

WYCOMBE AIR PARK JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON 4th November 2014

PRESENT

Mr R Pushman	Chairman
Mr S Brown	CEO, Helicopter Aircraft Holdings Ltd
Councillor R Metcalfe	WDC Member, Hambleden Valley
Councillor M Detsiny	Lane End Parish Council
Mr N Dunn	Great Marlow Parish Council
Mr H Luxton	Booker Common and Woods Protection Society
Mr R Wetenhall	Wycombe Air Park Action Group (WAPAG)
Mr N Phillips	Sands Residents' Association
Mr R Martyn	Booker Gliding Club
Mrs M Sarney	General Manager, Wycombe Air Park
Mr S Adkins	Head of Training, Wycombe Air Park
Mr J Smith	Divisional EHO, WDC

(3 members of the public were in attendance)

1. The Chairman welcomed all present to the meeting. He advised that there had been a change of management at the Air Park; Sean Brown was now the CEO and majority owner of Helicopter Aircraft Holdings Ltd. As a result of the changes, the Chairman had proposed that rather than dedicate the first 30 minutes to the public to allow for their questions and statements, S Brown would make a presentation, which he anticipated would likely answer many of the questions that the public no doubt had.
2. **Duration of meeting**
The Chairman anticipated that the presentation would take approximately 15-20 minutes, following which he agreed to allow sufficient time for public questions. He hoped to be able to conclude the meeting by no later than 8.30 pm.
3. **Presentation by Sean Brown**
S Brown advised the JCC that the information that he now understood both the JCC and the public had received was not as intended and he wished to rectify certain mistakes. He was the majority share holder and accountable manager of Helicopter Aircraft Holdings and the air park. He wished to emphasise that the air park was not owned by HeliAir and he was not solely interested in helicopters, and furthermore had held senior positions with a range of diverse businesses related to aviation throughout his career.

He wished to highlight certain specific points to the JCC:

* He had no intention for any runway extension at the air park; he did however wish to protect the air park from Wycombe District Council's (WDC) plans to develop on it.

- * He wanted to increase income without the need for increased flying by diversifying the training offered at the air park to include fire/safety training; airfield management; engineering training; air traffic control training and aircraft operation and planning courses; diversification into aircraft sales; training in aviation first aid; team building days; simulator training; advanced pilot training; aviation events; themed weddings; historical aviation events and grass land management.
- * He wished to encourage weekday use of the airfield by business users; operate stop periods and reroute aircraft when possible and increased noise sensitivity training for visiting aircraft.
- * He wanted to work with the community to introduce walking and cycling committees and wild life areas and host school visits and charity events.
- * He also thought it might be possible to introduce some kind of young people's apprentice scheme.

However, he further advised that when he had submitted plans to WDC for bi-usable hangars and a new entrance, these were rejected. He had in total submitted 3 sets of proposals, all of which had been rejected by the council. He advised however that the council had put up rent by 30%; they had unnerved the other users of the air park because they had enforced certain terms of the lease which meant that he was no longer the landlord of the other tenants on the air park as this had reverted back to the council; they had in addition forced a break clause for land development and he had also been told not to speak about this to anyone during negotiations. Clearly, if the council took all of his tenants and ultimately drove them out; increased his rent; prevented him from developing the air park and reduced his investment, the only option left open to him would be to increase flying activity, which was **not** what he wanted to do.

The Chairman thanked him for his presentation, which clearly provided a view from his "side of the fence". Whilst there was both a councillor and employee of the council present, there could be no defence of the council made and no comment from them. The Chairman then enquired as to how he might begin some forward investment. S Brown advised that this would be centred around the central building and the introduction of simulators.

Turning specifically to the lease, S Brown advised that he had requested a new lease and the council would only grant a 15 year lease and within that, as previously advised, they would take back all the sub tenants; they would require a break clause; they would require quieter aircraft and would require respite for local communities. However, under the 1954 Act, in 15 year's time the lease could again be reviewed and this could continue for perpetuity, as he understood it.

R Wethenhall stated that he would like to hear the council's view. He was advised that this was not possible as it was subjudice. S Brown confirmed that his understanding was there were no negotiations and therefore subjudice did not apply and he had no objections if the council wished to respond.

Councillor R Metcalfe advised that senior council officers were undertaking the negotiations and subsequently briefing the Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development, and these briefings did not cascade to the ordinary district councillors on the JCC. In addition, he advised that in June of this year, all district councillors had received a message from the head of legal services, stating that live negotiations were taking place, and they had been asked not to comment on this commercially sensitive matter, so as not to compromise the council's position.

S Brown reiterated that the purpose of his presentation was to show the JCC what plans he had to mitigate noise at the air park whilst still running an effective business. He had not intended to hijack the meeting but felt he needed to provide the background.

In respect of the release of this slide presentation, the Chairman considered that without the verbal narrative which had been provided, the whole picture was not presented, and he did not wish to get to a position whereby there could be any legal challenge, so he would take advice on whether this could be circulated.

He asked if there were any questions from the public.

Q. Resident Skirmett, stated that for some 15 years he had complained of overflying and there had been little improvement. However, of late, flights had been higher and further into the field, so he had noticed an improvement, but there was an ongoing need to manage and observe concerns of residents.

A. S Brown advised that complaints came directly to M Sarney, and were handled by S Adkins. He considered that for the last 15 years very little care had been put into airspace usage. He wanted to change the height at which aircraft flew and he also wanted to think about the helicopter routing; he wanted to manage the noise and was prepared to take on 15 years of bad feeling and poor results.

