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## Minutes

Agenda item: 4  
Drafted: 07.01.14

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**Minutes of the Consumer Affairs Committee meeting held on 10 December 2013 at Dexter House, Royal Mint Court, London EC3**

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### Present

#### Members

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

#### Guests

Shashi Verma	Director of Customer Experience, Transport for London (Item 4)
Simon Feast	Fares and Passenger Benefits Manager, Department for Transport (Item 4)

Members of the public and representatives from the transport industry

#### Secretariat

Tim Bellenger	Director, Policy & Investigation
John Cartledge	Safety and Policy Adviser
Richard Freeston-Clough	Communications Officer
Susan James	Casework Manager (Items 10-11)
Sharon Malley	Executive Assistant (minutes)

### 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. He said that the meeting would take items in a different order to that appearing on the agenda in order to accommodate the availability of external visitors.

## **2 Apologies for absence**

There were no apologies for absence from members. Representatives from the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) were unable to attend as they had unexpectedly been detained at their office responding to recent announcements from the Department for Transport (DfT) and Transport for London (TfL) on fares.

## **3 Declarations of interest**

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

## **4 Department for Transport fares and ticketing review (PC021)**

The Director, Policy and Investigation, presented a report on the outcome of the government's review of fares and ticketing. He said that London TravelWatch had made a detailed submission to the review calling for various measures to support London's travelling public. The report showed the extent to which London TravelWatch's proposals had been accepted, such as the successful call for TfL to do more to promote the use of Gold Card discounts. Some of London TravelWatch's other aspirations could be progressed through mechanisms such as franchise renewals and discussions with operators.

Members noted that the use of "London terminals" on tickets was still causing problems for passengers, especially for journeys made on High Speed 1 through St Pancras to Blackfriars and City Thameslink stations.

On the question of the withdrawal of cash payments from TfL buses, Shashi Verma said that the Mayor of London had not yet taken a view on the responses to TfL's consultation. He said that TfL was considering ways to allow passengers to travel on buses as long as their Oyster cards had balances between zero and the fare and that bus drivers had always been instructed to collect passengers who were vulnerable.

Members asked how messages around the removal of cash from buses would be communicated and Mr Verma said that a full public information campaign would be implemented. Members stressed the importance of reaching people who may not even try to board a bus if they had no cash but were in a vulnerable position.

A member said that he did not think TfL had moved far enough on the issue of cashless buses to assuage his concerns. He was particularly worried that large swathes of London would be left without access to places to top-up Oyster cards, effectively preventing them from travelling. Mr Verma said that passengers were expected to plan ahead somewhat to ensure they had funds to travel or to reach a place where they could top-up their Oyster cards.

Members asked whether the removal of cash from buses could be phased but Mr Verma was concerned that this could be confusing for passengers.

Members thanked the external visitors for their contribution to the discussion on fares and ticketing.

## 5 Minutes

The minutes of the Policy committee on 10 September were approved and signed as a correct record, subject to amending the heading from “Consumer Affairs” to “Policy”.

## 6 Matters arising (PC017)

It was noted that London TravelWatch retained concerns about the Dial a Ride service, but noted that TfL was working to address the problems at a high level.

In relation to working closely with Passenger Focus, the Chief Executive confirmed that London TravelWatch consistently sought opportunities for joint working, with the most recent area being on franchising.

It was agreed that the matter of pre-paid tickets not being properly dispensed by machines at train stations and that a report on London stations not surveyed for the National Passenger Survey should come back to the committee at future dates.

**Action: Executive Assistant**

It was noted that the report on passenger attitudes to the travelling environment would be published in the new year.

## 7 Key activities (PC018)

The Director, Policy and Investigation, presented a report on key activities undertaken since the previous meeting. Members noted that they would welcome this report being presented in the same format as the Key Activities report to Board.

**Action: Executive Assistant**

Members asked for clarification of the work of the Rail Industry Planning Group. The Director, Policy and Investigation, said it reviewed issues arising from the Route Utilisation Strategies such as market studies, and was separate to the National Rail long term planning process.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, confirmed that his meeting with the Oval Partnership was a one-off and was consistent with London TravelWatch’s policy priorities.

## 8 London Assembly’s scrutiny of buses (PC019)

The Policy Officer introduced his report by saying that London TravelWatch had contributed to the London Assembly’s scrutiny of buses and that Assembly’s report acknowledged London TravelWatch’s contributions.

The Assembly’s report made nine recommendations which were then considered in turn:

- Recommendation one: Members welcomed the recommendation that TfL should publish a long-term strategy for the development of the bus network.
- Recommendation two: In its response, London TravelWatch had noted that some sections of some routes were frequently overcrowded and this could be difficult to

measure. London TravelWatch was not itself investigating whether there were any other ways of measuring crowding that could be adapted for London, but officers had asked Bus Users UK whether any other bus authorities have ways of measuring overcrowding.

