

Scrutiny Streets, Environment & Homes Sub- Committee Agenda



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

Reserve Members: Karen Jewitt, Michael Neal, Andrew Pelling, Joy Prince,
Callton Young, Jan Buttinger and Oni Oviri

A meeting of the **Scrutiny Streets, Environment & Homes Sub-Committee** which you are hereby summoned to attend, will be held on **Tuesday, 9 July 2019** at **6.30 pm** in **Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX**

Jacqueline Harris Baker
Council Solicitor & Monitoring Officer
London Borough of Croydon
Bernard Weatherill House
8 Mint Walk, Croydon CR0 1EA

Stephanie Davis
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www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings
Monday, 1 July 2019

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting.
If you require any assistance, please contact the person detailed above, on the righthand side.

N.B This meeting will be paperless. The agenda can be accessed online at www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings

AGENDA – PART A

1. Apologies for Absence

To receive any apologies for absence from any members of the Committee.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (Pages 5 - 6)

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2019 as an accurate record.

3. Disclosure of Interests

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct and the statutory provisions of the Localism Act, Members and co-opted Members of the Council are reminded that it is a requirement to register disclosable pecuniary interests (DPIs) and gifts and hospitality to the value of which exceeds £50 or multiple gifts and/or instances of hospitality with a cumulative value of £50 or more when received from a single donor within a rolling twelve month period. In addition, Members and co-opted Members are reminded that unless their disclosable pecuniary interest is registered on the register of interests or is the subject of a pending notification to the Monitoring Officer, they are required to disclose those disclosable pecuniary interests at the meeting. This should be done by completing the Disclosure of Interest form and handing it to the Democratic Services representative at the start of the meeting. The Chair will then invite Members to make their disclosure orally at the commencement of Agenda item 3. Completed disclosure forms will be provided to the Monitoring Officer for inclusion on the Register of Members' Interests.

4. Urgent Business (if any)

To receive notice of any business not on the agenda which in the opinion of the Chair, by reason of special circumstances, be considered as a matter of urgency.

5. Update from Rail Service Providers (Pages 7 - 20)

To receive an update from relevant representatives and engage in discussion on key aspects of their operations.

a) Govia Thameslink Railway

- Update on performance indicators
- Response to recommendations from the meeting on 26 June 2018
- Latest timetable
- Passenger Benefit Fund

b) Transport for London

- Update on performance including timetable
- Accessibility

c) Network Rail

- Brighton Mainline Upgrade
- Croydon area remodelling scheme
- Stakeholder Engagement

6. Exclusion of the Press and Public

The following motion is to be moved and seconded where it is proposed to exclude the press and public from the remainder of a meeting:

“That, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within those paragraphs indicated in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.”

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Scrutiny Streets, Environment & Homes Sub-Committee

Meeting held on Tuesday, 19 March 2019 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Sean Fitzsimons (Chair);
Councillor Jan Buttinger (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Robert Canning, Richard Chatterjee, Luke Clancy, Felicity Flynn
and Callton Young

Also Present: Councillor Allison Butler, Cabinet Member for Homes and Gateway Services
Shayne Coulter, Head of Public Protection
Martin Davies, Senior Environmental Health Office

Apologies: None

PART A

18/19 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

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

Minute 14/18 Trams Update: The Chair clarified that there had been some miscommunication and the Tram operator was not invited to the meeting on 23 March 2018.

19/19 Disclosure of Interests

There were none.

20/19 Urgent Business (if any)

There were no items of urgent business.

21/19 Private Rented Housing in Croydon

The Head of Public Protection presented the report which outlined the impact of Private Rented Sector (PRS) on tenants as well as the wider community and the Council's response to problems and opportunities. The reports goes on to make a case that the Council's best option in managing the rise of PRS was for the renewal of the Selective Licensing Scheme.

The following further information was provided to Members:

- There were more people living in the private rented sector than in any other type of dwelling.

