

Scrutiny Streets, Environment & Homes Sub-Committee

Meeting held on Tuesday, 9 July 2019 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Leila Ben-Hassel (Chair);
Councillor Richard Chatterjee (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Robert Canning, Sherwan Chowdhury, Luke Clancy and
Felicity Flynn

Also Present: Councillor Michael Neal
Councillor Stuar King
Councillor Paul Scott
Ian Plowright, Head of Transport
Yvonne Leslie, Senior Stakeholder Manager, GTR
Rory O'Neill, General Manager, London Overground, TFL
Sam Russell, Communities and Stakeholder Manager, Arriva London, TFL
Ben Craig, Senior Route Planner, Network Rail
Greg Thompson, Public Affairs Manager, Network Rail
Charles bell

Apologies: Councillor Vidhi Mohan

PART A

23/19 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2019 were agreed as an accurate record subject to the following amendment:

Minute 21/19 Para 3, If the notice was invalid, it would be inadmissible in court and the Council would be able to mediate between the landlord and tenant.

24/19 Disclosure of Interests

There were none.

25/19 Urgent Business (if any)

There were no items of urgent business.

26/19 Update from Rail Service Providers

The Chair welcomed Members and invited guests to the meeting to receive an update from the Rail service providers in attendance on actions taken and responses to recommendations since the meeting of the sub-committee on 20 June 2018.

An Officer from Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) was in attendance and gave a presentation on actions taken to date and an update which included the following:

- The implementation programme of the rail timetable had not gone as planned and resulted in major disruption and delays experienced across the network
- A refund of fares in addition to the usual delay repay compensation was put in place following the disruptions caused by the introduction of the May timetable and passengers were paid over £17m in additional industry compensation.
- There had been a year on year improvement experienced and evidenced through the Public Performance Measure (PPM) and over the last three month over 90% of trains had arrived to timescale
- A Passenger Benefit Fund with a £15million pot to be spread across the network for GTR stations was in place. Rail user groups, Council, and the community had been invited to submit suggestions as to how the money should be spent.
- A recent National Rail Satisfaction Survey showed that trust was being rebuilt with passengers with satisfaction figures on 81% for Southern and 83% for Thameslink.
- Worked closely with Network rail on improvement plans and created action plans to address areas of further exploration.

Questions were raised on the contributing factors to failings in the implementation of the timetable and what lessons had been learnt. Members' were informed that a comprehensive report had been published by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) which detailed the background, issues experienced with timescales as well as over optimisation which contributed to the failings experienced. A key recommendation from the report was for the programme officer to assess risks and this was done in time for the roll out of the December 2018 timetable.

The sub-committee further learned that there had been two timetable introductions since the initial May 2018 roll out with a strategic timetable team in place constantly gathering data and reviewing the timetable.

A question was raised on how well promoted the passenger refund scheme had been, the percentage of take up and the ability of all rail users to claim as not all transport users use oyster which seemed to be a factor in the claims process. Members were informed that the scheme was promoted via the rail website, on social media platforms such as twitter and also by customer services at stations. It was difficult to measure take up as refunds were based on eligibility.

A Member questioned how prepared the service was during peaks periods such as Summer holidays and Christmas, whether there was a full complement of drivers recruited into position and if there was a reliance on drivers putting in to work overtime to cover a shortfall in staff. The Officer responded that a major recruitment and training programme had taken place and was ongoing. It was agreed that a briefing vacancy rates and recruitment would be provided to Members after the meeting.

Concerns were raised about the impact to passengers when trains arrivals were switched to another platform as the ability for passengers both able bodied and those with disabilities to get to another platform in a short space of time could prove to be dangerous. It was further commented that information on timetable or platform changes as well as delays must be relayed to passengers in ample time. Officers responded that information was shared with all station staff and support volunteers in as timely a manner as possible but agreed that more could be done to improve how quickly information was relayed to station staff as well as passengers.

It was noted that an improvement in attitude and culture towards passengers in particular those with disabilities was needed with a greater emphasis on improved customer service by staff.

It was also noted that the data from the Public Performance Measure (PPM) on year comparison supplied in the presentation showed that over 90% had not been achieved and this should be achievable. The officer responded that over two thousand trains ran each day and to achieve 90% was a task in itself. The figures showed that improvements were being made but it was recognised that there were problems experienced with train reliability and work as ongoing with partners to review and explore the reasons as to why higher figures were not being achieved. GTR was committed to exploring different ways to increase performance and were focused on their own on time internal measures as well as the industry PPM measure.