- Recommendation three: Members noted that although longer and orbital routes were popular, they were expensive and difficult to manage and required proportionally greater amounts of subsidy.
- Recommendation four: Members welcomed additional measures to reach bus users during consultations, such as emailing registered Oyster users when proposing changes to routes they have used. London TravelWatch's response had said that TfL needed to find a better way of explaining the costs and benefits of proposed changes so that passengers could make more informed responses and understand when proposals for change were not progressed..
- Recommendation five: Members supported the need for the NHS to consider transport accessibility more closely when planning new services and to discuss public transport options with TfL and other transport providers. Members noted that London TravelWatch had done a considerable amount of work in the past to improve access to major healthcare services and hospitals.
- Recommendation six: Members noted that TfL should do more research into the business case impact of concessionary fares.
- Recommendation seven: Members welcomed the recommendation that TfL should consider more sophisticated ticketing options for the benefit of passengers.
- Recommendation eight: Members were very pleased to see the recommendation on improving journey time reliability by reviewing pinch-points across the network. Members noted that there was no mention of road pricing as part of this discussion but welcomed the focus on bus priority measures.
- Recommendation nine: Members welcomed the recommendation that TfL should publish a schedule for the introduction of more environmentally friendly vehicles but noted that it would add cost.

The Policy Officer said that there were some issues of bus provision not discussed in the scrutiny, such as buses in town centres, buses not being given priority and problems of hail and ride services.

The London TravelWatch Chair said that he had discussed the scrutiny with Val Shawcross AM, the Chair of the London Assembly Transport Committee, and had undertaken to look closely at the recommendations to identify areas for London TravelWatch to help follow up. Members highlighted bus crowding and access to health services as potential priority issues.

It was noted that overcrowding impacted on reliability but the effects could be mitigated by better information for passengers, for example through the Countdown system.

In relation to access to health services, London TravelWatch had previously held a joint meeting of the Ministers for Health and Transport, which had been useful, but the ministers had moved on and it was more difficult to identify individuals since the abolition

of joint Primary Care Trusts and NHS London. One possible option for taking this forward was the London Health Board, which included Michele Dix of TfL. The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that the London Assembly's remit in this area was stronger than London TravelWatch's as it included wellbeing, meaning the Assembly might be more successful in taking forward transport access to health than London TravelWatch.

The Chair of London TravelWatch said that the Assembly did not have the resources to take forward all of their recommendations and would welcome London TravelWatch taking the lead in some areas.

It was agreed that the issue of crowding was of greatest concern to members as it impacted on reliability and the general ability to plan a network of services. Consultation with bus passengers was also an area to which members thought London TravelWatch could add value, with a focus on highlighting best practice. On access to health services, it was thought that the London Assembly was better placed to make progress than London TravelWatch.

It was agreed that London TravelWatch would write to Val Shawcross AM to outline its thoughts and propose a timetable for taking the recommendations forward.

**Action: Policy Officer**

## **9 Consultation on the role of the Highways Agency (PC020)**

The Policy Officer presented a report on proposals to change the Highways Agency into a government-owned company. The proposals would have an impact on London TravelWatch's remit in relation to the operation of motorways that interfaced with TfL road network (TLRN). As an example, if tolling were introduced onto certain motorways, it would have a knock-on impact on the usage of the TLRN.

It was agreed that London TravelWatch should respond to the consultation welcoming the increase in user representation on the new body. However, it should call specifically for the new body to take account of the impact on TLRN and other roads when making changes to the roads it controls. It was also noted that if Passenger Focus took on additional work in relation to the new body it should not be diverted from its core passenger representative function.

**Action: Policy Officer**

## **10 Casework report and update (PC021)**

The Casework Manager presented a report on the work of the casework team during the period July to September 2013. She said there had been a small reduction in the number of cases received during this quarter and that a new category had been introduced to the report, to show when caseworkers had asked complainants to send in paperwork relating to their complaint.

The Casework Manager said that most significant issue being raised by complainants related to penalty fares. The TfL process for investigating penalty fares was a very robust three-stage system but the train operators' processes had fewer layers. In legal terms, penalty fares were issued without any discretion on the part of the operator on the basis of strict liability. However, this could sometimes lead to harsh penalties being imposed on

passengers who had made relatively small mistakes or had acted in good faith. In order to achieve a fair result for passengers, caseworkers were treating penalty fare appeals as customer service issues and were trying to persuade train operators to respond sensitively to appeal cases.

The Casework Manager said that following discussions with Southern, more announcements would be made on trains about the validity of Oyster tickets on their services.

It was agreed that the table showing response times would be amended to highlight areas of concern.

**Action: Casework Manager**

It was noted that there were a large number of TfL-related initial complaints. The Casework Manager said that TfL were doing a lot of work to ensure that complaints were directed to them in the first instance rather than London TravelWatch, but noted that the TfL website was not always straightforward to use, which might explain why people approached London TravelWatch. This might improve when the new TfL website went live.

**11 Feedback questionnaire report (PC022)**

The Casework Manager presented a report about feedback from complainants on their experience of using London TravelWatch.

During discussion it was agreed that it would be useful to review websites of train operating companies to see what references were made to London TravelWatch and its appeal role.

**Action: Casework Manager**

It was noted that the sample size of over 100, representing a response rate of 20%, was reasonable. The report was published on the website so that the feedback was available for review by the public if required. It was noted that London TravelWatch had targets relating to customer satisfaction and reported on these to the London Assembly in its six-monthly report.

Members welcomed the positive feedback within the responses.

**12 Any other business**

There was no other business.

**13 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 fares and ticketing issues and also reviewed financial or reputational risks posed by the meeting.