

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Rochester Airport Consultative Committee (RACC) held at  
Holiday Inn, Chatham on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2014 at 17:00**

**Present:**

M. Moulton (MM) - (Chairman) – MAPS Ltd  
P. Britten (PB) – Rochester Airport Ltd (RAL)  
K. Carr (KC) – Rochester Airport Ltd (RAL)  
P. Homewood (PH) – Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council (TMBC)  
R. Heaps (RH) – MAPS Ltd  
R. Turpin (RT) – Medway Borough Council (MBC)  
P. Rudd (PR) – Skytrek Flying School (SFS)  
S. Smith (SS) – BAE Systems (BAeS)  
P. Gould (PG) - Secretary

**1. Welcome & Apologies**

MM opened the meeting at 17:00, welcoming members and introducing Mr Smith and Mr Heaps. He made the following opening remarks:

*As you know, the Department for Transport recommends that meetings take place at least annually and we have not met for just over 13 months. We won't meet just for the sake of it but I think today's agenda gives good reason. Correspondence has been addressed to me by complainants about noise and about the DfT ruling that only approved organisations may send delegates, not individuals. As I have shared with you the complaints from two individuals asking to attend, you will know that I have told them that, if they formed an organisation, as recommended by the DfT, they would be welcome. Indeed, some members have said they would welcome a dialogue with them. But they have declined to do this and so we will rely on the Airport Manager's report to give fair comment on all messages received and their authors. I have had to tell people who have addressed complaints to me individually, that the role of RACC is to give expert advice to the Airport management and, in my case, to pass on any comments, which they were perfectly able to do for themselves. I am fully satisfied that all such messages have been acknowledged and logged. The RACC has no authority to enforce its recommendations, nor would we seek it. As you will see from the Agenda, I have committed us to consider all complaints, fairly and, where reasonably possible, suggest ways of alleviation. In short, this is not just a talking shop and our recommendations are taken fully on board. At the end of the day, however, Airport policy has to be decided by its management. It is that management that has established the RACC and which bears the cost of administration, with delegates bearing their own expenses.*

Apologies had been received from Nigel Tiller, Trevor Clark, Garry Price, Phil Cole, Ian Brimelow, Emily Cheeseman and Alan Marsh.

**2. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2013 were accepted and signed as a true record. It had been agreed that delegate names and organisations are to be Minuted, so that in future only one set of Minutes would be produced.

**3. Matters Arising from the Minutes, not covered in the Agenda**

There were no matters arising.

**4. Organisations' Future Representation**

The Chairman said it was important that the RACC should have wide representation and asked for suggestions. It was agreed that the current list of delegates should be updated. A delegate should propose a deputy if unable to attend a meeting.

It was agreed that invitations to join the RACC should be sent to The Innovation Centre, the Holiday Inn, Fly Aviation UK Academy, Gyro School, General Aviation Safety Council and AV8. KC said he would contact each organisation to obtain a name so that the Chairman could make a formal invitation.

*Robin Heaps joined the meeting at 17:10.*

**5. Progress on the Airport Master Plan**

PB confirmed that, despite a fiery meeting of the Council, the Plan had been fully adopted on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2014.

**6. Planning Application Progress**

PB had prepared an update for the meeting and which is attached to these Minutes.

An almost-final aerial view was passed round. This also showed the site reserved for the projected 'Aviation Medway' heritage centre. It was hoped that lottery funding might be available for this and that the Shorts Scion floatplane would be displayed by MAPSL among other exhibits.

**7. Airport Manager's Report (including a summary of all complaints received from identified complainants and responses so far made)**

A report had been prepared by KC for the meeting and is attached to these Minutes.

A detailed discussion took place in respect of each complaint received and delegates were satisfied that these had been responded to and dealt with in the proper manner.

KC had prepared a spreadsheet noting 22 complaints received since 2013. The spreadsheet would be attached to the Minutes once personal details had been removed. KC said he would continue to update the spreadsheet and would summarise each complaint. Local councillors had been very supportive during this period and had brought some concerned local residents up to the airfield. It had been noted that during 2014 no complaints had been received until June.

The common theme of the complaints was autogyros, whilst not particularly noisy, are slow to pass over. KC and PB were looking into the problem to see if anything could be done. Although silencers are fitted to aircraft in Germany, it is however, outside the remit of the Airport to legislate that silencers be fitted to any aircraft.

Members agreed that the Airport Manager's report showed the value of the airport to the community over and above its use as an airfield.

**8. Consideration of Methods of Alleviation**

This item had been dealt with at the same time as the Airport Manager's report. Most complaints were gyrocopter-noise-related. It was not possible to alter their flight path but a paved runway would help them get airborne more quickly, thus reducing the noise intensity. The number of autogyros based at Rochester had reduced recently, but movement numbers remained the same.

KC told the meeting that the owner of the Gyro School had sponsored a local football club, (Walderslade FC) providing them with kit etc. The Chairman thanked KC for his help.

*Phil Rudd left the meeting at 17:55*

**9. Airspace and Related Issues**

The development of Southend Airport as a commercial airport could cause operational problems at Rochester. Phil Rudd had replied to the Consultation on behalf of Skytrek. The Chairman had also replied with concern about the possibility of additional noise to our neighbours.

KC said that Southend had submitted plans for their large airspace requirement, which was significantly larger than that of Heathrow and Gatwick. It seems that the mitigating circumstances had not been looked at by the CAA or NATS. Southend and Manston were looking at trying to control the whole of North Kent airspace. Southend would probably get their airspace and had made some concessions for Stoke microlight establishment. In the interim a RMZ (Radio Mandatory Zone) had been established, larger than the airspace Southend had requested and which finished 4nm north of Rochester. Medway and parish councils had been very supportive and had submitted their own respective comments about the adverse effects this may have at Rochester.

**10. Aircraft Preservation Report**

RH said that the Rochester Bridge Trust, sponsors for the Short Scion restoration had visited MAPS Limited. Steady progress was being made on the fuselage and work needed to start soon on the wings, for which a jig needed to be made. This was a 5-year restoration project.

Restoration work also included two Merlin engines being brought to museum standard for Peter Monk and Peter Black, and a propeller and seats from a Whitney bomber. MAPSL was looking at requirements for its move to the proposed new hangar building. The Company was very much indebted to BAE Systems for its support. Although this was unconditional, MAPS would be willing to support marketing, customer-relations or other activities, as had been done in the past.

**11. Other Business**

The Chairman and KC thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

There being no other business the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 18:13.

**12. Next Meeting Date**

A provisional date was set for 17:00 on **Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2015** at the Holiday Inn or Innovation Centre. It was hoped that Planning Permission would have been received by that date.