
Minutes

Agenda item: 4
Drafted: 21.02.12

Minutes of the Consumer Affairs Committee meeting held on 14 February 2012 at 6 Middle Street, London EC1

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Present

Members

David Barry (Chair), Gail Engert, Sophia Lambert, David Leibling (Deputy Chair)

Guests

Matt Winfield Stakeholder Engagement Manager, Transport for London (TfL) (from Item 5)

Secretariat

Tim Bellenger	Director, Policy & Investigation
Janet Cooke	Chief Executive
Richard Freeston-Clough	Communications Officer
Sharon Malley	Executive Assistant (minutes)
Susan Parham-McCance	Casework Manager (Item 8)

Minutes

1 Chair's introduction and pre-meeting announcements

The Chair welcomed members, officers and guests to the meeting and made the standard housekeeping and safety announcements.

2 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Sharon Grant and Terry Bennett. In addition, apologies were received from Lucy Preston from Transport for London and Simon Feast of the Department for Transport, both of whom were sending substitutes to the confidential section of the meeting. Peter Twigg of the Association of Train Operating Companies sent apologies for the public section of the meeting but would be attending the confidential section.

3 Declarations of interest

There were no additional declarations of interest.

4 Minutes

The minutes of the Consumer Affairs committee held on 29 November 2011 were agreed and signed as a correct record, subject to the addition that Susan Parham-McCance, the Casework Manager, had sent apologies.

It was noted that in relation to Item 5.6, TfL was now implementing the increased £80 penalty fare.

It was noted that in relation to Item 7, and as reported to the Board, new validators had been installed at Wimbledon station to assist passengers understand which to use when travelling on the tram and the train.

The Chief Executive commented in relation to the final paragraph of Item 8 that the focus on qualitative casework targets would begin from 1 April.

5 Matters arising (CAC026)

5.1 Editorial in targeting publications to promote London TravelWatch

It was noted that in relation to Age UK, if possible it would be more efficient to focus on a London-wide publication rather than going to each individual borough.

5.2 Production of posters giving information on black cab fares

It was agreed that the Policy Officer would update members on progress with this item.

Action: Policy Officer

5.3 London Underground ticket office and station staffing

It was agreed that officers would agree the best way for staff and members to record their personal experiences of staffing levels in Underground stations and would circulate the protocol as appropriate.

Action: Director, Policy & Investigation

The Director, Policy & Investigation, reported that he had met Transport for London to discuss their concerns with the findings of London TravelWatch's survey and learned that TfL's surveys, although conducted very frequently, did not distinguish between stations where there had been changes to the ticket office hours and those without. Therefore it was not possible to make a direct comparison between TfL's findings and London TravelWatch's. It was possible that TfL would be able to share its findings with London TravelWatch and for London TravelWatch to spend some time with TfL's mystery shoppers.

This constructive engagement with TfL was welcomed.

5.4 Stratford DLR link

It was noted that a fixed link between the two stations at Stratford had been part of the planning conditions for building the new station. As the relevant planning authority (the London Borough of Newham) had agreed that the Docklands Light Railway link between the stations at Stratford discharged this condition, this action should be regarded as complete.

5.5 Sending the How to Complain leaflet to libraries

It was noted that the Communications Officer was progressing this and would look into whether it was possible to use a central distribution system rather than sending the leaflets to individual libraries.

David Leibling said that it may be possible to make use of an organisation that installed leaflet display cases in libraries and he would pass the details to the Communications Officer.

Action: David Leibling

5.6 Law Commission review of taxi and private hire vehicles law

The Director, Policy & Investigation, said that the Law Commission was reviewing the entire body of law relating to taxis and private hire vehicles and he had been given the opportunity to put forward his view.

5.7 Add the How to Complain leaflet to the website in hypertext

Sophia Lambert said that she had an old plain text version of the How to Complain leaflet and would send it to the Communications Officer to assist with uploading it to the website.