- There was an emerging national picture of rising levels of deprivation and need due to rising rents in PRS.
- The rise in PRS was unprecedented and presented challenges such as a semantic link between poor housing and poor health.
- There was a stark difference between market rent and housing benefit, resulting from a four year freeze on housing benefit and a cap which affected people on lower income.
- People on lower income were most disadvantaged and had more difficulties securing tenancies due to inability to pay the high rent of PRS.
- Some of the issues associated with PRS included insecurity of tenures, risk of homelessness and quality of properties.
- Selective Licensing scheme enables the opportunity to monitor role of landlord, impact on tenants and impact on Council services.

In response to a Member query on the factors behind the rise in rented properties, officers responded that there were many factors including more developers building to rent due to demand. A housing crisis in inner London had resulted in an influx of people moving to outer boroughs.

It was noted that forced evictions took place in some circumstances and questions were raised on what protection was in place for tenants. Officers responded that it was important where a Section 21 notice had been served for tenants to contact the Council to check its validity. If the notice was invalid it would be admissible in court and the Council would be able to mediate between the landlord and tenant.

A Member asked how much of a problem was experienced with rogue landlords in the borough and what scope there was to monitor activities. Officers said that there was only a small number. There were many good landlords who were dutiful and the licensing scheme had afforded the opportunity to work closely with them. Croydon was a borough with a housing shortage, a large reliance on PRS and it was important to improve relations.

In response to a question on the figures of licensed landlords and how many enforcement officers were working on the scheme. Officers confirmed that there was currently 34,000 licenced landlords with an estimate of over 38,000 landlords in the borough. The enforcement team had 25 staff working on the scheme, including administration staff.

A Member questioned why the Council initially applied for the Licensing scheme, challenges faced and advantages in renewal. The Cabinet Member for Homes and Gateway Services informed the Sub-Committee that issues had been presented for many years regarding the poor condition of properties. It had been identified that there were landlords that were not fulfilling their responsibilities towards tenants and this was a huge problem not only for the tenants but also for the Council. Since the introduction of the scheme in 2014, the Council had acquired the powers to deal with many issues that were not limited to dealing with repairs. Landlords were now aware that they had a legal obligation to enforce agreement conditions placed on

them, including managing tenant's behaviours from impacting on other residents and ensuring that properties were safe.

Members were further informed that since the introduction of the scheme attention had been drawn to safety and maintenance of properties. Many landlords had not been complying with regulations and were now being forced to comply due to checking processes. A large proportion of landlords were only carrying out actions after the Council's intervention which was an indication that intervention was required.

It was questioned what the difference was between informal and formal notices. Officers said that hazards and risks were calculated using a risk assessment method. When risks were identified, informal notices were served to allow the landlord to address the issues presented and informal action had to date been very effective. Statutory notices were served following noncompliance and charges were incurred for each hazard.

The Council's preferred to approach landlords on an informal basis but if there was a history or lack of response, consideration would be given to serving a statutory notice.

The Council's intention was to make a case to the secretary of state for a borough wide scheme at the time of renewal.

It was questioned why a case was being made for the scheme to be borough wide. Officers responded that when a property was found to be unlicensed, there were always many other issues uncovered such as overcrowding, families placed in accommodation unsuitable for their needs, high instances of hazards, poor living conditions in properties above shops, threats to public health and antisocial behaviour. A borough wide scheme would ensure inclusion for the whole borough and provide reassurance that enforcement action could be taken without the reliance of waiting for a complaint to be made.

A Member asked what the Councils approach was to reaching vulnerable tenants, officers said that homes were leafleted when the scheme initially came to force. Notices have since been placed in libraries, council offices as well as on Facebook and Twitter. Further exploration of publicity was being looking into.

A question was raised on the benefit of the scheme for landlords. Officers responded that the majority of landlords paid a discounted rate on introduction of the scheme. A new landlord would pay £350 for a five year licence and the scheme was about working with landlords not against them. They were provided with advice and support with many issues including antisocial behaviour, ensuring that documents they provided tenants were legal and compliant as well as providing updates on changes in the law. They were provided with access to a landlord forum, newsletters and information which enabled them to raise their profiles and be good landlords. The scheme was a

reminder that they were running a business and that every other business was inspected with the same principles applied.

It was further questioned what would happen if a landlord was found without a licence, officers responded that charges could be levied and they would have to pay the full fees irrespective of the fact that we were over 3 years into the scheme. There was a member of staff now in position investigating allegations of unlicensed properties.

