

# Board meeting 27.02.18



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## Minutes

Agenda item: 4  
Drafted 23.01.18

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**Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 16 January 2018 at 169 Union Street, London SE1 0LL**

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### Present

#### Members

Jackie Ballard, Alan Benson (Items 1-9), Glyn Kyle, Arthur Leathley (Chair), Abdi Osman, John Stewart

#### Guests

Mark Evers                                      Chief Customer Officer, London Underground, Transport for London (Items 8 and 9)

#### Secretariat

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

## **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**

Apologies were received from Richard Dilks.

## **3 Declarations of interest**

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

## **4 Chair's activities and Transport Focus update**

The Chair said he had met Charles Horton, the Chief Executive of Govia Thameslink Railway, and had taken a journey in a train cab from Blackfriars to Crickelwood station. GTR was seeking to demonstrate performance improvements but there was clearly still a long way to go.

The Chair said he had attended a Transport Focus board meeting to which South West Rail had been invited to discuss operational problems they had experienced during the opening months of their franchise. It was clear there would be another year or so of difficulty ahead.

He had attended an event at London Bridge station with the Chief Executive and Director, Policy and Investigation, to mark the completion of engineering works to rebuild the station as part of the Thameslink upgrade.

The Chair said he had carried out a short interview with LBC Radio on engineering works, which went well. In addition, he had met Keith Prince AM, Chair of the London Assembly Transport Committee, and discussed London TravelWatch's workplan and ways for the organisations to work together on future activity. It was agreed that the revised version of the summary workplan would be circulated with the Governance Committee papers.

### **Action: Executive Assistant**

The Chair said he had attended an informal meeting in Havering on Dial-a-Ride, which focused his attention on the need for more improvements to this service.

He said that Transport Focus was planning to undertake research that would include coach and other transport access to Heathrow Airport. The Director, Policy and Investigation, had asked for more details on this as London TravelWatch's extensive experience in this policy area may be useful. London TravelWatch hoped to be involved in the design of the research to ensure there was no duplication.

## **5 Minutes of the Board meeting held on 28 November 2017**

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 28 November 2017 were considered. The word "sent" in the second line of Item 6 on page 2 should be amended to "send". On page 7, the final line of the second paragraph should be amended to read, "He asked whether any modelling of displacement of young people travelling

free using Zip cards and unable to use other forms of transport would be carried out.” The minutes would be corrected and presented for signature to the next meeting.

## **6 Matters arising (LTW569)**

Members noted that the London TravelWatch report on cycling had now been published. Daniel Moylan, a former Board member of Transport for London and Leader of Kensington & Chelsea Council, had questioned in a tweet whether London TravelWatch had gone beyond its remit in promoting road pricing and Keith Prince AM had like Mr Moylan’s tweet. Members noted these concerns.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that the first electric train had now run on the newly-electrified section of the Barking to Gospel Oak line and that there would now be a period of three months without trains running to allow the tracks and overhead line equipment to settle. During this time, new electric trains would be acquired and drivers trained. He hoped full electric operation would begin from May 2018 but he would monitor this and report on any slippage. It was agreed that members would like to make a site visit to see the electric line in operation once complete.

**Action: Executive Assistant**

Members noted that it would have been helpful to see the final version of London TravelWatch’s response to Transport for London’s consultation on the partial pedestrianisation of Oxford Street prior to submission.

## **7 Key activities (LTW570)**

The Chief Executive said that the meeting with Shashi Verma at TfL had covered general casework and complaints handling issues, such as the management of complaints involving train operators as well as TfL.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said the meeting with Will Rogers, the Managing Director of London Overground, had been useful and that he was now expecting a slight delay in the forthcoming London Overground ticket office proposals. He said that London Overground management were very aware of the findings of London TravelWatch’s review of London Underground ticket office closures and were keen to avoid a repetition of problems encountered by London Underground. He was confident that London Overground had learned from London Underground’s experience.

The Chief Executive said that the Rail Delivery Group had received three bids to run the proposed new rail passenger redress scheme. London TravelWatch and Transport Focus had been able to comment on the passenger-facing elements of the bids as part of the evaluation process.