6 Actions taken (CAC027)

The Director, Policy & Investigation, reported that he attended a meeting of the Office of Rail Regulation's Forum of Consumer Experts, a body that existed to inform the ORR of rail issues affecting consumers, such as fares, regulation of Network Rail and the intention to transfer powers from franchise agreements monitored by the DfT to licensing conditions operated by the ORR.

The meetings were gaining in importance as ORR repositioned itself as more of a consumer champion. The Chief Executive noted that the ORR appreciated London TravelWatch's combination of casework and policy and how its work complemented Passenger Focus's.

The Director, Policy & Investigation, said that he and the Casework Manager had met Lucy Preston and Howard Godwin of TfL to discuss issues arising from the recent fares increases. It was noted that it may be worthwhile to consider inviting Barry Doe to attend a forthcoming meeting to discuss this issue.

Action: Executive Assistant

The Director, Policy & Investigation, said that he had attended a meeting with the DfT for a confidential discussion on the forthcoming fares review.

7 Consultation on the use of non-geographic telephone numbers (CAC028)

The Director, Policy & Investigation, reported that Ofcom had published a consultation document on the use of 0843/0845 numbers by organisation such as Transport for London for the provision of information. Although initial consultation was now closed the matter as a whole remained open and London TravelWatch was able to provide feedback on the subject.

It was noted that London TravelWatch did not object to TfL receiving a small payment for receiving phone calls that sought information but it did not support TfL receiving payments when callers were making a complaint or seeking a refund.

It was also noted that although 0843 and 0845 numbers were cheap to call from landlines they were expensive from mobile phones and that this had impacts on social exclusion as research showed that households without landlines but with mobiles tended to be of lower incomes.

It was agreed that London TravelWatch supported the principle of the provision of a number that was free to call even from mobiles and that it would be acceptable for an organisation such as TfL to use such a number for complaints and a more standard revenue sharing number for information provision.

It was agreed that letter previously sent to Ofcom on this issue would be reviewed and updated for reissue.

Action: Executive Assistant

8 Casework report and update (CAC029)

Members welcomed the excellent work of the casework team as outlined in the Casework Report.

The Casework Manager confirmed that the table for target 2 contained different totals to that for targets 3 and 4 because some cases carried over month by month and the table reflected the dates that actions were taken.

It was noted that the Governance Committee used to be able to review trends over a 12-15 month period and that this was something that may be considered again from 1 April 2012. It may also be possible to report information on the number of complaints passed between London TravelWatch and Passenger Focus.

It was noted that it may be helpful to order the table on page 12 in the same way as that on page 6, ie by train then by TfL.

The Casework Manager reported on a success with complaints relating to East Coast. She had noticed an increase in the number of complaints being received relating to the same issue, whereby passengers had boarded trains with the wrong tickets having been told by members of staff prior to boarding that the tickets were valid. Passenger Focus had reported a similar problem. London TravelWatch raised the issue with the Chief Executive of East Coast, who identified a problem with its internal complaint handling procedures, and London TravelWatch hoped that this issue would now be resolved.

The Casework Manager said she was seeking to amend the online complaint form on the London TravelWatch website so that it prompted passengers to go first to transport operators before complaining to London TravelWatch.

It was agreed that information about operator performance could be included in London TravelWatch's performance reports rather than be published separately as a league table.

Action: Director, Policy & Investigation

9 Any other business

It was agreed that a note of the discussion in the confidential part of the meeting, about compensation arrangements during the Olympic Games, should be included in the public minutes.

The note said that ATOC's default position for people who had received free paper travelcards along with their Olympic event tickets was that 'delay repay' would not apply

and there would be no compensation for delays. In addition, the standard terms of carriage in relation to consequential loss would apply, so no compensation would be payable if, for example, transport delays resulted in people missing their events.

This applied only to the free paper travel tickets supplied with Olympic event tickets. Travel tickets purchased separately would be subject to the usual terms and conditions.

10 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 the implementation of new ticketing technologies beyond the London area, compensation arrangements during the Olympic Games and the review of the meeting.

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