A further question was asked on whether there was a database of intelligence that being built which could lead to intelligence led enforcement taking place. Officers agreed that some intelligence was filtering through and the ability to target landlords such as permitted development properties was improving. There were still properties that were unlicensed and it was more difficult to target those groups with the service still a reactive one at present.

A Member commented that there had been information in the media about issues experienced in some boroughs with landlords not informing the Tax Office of their rental properties as a source of income and asked if this was an issue in Croydon. Officers responded that they provided information to HMRC when asked as this was a legal requirement, It was disappointing that this was not reciprocated as HMRC will not share information with the Local Authority.

Members' raised questions on the budget and financing of the scheme. Officers responded that there was approximately £3mil in income and expenditure each year of the scheme. There was no profit to be made and all income raised was used solely on the scheme. The size of the team had remained the same since the scheme came into force and staffing levels were fixed. Members' commented that it would appear that corporate overheads were increasing and a detailed explanation would be beneficial.

It was questioned what the process for renewal would be. Officers advised that a paper was to be presented to Cabinet for agreement to commence the process. An application would be made to the secretary of state and then a consultation would take place towards the end of the latter part of the year.

Members expressed the importance of Councillors and the community involvement in the consultation as well as Scrutiny to ensure the consultation process would be robust. The Chair agreed that work would be undertaken with officers on how this matter could be taken forward.

The Cabinet Member for Homes and Gateway Service and Officers were thanked for their responses to questions.

Information request by the Sub-Committee

- An explanation of corporate overheads in relation to the Selective Licensing scheme.

The Sub-Committee came to the following **Conclusions**:

1. The report presented with was detailed and informative
2. It would be beneficial to look in depth at the link between health and housing
3. Croydon routinely provide information to HMRC as required by law and the LA should also be provided information upon request in return
4. The Chair to work with officers to develop this topic further
5. In order to make a fair judgement on the scheme, it was important to capture the voice of landlords and tenants.
6. It was important that a case be made for a borough wide scheme.
7. It was acknowledged that many landlords were carrying out their duties under tenancy agreement and only a small proportion were non-compliant.

22/19 Exclusion of the Press and Public

This was not required.

The meeting ended at 8.47 pm

Signed:

Date:

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Department
for Transport

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From the Minister of State
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Our Ref: MC/237518

- 4 OCT 2018

Dear Councillor Fitzsimons

Thank you for your letter of 4 July, about the introduction of the May 2018 timetable by Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) and its impact on services to and from Croydon stations and on passengers and the local economy.

I am grateful for you taking the time to share Croydon Council's views on the introduction of the May 2018 timetable and I fully appreciate that passengers travelling from Croydon stations expect a regular and reliable train service. I was particularly concerned to read of the impact the recent timetable disruption has had on disabled passengers.

Over the past weeks, passengers on GTR's Thameslink services have faced unsatisfactory levels of service, and I can only imagine the frustration that they have felt over the unacceptable service.

I would like to assure you that right now, the Department's overriding priority is to ensure GTR restores the reliability of service across the network. We are taking action to resolve the problems as quickly as possible, to ensure passengers are compensated appropriately, and to learn the lessons that will prevent this happening again in the future.

I note the Council's agreement that the timetable changes were needed, and I am frustrated that what should have been a beneficial development for passengers, with the introduction of new services, new routes and expanded capacity, has had such a poor start.

I also note the Council's disappointment over GTR's failure to attend the Council Sub-Committee when requested. The Department does expect GTR to manage its stakeholders fairly and effectively and I would like to assure you that Department officials have raised this issue directly with GTR.

This has been the most significant timetable recast in a generation – designing a robust, well-integrated timetable that works for the majority of passengers is highly complex and timetabling practitioners have worked hard for more than a year on the challenges involved.

While we were aware that there may be some disruption in the early days of any new timetable change of this size, the scale of the problem has far outstripped any expectation. The Department is determined that this is not repeated in the future.

Network Rail was far too late in finalising planned timetable changes and this must not happen again. GTR was not sufficiently prepared to manage a timetable change of this scale either. The rail industry has collectively failed to deliver for the passengers it serves.

