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**Minutes**

Agenda item: 5  
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**Minutes of the Policy Committee meeting held on 11 December 2019 at 169 Union Street, London SE1 0LL**

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**Present**

Members

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

In attendance

Simon Gimson	HS2 Commercial Lead, West Midlands Trains (Item 6)
Mike Hoptroff	Head of Operational Planning and Engineering Access, Virgin Trains (Item 6)
Francis Thomas	Head of Corporate Affairs, West Midlands Trains (Item 6)
Hassard Stacpoole	Senior Communications Consultant, Network Rail (Item 6)
Roland Stepney	Programme Sponsor (Conventional Rail Interfaces), High Speed Rail Team, Network Rail (Item 6)

Secretariat

Tim Bellenger	Director, Policy & Investigation
Janet Cooke	Chief Executive
Richard Freeston-Clough	Operations and Communications Manager
Susan James	Casework Manager
Luke Muskett	Committee and Public Liaison Officer
Trevor Rosenberg	Policy Officer
Vincent Stops	Senior Policy Officer

## Minutes

### 1 **Apologies for absence and declarations of interest**

Apologies for absence had been received from Abdi Osman. AL apologised that he would not be able to attend the board/staff social event after the meeting as he needed to attend a meeting at Transport Focus.

### 2 **Chair's introduction and pre-meeting announcements**

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting and made the standard safety announcements.

### 3 **Minutes**

The minutes of the Policy Committee of 11 September 2018 were amended. The word 'Kensington' was replaced with 'Kingston' at the bottom of page 3. The Chair signed the amended minutes as a correct record.

### 4 **Matters arising (PC148)**

AL asked how the meeting with the Mayor of Watford had gone. The Director, Policy and Investigation replied that it had been a 'very good meeting'. The Chief Executive remarked that he had raised several questions with regards to the Underground. They had agreed to have a follow up conversation by phone in June which would be fed back to the Board at the meeting in July.

### 5 **Key activities (PC149)**

A member asked what the word 'possessions' referred to. The Director, Policy and Investigation replied that it was another word for a line closure. The member asked that in future reports the language could be written more straightforwardly so that any reader could easily understand it.

A member asked for some further information regarding the visit to look at ticket vending machines at Harrow on the Hill, Kentish Town and West Brompton. The Director, Policy and Investigation said that he had attended these stations with Lucy Preston at TfL to ensure that passengers were able to purchase the full range of National Rail tickets on the machines. For most places where there was a direct train from the station, passengers would be able to purchase a correct ticket for their journey. He stated, however, that although the machines generally had the capability to issue the tickets, this was not immediately obvious to passengers when looking at the machine. Therefore, as a result of the meeting, TfL had agreed to consider creating new labelling for the machines so that this was clearer for people.

The member remarked that he was 'conscious' of the London Overground ticket office review that the organisation had recently been involved with and asked if there was a bigger issue with the machines that London TravelWatch should be considering. The Director, Policy and Investigation stated that the ticket machines

he had visited were at stations that had always been managed by London Underground, but also servicing trains of National Rail operators. He suggested that TfL would likely say that they had neither the space nor the finance to put in a National Rail type ticket machine and so had adapted their own machines so that they issued National Rail tickets.

AL asked what had been discussed in the meeting with Ian Taylor. The Chief Executive replied that it had been an informal meeting to demonstrate the various ways in which the organisation represented passenger interests. Mr Taylor had given a general direction of where transport policy was heading under Labour, but would not be able to give the full details until the latest manifesto was published.

The Chair asked how the meeting had gone with representatives from Bromley Council regarding hail and ride. The Policy Officer (TR) replied that those they had spoken with had been keen on improving accessibility on the buses operating in the borough and for making information on hail and ride services clearer to people. The Chair asked if there had been a willingness to resolve the outstanding issues which had prevented the reduction in the number of hail and ride buses in Bromley. The Policy Officer said that some roads in the borough were wide enough to accommodate bus stops, though there remained problems on certain bends or roads with a large number of cars parked on them. Representatives from Bromley had said that if fixed bus stops could be implemented and be shown to work successfully they were open to reducing the number of hail and ride routes. However, they added that the 'bigger picture' was to improve the reliability of buses in general.

