



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Cllr Sean Fitzsimons
Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee
London Borough of Croydon
Town Hall
Katharine Street
Croydon
CR0 1NX

Our Ref: SJ6598

26 June 2018

Dear Cllr Fitzsimons,

Thank you for the invitation to the sub-committee, I am afraid I will be in Parliament this evening. With that in mind, I have documented my most recent action against Govia Thameslink.

After the momentous failure of the timetable change I led and organised a letter from over 40 MPs, from across all four political parties in the South East including several Conservatives to the Transport Secretary. In terms of Croydon MPs, Steve Reed also signed the letter.

The significant and ongoing problems on the Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern rail networks over the initial two weeks period and then beyond have affected hundreds of thousands of commuters across many constituencies.

The abject failure of Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) to deliver anything remotely close to a decent service even resulted in 455 GTR services cancelled or delayed in just one day.

Many MPs including myself were contacted by constituents who were late for work, missed medical appointments or failed to meet their children due to train cancellations. This anger was worsened by poor communication between GTR and passengers regarding delays, with reports that GTR had known of cancellations hours before informing customers.

There were widespread reports of overcrowding on platforms and on trains, as well as significant issues faced by disabled passengers needing to travel.

We then heard from the Secretary of State and were offered a meeting on Monday, 4th June. This meeting was then cancelled. I have still to meet with the Secretary of State.

In addition to the Secretary of State being unable to timetable a meeting his own diary, I contacted GTR after the introduction of the new timetable to discuss my constituents concerns in Croydon and to try and gather some information about what was going on at East Croydon.

I was unable to speak with the Director of Passenger Services for Southern as they were on annual leave, and the Director for Thameslink was on sick leave. The operational team were unable to speak to me as they were trying to work out what to do. I was told I wouldn't be able to speak to someone for over a week.

The Department for Transport have negotiated a settlement for Govia Thameslink to buy out its liability in respect of the performance sums in the contract years September 2016 to September 2017 and September 2017 to September 2018. The settlements for these two latter years were £5million each year, totalling £10million.

I find it extraordinary that this is allowed, and would suggest it might explain the apparent lack of incentives to resolve these problems.

Since becoming the MP for Croydon Central a year ago, I have been contacted by over 50 constituents with serious concerns about the service GTR are providing to the people of Croydon. I welcome the sub-committee's investigation into the impact this is having on our town, our jobs and our residents.

I have set out below my questions to Govia Thameslink:

What is GTR doing to tackle the timetable failings as a priority?

How was the situation was allowed to get to his point?

What will the compensation scheme be?

Is there any specific information on how this is affecting town centres like Croydon who rely on GTR for passenger access?

Can we be given local information in a regular and timely way?

Sadly they won't be able to answer these questions as they won't be attending this evening's sub-committee but I hope you will agree with me GTR must answer these questions and resolve this immediately.

Best wishes,

Sarah Jones MP
Chair, APPG on Knife Crime
Member of Parliament for Croydon Central