The process of introducing the new timetable was overseen for the last two years by an Industry Readiness Board, made up of Network Rail, independent rail regulator the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) and the train operating companies and an Independent Assurance Panel. Both of these groups have told the Secretary of State that they had been given no information to suggest that the new timetable should not be implemented as planned – albeit with some likely early issues as the timetable bedded down. Indeed as few as three weeks before the timetable was to be implemented GTR itself assured the Secretary of State personally that it was ready to implement the changes.

Although there is still a considerable way to go, passengers have begun to see reliable and stable services since the introduction of the interim timetable on 15 July. Performance has significantly improved as compared to weeks following 20 May, however the Department is monitoring closely for sustained improvements by GTR and will be holding it to account. We will not hesitate to take action if the operator is found to have been at fault.

An inquiry by the ORR into the May timetable implementation is now underway. The inquiry will consider why the industry as a whole failed to produce and implement an effective timetable. Its findings will be shared as early as possible with me and the rail industry, so that lessons can be learnt in advance of future major timetable change.

Further, in regard to your point on GTR continuing as the operator and cooperating with scrutiny reviews, you may be interested to know that a comprehensive investigation is underway into GTR's compliance with its contractual obligations in relation to the introduction of the May 2018 timetable. If it is found that GTR is in breach of its contract we will take appropriate action.

I am pleased that a special compensation scheme for Thameslink passengers has been announced. The scheme has been designed to refund season ticket holders up to one month where they have suffered severe disruption and up to one week where disruption to services has been moderate.

Compensation will cover the period 20 May 2018 to 28 July 2018. The scheme is opening in three phases and Phase 1 is now open, with GTR contacting registered qualifying passengers, before a web portal is opened for Phase 2 by the end of September. Phase 3, for eligible non-season ticket holders, will begin at a later date, to be announced by GTR.

Full details of eligible stations and more information can be found on the Thameslink¹ website. GTR has been asked to clearly communicate with passengers how it can make their claim and ensure the process is straightforward. Passengers are also encouraged to apply to GTR for Delay Repay compensation for affected journeys.

We acknowledge that this is small comfort to passengers when things are not working as they should, but once we are through this difficult and challenging period, I am confident that we will have a better railway, fit for the future. In the meantime, please be assured that I will continue to do everything possible to ensure passengers get the service they deserve.

Thank you again for your letter and for raising the Council's concerns. I hope this reply is helpful.

*Yours,
Jo*

JO JOHNSON

¹ <https://www.thameslinkrailway.com/industrycomp/>



London Borough of Croydon Update to Streets, Environment & Homes Scrutiny Sub Committee

