

SEVENOAKS RAIL TRAVELLERS' ASSOCIATION

Minutes of Annual Meeting –October 13th 2005

Present: Michael Holden, M.D. of South Eastern Trains (SET); Colm Mather, Area Manager; Sarah Brown, Station Manager and two other members of SET staff, 3 representatives from CPO, Michael Fallon, M.P.; 9 of the SRTA Committee and 14 members of the public.

1. Annual Meeting

- The Minutes of the 2004 Annual Meeting (28th October) were approved.
- The existing Committee (Drs Houghton, Canet and Johnson, Cllrs Clayton, Parry and Gulliver and Messrs Benford, Dolby-Gray, Everett, Miles and Ryan) was re-elected.
- The Accounts for 2004 were approved.

2. Train Services.

The Chairman, Roger Johnson, reviewed the main issues that had arisen during the year 2004/05 and then introduced Michael Holden (MH). The main points of his talk were:

- The Department for Transport is likely to announce its choice of franchisee during November. The franchise agreement is likely to be signed before the end of 2005 with take-over by end-March 2006.
- The last VEP (Mark 1) units were run on the 1804 from Cannon Street on Friday October 7th.
- Main line timekeeping broke through the 5% discount level in December 2004 and continues to improve. There are fewer short formations and less than 1% of main line services are cancelled. Part of these gains is due to the improvements carried out at Ramsgate depot and starting some services at Broadstairs.
- The new 376 (suburban) stock is working well, but the reliability of 'Wealden' Networkers is suffering from too infrequent visits to their 'home' depot at Gillingham. (The home base for the 2-car (466) units remains Slade Green.)
- Reduction of ticket office hours was likely to be put into effect with little change from the original proposals (and no small simplified TVM's – Ticket Vending Machines). Railway enforcement officers would be on trains and stations.

The questions which followed covered subjects such as:

- One member complained that he could not now find a first class seat on fast services to Cannon Street. MH acknowledged that we had both written to him and spoken to him earlier in the evening about this. He had not received any complaints, but the last stock changes had been made only on October 10th. SET was counting the number of passengers in first class accommodation and would review action in the light of this count. SRTA had already discussed with him the changes that they thought necessary.
- SET needs help from Transport *for* London to introduce the Oyster card system.
- In contrast to main line services, Metro services are still below the level which triggers the 5% discount.
- Otford station is dangerous at night because it is poorly lit and the CCTV system cannot be monitored on line.
- The Cold Store site at Dunton Green would have about 500 houses, with occupation starting in 2008-09. Improvement in the train service was essential to prevent the area around Sevenoaks station becoming more snarled up in peak times.
- It was suggested that the price of parking at Sevenoaks station car parks was too high as empty spaces remained unoccupied.
- At least two commuters, who were not householders, had incurred problems when renewing their season tickets by telephone.
- One member asked for one of the non-stop services that follow the 8.29 to Cannon Street to stop at Sevenoaks when that service had been cancelled. (MH asked the Secretary to send details to him of the last two issues.)

3. Station Matters

- Station cleaning will be improved generally and maintenance of Sevenoaks station will soon commence.
- The state of the down-side shelter at Chelsfield would shortly be improved.
- Barrier manning on the Kippington side of Sevenoaks station would shortly be improved when staff training had been completed.

- More bicycle racks would be provided at which point chaining bicycles to railings would be stopped. At present, the rough surface of the path in the Kippington-side car park needs to be re-surfaced to encourage pedestrians to use it.
- The length of queues at Sevenoaks for the TVM's makes a case for more such machines to be installed. TVM's offer peak fares at all times if an Underground zone is selected, even after Cheap Day tickets can be sold. Purchasers should be offered the cheapest fare.
- The footpath level crossing south of Otford station needs to be renewed.
- Buses taking commuters to Sevenoaks station need more commitment from KCC.