

COUNCIL MEETING

25TH MARCH 2015

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC FOR WRITTEN REPLY

1. From Andrew Cairns

What alternative uses for the airport site has the Council considered, more appropriate to the residential nature of the surrounding areas, given that the management of BHAL feel unable to operate a viable business without increasing their weekly operating hours by an overall 14.5% (42% increase at the weekend)?

Reply:

The Council has not considered an alternative use for the airport site as it is leased to BHAL Ltd for a term of 125 years from 7th May 1994.

2. From Matthew Coates

(i) As job and Gross Added Value estimates are linked by NLP to more than just the increase in operating hours, has the Council received a satisfactory Business Plan from the Airport related exclusively to the increase in operating hours?

Reply:

The Airport has stressed that the forecast job growth could not be achieved without an increase in hours. The Council is reasonably satisfied that this is the case as evidenced by consultants (URS and DTZ) and BHAL's feedback from potential investors.

(ii) Why does the Council keep referring to the overall support for the Airport's proposals during its October survey when the Populus survey actually showed that only 35% unreservedly supported the only question that matters: Operating Hours, thus perpetuating BHAL's misrepresentation of it?

Reply:

The Council has encouraged the residents to read the full submission published on the Council's website. The populus survey result showed that "65% support the new opening times (including 35% who strongly support them) compared with 18% who oppose".

(iii) Why does the Council believe that taxpayers have to continue to provide funds and concessions to a private business serving an elite clientele AND already profitable, when that money would be better spent supporting other types of industries and enterprises?

Reply:

I don't believe the Council is.

3. From Zoe Chambers

(i) What forecasts have been run to ensure that there are enough students from the borough of Bromley to justify Bromley taxpayers paying £3.5m towards it and why was it not made clear that we taxpayers, not the airport, are paying for it?

Reply:

The Council is not in receipt of a Business Plan for the proposed training facility at the Airport and therefore it is premature to comment on costs and who will pay for the facility.

(ii) Has the Council analysed alternative sources of income for that large area which do not involve aeroplanes overflying people's homes and why would this not be a reasonable opportunity to ask the Airport (which is profitable and does not need extra support) whether they might want to rescind the lease if they do not like it as it is?

Reply:

The lease includes provision for the Airport to seek revisions to the operating criteria. That is all they are doing.

(iii) How much profit has the Council made in real terms from BHAL over the past 20 years after deducting the £1.5m to resurface the runway, additional money to install the ILS, £400k granted in 2007 (taken from BHAL's accounts) and other general infrastructure/services expenditure? Why do you think they are not taking you for a ride again?

Reply:

Since the lease agreement was signed, the Council has received rent payments totalling £2,382,374 for the period 1994/95 to 2013/14. In 1994, the Council undertook to contribute up to £1.5m towards the resurfacing of the main runway and actual expenditure on this totalled £1,500,850.00 between 1994/95 and 1998/99. In addition, the Council spent a total of £82,619.48 on lighting improvements between 1993/94 and 1998/99. This provides a net difference of £798,904.52 over the period 1993 to 2014.

We have checked back through our records and, from the information provided, have been unable to find any record of a contribution towards the ILS or of a £400k grant.

Subject to Members' decision tonight, I would be seeking to ensure that any new agreement with BHAL addresses more satisfactorily than was the case with the original lease agreement, a significantly better financial deal for our residents.

4. From Nicholas Voisey

(i) Now that I have read the report circulated yesterday, how can a decision be taken with so many imponderables, suggested 'best efforts' amendments, unsubstantiated projections, undeliverable pledges etc?

Reply:

The Council has received a proposal from BHAL and is obliged to consider the proposal in a timely manner.

(ii) How can the council even consider such a divisive decision based on putting two thirds unaffected residents of the borough against the third which is affected?

Reply:

The Council has a duty to weigh up the pro's and con's of such proposals and make decisions based on what is in the best interests of the Borough as a whole.

(iii) How can a Council, any council, support a party that has based its canvassing on market manipulation rather than market research and run a campaign by calling the opposition liars instead of using arguments as well as writing personal intimidating letters? All of this can be proven.

Reply:

The Council cannot be held responsible for activities undertaken by third parties and will make its own decisions based on its own merits and facts on the application it has received.