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## Minutes

Agenda item: 5  
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### Minutes of the Policy Committee meeting held on 19 December 2017

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#### Present

##### Members

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

##### In attendance

Joanna Whittington                      Chief Executive, Office of Rail and Road (Item 7)

##### Secretariat

Keletha Barrett	Policy Officer
Tim Bellenger	Director, Policy & Investigation
John Cartledge	Safety Adviser
Janet Cooke	Chief Executive
Sharon Malley	Executive Assistant
Vincent Stops	Policy Officer

#### Minutes

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

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

## **2 Apologies for absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

## **3 Declarations of interest**

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

## **4 Minutes**

The minutes of the Policy committee of 26 September 2017 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

## **5 Matters arising (PC123)**

Members noted that they would like to discuss fares and ticketing issues at a future meeting. The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that he hoped to be able to organise a confidential industry roundtable on this in the near future, to consider how fares and ticketing could be improved for passengers. There would be a Board item on findings from the roundtable after the event.

**Action: Director, Policy and Investigation**

## **6 Key activities (PC124)**

It was noted that Eurostar would be invited to the July Board meeting due to be held in Dartford.

The Chief Executive said she had attended an event for the potential Rail Ombudsman Scheme bidders at which she and Transport Focus gave a presentation about their work. The deadline for bidding was now closed and London Transport and Transport Focus would have the opportunity to comment on the passenger aspects of the bids in the new year.

Members asked whether the presentation to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on rail access to Heathrow Airport contained new information. The Director, Policy and Investigation, said it had not but it was still a good opportunity for London TravelWatch to promote its position and connect with interested Parliamentarians.

## **7 Office of Rail and Road**

The Chair welcomed Joanna Whittington, the Chief Executive of the Office of Rail and Road (ORR), to the meeting. Ms Whittington said that the ORR's roles included improving safety, performance and value for users and that it was the health and safety authority for the whole rail network. It also undertook some aspects of economic regulation of the railway and lead on issues such as information during disruption and protection of passengers with disabilities.

The ORR carried out the periodic review process of Network Rail, which led to the specification of funding for each period in return for performance and outputs and was one of the principal means of holding Network Rail to account.

Ms Whittington said that Network Rail was undergoing a significant reorganisation, with eight new Routes dealing with rail operations. Two new internal bodies would be established, one of which, the Systems Operator, would look at matters such as timetables and the other which would focus on the payment of charges between Network Rail and the train operators.

Ms Whittington said that Network Rail prepared business plans over five years for each route with costings and the ORR was scrutinising them now. In June it would publish its draft determination for consultation on each route. The final proposals would be set in October 2018 with new charges taking effect from April 2019.

The establishment of the eight routes created a much more manageable business for Network Rail and there was anecdotal feedback that they enabled better local engagement. The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that London TravelWatch had not been consulted by any of the Network Rail routes prior to their submissions of their business plans.

Ms Whittington said that another benefit of the route structure was the ability to compare the performance of routes. There were currently few incentives on Network Rail to improve performance but competition between routes might drive improvements. A balanced scorecard of measures was being negotiated with Network Rail for future performance assessment and she expected that there would be some standard metrics across the routes to enable comparisons.

The routes would be monitored by Route Supervisory Boards, which were a new element of the regulatory infrastructure.

Ms Whittington said that the ORR had encouraged Network Rail to engage with stakeholders when preparing the route business plans. The ORR would examine stakeholder engagement when assessing the business plans and had set out principles of stakeholder engagement.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said only one of the routes had consulted London TravelWatch when preparing their business plans. This was disappointing as London TravelWatch would have welcomed the opportunity to put forward the needs of transport users in London. Issues such as delay repay, the travelling environment, toilets and seating should be considered.

The Chief Executive said that individual staff at Network Rail were often helpful but rail in London was integrated and all six of the English routes converged on London. Most rail journeys included London. However, Network Rail tended to overlook London TravelWatch because it took a wider focus. London TravelWatch was developing ideas for individual routes but it was frustrating when Network Rail failed to engage.