Members asked whether there were likely to be significant changes to the National Rail Conditions of Travel following the Director, Policy and Investigation’s meeting with the Rail Delivery Group and Department for Transport to discuss this. The

Director, Policy and Investigation, said that the Conditions of Travel were being brought into line with the Consumer Rights Act and there were other positive changes to wording in relation to consequential loss. This was encouraging.

## **8 London Underground ticket offices (LTW571)**

The Chair welcomed Mark Evers, Chief Customer Officer for London Underground, to the meeting. The Director, Policy and Investigation, said there were three issues relating to the London Underground ticket office closures that remained unresolved: focal points, accessibility and visitor centres. Of these, the focal point issue had proved the most difficult to resolve. Some of the trials of designs and locations for focal points were only now completing so full feedback on results had not yet been gathered. A change in staff culture was needed to encourage staff to seek passengers to offer assistance rather than waiting for passengers to find them.

Mr Evers said that London Underground stations were all different and each station needed a bespoke solution. The pilots had given a good indication of general best practice in relation to the focal points, such as which signage was most effective and where focal points should be located.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that assistance for passengers with disabilities remained a significant concern. He said that the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) was planning to overhaul passenger assistance services on Network Rail, to replace the current paper-based systems with automated systems. He hoped that this would alleviate some of TfL's concerns when transferring passengers from TfL services onto Network Rail.

Mr Evers said he had not been aware of this work and said that TfL favoured turn-up-and-go assistance for passengers rather than Network Rail's system of pre-booking. Some people liked the ability to book assistance but the majority of TfL's stakeholders preferred passengers to have flexibility to travel without booking assistance in advance. He would liaise with the RDG to explore the best ways of managing the different approaches.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that the RDG believed it was moving the rail industry towards a turn-up-and-go approach and that if passengers did arrive at stations wanting to travel the industry would attempt to support them. It was important that there was a joined-up service in London and that passengers could be confident that assistance would be available from TfL when they travelled across London.

Members noted that some passengers with hearing impairments said they preferred speech-to-text on ipads to hearing loops and asked how efficient speech-to-text was as a form of communication. Mr Evers said it was more efficient than hearing loops as the loops could suffer from interference and some new hearing aids did not have a hearing loop function.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said he had visited the Visitor Centre at Paddington station in December. He had found there was no signposting to the Visitor Centre from the Underground station and no prominent signage from the

Network Rail station. There was very little TfL literature at the Visitor Centre, with most literature being promotional material aimed at London tourists rather than transport information.

Mr Evers said that visitors who were unfamiliar with the transport network needed greater assistance and so Visitor Centres were located in areas with high concentrations of tourists. Staff in the Visitor Centres worked in a different part of TfL to Underground staff so there was not as much communication between Visitor Centres and the Underground as there should be. More could be done in this area. The location of the Visitor Centre at Paddington was not ideal but space there was very restricted. London Underground had sought to increase the visibility of Visitor Centres by increasing the levels of signage. He would speak to colleagues about the signage and material at Paddington Visitor Centre as the primary purpose of the centres was to support transport users.

Members noted that progress with implementing London TravelWatch's recommendations about the closure of the ticket offices had been slow and that the mitigation measures were only now being put in place, a year after the ticket offices closed. Mr Evers said that there had been good progress on updating ticket machines to increase the products that they could vend. However, members clarified that London Underground had refused to implement one of London TravelWatch's recommendations, to enable ticket machines to vend annual season tickets, so it was inaccurate to suggest that London Underground had completed the implementation of London TravelWatch's recommendations on ticket machines.

Mr Evers said that a significant number of customers bought season tickets but would be better off with capped pay as you go products. London Underground did a lot of work to make passengers aware of their options at the end of their season tickets and season tickets could be purchased at Visitor Centres, although this was not the primary purpose of the Centres.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that London TravelWatch had published research relating to annual season tickets in the autumn but had not yet received a formal response from TfL. Mr Evers said that TfL had committed to making a formal response and would do so in due course.

