



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING : Monday, 25th September 2023

PRESENT : Cllrs. Chambers-Dubus, Campbell, Castle, Dee, Evans, Hilton, Hudson, Kubaszczyk, Sawyer and Wilson

Others in Attendance

Leader of the Council, Councillor Richard Cook

Airport Director, Gloucestershire Airport Ltd

Interim Head of Finance and HR, Gloucestershire Airport Ltd

Democratic and Electoral Services Officer

APOLOGIES : Cllrs. Field, Pullen and Hyman

36. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

37. DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIPPING

There were no declarations of party whipping.

38. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

There were no public questions.

39. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

There were no petitions nor deputations.

40. GLOUCESTERSHIRE AIRPORT - SEPTEMBER 2023 UPDATE

40.1 Following introductions from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Richard Cook, the Airport Director and Interim Head of Finance and HR for Gloucestershire Airport Ltd (GAL) delivered a presentation on key matters of interest, including an overview of the Airport Director's current priorities for Gloucestershire Airport, an update on the Business Plan refresh and a 2023 Finance Report. The Airport Director and Interim Head of Finance and HR for GAL also provided an overview of the latest position on staffing, including

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the appointment of a Deputy Head of Operations, CGX Development update and ongoing projects around the airport's green credentials and Environmental Policy.

- 40.2 Councillor Wilson referred to the narrative in the presentation regarding improving communication with tenants and asked whether there had been an improvement in relations. The Airport Director confirmed that in his view, relationships with tenants were in a better place. He explained that the Chairman of Gloucestershire Airport had asked him to focus on customer relationships as a key priority, and that he had held face to face meetings with all key tenants with indications of progress.
- 40.3 Councillor Wilson asked for further information around training opportunities for air traffic controllers and commercial pilots. The Airport Director explained that Gloucestershire Airport provided commercial pilot training, whereby students with no experience could complete a course costing around £125k for a Commercial Pilot License. In relation to air traffic controllers, he explained that many airports outsourced their air traffic control staff however this was managed in-house at Gloucestershire Airport. The Airport Director confirmed that the airport accepted amateur students and once they obtained their air traffic control license, they needed to demonstrate to the regulator active controlling in Gloucestershire as air traffic control is site specific. The Interim Head of Finance further added that the cost of taking the course was around £41k over 3 and a half years.
- 40.4 In response to a further question from Councillor Wilson regarding finances and the airport's profit, the Interim Head of Finance confirmed that the airport had seen additional consultancy costs for the CGX development, and associated marketing and data collection costs had had an impact on the 2022/23 profits.
- 40.5 Councillor Hilton referred to the national air traffic control shortage and noted his understanding that the UK previously relied on attracting many air traffic controllers from overseas. He asked whether the UK leaving the EU had had any impact on recruitment. The Interim Head of Finance and HR confirmed that Gloucestershire Airport did employ overseas staff. She explained that prior to Brexit, it was expected that the UK and EU licenses would be merged, however this involved two separate regulatory authorities and had not yet happened in practice. This said, she noted that pilots using Gloucestershire Airport were in a good location as they could make use of flight paths into Guernsey and Jersey, and subsequent further journeys over to France.
- 40.6 In response to an additional question from Councillor Hilton regarding whether the resurfaced runway had had a positive impact and whether Gloucestershire Airport could now accommodate larger aircraft, the Airport Director confirmed that the airport tended to attract medium size and small business jets at the moment, however the runway resurfacing works had improved the property in that it had made it easier for all aircraft to land.

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- 40.7 Councillor Hilton referred to the future ambition of Gloucestershire Airport to extend its hours of operation and asked whether this was likely to attract larger aircraft to the airport. The Airport Director clarified that this was a long-term desire of the airport. He further confirmed that modern jets tended to make use of 'whispering technology' which would provide quieter movements but movements of more quality. He also noted that he was keen to reduce the overall carbon footprint of the airport.
- 40.8 In respect of the narrative in the presentation around the Ten-Year Business Plan refresh, Councillor Hilton noted that the aviation industry was likely to change over the next 20 years and impressed that the Ten-Year Business Plan needed to have flexibility. He asked how the plan would be developed in light of this. The Airport Director agreed that flexibility was needed, and that it was his aspiration to make the airport's operations cleaner and more efficient, making more use of property.
- 40.9 In response to a further question from Councillor Hilton regarding interest from businesses in occupying commercial units, the Interim Head of Finance and HR confirmed that the airport had received interest from current tenants and overseas buyers for development. She noted that the airport had received support through a LEP grant with the aim of creating more employment opportunities, and that the airport was exploring all options.
- 40.10 Councillor Dee asked whether the lack of Radar technology had had any impact on operations. The Airport Director confirmed that the airport was still operating safely, however it meant that movements took place every 10 minutes compared with every 2-3 minutes with Radar. He noted that if the airport were to consider installing new Radar technology, there would be costs of around £2.5m alongside additional costs for staff training over the next 2 and a half – 3 years.
- 40.11 In response to a follow-up question from Councillor Dee regarding operating times, the Airport Director confirmed that extending operating hours was a long-term future aim, and that the airport would need to act proportionately and appropriately. He provided assurances that he was not naïve to concerns from local communities and that he was keen to work with communities to find a balance between commercial viability and environmental and residents' concerns.
- 40.12 In response to a query from Councillor Castle regarding increased movements should new Radar technology be installed, the Airport Director confirmed that new Radar technology was not a priority for the airport at the moment.
- 40.13 Councillor Castle noted that she was aware of concerns from Longlevens residents regarding an increase in movements in the area and asked whether there had been any changes in flight patterns. The Airport Director replied that there had been no changes in flight patterns and that the airport held regular meetings with tenants.

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- 40.14 In response to a further query from Councillor Castle regarding current flight times, the Airport Director confirmed that the current movement operating hours were between 8.30am and 7.30pm. He also confirmed that should there be any extension of operating hours in the future, the airport had ruled out offering late night flying for training schools.
- 40.15 In response to a query from Councillor Kubaszczyk regarding the narrative in the presentation that Gloucestershire Airport was one of the busiest airports in the UK, the Interim Head of Finance and HR confirmed that the airport was currently the 10th busiest airport in the UK and that flight training tended to generate more movement. The Airport Director noted that the airport was not necessarily targeting increased movements, and it was his ambition for the airport to move towards less, but smarter movements.
- 40.16 Councillor Kubaszczyk asked whether the recent water leak had had any financial impact on the airport. The Interim Head of Finance and HR explained that Severn Trent Water had that afternoon completed the repairs needed to fix the leak and that the airport would now need to assess the financial impact. She noted that it was the expectation that any financial impact would be covered by insurance.
- 40.17 Referring to the recent emergency landing on the A40 Golden Valley Bypass, Councillor Hudson asked whether there was any understanding of why the emergency landing had happened and the feasibility of it happening again. The Airport Director confirmed that the landing was currently under investigation by the Air Accidents Investigation Branch, that the pilot had been in contact with the airport's air traffic control and that there were no casualties from the incident. He noted that as the landlord, there was no failing on the airport, however the airport had reassessed its emergency plan.

RESOLVED – That the Overview and Scrutiny **NOTE** the presentation.

41. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 2nd October 2023 at 6.30pm in Civic Suite, North Warehouse.

Time of commencement: 6.30 pm hours

Time of conclusion: 7.37 pm hours

Chair