Ms Whittington said the new structures presented an opportunity for greater stakeholder involvement. The routes had been established quickly and not all processes had yet been put into place, but she hoped London TravelWatch would be more involved in future. She recognised that it was difficult for an organisation

not associated with a single route to become involved. However, the System Operator may be an appropriate channel for London TravelWatch's involvement as it covered issues common to all routes.

Members welcomed the alignment of targets across the routes and emphasised London TravelWatch's commitment to involvement in discussions and development of the targets.

Members asked how the ORR could measure passenger satisfaction with Network Rail. Ms Whittington said this may not be necessary, although it would be possible to include targets for Network Rail that were not wholly within its responsibility, such as passenger satisfaction.

Members noted that Network Rail was a monopoly supplier and did not have the same reputational concerns as train operators. They asked how the ORR's processes could be used to overcome this. Ms Whittington said that much of the economic regulation surrounding the railway was developed following rail privatisation in the 1990s and had largely stayed the same since, despite the changing nature of the industry. It would be possible to include reputational issues on Network Rail's scorecard.

In response to questions, Ms Whittington said that the ORR did not view itself as the customer of Network Rail. Network Rail's customers were passenger and freight rail operators. Rail operators acted as a proxy for passengers in some, but not all, cases. Rail operators did engage with passenger interests at the start of their franchises but this often tailed off towards the end. It was not always appropriate to equate the interests of train companies with those of passengers. Bodies such as London TravelWatch and Transport Focus, and other sub-national transport authorities, had a role in expressing the medium to long-term passenger aspirations.

Ms Whittington said the ORR was consulting at the moment on the monitoring and enforcement of assistance provided to passengers with mobility impairments. This followed from ORR research which showed that the public had low awareness of assistance options and that satisfaction levels were much lower for turn up and go services than for booked assistance. The reliability of booked assistance remained concerning. The consultation covered issues including whether the ORR should be more directional on staff training, given the research findings on staff attitudes, and would close at the end of January.

Members noted that awareness of assisted travel had always been low and questioned whether targeted promotion to users took place. It was important for train operators to be properly incentivised to provide assistance and also that resources promoting the service were spent effectively.

Ms Whittington said that some train operators may be worried about their ability to provide the service if there were a sudden increase in demand. She wanted to investigate whether train companies were holding back on promotion in order to manage the provision of the service more easily.

Members noted that there were few clear statistics on how many passengers made use of assistance and that the system seemed opaque from the passenger

perspective. Ms Whittington said the ORR was looking at the need to capture and record more data about the use of passenger assist.

Members noted that some train operators used the same training providers for equalities training as they did for health and safety training when they should use equalities specialists. Ms Whittington said that 60% of passenger assist requests were at stations run by Network Rail, so Network Rail staff needed training in addition to train operators.

Members said that some train operators had been unable to publish their Christmas timetables 12 weeks in advance, which they were supposed to do. This meant that passengers could not plan their travel over Christmas and were not able to buy cheaper advance tickets. This significantly undermined passenger confidence in the rail and ticketing system. Ms Whittington said that the ORR was investigating what had caused the problem and was looking at whether Network Rail had worked hard enough to book its engineering possessions over the Christmas break. She was also looking at whether the incentives were sharp enough in this area and whether any operator breached their licence conditions.

Members thanked Ms Whittington for attending and for her informative presentation.

## **8 Strategic Vision for Rail (PC125)**

The Director, Policy and Investigation, presented a report on London TravelWatch's response to the Department for Transport's Strategic Vision for Rail document. He said there were some laudable aims in the paper but it was important that the Route Supervisory Boards worked properly. It would be disappointing if the localising of decisions led to problems or conflicts across the wider network. He said that the paper's position on smart ticketing could lead to proposals to close ticket offices, which would have workload implications for London TravelWatch.

