

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (CUSTOMERS AND PARTNERSHIPS) held as a remote meeting via Zoom on Thursday, 7th January 2021

PRESENT: Councillor D M Tysoe – Chairman.

Councillors T D Alban, B S Banks, S J Criswell, J W Davies, Ms A Diaz, Mrs A Dickinson, D A Giles, Mrs S Smith and Mrs S R Wilson.

APOLOGY: An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor Mrs J Tavener.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors I D Gardener, D N Keane, J P Morris, J M Palmer, K I Prentice and R J West.

31 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3rd December 2020 were approved as a correct record by the Panel.

32 MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were received.

33 NOTICE OF KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Panel received and noted the current Notice of Key Executive Decisions (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which had been prepared by the Executive Leader for the period 1st January 2021 to 30th April 2021.

34 CONSULTATION BY NATIONAL AIR TRAFFIC SERVICE - LONDON LUTON AIRPORT FLIGHTPATHS

Consideration was given to a report by the Operational Manager (People) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the consultation by the National Air Traffic Service (NATS) on the London Luton Airport (LLA) Flightpaths. Also in attendance to answer the Panel's questions were Nicole Morris, Colin Wyatt and Adrian Ryman from the NATS/LLA Consultation Team.

In addition to the report, Mr Wyatt gave Members a brief presentation on the proposal but focused on the section which most affected Huntingdonshire. Mr Wyatt informed Members that a final decision had yet to be made and that NATS are legally required to respond to all comments they received during the consultation.

Councillor Banks asked whether the holding zone could be moved away from St Neots because it was a highly populated area. Councillor Giles agreed with the

suggestion and commented that the holding zone did not need to move far. In responding to the comments, Mr Wyatt stated that due to the north-south flightpaths, the east-west flightpaths and the military airspace, the holding zone would be better located where it was proposed. He added that NATS did model other options but for the reasons already referred to, they were not considered to be feasible. However, the Panel was informed that it might be possible to move the holding zone slightly.

Following a query from Councillor Criswell about the necessity for a holding zone, Members were informed that NATS did consider whether it was required as part of its assessment of the available options, but this was rejected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) on the grounds of safety. In terms of flight numbers, Ms Morris stated that it was expected flight numbers would return to pre-pandemic levels in time and that the holding zone was required.

In response to a question from Councillor Alban regarding the effect pollution levels would have upon residents, the Panel was informed that it would be minimal as the mixing that occurred at altitude meant that pollution from the planes would be dispersed. Councillor Alban then raised the suggestion that the holding zone could be located over the North Sea. However, the Panel was informed that due to the distance from the LLA and the timings involved in bringing planes to land, a holding zone located over the North Sea could not be justified.

Councillor Gardener stated that his residents' main concern was that the noise from a plane at 8000ft would be approximately 55db (according to NATS documentation) and the ambient background noise within parts of the countryside would be 29db. At these levels noise from planes would be intrusive for residents living in rural areas of the District. If the holding zone could not be moved, he suggested that the minimum flying height within the holding zone should be raised to 9000ft. This would reduce the potential for noise from planes within the holding zone to cause nuisance at ground level.

Following a question from Councillor Giles, Ms Morris confirmed that there were no plans for either a second runway or an extension of the existing runway at LLA.

The Chairman queried the timescales for the consultation and stated that due to the importance of the proposed change, the complexity of the documentation and the fact that the residents being consulted would have to obtain their own expert advice to be able to respond meaningfully, 15 weeks for the consultation seemed insufficient. In response, Members were informed that the CAA through their document, CAP 1616, recommended that the consultation should last for a minimum of 12 weeks and that this consultation exceeded the recommended timescale.

The independence of the conclusions and findings was questioned by the Chairman. Mr Wyatt stated that NATS were guided by the data provided by the CAA and that Members should have full confidence in the conclusions and findings. The Chairman then questioned why Stansted airport were not co-authoring the reports as the outcome would potentially change their existing arrival flightpaths. It was explained that Stansted were involved at the start of the

process, but it was established that the arrivals from LLA could be moved without affecting the Stansted arrivals.

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Panel was informed that NATS had contacted an officer at the Ministry of Defence in regard to the consultation and the impact the proposals would have upon military airspace in the East of England.

It was explained to the Panel, following a query from the Chairman, that once the holding pattern was agreed and implemented there would not be a significant margin of error. This meant there were unlikely to be planes drifting outside the zone and flying over areas which were not expecting it.

Councillor Alban asked how many flights Huntingdonshire residents could expect to use the holding zone. Mr Wyatt informed Members that it was expected that there would be an average of 219 flights per day arriving at LLA rising to 249 flights during the summer peak. On average this would be nine planes per hour, however Mr Ryman explained that, on average, air traffic control landed 30% of all flights before they needed to use the holding zone and therefore the statistics could be reduced by up to 30%.

Following on, Councillor Alban, questioned what could be done if the modelling proved incorrect when the proposal was enacted. Mr Wyatt explained that the statistics and the modelling were the best that could be provided by NATS and the CAA. After the scheme had been implemented for a year, there was a post-implementation review by the CAA. Should the CAA find that the reality was significantly different to the modelling, then the CAA could insist on a change.

After a query on the lack of evidence for the need for the holding zone to be located over Huntingdonshire and evidence that other options had been considered, Mr Wyatt explained that the evidence was considered under stage 2 of the process (with the consultation being stage 3). On behalf of the Panel, the Chairman expressed, dissatisfaction that the data had not been provided to demonstrate the need for the holding zone to be placed where proposed and that the other options considered had not been included in the consultation.

Addressing the responses by the Town and Parish Councils, the Chairman stated that he was satisfied that the Panel had covered the points and raised them with the NATS/LLA Consultation Team. Whereupon, the Panel

RESOLVED

that the comments of Members on this item be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration as part of its response to the consultation on behalf of the Council.

35 PROPOSED CHANGES TO NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Having noted that the proposed changes to Neighbourhood Policing in Cambridgeshire would not be discussed at the meeting, the Panel,

RESOLVED

that the item be deferred to the meeting in April 2021.

36 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

With the aid of a report by the Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme was presented to the Panel. The Chairman informed the Panel that there would be a task and finish review on the floods throughout Huntingdonshire during December 2020.

Chairman