
Minutes

Agenda item : 3
Drafted : 1. 3.10

**Minutes of the Consumer Affairs Committee meeting held on 27 January 2010
at 6 Middle Street, London EC1**

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Present

Members

David Barry (In the Chair and Vice-Chair), Terry Bennett, Daniel Francis, Sophia Lambert, Teena Lashmore (min. 3 to 12), Sharon Grant (London TravelWatch Chair) (min. 7 to 12)

David Leibling (Observer)

Secretariat

Mark Donoghue	Committee Administrator
Janet Cooke	Chief Executive
Bryan Davey	Director, Public Liaison

Guests

Matt Winfield Stakeholder manager, Transport for London (TfL)
One member of the public was present.

Minutes

- 1 Chair's introduction, pre-meeting announcements, apologies for absence and confirmation of Vice-Chair**

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. Apologies were received from Sarah Pond and Lorna Reith. Apologies for lateness were received from Teena Lashmore and Sharon Grant.

David Barry was confirmed as Vice-Chair and, in the absence of Sarah Pond, would Chair the committee.

2 Declarations of interest

There were no additional declarations of members' interests. The full list may be viewed on the London TravelWatch website at <http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/document/3861/get>.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the Consumer Affairs Committee meeting held on 25 November 2009 were approved and signed for the record subject to the following amendments :

Daniel Francis needed to be recorded as having chaired the committee and David Leibling's name needed to be added to the list of those attending the meeting. On page 2 the name of the committee needed to be amended to read as Consumer Affairs. Two actions needed to be added to the matters arising report.

A member asked whether the new system could produce a list of outstanding cases for each Caseworker. The Director, Public Liaison would liaise with the contractor to see if this was possible.

Action : Director, Public Liaison

4 Matters arising (CA028)

The members worked through the paper submitted to the meeting.

C/22.4.09/8 (Annex A) and C/23.9.09/4

The Director, Public Liaison would follow up the progress on this item.

Action : Director, Public Liaison

C/23.9.09/C1

The status of a consultation paper or other document would be checked with the Chair of the Committee and London TravelWatch Chair, before the decision was made on whether it would be in public or confidential session.

Action : Secretariat

C/23.9.09/7

The Director, Public Liaison was asked to follow up on this action and to look at the status.

Action : Director, Public Liaison

C/8.7.09/4

This item's status was ongoing and a proposed deadline would go to the next meeting.

C/8.7.09/7

On item (i) the Director, Public Liaison would review after the presentation of his sixth monthly report.

Action : Director, Public Liaison

On item (ii) the Director, Public Liaison noted that the current templates are not explicit, but do say which operator the appeal is going to. Operators are asked to respond to London TravelWatch within an agreed deadline.

On item (iii) the Director, Public Liaison noted that this is linked to the previous item and is ongoing.

C/8.7.09/8i and C/25.11.09/4

This had been raised at a previous meeting regarding the short formation of trains. The Chief Executive had updated the member who had raised this item.

C/25.11.09/4.1

It was agreed to check whether the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) had responded to this issue.

C/25.11.09/4.2

This item was completed.

C/25.11.09/4.3

The Director, Public Liaison reported that the London Overground (LOROL) position is unusual in that it is a concession, not a franchise. LOROL had agreed with the ORR to be explicit on complaint times. They aim to acknowledge complaints within one day and have achieved this for 95 per cent of complaints and respond to complaints within seven days. This item was complete.

C/25.11.09/6

This item would be covered by the monthly and six monthly reports, but members noted that there was nothing on quarter 3 performance.

C/25.11.09/8

Members requested a paper for the next committee meeting. The Director, Public Liaison would speak on the database problems under agenda item 10 (b).

C/25.11.09/10

This item had been overtaken by Transport for London's (TfL) introduction of an 0843 number for their travel information line. This item would be discussed would be discussed with TfL.

C/25.11.09/11

The Chief Executive was progressing this item.

C/25.11.09/3C

This item was ongoing.

