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**Minutes**

Agenda item: 2  
Drafted: 16.11.15

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**Minutes of the Policy Committee meeting held on 20 October 2015 at 169 Union Street, London SE1 0LL**

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**Present**

Members

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

Guests

Mark Frost	Head of Traffic and Transport, London Borough of Hounslow (Item 9)
Matt Winfield	Transport for London

Secretariat

Tim Bellenger	Director, Policy & Investigation
Janet Cooke	Chief Executive
Richard Freeston-Clough	Communications Officer
Susan James	Casework Manager
Sharon Malley	Executive Assistant
Robert Nichols	Policy Officer and Safety Adviser (RN)
Vincent Stops	Policy Officer (VS)

## Minutes

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

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

### 2 Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

### 3 Declarations of interest

The Chair said that his interest as Executive Chair of HACAN meant he would stand down from chairing the item on the southern rail access link to Heathrow Airport, but that he did not believe his interest was sufficient to prevent his participation in discussion of the item.

### 4 Minutes

The minutes of the Policy committee on 16 June 2015 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

### 5 Matters arising (PC055)

Members welcomed progress with persuading the Association of Train Operating Companies to amend the National Rail enquiries website to give more prominence to wording showing that Oyster prices may be cheaper than the fares shown. It was agreed that the position would be reviewed again in early 2016.

**Action: Executive Assistant**

Members noted that the Office of Rail and Road said it was unable to distinguish peak and off-peak in its right time arrivals performance data. The Director, Policy and Investigation, said this was because the ORR was keen to develop other, improved performance measures but was advised against doing this by the Department for Transport. Members were dissatisfied with this position as right time arrival of peak services was very important for regular commuters. It was agreed that the Chair of London TravelWatch would write to the transport minister on this and copy to Transport Focus.

**Action: Executive Assistant**

In relation to London TravelWatch's feedback satisfaction questionnaire, the Casework Manager said that she had tried many different approaches to try to increase the response rate and the current approach seemed to be the most effective. Members were keen to see the response rate increased further and the Chief Executive said that this would be prioritised in the new year when the new apprentice was in post.

## **Action: Casework Manager**

Members noted that the position of TfL in relation to buses appeared to have moved on since the last meeting, with TfL making public statements about prioritising bus priority works. Members would keep a watching brief on both bus speeds generally and on the impact of road works on bus reliability.

Members noted that some train operator websites did not give adequate information about London TravelWatch and its role, although some were excellent. It was not acceptable for information about London TravelWatch to be limited only to a short line at the end of a 20-page pdf about the passenger charter. London TravelWatch's details should be available on the operator's home page or by searching for the word 'complaint'. The Chief Executive said the first priority had been to update London TravelWatch's own website and work had also been done in relation to Transport Focus's and TfL's sites, with train operators to follow. The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that this issue was raised with operators during regular update meetings. Information on progress with each individual train operator would be reported in due course. It was noted that failure to provide adequate information about London TravelWatch may breach the spirit of the Office of Rail and Road's new guidelines on complaint handling.

## **6 Key activities (PC064)**

Members considered the list of meetings and events attended by officers and discussed outcomes. In relation to the meeting with Steer Davies Gleave, the Director, Policy and Investigation, said that it had been a presentation from graduates on using software to measure Twitter mentions during travel disruption to see whether Twitter feedback can be used to improve services. It had been an interesting discussion and useful good practice sharing.

Members asked about the meetings with potential bidders for the London Overground 2 concession. The Director, Policy and Investigation, said London TravelWatch had produced a report on priorities for the franchise that TfL had largely incorporated into the tender, and that this had been a positive engagement process. The Policy Officer (RN) would be participating in the bid review and provide commentary to TfL on the passenger aspects of the bids. This demonstrated London TravelWatch's ability to influence transport matters for the benefit of passengers in London.

The Policy Officer (VS) said that the meeting with the Victoria Business Improvement District co-ordinator had arisen through work on signage and had been a useful courtesy visit. The co-ordinator was particularly interested in public realm issues and were interested in London TravelWatch's work on wayfinding.

In relation to the introduction of Oyster ticketing from Gatwick Airport station, Matt Winfield from TfL said that this should begin in January 2016. This was welcomed by members.

The Communications Manager said that it was proving difficult to set a date with the All Party Parliamentary Transport Group for the launch of the Interchange Matters report but he was continuing to try to finalise an arrangement.

The Chief Executive said that the Travel Demand Management board had discussed disruption over the Christmas holiday period but she remained concerned that there was not enough high level industry-wide overview of this. She would continue to press for more co-ordination in this area and would raise it again at the next Travel Demand Management board in four week's time.

