

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 27 September 2012

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Anne Grigg
(Asset Management and Economic Development)

SUPPLEMENTARY DDF ESTIMATE – NORTH WEALD AIRFIELD CONSULTANCY

Recommending:

That a supplementary District Development Fund estimate of £150,000 be approved to enable a further consultancy exercise to be undertaken in relation to the future potential development of North Weald Airfield.

1. In mid 2011, using funding from Improvement East, Ernst and Young were appointed to assess independently work previously undertaken in relation to the future of North Weald Airfield and to outline the further work required to determine the optimal use of the site.
2. The Ernst and Young appointment followed earlier reports undertaken for the Council on the future of the airfield by Drivers Jonas in 1998/99 and by Halcrow in 2010/11.
3. Halcrow was given a fairly restricted brief to review aviation intensification including any supporting infrastructure that might be required. It is interesting therefore that given the wider brief to Ernst and Young, both consultants have concluded further work is required if the Council wishes to place itself in a position of better understanding of the aviation development options and opportunities alongside non-aviation related options.
4. Ernst and Young have suggested two further distinct packages of work:

Package 1 (2 to 3 months)

- define the Council's commercial objectives
- define potential options for managing the site
- assess these options against the Council's stated commercial objectives on a qualitative basis
- establish an option shortlist based upon that qualitative assessment
- a detailed qualitative assessment of the short listed options

(Ernst and Young consider the second point above to be very important, in that at this stage all options, whether aviation based or not, are freely considered, to establish what type of development would generate best value)

Package 2 (12 months or more)

- implementation strategy for preferred option and prepare for market
- procurement process

5. We have been advised that these packages of work will need to be delivered through specialist consultants. Ernst and Young have suggested that the normal process would be the appointment of a lead consultant to act for the Council with the likelihood that specialist sub consultants would be required for particular parts of the commission.

6. This is a potentially lengthy procedure, and the above timescales do not allow for the time required to procure a lead consultant.

7. Overall costs are also uncertain, but based upon previous exercises, a consultancy exercise of this complexity is very likely to cost in the region of £150,000. However, members should consider this cost in the context of what the Council may be looking to achieve in unlocking the financial potential of its largest landholding.

8. The outcome of any such exercise will also play a material part in the Council's ongoing Local plan process, since the Airfield is predominately Green Belt. In order to ensure that the consultancy exercise dovetails with the Local plan process, package 1 above will need to be undertaken, reported and considered by the council by April next year to inform the Preferred Options paper due to be published in July/August 2013.

9. The Ernst and Young report has been considered in detail by the North Weald Airfield and Asset Management Cabinet Committee and the consultants' recommendations are supported by that Committee. We agree with the conclusions of the Cabinet Committee and in order to proceed we are seeking a supplementary District Development Fund estimate of £150,000.

10. If the Council approves a supplementary estimate it is our intention to use the Government Procurement Service Framework Agreement, or similar suitable framework, for the appointment of consultants in the light of the restricted time available to complete the exercise in line with the Local Plan process. The use of such a framework is in accordance with the council's Contract Standing Orders.

11. We recommend as set out at the commencement of this report.