## **6 Euston station – impact of engineering works on passengers during HS2 construction (PC150)**

The Director, Policy and Investigation gave a summary of the potential impact on passengers using Euston station during the construction of HS2. He remarked that there would be several phases to the works, which would take place over a significant timescale. The Director remarked that London TravelWatch was keen that lessons were learned from previous engineering works that had taken place at stations such as Victoria and London Bridge.

The Director, Policy and Investigation commented that during the project at Victoria the station and surrounding area had eventually become a 'huge construction site' due to other property developers being attracted to it. At London Bridge, the reduction in track capacity had reduced the amount of slack in the system during times of disruption, which had increased problems.

Francis Thomas from West Midlands Trains began by thanking London TravelWatch for the opportunity to speak to them. He remarked that his organisation was working closely with all train operators, Network Rail and HS2 to ensure that there was as minimal disruption to passengers at Euston as was possible. Mike Hoptroff from Virgin Trains agreed with Mr Thomas' point and stated that Virgin had been preparing for over two years with regards to the works at Euston station. He added that there was also the 'inconvenient truth' of passenger growth over the following decade and the fact that the company had to balance this against increasing disruption for their current customer base.

Rowland Stepney stated that both he and Hassard Stacpoole worked within the HS2 team within Network Rail and were particularly interested in passenger handling arrangements at Euston station during the construction of HS2. Mr Stacpoole commented that a series of workshops would be run over a five year period in order for all parties to be in alignment in terms of reducing disruption to passengers.

Mr Stacpoole said that the rail companies had told Network Rail that they would prefer a single period of disruption to complete essential works rather than spreading this out across a longer period. Plans that had been set out for works in 2019 and 2020 had been broadly agreed with all sides and the workshops were now looking at options for 2021 and 2022. Mr Stacpoole stated that it would be essential that passengers were informed about the works as early as possible so that they could plan their journeys accordingly.

Simon Gimson from West Midlands Trains stated that 'a lot of hoarding' had already been put up at Euston and platforms 17 and 18 had been taken out of use. In addition, some retail stores within the station would need to vacate their premises and in January the taxi rank would be moved to a new location. Mr Gimson stated that demolitions had already begun on the east side, including at the previous Ibis Hotel building, and would continue at the site of the old Thistle Euston Hotel.

In addition, Mr Gimson stated that excavation work was currently underway at St James' Gardens in order to sensitively remove the skeletal remains from the burial ground there. Finally, the two large tower blocks that overlooked the station would also be destroyed in order to accommodate the space needed for HS2. The Chief Executive asked if there were plans to move the bus station at Euston. Mr Gimson replied that there were no plans to do so and that the station was currently being used to run late night and early morning replacement bus services.

AL asked whether the current schedule for the works could realistically be carried out as prescribed and if not whether it was something that should be looked at again whilst it was still in the planning stage. Mr Thomas replied that it would be a question for HS2 to answer as it was their project. He added that HS2 was 'being done' to West Midlands Trains' passengers and their focus was on trying to make this as least disruptive for people as possible.

AL asked how West Midlands Trains or other rail operators at Euston would get their voices heard if they had concerns about the proposed plans to ensure that such views were taken on-board. Mr Gimson remarked that along with the workshops that had been mentioned by Mr Stacpoole, there were also steering group meetings being held with all key stakeholders, which was where such points could be aired. Along side this, ad hoc meetings were continuously taking place between all of the parties involved.

A member asked whether best practice was being sought from other rail infrastructure projects that had taken place previously across the UK. Mr Thomas replied that ensuring best practice was carried out at Euston was 'absolutely' being sought by all involved. In particular, the stakeholder working group along with the RDG had gone through a variety of different successes and failures that had occurred on previous UK wide rail projects to ensure that their information was as comprehensive as possible.

The member asked an additional question as to whether the industry was engaging with local groups and bodies such as London TravelWatch to ensure that the passenger's voice was being heard. Mr Thomas replied that West Midlands Trains had 'multiple channels' open to them which they used to engage with transport user groups and bodies, including London TravelWatch.