## **7 Bus speeds in London (PC067)**

The Policy Officer (VS) said that members had urged TfL to develop bus performance measures that focused more closely on passenger priorities of crowding and delay. There was little progress to date in relation to crowding but work had been carried out on bus speeds.

The Policy Officer said that TfL had produced data on the speed of each individual route and shared it with London TravelWatch. In future this would enable London TravelWatch to report on trends in bus speeds and to engage in more productive dialogue with TfL. Members welcomed the opportunity to interpret the data and analyse long-term changes in bus speed performance.

Members noted that some routes showed less change in speed between peak and off-peak periods than others. It may be worth investigating whether this was down to provision of bus priority infrastructure and bus lanes on these routes.

Members welcomed the work that TfL had put into producing this data and hoped it would be possible for it to be published in a searchable format as this would help both London TravelWatch and bus user groups to hold TfL to account.

## **8 Hounslow (PC066)**

John Stewart stood down from the chair for this item and Stephen Locke took the chair.

Mark Frost, Head of Traffic and Transport at Hounslow Council, gave a presentation on proposals in respect of the southern rail access route to Heathrow Airport. He said that the route would create a new link between the airport and central London and would be beneficial regardless of any decision relating to a third runway at Heathrow. The route would include a station at Bedfont, which would unlock land for housing and employment development. Mr Frost said that the proposals were currently subject to a public consultation and that the results would be taken to Hounslow's cabinet for approval. This would give democratic legitimacy to the council's position on the route.

Mr Frost said that the council had liaised with the DfT, Network Rail, TfL and others to promote the route but that it was difficult because of the political sensitivities of the third runway.

Members noted that the current alignment involved the demolition of a number of flats near Bedfont. Mr Frost said that there may be alternatives that avoided demolition but the general alignment was important as it was the only route that enabled significant regeneration opportunities.

Mr Frost said that a previous attempt to create a new link to Heathrow, Airtrack, had failed because it involved the creation of new services on the network which had knock-on impacts on level crossings in the area. The proposed new alignment has been able to make use of existing service patterns rather than needing new services. There would be some negative impacts for users of some services from Surrey but overall the proposals were beneficial.

Mr Frost said that Network Rail had agreed to consider the proposals in more detail once a decision on a third runway at Heathrow was made. However, Network Rail did not have a brief to look at regeneration opportunities provided by the new link, it would only look at the benefits to existing passengers. The proposals were more expensive than Airtrack but could be afforded by funds released by the regeneration potential. Mr Frost wanted Network Rail to agree to consider the wider economic benefits when making its assessment of the proposals.

Members asked whether the viability of the proposals was affected by whether Crossrail served Terminal 5. Mr Frost said that more links to the airport would increase the viability of the southern rail link. The airport was a transport hub, with, for example, 30% of people at the coach station interchanging rather than using the airport.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, asked whether there would be benefits to amending the alignment to include a station at Terminal 4. Mr Frost said that Heathrow Airport was clear that the new alignment needed to serve Terminal 5 rather than Terminal 4 or the central terminus.

Members asked what needed to be done to maintain the viability of this option. Mr Frost said it was important that the DfT used appropriate assessment criteria when evaluating options rather than the more straightforward cost-benefit analyses that were usually used. It was noted that conversations with decision-makers about transport links to Heathrow were difficult because of the sensitivities of the third runway but time was pressing and he would welcome London TravelWatch's formal consultation response.

**Action: Director, Policy and Investigation**

John Stewart re-took the chair at the conclusion of the discussion.

**9 Casework report (PC068)**

The Casework Manager presented a report on the performance of transport operators in relation to casework for the period April to June 2015. She said that the report included the period when the casework database was being upgraded, which had caused disruption in casework handling.

Overall the time it took operators to respond to casework enquiries deteriorated, with Southeastern being particularly poor, and the Casework Manager was in discussion with Southeastern about this.

The Casework Manager said that TfL's response times had been slipping and she had met them to discuss how to improve the position. Network Rail did not

generate many appeal cases but when it did it was poor at responding to London TravelWatch.

The Casework Manager said that some of the more difficult cases were caused by having two different operators involved. Occasionally operators would respond directly to the passenger rather than going via London TravelWatch, which would mean cases remained open on London TravelWatch's system for longer than necessary.

The biggest area of complaint related to fares, including refunds, penalty fares and problems with Oyster payments. There was a recent growth in complaints about operators' complaints handling processes, which was something the casework team would monitor. In addition, complaints relating to buses were increasing.

