

WYCOMBE AIR PARK JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON
28th February 2022**

PRESENT

Mark Harris	Chairman
Councillor D Barnes	Buckinghamshire Council Member, Chiltern Villages
Mr A Anderson- Brown	Director, AAA
Mr R Sowden	General Manager, WAP
Councillor N Dunn	Great Marlow Parish Council
Councillor M Detsiny	Lane End Parish Council
Mr R Russell	Frieth Village Society
Mr N Phillips	Sands Residents' Association
Ms J Moore	Booker Gliding Club
Mr A Young	HeliAir
Mr B Coakley	Buckinghamshire Council

(5 members of the public in attendance)

1. M Harris welcomed all to what would be his first meeting as Chairman and he stated that he was delighted to have been given the opportunity to do so by the air park management. He referred the meeting to the letter that he had sent to the members of the JCC, which effectively gave an overview of his intentions and his background. He invited all present to also introduce themselves.
2. **Duration of Meeting**
In terms of the duration of the meeting, the Chairman advised that it would be as long as needed and he did not intend to squash debate. He further questioned whether this item was in fact needed on future agenda.
3. **Apologies for Absence**
Apologies had been received from S Brown; A Mann and T Hill.
4. **Minutes of the meeting held on 29th November 2021**
The minutes of 29th November 2021 were tabled and agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.
5. **Matters Arising**
There were no matters arising.
6. **Update from the Working Group**
R Wetenhall advised that the working group had now met on three occasions, the last being some 3 weeks ago. A number of items had been discussed, namely noise and complaints and working arrangements for that group. In terms of noise and complaints, it had been considered that in general the concerns around the change of route had been addressed satisfactorily and progress had been made regarding complaint handling, particularly in terms

of prompter responses back to complainants. The group had also considered how it could assist with ensuring acceptable conduct from complainants over the telephone and had undertaken to speak with individuals as appropriate. Adhering to the track by helicopters had seen an improvement, although when it was bad it was bad. Residents had however reported more observance to track, although it had been accepted that this was the quiet season. One area that remained to be bottomed out by the group had been the perception of additional flights and whether this was reality or not. It had been noted that there had been some technical issues in respect of reporting which R Sowden had agreed to look into. The group had also considered how it could establish a consultation process for potential future major changes to routes and how the group could play its part in such instances. The group also gave consideration to respite days. Further applications had been received with a potential to ask for a couple over the Platinum Jubilee period. Finally, there was a brief discussion around silencers and whilst it was considered they did make a difference, this was not sufficient to warrant a huge investment. It had been considered that the best way to reduce noise from aircraft would be investment in modern aircraft, which was in fact the direction of travel that the air park proposed to take.

R Wetenhall concluded that those on the working group had felt that this forum would be better in terms of having an exchange of views and constructive dialogue over matters; it considered it was working well; it felt that it could do more to take items off the JCC agenda and spend more time working on projects to then report back into the JCC. The Chairman stated that it would be important that the working group did not circumvent the JCC and he wished to advise the meeting that there was no intention whatsoever to do so. The working group would be the body at which the long drawn out discussions took place so that structured suggestions could be had by the JCC. There had also been a removal of the word "noise" from the title of the working group as the agreement at the last meeting had been that the group wished to talk about all manner of things related to the air park and not just noise. He therefore hoped that this met with the JCC's approval. Additionally, a different member of the working group would report back to the JCC, in order to share that responsibility.

In terms of responses to complaints, R Sowden acknowledged that the air park had been "intermittent" with same. He had endeavoured pre Christmas, to get back to as many complainants as possible. The air park had also seen a high level of staff turnover in January, with three leavers and three new starters, which had taken up a significant amount of management time. Additionally, two further operations staff would be recruited, which it was hoped would help enormously with the oversight of this process. The air park's intention was to move to a turnaround period for complaints of no more than 10 days, although it was hoped that most would be completed "in the moment". He pointed out that some of the challenges that the air park faced included a lack of definition as to what complainants had seen. Complaints were currently running at 80% helicopter related, although that figure had been skewed somewhat by October figures. R Sowden advised that more interrogation of the data would take place. The Chairman stated that there had been 28 complaints, via the website, in January 2022, but that did not give an illustration of how many actual incidents there had been. Going forward therefore, he wondered if there could be an additional column of number of incidents. A Brown stated that by responding more quickly, he hoped that this data would be more readily available.

Action – R Sowden

A resident enquired whether there was a facility to track aircraft, using Skyecho, for example. A Brown advised that this had been covered at previous meetings and reminded all that the air park was currently promoting the use of transponders. He was working with a tenant of the air park, who undertook radar installations for a living, to develop a form of flight tracking software which would be personal to the air park. He also advised that the fixed wing school aircraft did have Skyecho. In terms of the helicopters, much experimenting had been undertaken to find a system that did not suffer from interference from the rotar blades. With the development of the new software it was hoped that the antennae would be better able to support the use of flight radar within these aircraft. Helair had been most accommodating in allowing the use of their time on this project.

A resident enquired if there was a breakdown of complaints in respect of helicopters and fixed

wing. R Sowden repeated his earlier comment in that broadly speaking 80% of complaints related to helicopter activity. 110 complaints regarding helicopters had been received in October (with all complaints for that month totalling 129); with a total of all complaints over 4 months amounting to 173, it could be seen that the helicopters contributed the lion's share. A Brown stated that October had been the month in which residents had stated that helicopters had not been properly adhering to the circuit patterns and since then much work had taken place to rectify this. He was able to confirm that he had also now received some welcome calls from residents to advise that their perception had been that the helicopters were making efforts to stay on track.