A member stated that the railway industry often failed to make rail replacement services accessible. He asked what reassurances could be given that this would not occur during the works at Euston. Mr Stepney remarked that Network Rail was conscious that they needed to offer a better solution to passengers with regard to greater accessibility of replacement buses. He stated that it was known that passengers preferred to stay on trains in times of disruption, which was why replacement bus services would be used as a last resort.

Mr Thomas remarked that it was West Midlands Trains' policy to always request accessible bus replacement services, though was aware that bus operators on occasion have not always provided them. He assured the member, however, that the company would 'never leave a passenger behind', particularly those with additional transport needs.

The Director, Policy and Investigation asked whether during the planning process the parties had considered the possibility of being able to turn services around at Watford Junction. Mr Stacpoole said that the challenge with Watford Junction was that it was lacking a north junction. Originally this had been planned to be put in though this had not happened due to a landslide on the Chiltern route in 2004. Mr Stacpoole added that at present Watford was not a suitable station to terminate trains and a footbridge would need to be installed.

The Chief Executive stated that she understood the challenges with regards to Watford Junction, though given the period of time that works could potentially be ongoing at Euston (perhaps 20 years), it should be considered as an option. Mr Stacpoole replied that he understood the point and would feed it back to his chief operating officer.

The Chief Executive asked if enough thought had been put into ensuring that passengers would be able to move around Euston station during the construction of HS2. Mr Gimson stated that introducing additional access points to Euston would not resolve the issue of overcrowding as there needed to be a balanced flow of people coming in and out. He added that access to the deep tube was limited and it was often safer to keep people on the station concourse. Mr Thomas stated that West Midlands Trains would be changing the restrictions on off peak travel in January in order to help spread the flow of people out more evenly.

The Chief Executive asked if information was being communicated to passengers outside of London about the engineering works that were due to take place at Euston station. Mr Gimson remarked that West Midlands Trains had put efforts into tailoring messages out to particular areas of the country to make them aware of the potential disruption. Mr Thomas, however, expressed that the further away from London a passenger was based the less awareness there was of HS2.

AL stated that he was concerned that the current method of planning for the HS2 works at Euston station was akin to 'experts talking to experts' who would 'come to their own conclusions'. He asked that the steering group consider having

passenger bodies such as London TravelWatch and Transport Focus involved more closely so that the passenger's voice was being heard.

A member remarked that despite the best intentions it would be likely that possessions of train lines for engineering works would overrun. He asked whether train operators would be compensated by HS2 and Network Rail for any delays caused due to the overrunning of works. He suggested in doing so this would create a financial incentive for the project to be delivered on time. Mr Gimson replied that rail operators would be using the current industry mechanisms to recoup money owed to them for delays caused from overrunning engineering works. He stated, however, this should not be of concern to passengers, and reassured the member that people would be entitled to compensation regardless of who was at fault for causing a delay to their journey.

The Chair thanked all speakers for their contribution and for attending the meeting. He remarked that the organisation would be interested in being further engaged with the various working groups that had been set up in preparation for the work being carried out at Euston station. The Chair added that it would be beneficial that the passenger's voice was heard in such discussions, which London TravelWatch would be able to relay to them. Mr Thomas replied that he welcomed the opportunity to work closer with London TravelWatch to assist with planning for the works at Euston. He added that he would take the suggestion away with Mr Stacpoole to discuss with wider stakeholders and come back with a response.

**ACTION: Committee and Public Liaison Officer**

## **7 Christmas and New Year rail closures (PC151)**

The Senior Policy Officer introduced a summary of the rail closures that would be taking place during the Christmas and New Year period. With regards to TfL, there were only a small number of closures taking place, with the vast majority of stations open and with their services running. At the few stations that were closed, rail replacement buses would be provided instead. He remarked, however, that it was doubtful that there would be any replacement buses in zone 1 and passengers may need to use the standard TfL buses that roughly mirrored those routes. The Senior Policy Officer added that the full details of all TfL's closures could be found in appendix 2 included at the back of the report.

The Director, Policy and Investigation remarked that there was an issue with how current TfL's journey planner was with regards to which National Rail services were running, as their data feed was only updated once a week. Therefore, this could result in passengers planning journeys around London that were not available to them. The Chair suggested that it be followed up with TfL. Members agreed and suggested that the data should be updated at least every 24 hours.