Q. R Rendell stated that the air park website used for complaints no longer sent an acknowledgement or a copy to WDC. He considered that in the past, complaint figures had been distorted. He also alluded to the recent "crash landing" at Frieth Cricket Club.

A. S Brown advised that there had been no crash landing; a student had mishandled the controls, landed in a field close to the cricket club, reconfigured and taken off again. There had been a trained instructor with the student, who was aware of the safety steps to be taken.

The public participation part of the meeting was then closed.

4. Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Councillors I McEnnis; Z Ahmed; D Barnes, D White and Mr K Chanter.

5. Minutes of the meeting held on 17th July 2014

These were agreed as an accurate record.

6. Matters arising not appearing elsewhere on the agenda

M Detsiny advised that a letter had been sent to the leader WDC, Councillor R Scott, signed by five members of the JCC. The Leader had advised that the matter had been passed to C Brocklehurst. The JCC and those residents present considered they should be better kept informed by WDC.

7. Noise complaints received by the Air Park.

R Wetenhall had been asked by M King a resident of Frieth and member of WAPAG, that he had lodged a number of complaints that had not been dealt with to his satisfaction.

M Sarney advised that once she received a complaint she downloaded the tracker information and passed same to the Head of Training or CFI. If issues were identified, pilots were then briefed. An invitation for Mr King to visit the air park was extended so that he could speak face to face with staff. In addition, R Wetenhall advised that since the departure of D Phillips Mr King had sent complaints and had become irritated as he did not get either a timely response or one that met his satisfaction. On a more general point, he perceived that there had been a marked deterioration in flying over Skirmett and Frieth.

S Adkins advised that many pilots were students who did not take wind direction into account and subsequently drifted and in such instances they received further flying with an instructor. The same applied to club members. The issue for him, was from visiting pilots and there was currently a drive to improve the briefing notes on the website.

M Detsiny supported the view that flying had been particularly troublesome in the last couple of months. M Sarney agreed to review the tracker more frequently.

Discussion turned to movement statistics. R Metcalfe thought it would be useful to have sight of this and outside of the meeting he would have a conversation with M Sarney.

There was a view from some members of the JCC that the public were suffering from complaint fatigue. R Metcalfe reminded the meeting that he had signed up to a community engagement programme and would visit anyone at their home to ensure that the JCC was

seen as a body that promoted responsible flying. On this point, he enquired whether thought had yet been given to a calendar of respite for 2015.

H Luxton expressed a word of caution should any changes to routes be considered and reminded the meeting that without proper consultation this would cause chaos as had previously been demonstrated some years back.

8. Noise complaints received by Wycombe District Council.

J Smith advised that WDC had received a number of enquiries/complaints viz:

- * Runway usage stats and movement numbers had been requested.
- * There had been a feeling that there was a generally worsening situation from R06 take off avoiding Sands and if there were to be any change to existing procedures they should come through the JCC.
- * Aircraft landing on R24 were not always throttled down and were disturbing. S Brown advised that he would look at changing flying methods to get away from the ground as soon as possible and then throttle back. Silencers had been discussed earlier; S Brown advised that due to an increase in rent plus the monies being spent on the lease issues, his preference was to take the older aircraft and spread them around so they were not all based here. However, he also advised that he had not been impressed with the new aircraft available and he reiterated this was a tool and not the whole answer.
- * The overflying of Frieth Cricket Club and the problems this caused had been raised and this would be best addressed by weekend respite. The list of fixtures needed to be supplied to the air park.
- * There had been some concern that the WAPAG website was not working and if it was removed there needed to be an alternative mechanism to ensure responses were sent and the council somehow received copies of complaints/enquiries. For the next meeting, an overview of some of the "cheats" taking place was requested together with possible solutions. In terms of Remembrance Sunday, S Brown advised that a policy of respite was in place and he would ensure that both Sunday 9th and Tuesday 11th November respite was observed.
- * An allegation had been received in August that a stunt plane was flying too low over Sands.
- * K Chanter had provided an extensive report in August and whilst it was now historical, he evidenced a certain laxity around procedures, and a more speedy courtesy of reply was needed in respect of complaints made. The Chairman asked going forward, if an acknowledgement could be provided within 5 working days.

9. Community Matters

There was a need for the community to be involved with the air park. S Brown was considering a possible airshow; areas for wildlife and areas for walkers when the airfield was not operating. He welcomed other ideas. R Wetenhall asked that if an airshow was planned and any waiving of the noise abatement procedures would take place, this was shared with the community and the JCC as this had not taken place at previous Air Expo shows and had caused great annoyance to residents. The Chairman suggested that S Brown might like to work with him on RAFA training.

10. AOB

Discussion took place around the substantive issues that had been raised and the fact that WDC were not represented/or able to comment on the future of the air park. R Metcalfe advised that he had asked the Leader for a strategic level of engagement for the Chair and Vice Chair of this committee. Further debate took place and it was suggested that C Brocklehurst's attendance would be welcomed.

The Chairman advised that the concern of the meeting would be fed back to the council and a formal request for a response to the issues of non-communication from the council requested. S Brown welcomed the council joining the next meeting and giving their own presentation. M Detsiny suggested that tonight's presentation be sent to the Leader/senior member of the council requesting that they come to the next meeting to respond to the points raised by the presentation. In this respect, M Detsiny offered to draft a letter for the Chairman to sign.

Congratulations were extended to M Sarney on her promotion to General Manager.

N Phillips requested sight of the published training circuits.

11. Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 3rd February 2015 at 6.30 pm at the air park.

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm.