

REDHILL AERODROME CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Draft minutes of the virtual meeting of the Redhill Aerodrome Consultative Committee held on the 2nd December 2020 at 9.40am via Zoom.

PRESENT:

Terry Pollard (Chairman)
 Michael Blacker (Reigate & Banstead Borough Council)
 Jim Blackmore (Salfords & Sidlow Parish Council)
 Richard Blain (Pilots' Hub)
 David Burke (Estates Manager, Redhill Aerodrome Ventures Limited)
 Wayne Clark (Salfords & Sidlow Parish Council)
 Jonathon Essex (Reigate & Banstead Borough Council)
 Ian Frow (Outwood Parish Council)
 Pat Glenn (Bletchingley Parish Council)
 Chris Hoskins (Nutfield Conservation Society)
 Rigel Mowatt (Nutfield Parish Council)
 Paul Murray (Keep Redhill Airfield Green)
 Vince Sharp (Secretary)
 Nick Stagg (Chairman, Redhill Aerodrome Ventures Limited)
 Debbie Vickers (Tandridge District Council)
 Philip Wright (Aerodrome Manager)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Nicola Taplin (Cubair)

1. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the first Zoom meeting of the Committee. He referred to the sad loss of Reigate & Banstead Borough Councillor Derek Allcard who had passed away in September. RBBC's main representative was now Councillor Michael Blacker, with Councillor Jonathan Essex as his substitute.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 22ND JANUARY 2020

Subject to Michael Blacker being listed as representing Reigate & Banstead Borough Council (and not Tandridge District Council) the minutes were approved as a correct record.

In connection with the final paragraph of item 3 of the minutes, Jim Blackmore asked whether the independent aeronautical survey of the taxiway had been undertaken and whether it would be made public. Nick Stagg had not joined the meeting at this point but, in his absence, Philip Wright stated that he thought the survey had been completed and assumed it would be made public at some point in the future.

Jim Blackmore also requested an update in connection with Item 6 of the minutes (liaison with Salfords & Sidlow Parish Council regarding "westerly take offs"). This concerned the placing of a marker board on a rooftop at the western end of the aerodrome to assist pilots in maintaining the correct climb-out path. Philip Wright advised that he had been trying to obtain guidance from the CAA about size and colouring for such a sign, but this had been delayed due to CAA staff having to work

from home in light of Covid-19 restrictions, coupled with the CAA auditor for the aerodrome having been on leave.

3. FLIGHT MONITORING

(i) Aerodrome Manager's reports

Monitoring reports for January to October 2020 had been circulated prior to the meeting. These comprised movement statistics; complaints by residents about aircraft movements; and references to incidents / accidents. Complainants were no longer identified by name within the reports. Instead, individual complaint records referred to the post code of the complainant's property.

Philip Wright confirmed that, contrary to speculation, the aerodrome had not changed flight patterns since the onset of the pandemic. He believed that the lack of normal aircraft noise associated with Gatwick, and the fact that more people were working from home, had made local flying seem more intrusive.

In response to a question from Chris Hoskins, Philip Wright explained that the telephone line for reporting noise complaints was temporarily unavailable earlier in the year as the relevant software licence had expired. He apologised for that oversight, but it was confirmed that the line was now working again. It was accepted that the telephone line should be retained (alongside digital communication channels), at least for the next two years, as some local residents did not access the internet.

Phillip Wright also agreed to check whether August data had been omitted from the reports.

(ii) Overflying outside the agreed in/out flight routes

Chris Hoskins (who had requested this agenda item) stated that there had been a considerable increase in 'over-flying' by fixed wing aircraft above the Nutfield Park area, some of which had been at very low altitude. Philip Wright acknowledged the need to:

- brief instructors and re-educate pilots ahead of the new 'flying season'; and
- encourage regular attendance at RACC meetings by representatives of flying clubs, the National Police Air Service (NPAS), and the Air Ambulance service.

Philip Wright confirmed that persistent offenders could be banned from the aerodrome although it had been difficult to identify repeat patterns of flight line breaches amidst the stop / start impact of the pandemic upon aviation. His preferred approach of having face to face contact with relevant pilots / instructors had not been possible but he would review the published flight path instructions and the scope for improving briefings for new pilots etc.

Nick Stagg emphasised the importance of including NPAS and the Air Ambulance service in discussions with the flying clubs as part of the process for building constructive relationships with the local community.

4. UPDATE ON BUSINESS ACTIVITIES AT THE AERODROME

Nick Stagg summarised the negative impact of the pandemic upon the commercial operations of the aerodrome. Income for 2020/21 from airside activities had reduced due to the cessation of flying via the COVID-19 restrictions. Although rental income from tenants was still being achieved for the current financial year, 2021/22 could be very challenging if leases were not renewed and vacated units remained unlet. David Burke reinforced this view by commenting on new working practices which would reduce demand for commercial office space. Alternative ways of utilising accommodation on the aerodrome might therefore be required.

In response to a question from Richard Blain, Nick Stagg explained that, while RAVL had sought to minimise service charges, it had not been financially viable to allow 'rent holidays' for tenants.

Following a question from Debbie Vickers about the emerging 'Tandridge Local Plan 2033', Nick Stagg confirmed that he had made representations during the public examination on behalf of RAVL that, in RAVL's opinion, the plan was inadequate and did not effectively meet local needs. He considered that, from his perspective, the plan didn't do anything to address the needs of the aerodrome. He also referred to the restrictions imposed by Local Authority planning regimes given that the aerodrome is in the Green Belt and cited the issue of the taxiway improvement works (and Reigate & Banstead Borough Council's view that this was not covered by permitted development rights) as an example.

In connection with the unlicensed taxiway matter, Paul Murray asked if the number of flights had increased following the safety improvement work. Wayne Clark asserted that Salfords & Sidlow Parish Council had evidence to suggest they had. He accepted that the taxiway needed to be safe for take-offs and landings, but residents didn't want it to trigger a carte blanche increase in aircraft movements. Nick Stagg argued that the taxiway works had made no material change to the use of the aerodrome. He maintained that RAVL's management team had co-operated fully with requests from planning officers (including an offer to impose a cap on aircraft movements) and was willing to provide any further information as required. However, he stressed that aviation safety was RAVL's primary motive.

Richard Blain confirmed that, from a pilot's perspective, the taxiway was now much safer, although still relatively short. He believed that the taxiway was vital for the survival of businesses at the aerodrome as it enabled flights to continue throughout the winter and other times when the main runway was unusable due to bad weather. He described how the aerodrome tenants and users were desperate for better facilities. Phillip Wright confirmed this view and explained that, in his opinion, the only reason why one particular flying school remained solvent was that it could operate during the winter. Phillip also clarified that the CAA had lifted national restrictions regarding the use of such unlicensed taxiways / runways.

Michael Blacker referred to Reigate & Banstead Borough Council's Development Plan and stated that the Council did not wish the aerodrome to be redeveloped for housing. He also expressed reservations that the taxiway could turn into a runway during the winter and looked forward to seeing the relevant consultant's report.

Phillip Wright concluded that he had tried to be as open as possible with neighbouring communities in terms of publishing information on the aerodrome's website. He argued that the aerodrome could not always be blamed for what might have occurred in the past regarding any shortcomings in liaising with the public or the local planning authorities.

5. FUTURE MEETING DATES

Future meetings were scheduled as follows (10.00am at Redhill Aerodrome Business Centre or via Zoom, dependent upon possible ongoing Covid-19 restrictions):

Ordinary meeting - Wednesday 24th March 2021; and

Annual Meeting - Saturday 19th June 2021

The meeting closed at 10.56 a.m.

DRAFT