Members noted that London TravelWatch would not be able to engage with all the Network Rail Route Supervisory Boards and that it may be more efficient to focus on working with the System Operator. They said that it would be helpful if Network Rail were required to consult London TravelWatch rather than waiting for London TravelWatch to approach it.

The Chief Executive said it was important to engage with the Route Supervisory Boards at an early stage to help ensure that route performance was being measured against the right targets. She was trying to establish how best to influence decisions within resource limitations.

Members agreed that London TravelWatch should promote the proposed performance measures set out in the Director, Policy and Investigation's report.

## **9 Christmas engineering works (PC126)**

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said there would be significant levels of engineering work around London over the Christmas and new year holiday, especially by Network Rail. The works involving Great Western Railway carried

significant risk in relation to both execution and the likelihood of completing on time. Other train operators faced risks relating to the provision of a full timetable if their staff refused to work their rest days. There was also a possibility of some disruption due to industrial action.

## **10 National Rail performance report (PC127)**

The Policy Officer (KB) presented a report on the performance of National Rail for the period July to September 2017. She said there had been some presentational changes to the layout of the report but it covered the same data sets. Overall the performance over the period had improved. Govia Thameslink Railway had seen a significant improvement but was still performing poorly relative to other operators.

South West Trains and its successor South Western Railway had had poor performance because of the significant engineering works that took place at Waterloo station in August, (during which the franchise changed from South West Trains to South Western Railway).

Members welcomed the updated layout of the report. It was noted that South West Trains had experienced an increase in complaints in Quarter 1 and a dip in performance in Quarter 2 and it would be helpful to the reader to pull the details of this into once place in the summary. It would be important to monitor future South Western Railway performance to ensure this was not the start of a trend.

It was noted that it could be difficult to compare complaints data between operators as there were differences in the way companies were recorded and categorised complaints. In addition, there were always higher levels of complaint for inter-city services than metro.

It was noted that the industry was moving towards 'right time arrival' performance measures and that the performance report would be amended to reflect those measures when they became widely available.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that London TravelWatch would promote a 'check before you travel' message on its website. The Chair of London TravelWatch said he had taken part in an interview with LBC Radio on this issue.

## **11 Transport for London performance report (PC128)**

The Policy Officer (KB) presented a report on the performance of Transport for London modes over the period July to September 2017. She said that generally TfL services performed well during the quarter, but bus speeds were poor and the percentage of scheduled services that operated was also down. This was a trend to monitor in future. Members noted that the Executive Summary in the TfL report was useful in setting out issues of ongoing concern.

It was noted that the report found that buses were travelling more slowly, which was the cause of poor bus performance, rather than passengers waiting longer for buses and the report should be clear on this.

It was agreed that Dial-a-Ride should be invited to a future meeting to discuss performance issues. It may be useful to extend this into a broader discussion of

social needs transport. Members questioned whether the performance review of Dial-a-Ride could include Taxicard but the Director, Policy and Investigation, said that Taxicard was not within London TravelWatch's remit.

**Action: Executive Assistant**

## **12 Casework performance report (PC129)**

The Casework Manager presented a report on operators' performance in the handling of casework during the period July to September 2017. She said that there had been a drop in the level of initial cases that London TravelWatch received, which was good because these were cases that were not in London TravelWatch's remit. This enabled caseworkers to focus on resolving appeal cases.

The Casework Manager said that passenger satisfaction statistics would be reported to the Board every six months.

The Safety Adviser noted that the largest cause of complaint by passengers was about the complaint handling process itself. This was an interesting lesson for the industry about the importance of handling complaints well at the outset. He said that concerns about safety largely related to personal safety rather than the safety of transport infrastructure.

Members noted that response times from operators had increased slightly. The Casework Manager recognised this but said the priority was to get a good outcome for passengers, which sometimes meant waiting a little longer for a response.

## **13 Any other business**

There was no other business.

## **14 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.