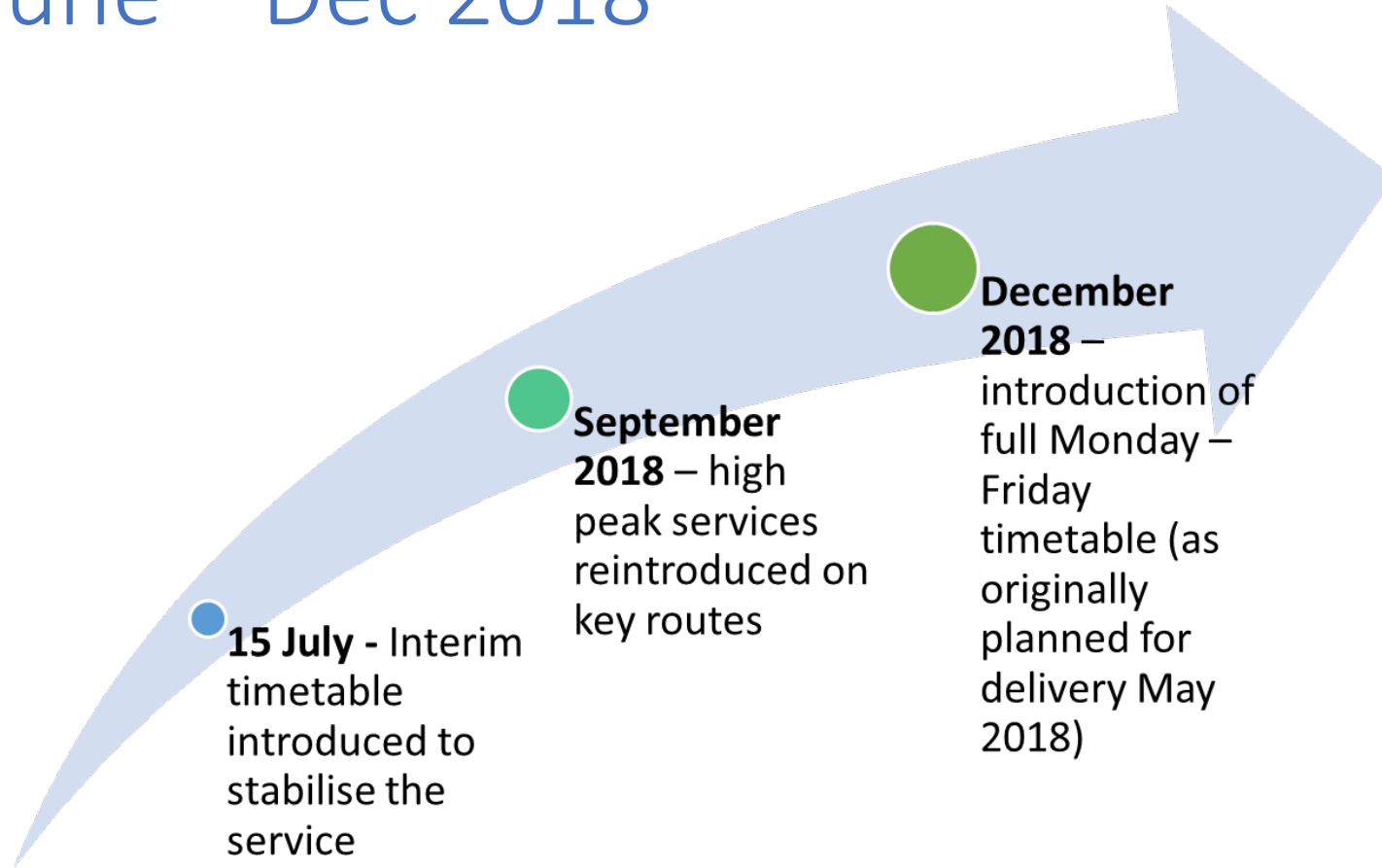
9 July 2019

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GTR update & actions to date



June – Dec 2018



- National Programme Management office set up to oversee all future timetable changes
- Priority of maintaining train service reliability

