge	Safety Adviser
Janet Cooke	Chief Executive
Richard Freeston-Clough	Communications Officer
Sharon Malley	Executive Assistant

Minutes

1 Confidential minutes, declarations of interest and matters arising

The confidential minutes of the Policy committee held on 20 June 2017 were agreed and signed as a correct record. There were no matters arising or additional declarations of interest.

2 London TravelWatch research on season tickets

The Director, Policy and Investigation, presented a draft report on the findings of London TravelWatch's research on season tickets. The report was nearly ready for publication but the Communications Officer said that he would complete a final proof and edit beforehand, and would also add photos.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that the results had already proved useful in discussion with operators and were also informing preparation for the January fares round.

The research showed that annual season ticket holders were not regular users of ticket machines as they only purchased a ticket once a year. This meant that they were not confident in using ticket machines, despite being frequent travellers.

Members commented on the draft report. It was suggested that the recommendations would benefit from increased detail and focus and that comparisons with other regulated markets would be helpful. In some other sectors, this method of retailing the product would be considered inadequate given its expense and importance. The potential for consumer detriment was significant. It was not acceptable to rely on internet sales or ticket machines for purchases of several thousand pounds.

The presentation of the report would be improved by pulling the recommendations into a stand-alone list with a clearer focus on what London TravelWatch hoped to achieve. Many of the key findings should be incorporated into the recommendations. The report could have clear text boxes for useful information, such as the definition of season tickets, how they were retailed and what changes were being sought.

Members noted that season ticket holders were captive purchasers and there was no recognition of their loyalty.

Members asked whether London TravelWatch had data on the current number of season ticket holders and the average cost of a season ticket. The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that much of this data was considered commercially sensitive by transport operators and they were reluctant to release it. London TravelWatch was recommending that operators become much more transparent in this area. For the purposes of the report, it may be possible to publish illustrative data such as the price of an all-zone Travelcard or a season ticket to Bedford.

It was agreed that the report would be updated in line with members' comments.

Action: Director, Policy and Investigation

3 Changes to the consumer landscape

The Chief Executive updated members on the current position in relation to the proposals for a rail ombudsman service. She said that the current plans would cover National Rail passengers but not TfL nor Eurostar. The Rail Delivery Group, who were driving the project, were in the process of procuring a contractor to provide the service. Three companies had expressed an interest.

The Chief Executive said that the Rail Minister had been consistent that he wanted passenger bodies to be involved and London TravelWatch and Transport Focus would continue to participate in the scheme's development to ensure the passenger voice was represented. However, they remained clear that this was now the RDG's scheme.

The focus was currently on the finalisation of the eligibility criteria for inclusion in the Invitation to Tender.

The Chief Executive said that changes would be needed to the way that passengers were signposted through the complaints system and that the Office of Rail and Road was currently consulting on this. Triaging for eligibility for the ombudsman scheme would be done by the contracted provider, which passengers who were not eligible for the ombudsman being directed instead to London TravelWatch or Transport Focus.

Alongside, there were consultations underway on the National Rail Conditions of Travel and on appeals for penalty fares.

The Chief Executive said that the RDG had agreed in principle to cover London TravelWatch's costs in working on this project.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said work on reforming penalty fares had been a lengthy process. The announcement of results of a consultation carried out in 2015 was due soon. There had been concern that one of the companies authorised to hear penalty fare appeals was owned by train operators, which meant that it could not be considered independent. This appeal provider was now closed to new cases and a new provider had been introduced.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that National Rail appeals had a two-stage process while TfL appeals had a three-stage process. The DfT was considering adopting a similar three-stage process for National Rail appeals, which would involve the creation of an independent lay panel. Transport Focus would run the recruitment and London TravelWatch would assist with the selection. He hoped there would be a good representation of London panel members as there were high numbers of appeals concerning travel in London.

Members noted that the RDG proposals for the rail ombudsman might not meet the Cabinet Office criteria for full ombudsman schemes. There was also concern that allowing the contracted provider to triage cases through the system may incentivise the provider to take control of more cases than necessary. The Chief Executive said these issues would be given further consideration by the working group in the coming months.

4 Meeting review

The meeting had been useful and Ian Wright's presentation had been engaging. No specific risks or media opportunities were identified as arising from the meeting.