

WYCOMBE AIR PARK JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON 30th July 2013

PRESENT

Mr R Pushman	Chairman
Mr D Phillips	General Manager, Wycombe Air Park
Councillor Z Ahmed	WDC Member, Sands
Councillor I McEnnis	WDC Member, Chiltern Rise
Councillor D White	Hambleton Parish Council
Councillor N Timberlake	West Wycombe Parish Council
Ms Jenny France	Great Marlow Parish Council
Councillor S Parker	WDC Member, Booker & Cressex
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
Mr R Crockett	Booker Gliding Club

(3 members of the public were in attendance)

1. The Chairman welcomed those present to the meeting. He sadly, firstly referred to the tragic loss to both this Committee and the District in general from the untimely death of Councillor Roger Emmett, who held the position of Vice Chairman of this Committee. A minute's silence followed.

The Chairman then referred back to the last meeting, when he reflected that whilst there had been a full and frank exchange of views, he considered that D Phillips had come under attack and he apologised for allowing this to happen. He asked that the meeting be conducted in the spirit of mutual help rather than accusation.

2. The Chairman then opened the public participation section of the meeting stating that the usual rules applied.

Q. Mrs Pratt, Spring Coppice, stated that her neighbour had asked her to read out a letter as she was herself on holiday and unable to attend.

"There had been increased air traffic at Spring Coppice, and she was disturbed on a daily basis, primarily by helicopters, and she asked that a comprehensive action plan was put in place. She considered that there were insufficient penalties imposed on those persistent offending pilots." Mrs Pratt provided a copy of the letter to D Phillips for full response. In addition, Spring Coppice residents were already blighted by helicopter and fixed wing and were now experiencing noise from glider tugs as well.

A. The Chairman advised that the latter point was covered in item 7 on the agenda and whilst the public could not strictly participate during this part of the meeting, on this occasion he would allow it.

Q. T Griffin, Heathfield Road, Sands said that at a recent AGM, air pollution had been considered and he had updated the meeting about the noise action plan currently being compiled, to which he had been met with comments such as “what difference will it make to us as we have to put up with so many aircraft”.

A. D Phillips stated that the air park was trying to be a better neighbour and he was doing his best to broker a compromise as best he could. It was suggested that J Smith be asked to take some noise readings. R Wethenhall offered a comment at this point. Noise from aviation was unique in that it was exempt from council intervention and the local authority had no power in respect of aviation noise – all that could currently be done was to ask D Phillips to do something about it. J Smith’s role was however considered of value as an impartial observer.

3. Election of Vice Chairman

The Chairman advised that he had made an approach to a Councillor to take over this role, however this had been declined for genuine reasons and he asked that this matter be held in abeyance until the next meeting.

4. Duration of meeting

It was hoped this would be one to one and a quarter hours.

The Chairman advised that it had been necessary to postpone the last meeting until now and he asked D Phillips to advise the meeting of the circumstances. D Phillips stated that Booker Aircraft Operations Limited had gone into liquidation and he had been required to transfer the business over to AAA Limited, and as a Director, he had a legal duty to ensure all staff had the opportunity to a full and frank discussion – the timing of which had coincided with the previously scheduled JCC meeting, and with the Chairman’s agreement the meeting had been postponed.

The Chairman further proposed that the regularity of the meetings revert to quarterly with the caveat that special meetings could be called at anytime if this was considered appropriate. R Wethenhall suggested that reversion take place once the noise action plan had been agreed.

5. Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd April 2013

The minutes of the above meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

6. Matters of report not appearing elsewhere on the agenda

N Phillips enquired as to R 035 NAZ as it had been in frequent use and most of the pilots turned short over Sands. D Phillips agreed to discuss this with him outside of the meeting.

7. DEFRA Noise Action Plan

D Phillips recapped following the previous meeting. He had now received a response from Wycombe District Council and in general terms, following discussion there were a few points which required amendment and he had subsequently incorporated various observations and his interpretation of them. He had now what he proposed was the final version, and he questioned whether there was any merit in it being circulated further as he did not see how the outstanding issues could be resolved.

