

THE LONDON HELIPORT CONSULTATIVE GROUP

Minutes of the inaugural meeting of The London Heliport Consultative Group held at Wandsworth Town Hall (Room 123), on Tuesday, 5th December 2006 at 7 p.m.

PRESENT

Users' representatives

Mr. Christopher Forrest
Capt. Robin Renton
Capt. Paul Watts

Residents' representatives

Mr. Kenneth Fergusson
Mr. Dennis Rooke
Sir Peter Jennings
Ms. Eryl Wrage

Local Authority representatives

Councillor Tony Belton
Councillor John Hallmark
Councillor Jeremy Edge
Councillor Greg Smith

Observers, advisers and officers

Mr. Allan Gray (Weston (Aviation) Limited)
Mr. Simon Hutchins (Weston (Aviation) Limited)
Councillor Ravi Govindia (Wandsworth Borough Council)
Mr. Steve Mayner (Wandsworth Borough Council)
Mr. Colin Stanbury (Wandsworth Borough Council)
Mr. Francis de Lima (Wandsworth Borough Council)
Mr. Max Dixon (Greater London Authority)

Independent Person

Mr. Roger Bird

PROCEEDINGS

At the start of the meeting, Mr. Allan Gray, took the Chair as interim Chairman, pending the appointment of the independent Chairman. He welcomed all present to the meeting and explained that the London Heliport had recently been advised that it had been designated as an 'airport' – the 53rd airport in the country. Accordingly, there was a requirement for a consultative committee to be established. However,

notwithstanding that requirement, Weston (Aviation) Limited had been working with the Council on the setting up of the Consultative Group, as a matter of good practice. At the request of the interim Chairman, all the members of the Consultative Group and the advisers, officers and observers present, introduced themselves.

Appointment of Chairman. On item 1, the interim Chairman advised the Consultative Group that Weston (Aviation) Limited and the Council, in consultation, had nominated Mr. Roger Bird for appointment to serve as independent Chairman of the Consultative Group, for a period of four years. He asked whether there were any other nominations.

As there were no other nominations, the interim Chairman declared that Mr. Bird had been duly appointed to serve as Chairman of the Consultative Group.

Mr. Bird thereupon took the Chair.

Draft Constitution and Terms of Reference. On item 2 (Paper A), the Chairman invited discussion on the draft Constitution and Terms of Reference which had been prepared jointly by Weston (Aviation) Limited and the Council. He noted that this document had been based broadly upon the Constitution and Terms of Reference of the consultative committee of Shoreham Airport.

Councillor Belton commented that the representation by residents had been based solely upon the fairly large private sector developments in Battersea and that residents in the public and co-operative housing sectors, such as Totteridge House – who also had a valid interest in the activities of the Heliport – had apparently been excluded. He enquired whether residents in the latter sectors had been included or were proposed to be included in any way in the establishment and development of the Consultative Group.

In reply, Councillor Govindia explained that, as the Borough Housing Panel includes representation from all public housing stock, the residents in the Council/public/co-operative housing sectors already had an avenue through which they could raise issues that affected them, including any in relation to the activities of the Heliport. Accordingly, the Council had taken the view that residents' representation on the Consultative Group should be by residents from the major riverside housing developments. He explained that residents' associations from these developments had set up a residents' group and had indicated their intention to endeavour to represent wider residents' interests.

Councillor Belton asked for the Borough Housing Panel to be informed about the establishment of the Consultative Group, which the Secretary undertook to do.

Following discussion, the Consultative Group approved the draft Constitution and Terms of Reference, with the following amendments:-

- (a) under 'Definitions' on page 1, the deletion of “/administrators” after the words “Heliport owners” in line 2 of the definition of “the Heliport management”;

- (b) on item 6 on page 2, the insertion of the words “at least” between the words “shall meet” and “twice in a calendar year”, on line 1; and
- (c) on item 16 page 4, the deletion of the words “office of the Mayor of London” and the insertion instead of “Greater London Authority” on line 3.

Residents’ items. On item 3, the Consultative Group considered the items placed on the agenda by the residents’ representatives.

The Chairman explained that as regards the information outlined in item (a) (Proposal for collecting, recording and regular reporting of noise complaints), the Secretary would circulate to members of the Consultative Group, all information sent to him for the purpose, on complaints received by the Heliport regarding helicopter noise.

Mr. Fergusson acknowledged that residents welcomed the setting up of the Consultative Group and stated that, in an endeavour to establish best practice, they would wish to receive information of various aspects including the types of helicopters that operate, the operational routes, the patterns of usage of the Heliport, and the ways in which residents could report concerns regarding unacceptable noise levels. In response, the Consultative Group were advised that residents could report incidents to, or seek such information from, the Heliport itself.