Passenger Compensation

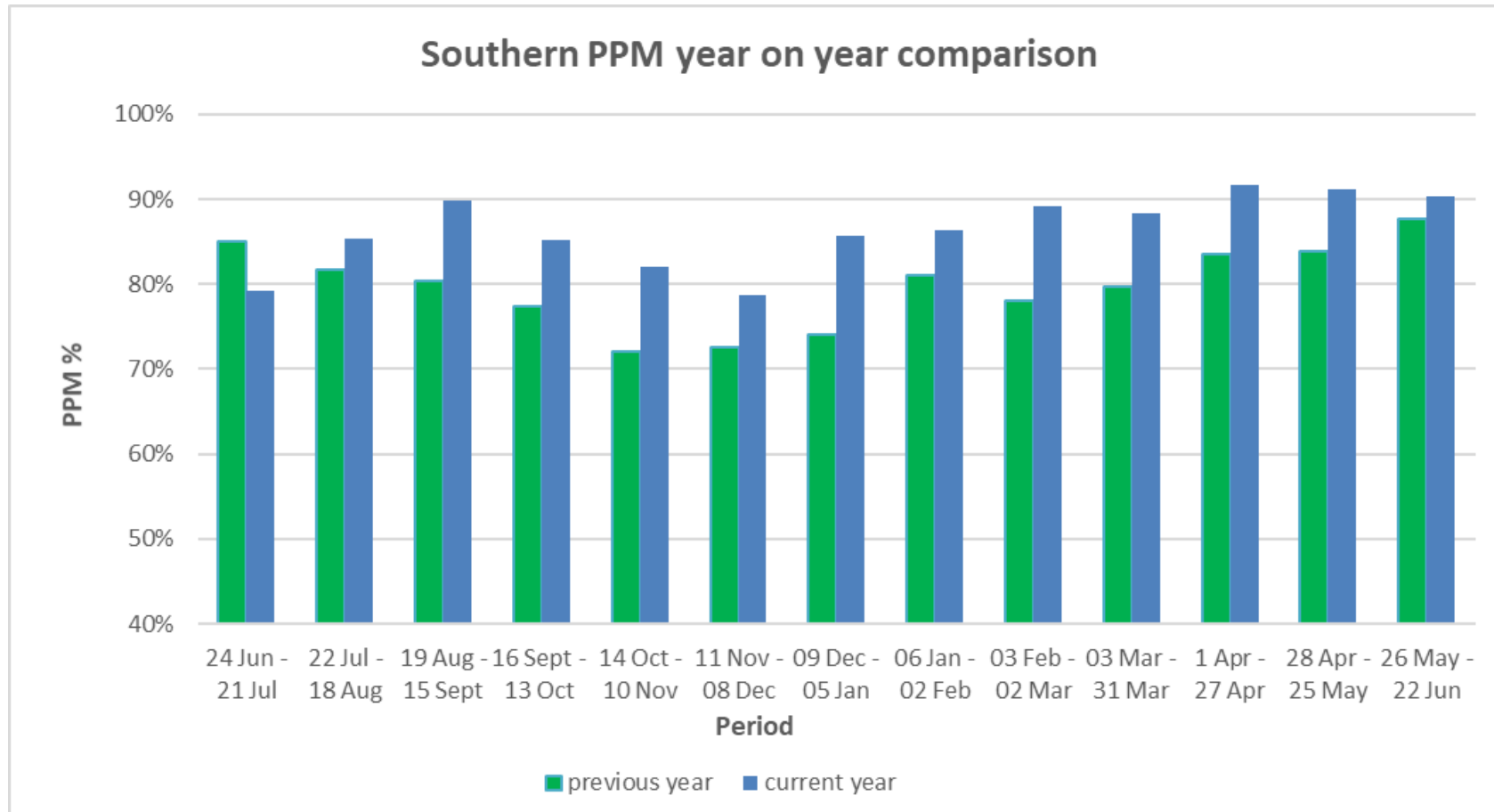
News ▶ Croydon News ▶ Transport

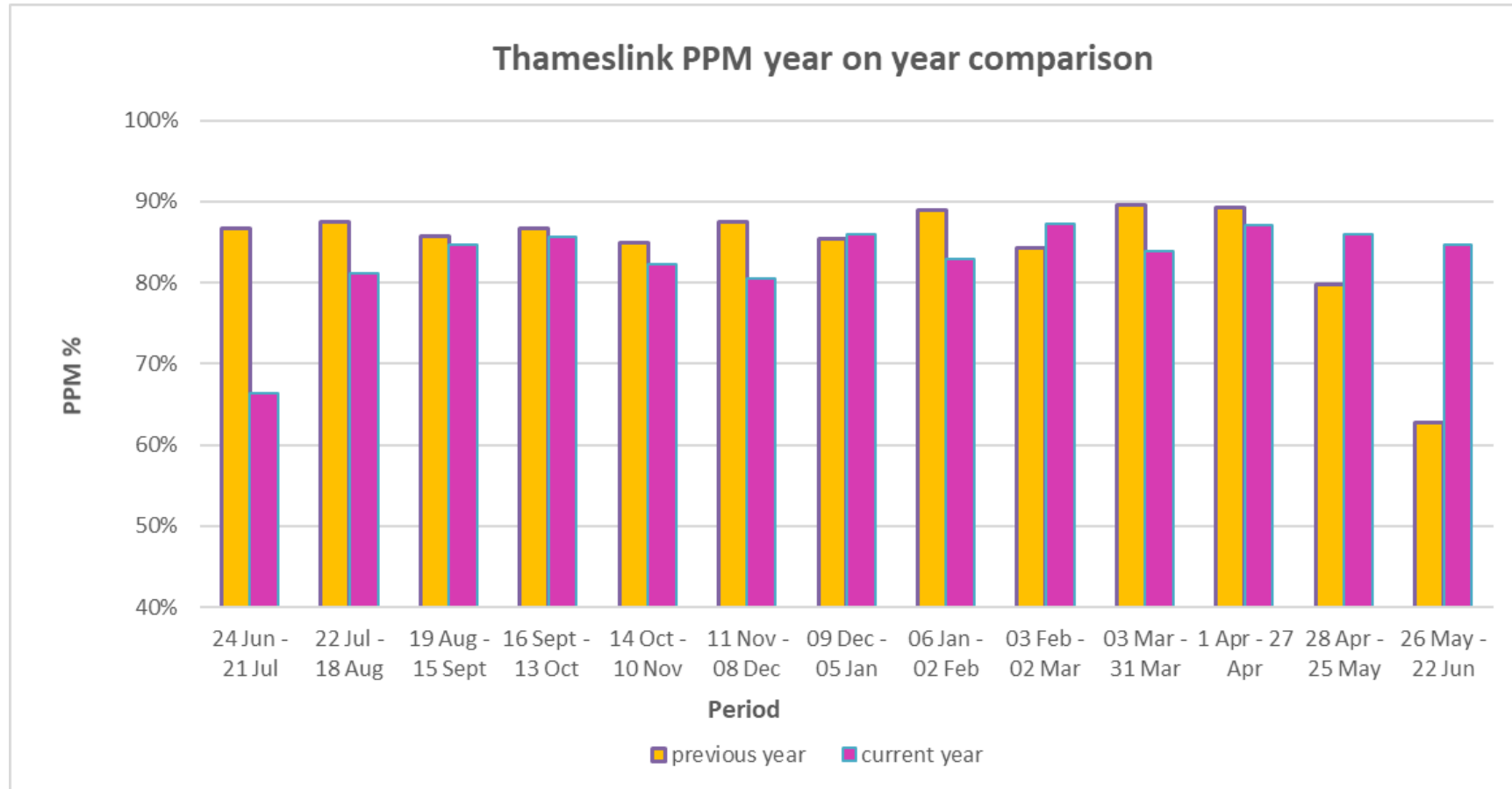
Croydon commuters offered compensation following timetable chaos

Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) has begun to contact qualifying season ticket holders to notify them of how much money they are entitled to

- Nick Brown, GTR Chief Operating Officer, said: *“We apologise to passengers for the poor level of services since the introduction of the May timetable. In recognition of this we will be refunding fares according to the level of disruption on Great Northern and Thameslink routes. This compensation is offered in addition to our usual Delay Repay compensation for journey delays of 15 minutes or more and enhanced compensation for season tickets holders.”*
- Special Industry Compensation instigated in three phases for season ticket holders and non season ticket holders travelling three days a week or more
- Passengers were paid over £17m in additional industry compensation
- Delay Repay (from 15 minutes) could also be applied