A Guest challenged the frequency of trains per hour at Norwood Junction which had been reduced from eight trains per hour in 2015 to four in 2018, and highlighted the limited range during peak periods. Further concerns that going forward, less trains would be delivered per hour. The officer responded that this was the maximum that could be achieved from the network as a whole but agreed to explore if any changes could be made in the medium term.

Councillor Stuart King, Cabinet Member for Environment Transport and Regeneration (job share) welcomed the full range of officers in attendance. He raised concerns that West Croydon was not considered for allocation of the Passenger Benefit Fund and asked if there would be consideration and willingness to allow a pooling of funds with the Council providing direction as to where the funds should be spent.

It was further questioned what criteria was used in the categorisation of stations that were selected to receive the funds and had the wider impact of Thameslink services on other stations not selected been taken into consideration. Officers responded that one of the criteria of the selection process was that the station had to be a Thameslink served station which was why West Croydon was not allocated part of the funding. Pooling of funds could be considered as an option as the distribution of the funds would be based on information and suggestions collated from community, councils, and stakeholder. The officer agreed that once all the suggestions had been collated, this option could be further discussed.

The Chair thanked the officer for responses to questions.

Officers from London Overground and Arriva Rail London were in attendance and gave a presentation on service performance, in particular at West Croydon Station and the use of Platform One. The sub-committee was informed of the following:

- Performance was appraised in two ways
- Arriva was subject to pay penalties to TfL for poor performance.
- As an operator, Arriva was held to account in all aspect of their service and were conscious maintain high levels of performance.
- The priority for Arriva was to return any disrupted service to a good service as quickly as possible, in particular at the top of line.
- West Croydon was susceptible to experiencing issues or unintended consequences that had occurred in the service as it was at the end on the line.
- Platform changes did impact on journeys but a balance had to be drawn between operational and passenger needs in the decision making process.

A question was raised as to what could be done to resolve the issues of lack of access for disabled users. There were many challenges experienced by disabled passengers across the network such as delays and changes to routes as well as inability of staff to use ramps adequately. It was further questioned to what extent operational benefit was weighed against loss of accessibility and whether consideration was given to the passenger experience when a decision was made on changes.

Officers responded that there had been investment in training of staff to deal with passengers appropriately and that all staff had general accessibility training, with agency staff also receiving station specific training. They were looking at how to automate communication between stations to make it easier for customers with mobility issues to notify stations of their arrival at the

beginning of their journey. Members were informed that reporting of issues and receiving of complaints when things do not go right was the quickest way to learn. Formal feedback was encouraged at all times as it was crucial to driving change.

Officers informed the sub-committee of the 'Turn up and Go' policy which meant that passengers requiring assistance would no longer be advised to book 24 hours ahead but could get assistance at any time during their journey. A Guest in attendance highlighted that whilst the policy was in place, there were no changes experienced in his ability to receive assistance from staff regardless of whether he had booked or not. The policy in his experience was not effective.

A Guest further highlighted that general communication was poor and staff were not always available at some stations at certain times on the day to assist passengers. It would appear that there were vacancies and shortage of staff at many stations. It was reinforced to the operators in attendance that communication was key to an effective service.

Officers agreed that with the prevalence of Apps, passengers often had more insight as to what was happening across the service than staff and work was being done to improve the use of technology and transmission of information in real time for staff.

A Member questioned the changes that had been made to the platforms at West Croydon by moving the Overground service from platform 4 to platform 1 and suggested that the changes were not needed as the previous system was effective. The new system was not beneficial to passengers and if the changes were due to operational need then ordinary passengers and people with disabilities were severely disadvantaged. Officers responded that platform 1 was being utilised in the way it was as they could not operate the agreed timetable if the service did not operate in the way it currently did. They agreed the feedback received was useful and would be discussed at greater length at head office.

It was further challenged that when the Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) was conducted, the evaluation should have shown that the proposed change was not effective as the impact of the issues at West Croydon station was severe and a lot of people with mobility issues were not using West Croydon Station due to problems with accessibility.

There were concerns raised on security of the mobility entrance at West Croydon as well as lack of visibility of staff after 10pm, it was important for all operators to ensure that support staff were available at all times. A suggestion was also made that operators look into electric charging points for wheelchairs at stations. Officers agreed that all points raised would be taken into consideration for further exploration.

