

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 4 November 2014

Subject: Assets & Economic Development

Portfolio Holder: Councillor A Grigg

Recommending:

(1) That a supplementary estimate from the District Development Fund in the sum of £60,000 be approved for the procurement and appointment of Marketing Agents to seek an Operational Partner to manage the aviation activities at North Weald Airfield.

Report:

1. The Council have received a number of reports on the options for the future of the Airfield. The Cabinet on 22 July 2013 had resolved that the future should be the “mixed aviation/development option”, subject to the Local Plan. These development options were now being considered in detail as part of the Local Plan review. In order to inform that process and assess the aviation potential, it was suggested that bringing in a private sector operating partner could be beneficial.

2. Property consultants, Savills, were appointed to review the current position and undertake a soft marketing exercise to obtain the views of companies operating in this sector of the aviation industry. Due to the number of unknown factors around how the aviation operation could be improved at the Airfield, there was a clear preference from the private sector for a management agreement rather than a long lease.

3. A management agreement would involve the Council paying a fee to an operator who would take responsibility for running the aviation business. A term of 5 to 10 years was envisaged for the initial agreement and the objective would be to try and ensure that the aviation business at the Airfield became profitable in its own right. It was anticipated that aviation activities would initially be restricted to the west side of the main runway, but would include operational buildings such as the Control Tower.

4. At its meeting on 6 October 2014, the Cabinet agreed to progress the appointment of an operational partner at the Airfield. This would entail the appointment of Marketing Agents in the first instance, for which a supplementary District Development Fund estimate in the sum of £60,000 would be required, and authority was delegated to the Portfolio Holder to agree the terms of appointment. A report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Cabinet on the outcome of the marketing exercise.

5. We recommend as set out at the commencement of this report.