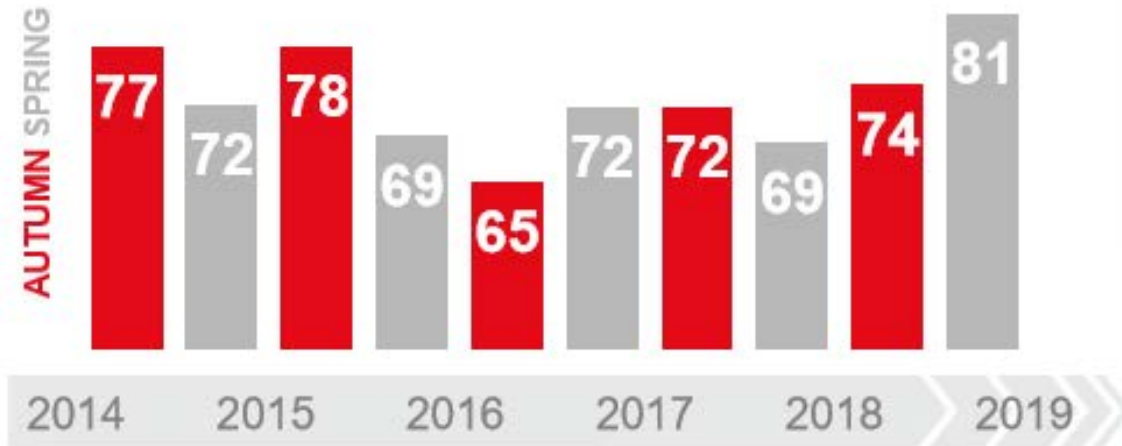
NATIONAL RAIL PASSENGER SURVEY SATISFACTION AT A GLANCE

Southern SPRING 2019

This survey covers 1,616 Southern passengers



OVERALL JOURNEY SATISFACTION



81%

Overall satisfaction in
Spring 2019

Overall Satisfaction
= Very Satisfied +
Fairly Satisfied

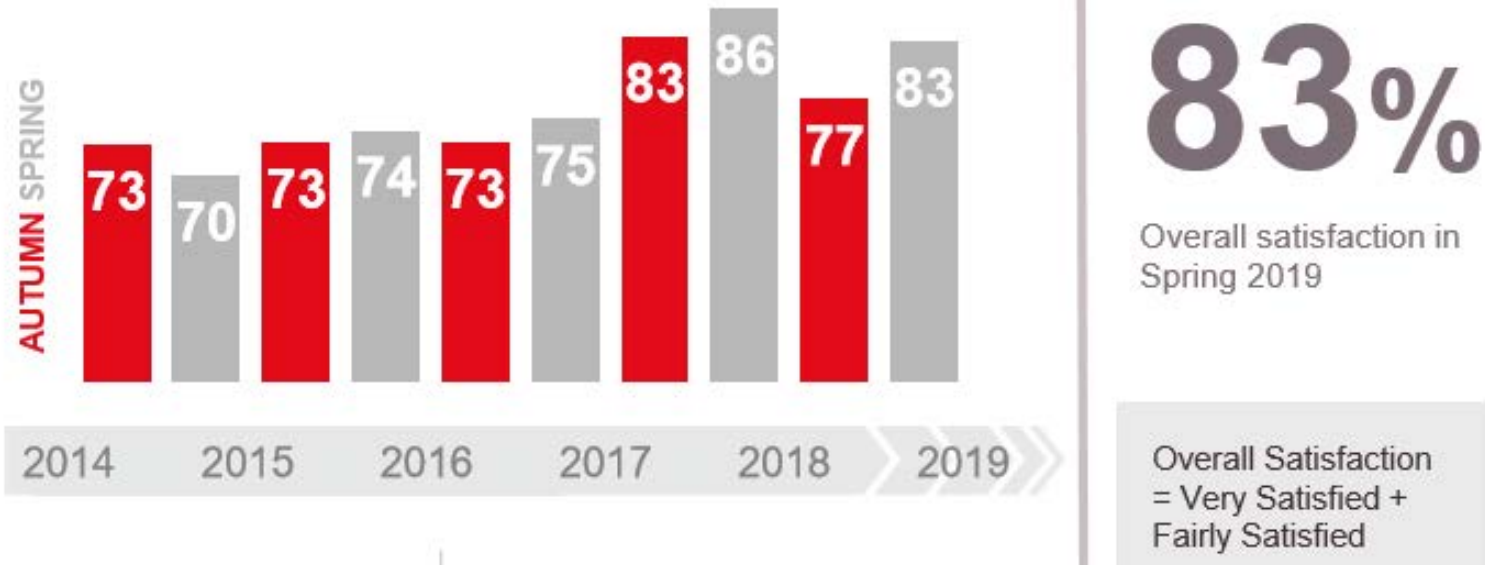
NATIONAL RAIL PASSENGER SURVEY SATISFACTION AT A GLANCE

Thameslink SPRING 2019

This survey covers 1,290 Thameslink passengers



OVERALL JOURNEY SATISFACTION



Passenger Benefit Fund

Following disruption faced by passengers in summer 2018:

- The Secretary of State for Transport announced that GTR would contribute £15m towards a passenger benefit fund
- The fund will be used to provide tangible benefits for passengers to improve their journeys
- We are conducting a three month engagement programme with passenger groups, councils and stakeholders to decide on the benefits
- Stakeholders are invited to submit ideas through an online submission form - www.passengerbenefitfund.co.uk/
- A list of prioritised schemes will be reviewed in August when the engagement process has closed



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