Members asked whether TfL treated loyal users of annual season tickets properly. Mr Evers said that more could be done to make annual season ticket holders aware of the significant discount they are given. He said that passengers had continued to be able to buy annual season tickets despite the closure of the ticket offices without there being any increase in complaints.

Mr Evers said that all the focal points would be in place by the end of the year. Around 30 to 50 focal points would be installed as they were not needed in smaller stations where the location of assistance would be clear to passengers. All 325 new staff had been recruited and trained and the majority were now in place, with the remainder being in place by the end of the financial year.

Mr Evers said there was a strong focus on staff presence, attentiveness and ability to help. Staff visibility and helpfulness scores had improved over the last year.

Members noted that there were still examples of passengers being unable to find assistance and this needed to be addressed.

Mr Evers said that customer satisfaction scores were improving. However, he may need to consider whether more research would be necessary once the focal points were in place to look at whether they were working effectively.

Mr Evers said that this change operation required a significant change of culture among staff and this could take several years. He would be pleased to report on progress and the steps that were being taken to embed culture change to a future meeting.

Mr Evers said that London TravelWatch's report on ticket office closures had been helpful in managing the change of culture that was necessary to continue serving passengers well. The ticket office closures were a significant change to how London Underground operated stations as half the Underground's station staff had needed to move stations. The provision of good customer information was not straightforward but the London Underground leadership team was focussed on improving customer service in stations.

Mr Evers said that the structure at London Underground had been reorganised so that there were now separate directors for stations and for operations. The Chair recognised that cultural change would take time and said that London TravelWatch would continue to assist where possible.

## **9 London Underground update**

Mr Evers said that passenger demand remained a challenge for London Underground. TfL was currently forecasting a slight decline in passenger numbers which would have a detrimental impact on revenue.

He said that leaf-fall issues had affected reliability on the Piccadilly line. A variety of initiatives had been put in place to address this, including removal of trees and specific training for drivers, which he hoped would lead to better performance in future.

London Underground was behind its target for the year on reliability, with the biggest problem being operator attendance, having the right number of operators and operators being in the right place. The position was improving but this was a significant cause of unreliability.

There was strong emphasis on safety, with more than 100 fewer safety incidents reported this year. Safety on escalators was a particular focus with new signs being introduced along the centre of escalators and new posters in stations. Other interventions included the use of red zones at the top and bottom of escalators to encourage people to move away. In addition, work was underway to reduce the slipperiness of the stairs at Oxford Circus station.

Some elements of the Underground modernisation programme were ahead of schedule. The creation of level access on some platforms had led to greater

horizontal gaps in some stations and work had been done to address this but there was still more to do. There was also forthcoming planned work on signalling.

On the Northern line extension, tunnel boring had now linked Battersea to Kennington and the Kennington Loop. Work on this was going to plan. The new increase in frequency on the Victoria line was also now in operation, with dwell times to enable 36 trains per hour being managed well. New timetables would shortly be introduced on the Northern and Jubilee lines to increase the duration of the peak frequency period.

On the deep tube lines, Mr Evers said TfL had considered buying new trains but had decided that the Piccadilly fleet needed investment first. The works to make Victoria station step-free were a significant improvement for passengers and would continue over the next twelve months.

Work was continuing to provide step-free access at Tottenham Court Road station and ramps were being put into place. There remained concerns that staff were not confident in using the ramps at peak times and work was underway to address this. Bond Street station was now step-free.

The procurement of lifts had been improved. Previously lifts had been bespoke for each station but standard lifts were cheaper and it had been possible to order these for stations at the end of the Central line.

Mr Evers said he had spoken to the sponsor of the Bank station upgrade programme and had been told that Acom were performing the feasibility assessment on the inclusion of lifts to enable step-free access to the Central line platforms. He hoped the results of this assessment would be available by May.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that the Bank reconstruction scheme was planned to provide step-free access to the Northern line and interchange to the Docklands Light Railway. However, there was still doubt about step-free access to the Central line and access at the Monument end of the station. Mr Evers said the project sponsor would be able to confirm the current position in respect of Bank works and also reasoning behind decisions. The Chief Executive said it would be useful to have this soon and certainly in advance of the next meeting.

