

BIGGIN HILL AIRPORT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

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1. Summary

1.01 Under Section 35 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982 (as amended), the Biggin Hill Airport Consultative Committee is constituted from representatives of users of the Airport, local authorities and residents' associations.

1.02 The aims of the Committee are:-

- (a) to consult with and inform the local community of developments and plans for the Airport;
- (b) to allow the efficient functioning and economic development of the Airport, its airport business community, its resident workforce, while moderating its impact upon local communities and the environment;
- (c) to ensure that the Airport plays an active role in supporting the economic activities and objectives of the local and regional communities (business and residential).

1.03 The Committee meets four times a year in January (when the Annual General Meeting is also held), April, July and October.

1.04 All meetings were held at the Airport and, as usual, were well attended.

2. Membership

2.01 There were a number of changes that took place during the year namely that:

- Rob Shirley who had represented commercial users resigned because he was no longer working at the Airport. He has not yet been replaced;
- Vic Endacott due to business commitments was unable to attend all of the Committee's meetings and the Reverend John Musson now represents Bromley Residents Federation and Cudham Residents Association. Vic Endacott now deputises when necessary and able;
- Councillor Richard Parry, the Chairman of the Noise and Safety Sub-Committee stood down as a member of Kent County Council. He does an excellent job as Chairman of the Sub-Committee and I was pleased when the Committee agreed that he would be appointed as an ex-officio member of the Committee in order that he could continue to serve in that role. A

replacement representative of Kent County Council is in the process of being appointed to the Committee;

- Councillor Mark Watson was appointed to represent Croydon Council in place of Councillor Toni Letts who was unable to continue as a member of the Committee because she is now the Mayor of Croydon Borough;
 - Councillor Martin Allen had been appointed as the representative of Tandridge District Council with Councillor Keith Jecks, the previous representative, as his substitute;
 - Councillor Cameron McIntosh was appointed to represent Surrey County Council in place of Councillor David Hodge. Councillor Hodge stood down as he has been unable to attend many meetings since he became the Leader of Surrey County Council.
- 2.02 As suggested above, substitute members are permitted and a number attended in place of appointed members who were unable to attend meetings during the year.

3. Complaints and movements

3.01 I have already mentioned the Noise and Safety Sub-Committee in this report. It meets prior to meetings of the Committee and Richard Parry provides very full and clear reports of the results of its discussions of complaints at our meetings.

3.02 Of the complaints that are received regarding Biggin Hill movements, there were 194 that related to Biggin Hill movements during the year from 1 October 2016 to 30 September 2017. This is over twice as many as in the previous year and which I referred to in the last Annual Report. There were only 23 in the first half of the year and the increase appears to have a lot to do with the ease with which members of the public are now able to raise issues about aircraft movements using the new Noise Monitoring and Track Keeping System which became operational in April 2017. There is a local pressure group, Flightpath Watch, that is opposed to any expansion of the Airport and which encourages its members to use the system. Currently, all complaints are being investigated and responded to.

3.03 The new system allows the Sub-Committee to have accurate information about whether pilots contravene the Airport's regulations and, of these 194 complaints, 44 of the movements involved contraventions.

3.04 In the year up to the end of September 2017 there were a total of 50,430 aircraft movements at the Airport. Therefore, the number of genuine complaints continues to be extremely low relative to the number of movements.

3.05 The Committee is provided with a map at each meeting showing from where complaints emanate to enable members to identify whether there are any consistent patterns of which it should be aware. It also enables members to ask for information about any complaints in areas that they represent or in which they live.

3.06 At the July meeting we received a paper setting out the Airport's policy on processing noise complaints which is now posted on the Airport's website. Increasingly, sanctions are being used against pilots who do not comply with the Airport's regulations including being banned from using the Airport.

3.07 Starting from the July meeting we have been receiving reports by Bickerdike Allen Partners LLP which provides noise contours for the operations at the Airport following the changes to the operating hours.

3.08 Richard Parry consistently reports that the complaints have been handled fairly and well by the Airport Managing Director.

4. 19 January 2017 meeting

4.01 The first meeting of the calendar year is always preceded by the Annual General Meeting at which the Annual Report is received. The most notable issues dealt with at the business meeting are referred to below.

4.02 *Northolt Airport* - I mentioned in the previous Annual Report that, at the request of the Committee, I had sent a letter to the Prime Minister and also to Liam Fox, MP and Michael Fallon MP about the unsuitability of Northolt Airport for the use of business aviation. I advised the Committee that I had not received a reply to that letter. The subject of Northolt airport came up at each meeting during 2017 and, regrettably, at the time of writing this report, I have still not received a reply.

4.03 We learnt at this meeting that RAF Northolt was preparing to spend an estimated £45m on installing arrestor beds and resurfacing the entire runway. It was suggested that these improvements were intended to obviate some of the safety shortfalls that have been highlighted.

4.04 *Noise and Track Keeping System* – the newly-installed system had undergone extensive testing and evaluation and a problem that had been identified was to be resolved imminently. The consultants for Bromley Council would then be checking that the limits on noise contours were being complied with. The Committee was informed that the system would be well publicised and a guide for the public on how to make use of it would be published.