C/25.11.09/3C

The member who had been liaising with the Communications Officer proposed that there should be two separate leaflets : one for the website and one hardcopy. The Chair of London TravelWatch recorded her thanks to the member. The leaflet would need to be circulated to members and to staff.

There were two items that needed to be included in the matters arising report.

A member raised the item on page 3, the lack of frequency of the Case of the week e-mail. The Chief Executive reported that the frequency would be increased.

Members requested a paper on overlaps in remit between Passenger Focus and London TravelWatch.

Action : Chief Executive

A member asked whether any analysis had taken place on the Croydon event. The Chief Executive gave a short report on the event and that the next bus surgery event would take place in Romford on 5 March.

A member suggested putting timescales on the report to prioritise items.

5 Actions taken (CA029)

Members noted the report of recent work undertaken by the secretariat on matters pertinent to the Committee.

6 Performance report (CA030)

The Director, Public Liaison explained that Annex B of the report captured the performance of the Casework team as of 22 January 2010. He had not been able to provide more contextual information due to the problems experienced in generating the reports.

A member noted the number of enquiries received. Passenger Focus had put a pre-announcement on calls to them giving the phone number of National Rail Enquiries (NRES). The Director, Public Liaison explained that a number of the enquiries concerned buses, for example, the passenger had left something on their bus or had an argument with a driver. London TravelWatch acts as a sign post for passengers. The Chief Executive reminded members that they had not wanted to remove London TravelWatch's phone number from the poster on buses. If a quick answer was available to the enquiry, staff gave them.

Members asked the Director, Public Liaison to keep this under review. The Chair of London TravelWatch asked that, perhaps, a small survey could be done and report back. The decision can then be made whether to do this work differently or efficiently. The Chief Executive would raise this with the Casework Manager.

Members noted that the enquiries had not previously been recorded and that the volumes would be noted to the Transport Committee.

A member asked when the Quarter 3 information would be available. The Director, Public Liaison reported that he would be meeting with the contractor. Work is required to understand

how the query is constructed. He would have the information available on Quarter 3 at the March committee meeting.

Action : Director, Public Liaison

The Chair noted that the priority was to get the report writing resolved and that this had not been done due to other work taking priority.

7 Six Monthly Casework report (CA031)

The Director, Public Liaison began by explaining to members that this report would be the last of its type on the old database. Changes had been put in place to make acknowledgements quicker. Other areas of improvement were on the 5 working day referral target.

A member noted the poor response times for London Buses (on average 26.9 working days) in the reporting period, whilst the average time for Train Operating Companies (TOCs) had fallen. The Chair noted that most operators had improved, with improvements made by London Underground and most TOCs. A member asked whether the deterioration for some organisations was seasonal. The Director, Public Liaison replied that overall the situation was better, but that some parts of TfL had not.

Members noted that the data for targets 4 and 5 had shown a small improvement. Some cases took longer to close because of the complexity involved. The Chair noted that over time the team were moving to a position where they took less time to close. Members noted that arrangements were now in place to cope with staff sickness.

Members discussed the questionnaire survey of complainants who had used London TravelWatch. A member queried the high figure for accessibility on question 3. The Director, Public Liaison reported that this figure included complaints about the gating of Lewisham station. Particular issues, for example, reduction in ticket office hours (schedule 17 consultations) may affect the percentages (the First Capital Connect consultation on ticket office hours meant that the Other category was 49 per cent over the period October 2008 to March 2009).

It was agreed to obtain the mode of transport that was being complained about from complainants completing the questionnaire.

Action : Director, Public Liaison

8 Policy issues for consideration (CA032)

The Director, Public Liaison explained the background to the issues highlighted in annex A. First Capital Connect (FCC) had been running a reduced service due to a number of issues, for example, drivers withdrew from overtime, the adverse weather conditions, etc. The customer complaints department had built up a backlog of complaints and were not accepting complaints via e-mail. London TravelWatch were alerted to this problem via a passenger who had been on the phone for 20 minutes and decided to e-mail his complaint. They received a response saying that they did not accept e-mails. London TravelWatch had taken this up with the Department for Transport (DfT). The DfT did not think that this meant that there was a breach of their franchise agreement. It was agreed that the Chair of London TravelWatch would write to FCC and copy the letter to the DfT and the appropriate Minister.

