

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 25 September 2008

Portfolio Holder: Councillor C Whitbread

Item: 14

1. SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE - NORTH WEALD AIRFIELD - FUTURE OPTIONS

Recommending:

...

That a suitable supplementary DDF estimate be approved to cover the costs of engaging a consultant to undertake further strategic feasibility work and develop a scoping report and brief examining the intensification of aviation use with limited business or other uses including leisure as required to make it economically viable.

(NOTE: An oral report will be made on the amount required)

1. We have discussed recommendations of the North Weald Airfield Strategy Cabinet Committee following their consideration of a report on future options for the Airfield.
2. In 1999 the Council, after a competitive process, commissioned property and valuation consultants, Drivers Jonas, to undertake a review of potential options for the future of the Airfield. At that time the Airfield was subject to development pressures, by the then Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR). Also, a number of aviation related studies were being undertaken by DETR - Airports Policy Division, in relation to the potential growth of business aviation in the South-East.
3. After a period of research and review, which included transport and infrastructure studies, Drivers Jonas identified six potential options. These options were the subject of public consultation and as a result a further option emerged, largely promoted by existing Airfield tenants who considered that a business aviation option would be viable.
4. Following the consultation exercise, some low level operational issues were pursued, with respect to safeguarding the feasibility of extended operating hours and the collection of landing fees, but the Council decided not to proceed with any of the identified options. The reason for this decision was in recognition of the fact that the East of England Plan 2000-2021 was being developed at the time and that it would have been premature to pre-empt any potential outcome.
5. Now that the Regional Planning Guidance has been produced and does not compel the Council to develop alternative uses for the Airfield we agree there is scope for a longer-term view to be taken in relation to the future of the Airfield.
6. As a starting point, the Cabinet Committee has reviewed the options previously identified and has concluded that the analysis of the Drivers Jonas report would need

to be updated to reflect changes in the policy, planning and general economic context that currently prevails.

7. The Council does not currently have the expertise or capacity to undertake such a complex property review. It is proposed, therefore, that further specialist advice be commissioned to undertake feasibility work.
8. There is no current budgetary provision to engage a consultant for this purpose and accordingly we recommend as set out at the commencement of this report.