4.03 *Proposal for the new runway 03 Instrument Approach Procedure* - members heard that the implementation of the revised runway 03 GPS approach could be delayed until late in the third quarter of 2017. At the October meeting we heard that it was probable that the revised procedure would not be introduced before March 2018

4.04 *Runway 29/11* - we heard that, following a consultation with airport users, the decision had been taken to close the little-used runway 29/11. Whilst the light aircraft community was opposed to closure, business aviation had been in favour.

4.05 *Proposed airport hotel* - previous annual reports had referred to this proposal and the Committee was informed that finance had been obtained to fund its construction, subject to contract. It was hoped that construction would begin in late 2017.

4.06 *College Update* - previous Annual Reports had also referred to the proposed Aviation College and the Committee was informed that it was intended that it would have a workshop/hangar and ancillary accommodation.

5. 20 April 2017 meeting

5.01 This meeting covered many of the issues discussed at the previous meeting but included discussions on two Government consultation documents (paragraph 5.05 below).

5.02 *RAF Northolt* - we heard that expert analysis of the RAF Northolt obstacle environment had been commissioned to identify the exact areas where it does not comply with civil safety standards. The Committee noted that the only practical way to mitigate the obstacles would be to shorten the runways.

5.03 *New runway 03 GPS approach* - the Committee received a report setting out the proposal that had been submitted to the Civil Aviation Authority for approval.

5.04 *Noise and Track Keeping System* - this was the item but took up the most time at this meeting and the Committee received a very interesting presentation on how to use the new system which was now fully operational. Members were pleased to learn that complaints and comments could still be made by telephone, letter, email, etc. and that any raised by such methods would be entered into the system. It is still the case that not everyone has access to or is able to use a computer.

5.05 *Government Consultation – National Policy Statement and UK Airspace Strategy* - we received a briefing paper on the following Government documents:

- Draft Airports National Policy Statement: New Runway Capacity and Infrastructure at Airports in the South-east of England and
- Upgrading UK Airspace - Strategic Rationale.

6. 27 July 2017 meeting

6.01 This was the longest meeting of the year when the main discussions arose from the increased activity at the Airport and environmental issues.

6.02 *Variation of Airport operating hours* - in earlier Annual Reports there have been references to the Airport's application to extend its operating hours. The revised hours finally came into force on 1 May 2017 and the Committee learnt that, as anticipated, had resulted in business aviation operations on the Airport being boosted.

6.03 *Tenants and businesses at Biggin Hill* - I referred in the last Annual Report to Bombardier becoming a tenant at the Airport and members were advised that it was now operational with approximately 80 staff engaged. Further staff recruitment was taking place and at our October meeting the Airport Managing Director reported that the company was fully operational and had employed 100 staff and was continuing to recruit staff.

6.04 Business aviation continued to be displaced from major hub airports and the Committee heard that Airports such as Biggin Hill were being expected by Government to take the surplus business aviation activity. This would inevitably displace light aviation. One flight training company had already moved its circuit training operations elsewhere. In June it had had been decided to limit the number of training circuits that take place at the Airport on safety grounds.

6.05 *Technical Training College* - the Committee learnt that London South East Colleges had submitted a bid for £9m to build a dedicated campus for aerospace and technology skills at Biggin Hill London Aerospace & Technology College (LATC). Ahead of the building of the campus, which was expected to take place in 2019, London South East Colleges was launching 30 placements in Level 2 Diploma courses in Aerospace and Aviation Engineering to be run by City and Guilds and which started in September.

6.06 *Environment* - the new Noise Action Plan was mentioned in the 2016 Annual Report and it was noted that it was being used to improve the behaviour of pilots of

aircraft using the Airport and contained some of the most stringent noise controls of any UK airport. A number of initiatives were being used to control noise as activity grows. Biggin Hill Airport had more controls and was quieter than any other commercial airport in the UK. Ground noise was now controlled by measures set out in the Ground Noise Action Plan to contain aircraft ground noise within the Airport boundary. Air quality monitoring activity around the boundary of the Airport had found air quality to be good.

6.07 *Noise contours* - as mentioned in paragraph 3.06 above, this was the first meeting at which the Committee received a paper that advised that Bickerdike Allen Partners LLP which set out noise contours for the operations at the Airport following the changes to the operating hours. They showed that noise emanating from all movements were well within the limits set.

7. 19 October 2017 meeting

7.01 This was a less substantial meeting than the July one. The discussions included the following.

7.02 *Quasi-public transport operations* - we heard that new European Aviation Safety Agency regulations had permitted private pilots to advertise their services on websites such as SkyUber and Wingly and to invite members of the public to share the cost of their flight, or to propose a flight themselves. This had resulted in some private pilots establishing themselves as quasi-public transport operators, unlicensed and without the requisite expertise to conduct such operations safely. The Committee shared the Airport company's view that this is hazardous and undesirable from a security perspective. Although no action had yet been taken by the Airport, such flights would be likely to be prohibited from using the Airport.

7.03 *RAF Northolt* - referring to paragraph 4.02 above, members were informed that the Airport company had received no response to its letter to the Civil Aviation Authority which had enclosed its consultant's report setting out the safety issues at RAF Northolt. The Airport Managing Director advised, however, that he had subsequently been informed that the substantive reply would be received shortly. I look forward to hearing at the next meeting if the company has, in fact, had the reply.

John Bowden

Chairman