

REDHILL AERODROME CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Redhill Aerodrome Consultative Committee held on the 12th April 2023, at 11.00am, hosted in the Council Offices, Station Road East Oxted with options to join via Zoom.

PRESENT IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER:

Terry Pollard (Chairman)
Jim Blackmore (Salfords & Sidlow Parish Council)
Chris Hoskins (Nutfield Conservation Society)
Paul Murray (KRAG)
Vince Sharp (Secretary)

PRESENT VIA ZOOM:

Catherine Baart (Surrey County Council)
Michael Blacker (Reigate & Banstead Borough Council)
David Burke (Chief Executive, Redhill Aerodrome)
Jonathon Essex (Reigate & Banstead Borough Council - deputy)
Chris Farr (Godstone Parish Council)
Pat Glenn (Bletchingley Parish Council)
Rigel Mowatt (Nutfield Parish Council)
Nick Stagg (Chairman, Redhill Aerodrome Ventures Limited)
James Tester (Redhill Aviation)
Mark Wooller (Outwood Parish Council)
Philip Wright (Aerodrome Manager)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Nikki Taplin (Cubair)

1. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed all attendees and thanked Tandridge DC for hosting the meeting and enabling both 'in person' and 'on-line' participation via the conferencing facilities in the Council Chamber.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 29TH NOVEMBER 2022

Paul Murray (PM) argued that the final sentence of paragraph 8(i) (headed "*Potential for solar roof panels on aerodrome buildings*") should be amended from:

"Nick Stagg also acknowledged that any development proposals would need to take account of the Green Belt where applicable".

To:

"Nick Stagg confirmed that future development possibilities were restricted by the Aerodrome's existing Green Belt status".

Nick Stagg (NS) considered that the sentence should remain as currently drafted and the minutes were approved as a correct record. However, PM indicated his wish to pursue the issue under 'Matters Arising' (Item 3(iv)) below refers.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE ABOVE MINUTES

(i) Flight markers on the care home roof

In response to a question from Jim Blackmore (JB), Phillip Wright (PW) advised that it was not conclusive whether such markers would be visible to pilots.

(ii) Salfords Primary School

In response to a further question from JB, PW advised that the school had not responded to his previous offer to visit, but he would make contact again now that the flying season had commenced.

(iii) Means of conducting future meetings

Chris Hoskins (CH) presented further arguments in favour of reverting to 'in person' RACC meetings, ideally at the aerodrome. This was supported JB and PM.

NS commented that, in his personal experience, virtual meetings had become an established means of conducting business. He considered that a return to 'in person' RACCs would be challenging and not environmentally friendly and proposed that the committee should proceed with the hybrid arrangements being provided for this current meeting. David Burke (DB) advised that there was no suitable room within the aerodrome for the committee. Furthermore, he was committed to protecting his team from Covid and other viruses, as outbreaks would jeopardise the operation of the aerodrome. Jonathan Essex (JE) agreed with NS, provided that the annual public meeting continued to be 'in person'. The Chairman concluded that the committee would continue with the hybrid option.

(iv) Green Belt status of the aerodrome

PM asked if NS accepted that future development possibilities at the aerodrome were restricted due its Green Belt status. NS confirmed that the aerodrome would comply with all applicable planning regulations when proceeding with any future development proposals, although none were contemplated at the present time.

4. UPDATE ON BUSINESS ACTIVITIES AT THE AERODROME

NS stated that the business was continuing to grow but the economic situation posed major challenges for private pilots and flying schools. Progress was being made with letting the space previously occupied by Arena Aviation and efforts were ongoing to invest in the site to maximise rental income. Nevertheless, the capital investment required to upgrade the ageing buildings, coupled with the increasingly stringent regulatory regimes governing aerodromes, created significant financial pressures.

DB added that plans to invest last year's modest aerodrome profit in the buildings stock were thwarted by the escalating business rates liability for empty units (which, in one case, had increased from £43K to £84K). He also referred to the problems caused by road drainage issues on Kings Mill Lane. NS commented that, on one occasion, a flooding incident had caused a potential tenant to withdraw interest in renting a hanger. Catherine Baart (CB) agreed to take up the aerodrome's concerns (about the drainage problems) with the County Council.

CH asked for an update regarding the former Pilots' Hub café. DB explained that the aerodrome had only just taken back control of the building (Hanger 9) and was addressing the need to undertake improvement works, including more suitable WCs. The implementation of such works would depend on upon available finances but he hoped a catering facility would reopen as soon as possible (although he couldn't give an estimated date at this stage).

5. FLIGHT MONITORING

PW presented flight monitoring data for the period from November 2022 to March 2023. The aircraft movement figures were up on those for the preceding year, which was encouraging, although the recent wet weather had caused a drop-off with the grass runways becoming waterlogged. He thanked Cubair and Redhill Aviation for their co-operation in sharing flight movements which had been effective in adhering to the Section 106 cap.

PW also thanked JB for spotting errors in the movement statistics for November, January and March, hence the amended tables circulated on 11th April. However, JB raised further queries with the February figures and PW undertook to review the spreadsheet formula.

It was agreed that a representative of A2B Heli Charters, which had recently become a new tenant at the aerodrome, be invited to future RACC meetings.

6. QUESTIONS FROM SURREY COUNTY COUNCILLOR CATHERINE BAART

- (i) What does the aerodrome do to support biodiversity as it manages a large expanse of uncultivated grass land?

NS explained that the large expanses of grass had to be cut to a uniform length to enable the aerodrome to operate safely. This, together with the need to minimise the risk of bird strikes, meant there was little the aerodrome could do to improve bio-diversity.

- (ii) What will be the impact of Gatwick's proposed expansion plans on the aerodrome, should the plans be approved?

PW confirmed that the aerodrome had been liaising with Gatwick about the possibility of increasing the height of Redhill's permitted airspace, which should benefit residents in the vicinity of the aerodrome. Subject to that, Gatwick's expansion plans would have no operational impact upon Redhill.

7. FUTURE MEETING DATES

The next two committee meetings were scheduled as follows (both at 10.00am in the TDC's Council Chamber in Oxted, with an option to join via Zoom):

- Wednesday 5th July
- Wednesday 6th December.

The aerodrome's management team could no longer make the 13th September for the 2023 public meeting and Vince Sharp would attempt to arrange an alternative date. JB requested that this meeting be held in Salfords Village Hall if possible.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Possible site visit to the aerodrome / public access issues

JE suggested that a site visit should be arranged to enable committee members to view the new catering facility. He believed this would enable members to gain a greater understanding of key issues at the aerodrome and would help foster relationships between aerodrome users and community representatives.

In response, NS explained that public access to the aerodrome had to be rigorously controlled to comply with current CAA safety requirements and that the aerodrome should no longer be regarded as a public recreation space. It would not be practicable to accommodate the whole committee 'en-bloc', but he agreed that a limited number of RACC members could be invited to the new catering outlet once it became fully operational. He also confirmed that all aviation tenants were encouraged to attend RACC meetings to enable a range of relevant views to be exchanged.

The meeting closed at 12.12 p.m.