**ACTION: Committee and Public Liaison Officer**

The Senior Policy Officer remarked that with regards to National Rail services, there were far more significant closures planned during Christmas and New Year. During the period, Clapham Junction would effectively become a terminal for passengers travelling from Weybridge via Hounslow to Waterloo and from Kingston and Twickenham via Richmond to Waterloo. He referred members to appendix 1 for the

full details of all disruption that was planned to take place. A member commented that he had been at Richmond station that morning though had not noticed any information on display informing passengers of which services would and would not be running, despite Christmas being only two weeks away.

## **8 Casework Q2 performance report (PC152)**

The Casework Manager presented the Casework performance report for Q2. She remarked that it had been 'quite busy' and the organisation had received more appeals than usual, which was a good sign that people were able to reach the organisation. The period had coincided with the May timetable changes resulting in there being a higher number of National Rail complaints compared to that of TfL. With regards to TfL, they had addressed an issue of cases not coming back to London TravelWatch within 10 working days.

The Casework Manager commented that cases that had taken longer than 20 days had been fewer than usual. However, the cases that had been received had been more complex and taken some time to resolve. The team had also been contacted with regard to the additional industry compensation that was offered to GTR customers. Each person who had raised a query about it had received a response back to explain why they were or were not applicable for the scheme.

During Q2, the Casework Manager stated the Rail Ombudsman had become available for passengers to appeal railway complaints. However, complainants would only be able to use the Ombudsman as a second stage appeal if their journey took place after 26 November and only after the rail operator had been given the opportunity to resolve the matter themselves. Therefore, it would be unlikely that London TravelWatch would be receiving any third stage appeals from the Ombudsman until January 2019.

A member stated that he was concerned to hear that some appeals were becoming more complex and taking longer to resolve. The Casework Manager remarked that regarding complaints to do with penalty fares, the people involved have no one else that they can turn to leaving London TravelWatch to try to resolve the matter, which could be very time consuming. The member asked whether she felt the Ombudsman would make a difference to the casework team's workload. The Casework Manager replied that she had 'no idea'.

The member remarked that he had heard anecdotally that South Western Railway's standards had been falling recently and asked if she had noticed an uptake in complaints against the company. The Casework Manager replied that she had not noticed anything unusual with regards to South Western. Another member remarked that it was important that the organisation highlighted the successes it had achieved for passengers, such as the Great Western Railway case on page 9.

## **9 National Rail Q2 performance report (PC153)**

The Director, Policy and Investigation presented the performance report for Q2. He remarked that both Southeastern and Great Western Railway had seen an improvement in performance whilst South Western Railway had seen a sharp decline, which was 'quite worrying'. AL asked whether it was worth having the company attend a future board meeting in order for the Board to put the question of

their performance to them. A member commented that the South Western Railway had moved their operations centre resulting in the company losing staff, which had 'clearly had an impact'. He added that he had heard reports locally that when issues had arisen they were not being picked up in the correct manner. The Chief Executive suggested that the March Policy Committee could potentially be when South Western could come in to speak to the Board on the matter.

A member suggested that the report continued to lack a proper introduction and quickly moved on to 'very industry stuff' which was 'dry and repetitious'. The Chair suggested that the verbal update that was given to the Board could be written up as an executive summary and used as an introduction. The Chief Executive said that she had been pushing for staff to do more internal challenge where they could see things that could be improved. They would take the suggestions away and try to implement some changes for the next report

**ACTION: Policy Officer (KB)**

**10 TfL Q2 performance report (PC154)**

The Senior Policy Officer presented TfL's performance report for Q2. He remarked that London Underground had enjoyed its best ever performance during the period, though there had been significant lateness on both TfL Rail and London Overground services. The main focus of the summary was to highlight that journey time reliability was no longer being accounted for. TfL had failed to reach the previous target they had set and were unlikely to in future and so they had simply stopped measuring it.

A member commented that it was 'unacceptable' that TfL had stopped measuring journey time reliability and asked how London TravelWatch could put pressure on the organisation to rethink the decision. The Chief Executive remarked that Gareth Powell, Managing Director of Surface Transport at TfL, would be attending the 15 January board meeting. She suggested that it could be question that could be put to him during the session.

**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 reviewed financial or reputational risks posed by the meeting.