The Chairman stated that it must be very difficult to effectively brief pilots when there were no real landmarks. P Rose, resident, advised that he had raised this issue at the last meeting as he considered the documentation currently available to pilots on the website could be greatly improved, which he considered would be a really easy win. A Brown agreed that the current information was inadequate for visitors, particularly helicopters. The air park management had met with stakeholders and had developed a workable design for joining instructions, which would be presented to the Working Group in due course, following further consultation with stakeholders. He stressed that there had been no changes, it would merely better reflect the current procedure and was a priority for the air park. The Chairman suggested that the stakeholders be advised that receipt of their further comments would be required with the next two weeks so that by the time of the next JCC meeting, it may be possible to report that this exercise had been completed.

Action – A Brown

A resident wished to share his observations in that he considered that trainee pilots did not as a rule stray too far away from the designated circuit but that the private helicopter pilots adopted short cuts. He cited a helicopter at night, flying at circa 500' which was definitely not on track. A Brown asked that such instances were reported to him swiftly as there were a number of additional permissions required from him, for night flights and he did not want pilots to shortcut these procedures.

7. Use of Respite Days

A Brown advised that he had received a request from Parmoor House and some dates around the Queen's Platinum Jubilee had been muted but nothing specific had as yet come to his attention. R Wetenhall advised that he would come back with a formal request in respect of a date for a village fete (4th June) and endeavour to firm up on any other dates. If there were more requests than available days, the matter would be presented to the Working Group for deliberation.

Action – R Wetenhall

8. Constitution

The Chairman advised that whilst the JCC did have a constitution, it was sadly no longer fit for purpose. He had understood that some work had commenced with regard to its updating, which appeared to have been lost. Therefore, he and R Sowden had made some suggested changes to the 2012 version which would be considered by the Working Group at their next meeting. He hoped thereafter to bring a finalised proposal to the next meeting of the JCC for any comment and approval. The draft 2022 version would be circulated with the next JCC agenda in order to allow time to consider same. He advised that the changes would not be radical but would reflect current reality and bring it up-to-date. R Wetenhall advised that he had been involved in the previous drafting of the 2012 Constitution, the purpose of which had been to ensure that it was in line with current legislation and best practice and followed those guidelines. The Chairman enquired if there was a model constitution. He was advised that this aspect did feature in the air park's latest Noise Action Plan and the Department of Transport had also published some guidance. A Brown to send a link of the latter to the Chairman.

Action – A Brown

9. Community Matters

M Detsiny wondered if the air park might stage something to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, as it was a once in a lifetime event. R Sowden advised that building relationships

with the local community was a key area of focus for him. It had been mentioned at the Working Group that if there was a group who wanted to do something the air park would be willing to offer up some space, out of flying hours, provided it was quick to set up/take down. He also stated that the air park would be willing to help in terms of fundraising such as trial flights either fixed wing or helicopter, as potential raffle prizes. R Sowden confirmed the air park's desire to help in this regard and he invited people to make contact with him.

R Wetenhall suggested that this item could also be used for the air park to advise the community when it was holding specific events and he cited AerExpo as an example. This could then be helpful in providing advance notice to residents. R Sowden advised that there was an Elite Show scheduled for 13th and 14th of May 2022, which the air park would host but which would be run by another organisation. He added that the air park would control every aspect of flying and arrival slots would be staggered as would departures. No procedures would be changed and there would be no circuit traffic on those days. A Brown also advised that whilst in the early days of planning, he had agreed to host an NHS Fundraising event on a weekend day in September, which would be an outdoor cinema experience with a flying element attached to it. Further details would follow once the charity had worked this up more fully. From the Sands Residents' Association viewpoint if residents had been made aware in advance of events, they were far more tolerant of any transgressions. Additionally, their residents' association were in the throes of Jubilee planning and stated they may take up the offer of assistance from the air park. N Phillips to connect with S Fryer on this point.

Action – N Phillips

10. AOB

J Moore, Booker Gliding Club, stated that at the last meeting, S Brown had advised that the air park had lodged an objection to the planning application for the move of the gliding operation. She stated that he had previously supported this move and asked as to the reason for his change of mind. A Brown advised that this matter was subject to a legal case with the air park's landlord (the council) and he could not therefore comment further. He did state however, that air park management had not considered the design in its entirety to be adequate and he could not be drawn further on this matter. J Moore considered the answer to be unsatisfactory. The Chairman hoped that in the fullness of time, there would be an outcome.

11. Date of Next Meeting

R Sowden advised that there had been some discussion as to whether there should be 3 or 4 JCC meetings per annum. The current constitution stated 3 meetings, however, there had been a willingness from the air park management to increase that to 4 following some heavily attended JCC meetings, in order to keep dialogue flowing. Upon reflection however, as the winter period was generally fallow, 3 periods, in March, June and October had therefore seemed logical. R Wetenhall confirmed that the constitution stated 3 meetings but in practice this had been 4. M Detsiny considered that by having regular dialogue through JCC meetings, it could be evidenced that matters no longer festered and he considered the JCC should meet 4 times a year. This was supported by D Barnes. The Chairman confirmed his willingness to hold meetings in March, June, September and December. This meeting, whilst strictly speaking in February, would act as the March meeting. He agreed to set the June meeting tonight and agree the remaining dates for the year so that they could be published well in advance.

The date of the next JCC would 27th June at 6.30 pm at the air park.

Further dates had been agreed as:

12th September at 6.30 pm at the air park

12th December at 6.30 pm at the air park

The meeting closed at 7.21 pm.