In reply to a query by the Chairman about which agency ought to be responsible for collating helicopter incidents, Mr. Gray advised the Consultative Group that recommendation 4 of the London Assembly’s review report suggested that the Department for Transport ought to have that responsibility. He acknowledged that, at present, there was no identified agency. He explained that the Heliport maintained its own log of complaints which, hitherto, had not been sufficiently robust. However, from 1st January 2007, the Heliport would keep a paper-based and computerised log which would be transferred readily to whichever agency became responsible for this task.

In reply to a comment by the Chairman that the three Local Authorities involved in the Consultative Group, together with the Heliport, could devise its own interim system, Councillor Govindia observed that both Wandsworth Council and the Heliport received complaints and he endorsed the Chairman’s suggestion that the agencies involved in the Consultative Group could seek to produce its own logging and monitoring system. He suggested that the Secretary should endeavour to seek information from the three Councils on the sources of complaints, how they are logged, etc. Mr. Gray added that the Heliport would be prepared to meet with officers from the three Councils to decide on how this information should be collated and by whom.

On item (b) (Proposal for regular reporting of helicopter movements), Mr. Gray advised the Group that this information was provided monthly to the Civil Aviation Authority and to Wandsworth Council. He confirmed, in answer to a question by Councillor Belton, that these figures were of daily totals only.

Councillor Belton commented that records of timings of flights would be of interest to residents.

Mr. Gray advised the Consultative Group that flights to and from the Heliport took place between 7 a.m. and 11 p.m. and that any flights outside of those hours were not connected with the operations of the Heliport. He added that the Heliport was working closely with the Metropolitan Police Air Support Unit on the latter's helicopter movements.

In reply to a suggestion by Ms. Wrage that the monthly information on flights be provided to the other two Councils as well, Mr. Gray explained that the information was provided to Wandsworth Council as part of a Section 106 Agreement with the Council.

Mr. Fergusson endorsed the call for flight timings to be provided, as it was essential to be able to relate complaints to precise times on the records. Mr. Hutchins confirmed that a detailed log of all helicopter movements connected with the Heliport were kept and that this information could be accessed on the CAA's website.

Councillor Govindia noted that 12,000 movements were permitted annually and was of the view that the basic information reported to the Council could be shared. He observed that, however, the recording of complaints received was an altogether different area that required the recording of all pertinent information, including, obviously, timing. He was confident that a proper system of recording of complaints would evolve over time and suggested a steady development towards such a system that built upon what was possible at each stage.

Mr. Gray advised that, with all complaints, the Heliport sought to obtain the time of the alleged incident from the complainant, but that specific answers were not always forthcoming.

After discussion, it was agreed that records of the complaints received would be collated by the Heliport on a quarterly basis and would be reported to meetings of the Consultative Group. In reply to comments by Councillor Hallmark, the Consultative Group was advised that records already identified whether flights were by civilian or military/Police helicopters.

On item (c) (Sharing best practice for helicopter landings and departures), the Chairman observed that such information would obviously be useful in properly understanding the operation of the Heliport. He enquired whether such guidance could be put together. Capt Renton replied that it was possible to obtain such information from the British Helicopter Advisory Board. He emphasised that the Heliport operated to strict rules, which did not tolerate any dangerous practices. He undertook to obtain and provide such information to the Secretary for circulation to members of the Consultative Group.

Councillor Belton enquired whether perhaps information on best practice was available from other cities e.g. New York, which experienced much helicopter

movement. He suggested that such information might be useful for comparative analysis.

Date of next meeting. On item 4, it was agreed that the next meeting of the Consultative Group should be held on Monday, 30th April 2007 at 7.00 p.m.

Any other business. The Chairman invited members to raise other items of business that had not been covered in earlier discussion.

(a) Place names. In reply to a suggestion by Sir Peter Jennings that members be provided with nameplates at future meetings, the Chairman asked the Secretary to arrange for these to be prepared, if possible.

(b) Visit to the Heliport. Sir Peter Jennings asked whether Weston (Aviation) Limited would be agreeable to arranging for perhaps two groups of members of the Consultative Group to visit the Heliport. He suggested that this would provide members with a valuable insight into operations of the Heliport and the patterns of take-offs and landings and perhaps provide them with a measure of understanding of the problems, which residents complain about. He suggested that the visit perhaps ought to involve a briefing to members followed by a question and answer session.

Mr. Gray replied that it might be possible to accommodate a group of members in one visit. He explained that the times of operations depended entirely upon pre-booked landing slots. He noted that, in November, on 7 nights, the last operations took place by 8 p.m. As regards the period of notice required to be given for landings, Mr. Gray advised that the deadline on weekdays was 7.30 p.m. for that evening, and at weekends, it was 6.00 p.m.

The meeting ended at 7.45 p.m.