The Casework Manager said that strike action resulted in increased levels of complaint and it was difficult to explain to passengers why they were not entitled to compensation for disruption caused by industrial action. Passengers expected to be compensated for the inconvenience caused by strikes.

The level of appeals and direct cases dropped slightly during this period but the figures for the current period showed levels picking up again.

In response to questions, the Casework Manager said that previously bus complaints were mainly about driver behaviour but recently there had been an increase in complaints about bus service provision, with complaints running at around seven or eight cases a week, from previously having none at all. This was an issue to monitor.

Members noted that the performance of Virgin East Coast and Southeastern in responding to casework enquiries was unacceptable. It was noted that the Office of Rail and Road had introduced and formalised guidance for train operators on complaints handling and London TravelWatch needed to make sure that operators were following it. The ORR was making compliance with the guidance a license condition so it was now more enforceable.

The Casework Manager said it was important to find the right balance between good responses and quick turnarounds. It was important to maintain good working relationships with transport operators in order to get the best responses for complainants, without seeming to provide excuses for the operators.

## **10 National Rail performance report (PC069)**

The Policy Officer (RN) presented a report on the performance of National Rail for the period April to June 2015. He said that the public performance measure (PPM) showing performance and punctuality continued to be of concern, with this period being worse than the same period last year.

There was some concern at the performance of the Go Ahead group of operators and it was unclear whether this related to the type of railway they operated or whether it was a systemic problem. This would be kept under review.

Problems with TfL Rail performance were caused by their inheriting poor quality rolling stock from the previous operator of the franchise, which led to higher than normal levels of train cancellations.

London Overground saw the biggest dip in right time arrivals, which was mainly due to problems on other parts of the network, especially at London Bridge, which had a knock-on effect on London Overground. Passenger satisfaction generally was at the lowest level for eight years.

Overall, Southern and Govia Thameslink Railway were performing poorly while c2c was performing best. The problem was compounded by the fact that the poorest performing operators also carried the greatest number of passengers.

Members agreed that the report was concerning. It was important that operators did not seek to shelter their poor performance behind issues such as London Bridge when other factors such as driver shortage and train failure were also causing problems, and these factors were in the control of the train operators.

Members said that new measures were in place to monitor crowding while the data in the report only included the 'passengers in excess of capacity' measure. The Policy Officer (RN) said he would refer this back to the officer responsible for producing the report. In addition, members noted that it would be worthwhile to highlight key findings at the start of each report as there was so much valuable data within the document that sometimes important findings could be overlooked.

**Action: Policy Officer (KB)**

Members recognised the value in the performance report in bringing together data from a wide range of sources and evaluating the findings. The overall findings strengthened London TravelWatch's position in calling for improved compensation for passengers experiencing delays of 15 minutes on metro-type journeys. It was agreed that the key findings of the report would be included in the forthcoming letter to Claire Perry MP on right time arrivals.

**Action: Director, Policy and Investigation**

It was noted that organisation such as the Campaign for Better Transport may be able to make use of the information in this and the TfL performance report and it was important that they should be directed to it.

## **11 Journey time reliability (PC070)**

The Policy Officer (VS) presented a report on TfL's change to its performance target relating to the speed of road traffic. This target, known as journey time reliability (JTR), measured the amount of time it actually took to make a journey expected to take 30 minutes. This target had initially been planned to improve over time but recently TfL had acknowledged that other works would impinge on its ability to meet the target. This led to the target being temporarily relaxed. However, the Policy Officer (VS) said that bringing performance back to the formerly agreed level would be a significant challenge.

It was agreed that the Policy Officer would investigate this further and report back.

**12 Transport for London performance report (PC071)**

The Policy Officer (VS) presented a report on the performance of TfL for the period April to June 2015 and said that most of the passenger modes had performed well. TfL had now produced a measure showing the number of complaints about streets made per journey and trends on this would be monitored. Problems with JTR, as outlined in the previous item, continued to impact on bus reliability.

Members noted that satisfaction with Dial a Ride booking services remained poor and this should continue to be an area of pressure for London TravelWatch. The Policy Officer (VS) said that TfL was planning to consult on changes to Dial a Ride and he would report on them in due course.

Members welcomed the significant improvements in bus stop accessibility in recent years, following work by London TravelWatch. It was agreed that future consideration of accessibility of bus stops could include sensory as well as mobility impairments and could also include review of hail and ride sections of bus routes as they could be inaccessible for some people.

**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 discussed transport affordability research and future rail travel pricing policy and also reviewed financial or reputational risks posed by the meeting.