

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: North Weald Airfield and Asset Management Cabinet Committee **Date:** Monday, 29 October 2012

Place: Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 7.00 - 8.15 pm

Members Present: Councillors Mrs A Grigg (Chairman), R Bassett, Mrs E Webster and C Whitbread

Other Councillors: Councillors K Avey, D Stallan, Mrs L Wagland and G Waller

Apologies: Ms S Stavrou

Officers Present: G Chipp (Chief Executive), J Gilbert (Director of Environment and Street Scene), J Nolan (Assistant Director (Environment & Neighbourhoods)) and G J Woodhall (Democratic Services Officer)

Also in attendance: -

19. MINUTES

Resolved:

(1) That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2012 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct.

21. STRATEGIC REVIEW OF NORTH WEALD AIRFIELD

The Director of Environment & Street Scene presented a report concerning the proposed Strategic Review of North Weald Airfield.

The Director reported that following consideration of the Ernst and Young review of the Halcrow Report by the Cabinet at its meeting in September, a brief had been drawn up for appropriate consultants to bid for undertaking the Strategic Review of North Weald Airfield. Some changes had been made to the consultation requirements in view of the receipt of Counsel's advice about ensuring there was no conflict between the consultation undertaken as part of this review and that which was required as part of the preparation of the Local Plan, in effect ensuring that this strategic overview formed part of the Local Plan preparation process. The Director requested the Cabinet Committee to consider an additional recommendation to request the Chairman of the Council to waive the requirement for the decision to be subject to call-in, due to the need to integrate the review of the Airfield with the on-going Local Plan preparation process.

The Director stated that, following the receipt of Counsel's opinion, the Consultants would be expected to consult with all relevant key stakeholders as part of their

consideration of options, before a District-wide public consultation on the future of the Airfield would be undertaken as part of the Local Plan 'Preferred Options' consultation process in the summer of 2013. The tender documents would be issued on 9 November with a deadline of 12 December for their return. The returns would be assessed by 11 January 2013, with the interview panel to meet the shortlisted candidates at the Airfield on 22 January and a report to the Cabinet to determine the successful candidate in February 2013. The successful consultant would be expected to start by the end of February and report back to the Cabinet in April 2013. It was acknowledged that the schedule was very demanding but the Council was under an obligation to conduct the review in conjunction with the Local Plan being undertaken across the whole of the District.

The Director went through the Brief for the benefit of the Cabinet Committee, and highlighted that the Council's objectives for the Airfield needed to be in place by February 2013, a report would be considered by the Cabinet in December 2012, and that the 80/20 approach for the evaluation criteria had been set by the use of the Government Multi-Discipline Consultancy Framework Agreement RM353.

The Cabinet Committee was concerned only 30% of the weighting was being given to the presentation aspect, where the bidders would show that they had the ability to fulfil the contract. The Director stated that the draft document showed the suggested 50/30 weighting between Relevant Experience & Proposed Approach, and the Presentation, for the Cabinet Committee to be satisfied that the Consultant could perform the task. However, this could be amended if the Cabinet Committee considered it necessary. The Cabinet Committee agreed that the weighting be amended to 40/40 for these two criteria, to ensure that the Council got the best team and not the best bid writers.

In response to a number of concerns raised by the Planning Portfolio Holder, the Director of Environment & Street Scene acknowledged that the proposed timetable was a cause of anxiety, but it was the responsibility of the bidders to inform the Council if the time available was simply not long enough. The runway survey was expected to be performed shortly, and it was acknowledged that the runway needed to be fit for purpose both now and in the future. It was accepted that the views of local residents on the future of the Airfield would be important, but the suggested consultation was based upon the opinion of Counsel and should not yet be a wider public consultation. However, any comments received by or from the Parish Council would be taken into consideration. It was felt that there was no need to worry about the possible impact of the review on Stansted airport at the current time; it was unlikely that a new regional hub at the Airfield would be a recommended outcome of the review. The Planning Portfolio Holder stressed that it was the responsibility of the Consultants to determine the best option for the future of the Airfield for the Council to consider, as the Council was not an expert in the aviation field.

The Cabinet Committee was reminded that the Cabinet had had concerns about running different consultations in parallel and hence Counsel's opinion had been sought. This opinion stated clearly that any wider public consultation had to be part of the Local Plan process and not a separate event. The Director of Environment & Street Scene shared the concerns expressed about the lack of business objectives agreed by the Council for the Airfield, but the current task was to agree the brief to be issued to the prospective consultants, and the business objectives would be agreed by the start of the review.