The Chair thanked officers for their attendance and responses to questions.

Officers from Network Rail were in attendance to provide an update on the Brighton Mainline Programme.

Members were given a presentation which included the following points:

- The public was consulted on the development proposals of the Railway
- It was hoped that construction of the Croydon Area Remodelling Scheme (CARS) could commence, subject to funding from 2023. The CARS project was key to redevelopment proposals.
- There had been many challenges identified such as issues with punctuality on the BML.
- Looking ahead there would be infrastructure constraints and the underlying infrastructure would require reconfiguration. Additional infrastructure would be needed to enable improvement and the ability to run more trains.
- An operational analysis of London to the South Coast showed that Croydon was governing the bottleneck, was the most complex with the most extensive engineering challenges and works will impact on the passengers.
- A dedicated team is in place working with GTR and passing on information
- Recent Accessibility scheme at Selhurst station due to be completed.
- Longer term proposals include unblocking of the Croydon bottleneck at Selhurst triangle, Norwood Junction and East Croydon.
- Consultation feedback was positive with over 90% of responders agreed with the proposals, wanted the work to be carried out as quickly as possible with minimal disruption.
- This is a non-funded scheme beyond the design work and it was being made clear that funding was a key part to realising the next steps.

A guest congratulated the proposal and work carried out so far and asked if the Norwood Junction element of the proposals could go ahead separately to the whole scheme. Officers responded that due to the infrastructure challenges at other stations on the Norwood junction line it would be difficult for the works to go ahead separately.

It was asked what was being done to improve accessibility at Norbury station which has a separate entrance that had been closed for many years and if this work could be carried out if it was agreed to pool the funds from the passenger benefit fund. Officers from Network Rail and GTR agreed to take the points forward for further discussion.

A Member commended the positive presentation and information received and expressed that it was hoped that the proposals could be achieved given the challenges with funding.

Further information was requested on the 'turn back' idea and it was commented that if there was a turn back at Wallington Station, opportunities should be taken to improve accessibility at Waddon Station. Officers

responded that all works were subject to securing funding from a national prioritisation pot and what was needed was a government commitment on funding for all proposals to be realised.

It was noted that the main aspect of the BML upgrade was to improve connectivity and the work would be carried out at the expense of the local community. Assurance was sought that aspirations to reconnect Croydon with the suburbs was beneficial and would indeed provide better connections with inner London boroughs. Officers responded that extensive works was being carried out with TfL on connectivity on local versus regional journeys and planning was key to metropolisation. How and where was chosen to connect at present was due to constraints with infrastructure.

A Guest said that at the meeting of 20 June 2018, there were two things raised which was for the restoration of the one day tram pass which had now been restored but also that a Councillor raised that there should be a designated space at train stations in particular at Victoria station for people with disabilities in the event of disruptions to the service. Officers responded that this was still being looked into but were pleased to announce that there was now increased seating from 150 to 450 at Victoria and London bridge Stations.

The Chair thanked all officers and guest for their attendance and participation in the meeting.

Govia Thameslink Railway

Information request by the sub-committee

- A briefing on vacancy rates and recruitment for drivers as well as action plan for peak travel periods of the Summer holidays and Christmas.

In reaching its recommendations, the sub-committee came to the following **CONCLUSIONS:**

- I. It was encouraging that GTR was in attendance to answer questions and be held accountable for actions and to provide an update a year on from the introduction of the new timetable which through its unsuccessful delivery caused chaos to the network.
- II. On questioning it was evident that whilst there were still some issues prevalent in the regulation of the service. The service had stabilised and remaining issues were as a result of knock on effects from the initial introduction of the timetable changes.
- III. There was a need for better co-ordination of the service between GTR and Network Rail which would improve interchanges.
- IV. Whilst there had been notable improvements, there were still inefficiencies at some stations in the early mornings and reduced trains in the evenings and Saturdays in many. In Particular there was a big

- gap in the amount of trains between East Croydon at Selhurst where there has been three per hour but there was now only one per hour.
- V. It was evident that there was a need for improved integrated systems and advanced reporting of issues to be communicated to staff at all stations
 - VI. There was a distinct concern that West Croydon was not selected to be allocated some of the passenger benefit fund as this station bore the brunt of knock on effects of issues of the surrounding stations.
 - VII. The Public Performance Measure figures were disappointing and more work was needed to improve the figures.
 - VIII. It was important that advanced planning goes into managing the service during the summer Holiday and Christmas periods which were peak travel times across the country.
 - IX. When trains are switched to another platform, this causes problems for passengers in particular those with disabilities.
 - X. Improvements were needed in customer service, responsibility and ownership by staff.