Action : Chair of London TravelWatch

The Director, Public Liaison explained that CIV tickets (Conditions Internationales de Vente – International Conditions of Sale) were used by passengers who travelled via Eurostar services to the continent. The tickets are useful for passengers who are delayed en route to London St Pancras. The tickets enable travel at any time, are valid for two months and allow for passengers to be transferred onto later services if they miss their train due to delays.

The member of the public who had raised this issue spoke to members and listed his concerns. One of the benefits of the ticket was that it allowed passengers to transfer via the Underground to London St Pancras. A recent decision had been made by the train operators to change the validity of CIV tickets from South London to exclude travel on the Underground and, make them valid by First Capital Connect's service across London only. The decision had not been made public or consulted on. This was a disadvantage to passengers. He had been liaising with a member of the Casework team to get a response as to why the decision had been made.

It was agreed that joint action between London TravelWatch and Passenger Focus should take place on this issue with ATOC. If no satisfactory response was received it would be pursued with either the ORR or DfT. It was agreed that the matter would be pursued at the Fares and Ticketing committee.

Action : Committee Services

9 Casework review update

The Chief Executive reported that the casework review had taken place last year. A number of changes were now in place apart from one (withdrawal of London TravelWatch phone number from posters on London Buses). The review had identified capacity and resourcing problems with the team being vulnerable to sickness. There had been a more pro-active use of staff to cover extended staff absences.

The policies and procedures had been reviewed. Cases that were previously referred to the committee (which could add an extra 8 weeks on to the length of a case) were now dealt with outside the meeting. This had freed up time for the committee and meant they could consider more items. Letters were now scanned and operators had been requested to ask complainants to attach copies of correspondence when they referred complaints to London TravelWatch. Procedures needed to be written for the new casework monitoring.

The Chief Executive noted that in hindsight she had not appreciated the time it would take. Other areas of work had not been progressed. She was hopeful that the appointment of the new Casework manager would further improve performance. There is an upward trend in performance.

There were some outstanding items from the review, for example, enhancing the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) section on the website. Some work had been done on this and it was hoped to have a completion date of the end June 2010 for this work. A procedure manual would also need to be completed to meet the needs of Caseworkers which would have a completion date of end June 2010. The case of the week would happen regularly from 1 March 2010. Whilst the quality of work is high in the Casework team there were still areas of improvement. A benchmarking exercise will be undertaken, where she considered that correspondence will be reviewed and standard letters created. The expected completion date for this is June 2010.

The members felt that the review should not be completed until the outstanding items were completed.

The Chair thanked the Chief Executive for her verbal report and asked for a paper at the next meeting.

Action : Chief Executive

10 Casework update

a) Recruitment update

The Director, Public Liaison noted that long term sickness had been a problem in the Casework team. The recruitment of a new Casework Manager is a step forward. The Casework Officer on a temporary contract had been confirmed in post with a 12 month contract.

b) CRM Dynamics database update

The Director, Public Liaison updated members on the issues that he had been trying to iron out after the database went live. A number of improvements in terms of the functionality of the database and reporting were currently being worked on with the contractor. The migration from the old database had been successful and it would not be used from the 1 February 2010. The Chair asked the Director, Public Liaison to let him know if he would like any support.

11 Any other business

The Chair of London TravelWatch raised concerns that passengers exiting the new ticket hall at Kings Cross/St Pancras were not able to access national rail information. The Director, Public Liaison, would raise this with Network Rail.

Action : Director, Public Liaison

12 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 the confidential minutes of the last meeting, discussed audits and reviewed the meeting.

The next meeting would take place on 10 March 2010.

13 Glossary

ATOC	Association of Train Operating Companies
DfT	Department for Transport
FCC	First Capital Connect (Train Operating Company which serves a large number of passengers within London TravelWatch's remit)
LOROL	London Overground
NRES	National Rail Enquiries
ORR	Office of Rail Regulation
TfL	Transport for London
TOC	Train Operating Companies