

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: North Weald Airfield and Asset Management Cabinet Committee **Date:** Tuesday, 22 March 2011

Place: Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 6.30 - 9.00 pm

Members Present: Councillors Mrs D Collins, Mrs M Sartin, D Stallan and Mrs L Wagland

Other Councillors: Councillors Mrs A Grigg, R Barrett, W Breare-Hall, Mrs P Smith and J M Whitehouse

Apologies: C Whitbread, B Rolfe and Mrs E Webster

Officers Present: D Macnab (Acting Chief Executive), J Gilbert (Director of Environment and Street Scene), S G Hill (Senior Democratic Services Officer), L MacNeill (Assistant Director (Operations, Administration & Finance)), T Carne (Public Relations and Marketing Officer), I White (Forward Planning Manager), B Moldon (Principal Accountant), D Goodey (General Manager North Weald Airfield), C Pasterfield (Principal Valuer/Surveyor) and P Sewell (Democratic Services Assistant)

Also in attendance: W Millington, N Kaberry and R Purvis (Halcrow)

32. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 8 November 2010 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(a) Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor J M Whitehouse declared a personal interest in agenda item 4, Asset Management Coordination Group minutes 24 January 2010 and 7 March 2011, by virtue of living in close proximity to the St John's Road development site. The Councillor had determined that his interest was not prejudicial and would remain in the meeting for the consideration of the report.

34. ASSET MANAGEMENT COORDINATION GROUP - 20 JANUARY 2011

The Cabinet Committee considered the notes of the Asset Management Coordination Group held on 20 January 2011. They considered the information regarding the sites owned by the District Council and noted the progress.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Asset Management Co-ordination Group held on 20 January 2011 be noted.

35. ASSET MANAGEMENT COORDINATION GROUP - 7 MARCH 2011

The Cabinet Committee considered the notes of the Asset Management Coordination Group held on 7 March 2011. They considered the information regarding the sites owned by the District Council and noted the progress.

Councillor Stallan enquired about the new sites identified in item 4, New Depot at North Weald, and asked for the word 'temporary' be used in future discussions. John Gilbert, Director of Environment and Street Scene, explained that alternative sites had been identified owing to some ecological problems currently being investigated. Mr Gilbert undertook to provide further details in private session. It was noted that any progress made regarding this site would be reported back to the Cabinet Committee in due course.

Councillor Mrs Grigg asked if further location details could be given regarding these sites, particularly the alternative site's proximity to the control tower. Mr Gilbert was unable to give such details as the site was currently only a potential option and yet to be formalised.

Councillor J M Whitehouse expressed his concern with regard to the progress of St John's Road/Epping Depot Site, considering the absence of the Economic Development Officer and unresolved highway issues. He was informed that talks were taking place with Harlow Council for short term help with respect to Economic Development issues. Mr Macnab advised that negotiations were currently ongoing regarding the highways issues as the previous studies validity had been questioned. Mr Macnab shared the Councillor's concerns about the protracted timescales and to this end, had requested a detailed report be given to Management Board. He assured Members that the information received would be circulated via the Council Bulletin, but could not envisage that the Council would be in a position to formally consult before the Local Council Elections in May.

In response to a question by Councillor Mrs Wagland, Mr Macnab confirmed that the District Council's Estate Management Officers were present at all meetings of the Working Group with County Officers and their advisors, in order to address valuation and estate issues alongside the development of the planning brief.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Asset Management Co-ordination Group held on 7 March 2011 be noted.

36. NORTH WEALD AIRFIELD - AVIATION INTENSIFICATION STUDY

In August 2010 Halcrow had been appointed to undertake an Aviation Intensification Study of North Weald Airfield in order to examine the potential for an intensification of flying activity. Three representatives from Halcrow attended the meeting and gave a presentation to the Cabinet Committee on their final report.

Since presenting the interim report at the meeting on 8 November 2010 (minute 30 refers), Halcrow had consulted with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) on Aerodrome Standards and Airspace Policy, and had undertaken discussions with various operators and fixed base operators (FBO). This had enabled the identification of 3 development options, as well as estimates of costs and revenues, business planning, and financial projections.

Currently, aviation operations at the airfield functioned at a loss to the Council of approximately £300K per annum. There were approximately 20,000+ aircraft movements recorded per year, which was mostly private, recreational, and heritage aircraft. The infrastructure and operations met CAA guidelines for unlicensed aerodromes, though perimeter security and pavement maintenance needed to be addressed.

Halcrow had identified three potential development options for the North Weald Airfield:

(1) Take no action

To continue current arrangements with no significant capital investment, risking pavement deterioration limiting aircraft operation and not reducing the current level of financial subsidy.

(2) Organic growth

The Airfield remaining unlicensed, but active pursuit of more tenants and traffic resulting in modest growth and marginal improvement in the level of financial subsidy.

(3) Active development

Licensing of the Aerodrome in order to target business aviation operators, requiring an investment in infrastructure. Different management options were proposed, either retaining EFDC as manager and operator, or leasing the field to an FBO thus sharing both risks and benefits, and with the potential to recover the current financial subsidy.

It was noted that the business aviation market had taken a recent downturn, but was now growing again. The forecasts for growth that Halcrow provided took this trend into account, and were therefore conservative estimates. It was also noted that active development scenarios would require considerable capital costs in order to provide a minimum 1400m of updated and satisfactory runway (the current runway stood at 1900m), pavement strengthening, and runway lighting.

The Chairman thanked the representatives from Halcrow for their presentation, and the meeting was then opened for Members' questions.

Councillor Mrs Sartin asked the representatives from Halcrow if any discussion had taken place regarding the effects of expanding the current airfield site on airspace given the Airfield's proximity to Stansted Airport. Mr Kaberry responded that this had been discussed with the CAA, and though they were not permitted to refuse an increase in aircraft activity, the CAA were not keen on encouraging further crowding of the already congested airspace.

Councillor Mrs Grigg enquired as to the possibility of an option between organic growth and active development, but was told that the distinction between licensed and unlicensed activity rendered this unfeasible. Additionally, as other alternative operating airfields already had Instrument Landing Systems, it was virtually a prerequisite to follow suit and be able to attract air passenger operators to North Weald.

Councillor J M Whitehouse questioned the noise impact of the estimated growth in aircraft movements. The Halcrow representatives acknowledged the noise increase and a need for longer operating hours as a consequence of additional movements. It

was noted that there was some scope for the Council to control flight paths, though this was constrained by air space requirements.

Councillor Mrs Smith asked the representatives from Halcrow to expand on a graph presenting estimated business aviation movements. Mr Millington explained that this graph showed the estimates for the entire South East region. The activity attracted by North Weald would be part of this.

After a further presentation made in private session, the Cabinet Committee discussed the options available at length. Outstanding questions regarding the Asset Management Coordination Group minutes were also answered.

Members discussed the potential investments the Council would have to make dependent upon varying levels of involvement with FBOs, though it was acknowledged that these were estimates, and further information would be required to understand these options fully.

After extensive discussion in both public and private session, the Cabinet Committee were of the view that the option of active development should be the subject of further investigation including market testing. It was also agreed that the public and North Weald users would be consulted after this exercise had been completed.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the North Weald Aviation Intensification Study Final Report be noted; and
- (2) That the following recommendations be made to Cabinet:
 - (a) that the option of active development be pursued;
 - (b) that market testing be undertaken with fixed base operators in order to provide more information on potential risks, investments and benefits.

37. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

It was noted that there was no other business for consideration by the Cabinet Committee.

CHAIRMAN