A local member for Chigwell Village highlighted that the lack of clearly defined business objectives for the Airfield could have an impact later on in the bidding process, as some of the bidders might claim that they were disadvantaged. The

Director acknowledged that it could be made clearer in the document that the business objectives would be set by the Council in December, due to the short timescale involved. A broad assessment of the different categories for the business objectives had not been given in the brief so as not to reduce the flexibility of the bids. Section 7 of the document, The Commission, detailed the different assessments that would be undertaken of each submission, and the Chairman emphasised that there could be both financial and community based benefits to the development of the Airfield. The Chief Executive proposed that a broad assessment of the different categories for the Council's business objectives for the Airfield could be added to the Brief, with delegated authority given to Officers to revise the Brief and the Chairman of the Cabinet Committee to agree the final draft. The Cabinet Committee could then agree the core fundamentals of the Brief at this meeting.

When queried whether the Council had considered linking the Airfield with other airports, The Director responded that the Halcrow report had examined intensification of aviation use at the Airfield, and the Cabinet had agreed this as a possible option, although the intention had never been for the Airfield to become a second Stansted or Southend airport. The current exercise was designed to examine as many options as possible and give the consultants the widest possible Brief.

A local ward member for North Weald Bassett suggested a number of revisions to the text of the document, including: in Section 1, that the Airfield was also purchased for leisure use and not just to stop Harlow expanding; in section 2, that a number of the features at the Airfield had been proposed for local or national listing as historical monuments; in section 3, adding further information about landing fees; and in section 6, adding a new short section about the results of the Drivers Jones study and the East of England Plan. The Director of Environment & Street Scene stated that all previous reports on the Airfield would be made available to the chosen Consultant, although more detail could be added to the Brief regarding the Drivers Jones report and East of England Plan. Detailed information on landing fees was confidential, although again this would be made available to the successful Consultant.

The Director confirmed that there was not the expertise within the Council to perform the consultation and study, and that all other uses for the Airfield would be part of the Brief to the Consultants, including agricultural/horticultural use.

The Cabinet Committee agreed the draft Brief, along with the proposed amendments made during the meeting. In addition, the Cabinet Committee also felt that the Lead Consultant should bring the other key members of their team to the Presentation scheduled for January 2013, and that an additional requirement should be for the team that undertook the review to stay together for its duration, as far as was practically possible. The Chairman stated that the draft Brief would be circulated to the members of the Cabinet Committee for comment, as well as the other District Councillors in attendance. Authority was delegated to the Chairman of the Cabinet Committee to agree the final version of the Brief, and that the Member Interview Panel should also include local ward members for North Weald Bassett as well as the members of the Cabinet Committee. Finally, the Chairman of Council would be requested to waive the call-in period for this decision, due to the need to run the review of the Airfield in conjunction with the Local Plan development process.

Decision:

(1) That the brief to be issued to consultants on the Government Procurement Service "Multi-Discipline Consultancy Framework Agreement (RM353) for the review of North Weald Airfield be agreed, subject to the following amendments:

- (a) a broad assessment of the different categories for the Council's business objectives for the Airfield being given, prior to the actual objectives being agreed;
- (b) changing the evaluation criteria to:
- 40% weighting for Relevant Experience & Proposed Approach; and
 - 40% weighting for presentation;
- (c) each lead consultant to bring the key members of their team to the presentation scheduled for January 2013; and
- (d) an additional requirement for the team that undertakes the review to stay together for the duration of the review, as far as is practically possible;
- (2) That authority be delegated to the Chairman of the North Weald Airfield & Asset Management Cabinet Committee to agree the final draft of the brief, prior to its issue to potential consultants;
- (3) That the role of the review of the Airfield forming an intrinsic part of the ongoing Local Plan preparation process be noted;
- (4) That the Member interview panel for the appointment of the preferred consultant be formed by members of the Cabinet Committee and District Council ward members for North Weald Bassett;
- (5) That the Chairman of Council be requested to waive the requirement for this decision to be subject to call-in, due to the need to schedule the review of the Airfield in conjunction with the on-going Local Plan preparation process.

Reason for Decision:

To enable the strategic review of the Airfield to be undertaken as part of the Local Plan process.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To undertake the strategic review separately from the Local Plan preparation process. However, this would risk the Local Plan being found 'unsound' at the Examination in Public.

22. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

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

CHAIRMAN