Further discussion ensued, and it was subsequently agreed that the JCC should consider the document once more to ensure that it had captured the essence of discussions and the observations that had been forthcoming. D Phillips stated that he would endeavour to do this and make every effort to submit the noise action plan prior to the next meeting of the JCC.

H Luxton asked what in summary were the main points of the noise action plan and these were given as:

a) Investigate new quieter technology training aircraft by replacing the Cessners with quieter aircraft, subject to the lease negotiations;

- b) Adopt alternative noise mitigation measures where feasible including the fitting of aircraft silencers across the training aircraft fleet;
- c) Enhanced use of GPS tracking to encourage its wider use and as a mandate for based helicopters;
- d) Further development of the JCC and use of the website for complaints handling; and
- e) Continue to investigate opportunities to create respite including the use of a variable circuit strategy (south circuit).

Copies of the final draft were circulated and D Phillips asked for comments via email by mid September, as to whether the JCC considered he had accurately captured feedback.

In terms of the lease negotiations, I McEnnis advised that the leadership of the council had changed and he agreed to set up a meeting with the new leader, Councillor Richard Scott, R Pushman and D Phillips to see if the matter of the lease could be moved forward.

8. Booker Gliding Club early morning operations 29th June 2013

R Martyn advised that a special D Day event had been organised and the gliding club had made efforts to notify approximately 100 residents who they considered were likely to be affected by this. However, on the day wind direction dictated the runway, and whilst it had always been envisaged that R24 would be used, wind direction dictated the use of R35. Flying commenced at 4.45 am and continued until 6.30 am when it was suspended until 8.30 am due to complaints.

This was the first formal complaint that the gliding club had received for many years and it had been a source of embarrassment and regret to them, for which they were truly apologetic. The Chief Flying Instructor had written a letter of apology to the main complainant.

9. Silencers

D Phillips advised the meeting that he had purchased three at a cost of circa £1800 each and he intended fitting them to the Warrior aircraft. He anticipated a noise reduction of 6-8 DbA and he considered this would also result in "softer sound" on the ground. Local resident, K Chanter, had assisted by providing useful objective observations during trials. Further, D Phillips anticipated that the Cessna 152's could also have silencers fitted as part of the fleet replacement plan but they were less noisy aircraft in the first instance.

10. Noise complaints received by the Air Park

D Phillips advised that the number of complaints compared to last year, was low. Due to wind direction, since 24th April runway usage had been as follows:

R24 – 52 days; R35 – 19 days and R06 – 37 days.

As a result, this had generated significantly more noise for the Sands/Spring Coppice area and this had been highlighted. He had also been aware of more complaints regarding glider tugs and considered this to be due to the weather and temperature, which had resulted in their turning being a tad late. Booker Gliding Club would take ownership and deal with these complaints.

In respect of Frieth/Lane End, the generic complaints from this area had been that pilots did not follow the correct route and flew wide.

D Phillips reported that upon investigation he had grounded one pilot. Councillor Z Ali enquired whether he had responded to the complainant in Underwood Road, Sands. This was confirmed and he and R Martyn were to develop a format to report gliding club statistics to future JCC meetings.

11. Noise complaints received by Wycombe District Council

There were none to add to those received from WAPAG.

12. Reports from other bodies

Booker Common & Woods Protection Society – H Luxton reported that along Arundel Road and the wood edge, aircraft from R06 were "off track" more often than not. In addition, residents had felt they had been overflowed by helicopters. He continued in that the main concern of residents was the repetitive nature of the infringements. D Phillips confirmed he would raise this matter with HeliAir.

Sands Residents' Association – N Phillips enquired as to the scale of penalties imposed on

pilots found to be infringing. D Phillips stated that he would resist the imposition of fines for students, suggesting that it would be far more beneficial to go through a debriefing session with them.

13. Community Matters

Councillor N Timberlake enquired whether the air park had any plans to mark the centenary of the start of World War I and he was advised that nothing so far had been planned.

Booker Gliding Club had arranged an open day in mid August for air cadets with learning disabilities, however it was not envisaged that there would be a great deal of additional flying activity involved. D Phillips would be kept advised.

14. Date of Next Meeting

24th September at 6.30 pm at Wycombe Air Park