

**STANSTED AIRPORT REFERENDUM GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30 pm on 28 AUGUST 2002**

Present:- Councillors Mrs M A Caton, Mrs C M Dean, P G F Lewis and G Sell.

Officers in attendance:- B D Perkins and M T Purkiss.

SAR1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R D Green and R J O'Neill.

SAR2 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED that Councillor P G F Lewis be elected Chairman of the Referendum Group for the remainder of the council year.

SAR3 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 July 2001, were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

SAR4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Some Members had asked for clarification of whether there was a conflict between their involvement in this project and their role as a member of the Development Control and Licensing Committee which would determine the current planning application for the expansion of the airport. Officers considered that there was a clear distinction between the current planning application and the issue of additional runways and it would not be necessary for Members to declare an interest on the basis of their membership of the Development Control and Licensing Committee.

SAR5 EVALUATION OF RESPONSES TO CONDUCT A REFERENDUM

The Committee & Communications Manager reported that four companies had been invited to submit proposals for carrying out a referendum on proposals for additional runways at Stansted Airport. Two companies had responded and had included the option of a postal referendum to each elector or household and other options which would include the opportunity for electors to respond by Internet or telephone. He circulated to Members a summary and evaluation of the proposals submitted by the two companies, Electoral Reform Services and election.com. Both companies had a proven track record and had submitted proposals which were sound and would meet the Council's deadline. Members did not feel that the extra cost involved in providing the ability to respond by internet or telephone could be justified and considered that a postal ballot was the most appropriate way of dealing with

this matter. Members considered it important that Electoral Reform Services was a company which was widely known to electors and had considerable experience working with local government.

RESOLVED that the proposals submitted by Electoral Reform Services to undertake a postal referendum involving all electors in the sum of £21,438 be accepted.

SAR6

QUESTION AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

In giving his apologies, Councillor O'Neill had asked that the Members of the Group be made aware of his view that the question included in the Referendum should be a single, very simple question and not multiple choice. The content of the question would have to be discussed with Electoral Reform Services and their advice would need to be taken into account to ensure that the Referendum was objective and stood up to scrutiny.

RESOLVED that, subject to the advice of Electoral Reform Services, the question to be included in the Referendum should be "the Council is opposed to any further runways at Stansted Airport. Do you agree?"

The Group also considered that some background information ought to be included with the ballot paper and this should be factual and objective. It was suggested that the information should include statistics about the current throughput at the airport and how this would increase with additional runways. It should also refer to the loss of listed buildings, villages and hamlets as detailed in the SERAS document. The other key issues to be addressed were increased traffic, housing, the loss of amenity, impact on the environment and increased noise. One statistic that might be relevant was that the additional 83,000 extra homes proposed in the report were three times the number of the existing houses in the District. It was also considered that the information should provide addresses and websites where further information could be obtained on the proposals.

The Group considered that it was vital that as many electors as possible participated in the Referendum. The importance of the Referendum would need to be highlighted in the information contained with the ballot paper and all councillors and town and parish councils had a role in encouraging electors to respond. In this respect, it was felt that it would be helpful if Electoral Reform Services could provide details of the number of responses received after 7 or 10 days into the exercise.

SAR7

PUBLICITY

It was noted that a meeting had been arranged on 3 September 2002 to appoint consultants to deal with public relations and lobbying and best use needed to be made of the consultant's expertise. The Group felt that every opportunity should be taken to obtain national media attention and that when the results of the Referendum were known, efforts should be made to obtain good publicity when the results were delivered to the Government.