**Action: Executive Assistant**

Members asked whether delivery of step-free access at Bromley-by-Bow had been delayed by one year. They also asked about the lift at Blackhorse Road, which was locked out of use, apparently because it was built to Network Rail specification and could not communicate with the TfL systems, although the station was managed by TfL. Mr Evers said he would investigate and report back.

**Action: Executive Assistant**

Members gave examples of occasions when there was disruption on the Underground and drivers did not give enough information to passengers already on trains about how to complete their journeys. Mr Evers said that it could be

challenging for drivers to identify precisely which pieces of information to convey but he would be happy to look at this issue again.

The Chief Executive asked whether 'distracted walking' featured as part of the London Underground's passenger safety programme. Mr Evers said it was not the priority message in this area as the focus was on encouraging people on escalators to use the handrail.

The Chief Executive asked about reports that the Night Tube operation meant that routine safety checks could not be made. Mr Evers said he was confident that appropriate safety checks would be carried out but it was not his area of expertise and he would look into it before responding.

**Action: Executive Assistant**

Members asked whether the trial at Holborn station involving passengers standing on both sides of the escalator had any impact on safety. Mr Evers said that the trial was primarily for congestion and was successful in that regard but there was not enough data on safety implications to make a judgement. However, he noted that a small decrease in escalator speed could have a significant impact on improving safety, especially for escalators that accessed Network Rail stations.

Members said that since London Underground had begun its campaign to encourage passengers with luggage to use the lifts, it had been more difficult for passengers with mobility impairments to use the lifts. Mr Evers agreed there was a difficult trade-off between safety, reliability and accessibility.

The Chair thanked Mr Evers for attending and for providing comprehensive responses in this item and the previous one. He looked forward to hearing again on progress at a future date.

## **10 Christmas engineering works review**

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that the engineering works over the Christmas and New Year holiday period had largely been completed as planned and the networks had been handed back on time. He had noted, however, that several of the platforms along the Paddington to Didcot route had not been extended as planned in order to accommodate electrified trains.

Members asked whether the preference would be for works to be finished even if it meant overrunning or for the network to be handed back in time even if the works were incomplete. The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that on balance it was probably best for passengers for the network to be handed back on time as the consequences of overrunning engineering works could be very inconvenient.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said there would be a review of the engineering works programme at the next Travel Demand Management meeting, which London TravelWatch would contribute to. Members put on record their welcome that the works had been completed and handed back on time.



## **11 National Audit Officer report on GTR (LTW572)**

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said that the National Audit Office had released a report on value for money in relation to the operation of Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR). The report was critical of the Department for Transport, Network Rail and GTR, who, along with the Office for Rail and Road, could take significant learnings from the findings.

The report highlighted how much passengers had suffered over the last four years. The Thameslink upgrade was a huge project that would deliver eventual benefits but there was very little for passengers in the intervening period. The risks, costs and impact had been often underestimated.

The Director, Policy and Investigation, said the report vindicated London TravelWatch's concerns about the operation of this franchise. The National Audit Office did not speak directly to London TravelWatch in preparing this report but did have access to its reports and research.

The Chief Executive said that the report showed how devolution of rail franchises in the London area would be helpful and that current franchising arrangements with operators required to work with Network Rail were not always best for passengers.

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 a section of the meeting.

During the confidential session, members continued to discuss the National Audit Office report. At the conclusion of the discussion, they resumed the meeting in public.

## **12 Appointment of subsidiary bodies**

It was agreed that the Board and Committee arrangements would continue as currently, as set out in the report.

The Chair noted the importance of all members attending all scheduled meetings as far as possible.

## **13 Any other business**

The Chief Executive said she was due to attend the London Underground stakeholder board and would raise there the question of whether their operations had been affected by the collapse of Carillion.

## **14 Resolution to move into confidential session**

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 a section of the meeting.

During the confidential session, members reviewed the meeting.