The sub-committee **RESOLVED** to recommend to GTR that:

- I. Improvements had to be made on interchanges, in particular with the fast service at Norwood Junction which run very close to each other which causes a multitude of issues for passengers.
- II. Changes to be made in the culture of the network and staff with more consideration given to the needs of passengers with disabilities
- III. Nationalisation of appropriate customer service standards across services by staff on concourse and platforms.
- IV. Improvement of information at station in terms of staff availability as well as advance notice of changes to train platforms to enable all passengers as well as those with disabilities to make the necessary changes as safely as possible.
- V. The Operator to look into better use of data to ensure that information is relayed to their staff and passengers in real time
- VI. Feedback be provided on the criteria process for the allocation of the Passenger Benefit Fund and consideration be given to the pooling of the fund for Croydon.
- VII. The Strategic Planning team to look into the loss or reduction of trains at some stations in the evenings and weekends
- VIII. Commitment required for all stations to have available staff support at all times and not just during peak periods.
- IX. All staff to have undertaken wheel chair and ramp use training.
- X. Dedicated areas on platforms with people with disabilities.

Transport for London

In reaching its recommendations, the sub-committee came to the following **CONCLUSIONS**:

- I. Thanks to officers for their attendance and answers to questions
- II. It was made clear by the guest in attendance at this meeting that there were distinct flaws in the 'Turn up and Go' policy and there was a possibility was it was not fulfilling its intentions.
- III. The changes made to platforms 1 and 4 at West Croydon Station did not work as efficiently as the previous system and has resulted in negative impact to passengers with people with disabilities severely disadvantaged.
- IV. It was concerning that there were reports of weekend closures of ticket offices which impacted on passenger safety as well as ability to obtain information as needed.
- V. Data sharing was underutilised and there was a need for exploration of better use of what was in place to enable improvements to services
- VI. Improvements were needed in customer service, responsibility and ownership by staff

The sub-committee **RESOLVED** to recommend that:

- I. The 'Turn up and Go' Policy was not working as it should and a formal response was required on the effectiveness of this policy. Evidence was needed on customer satisfaction of this policy.
- II. Specific remedial or permanent action on reduction of impact of issues with the changes made to platforms 1 and 4 for disabled passengers to be provided.
- III. Consideration be given to the implementation of electric charging points at stations for wheelchair users.
- IV. Commitment required for all stations to have available staff support at all times and not just during peak periods.
- V. All staff to have undertaken wheel chair and ramp use training
- VI. Rationalisation of appropriate customer service standards across services by staff on the concourse and platforms
- VII. The EQIA and TFL's own assessment document be provided to the sub-committee

Network Rail

In reaching its recommendations, the sub-committee came to the following **CONCLUSIONS**:

- I. Thanks to officers for their attendance and answers to questions.
- II. Members were encouraged and positive about the work to be carried out Norwood Junction.
- III. It would be beneficial for a feasibility assessment to be carried out at Norbury Station to improve access arrangements.
- IV. There was concerns about securing funding for the project to be realised and members were not convinced that following consultation

that the community realised that funding was not yet secured for the work to be carried out.

- V. It was important that connections to suburbs be improved.
- VI. It was important for the Council, Councillors and community of Croydon to lobby government for funding of this project.

The Sub-Committee **RESOLVED** to recommend that:

- I. Timescale to be provided in regards to demolition of the Royal Mail building
- II. It was important that expectations be managed and for it to be made clear to the community that funding was not yet available for the proposed works to be carried out as yet.
- III. An assessment of access arrangements at Norbury Station be undertaken
- IV. To explore the metrolisation, or suburban connection which was needed to provide greater links for Croydon with its neighbouring boroughs.
- V. Consideration be given to the creation of a station team at London Bridge, similar to one that exists at Victoria station to ensure clear visibility of passenger assistance
- VI. Dedicated areas on platforms for people with disabilities.

27/19 Exclusion of the Press and Public

This was not required.

The meeting ended at 10.17 pm

Signed:

Date:

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