



**Belfast City Council**

**Report to:** Health and Environmental Services Committee

**Subject:** ~~The~~ **George Best Belfast City Airport Forum**

**Date:** 5th November, 2008

**Reporting Officer:** Mrs Suzanne Wylie, Head of Environmental Health, ext. 3281

**Contact Officer:** Mrs Siobhan Toland, Environmental Protection, ext. 3312

**Relevant Background Information**

The George Best Belfast City Airport is an important asset which is vital to the continued development of the City. In 2007, a total of 2,177,544 passengers passed through it, bringing many business opportunities and contributing significantly to the increased number of tourists visiting Belfast. However, it also has to be recognised that a city airport such as this has to be well managed to mitigate the potential impact it can have in terms of noise, air pollution and public safety.

The Airport has an established Airport Forum (in operation since 1993) which includes representation from communities as well as both officer and Member representation from Belfast City Council and North Down Borough Council. The Member nomination to this Forum has in the past been made by the Health and Environmental Services Committee and is currently Councillor Robin Newton. An officer from the Environmental Health Service, Siobhan Toland is currently the Council observer nominee on the Forum. The Forum comprises representatives from local authorities; residents groups; the NI General Consumer Council; the Department for Regional Development; airlines and other groups.

In answer to a query raised by this Committee at the October meeting during discussion of a request from the Forum to increase the Council's representation, the following additional information is provided. The Forum's constitution

requires that the Chairman and Deputy Chairman are independent. Independent in the context of the Forum means that they are not members of any organisation associated with the Forum. The appointments are fixed terms as detailed in the constitution (~~attached in~~ Appendix 2).

The posts of Chairman and Deputy Chairman are not publicly advertised. In the event of the post of Chairman or Deputy Chairman of the Forum being vacant, the Secretary shall ask Forum Committee Members to nominate an independent person who would have agreed to allow their name to be submitted. The nominees must:

- Have previous experience of Membership or Chairmanship of public bodies, and the ability to communicate successfully at all levels;
- Have an awareness of matters relating to the economic importance to Northern Ireland, and the environmental aspects, of air transport;
- Have a public profile within N. Ireland which attracts a high level of respect and support across the community.

Where there is more than one nomination, the Forum Committee would elect a Chairman or Deputy Chairman from those nominated. In the event of a large number of nominations being received, the Forum Committee may appoint an Appointment Sub Committee to draw up a shortlist of names to be put to the Forum Committee for election. This has now been written into the revised draft constitution as of a meeting of the Forum review group on 16 October 2008. An extract of this section is included as Appendix 3.

The aim of the Forum is to facilitate consultation on all issues relating to the development and operation of the airport, including noise complaints and airport performance. Recent developments in the Forum have led to the creation of 3 Sub Groups:

Environmental & Technical Group  
Economic & Services Development Group  
Airport Development Group

Members will also be aware of the Examination in Public (EIP) in June 2006 and the suggested outcomes which has led to a review of the Planning Agreement. The Council's response to the draft Planning Agreement was agreed by Committee in June 2008 and a report on the recently issued final revised Agreement is also included on the agenda for your meeting.

The findings of the EIP also supported the need for a stronger relationship with, and enhanced role for, Belfast and North Down Councils, for example with an increased role in scrutiny over the noise management systems and increased membership on the Airport Forum.

In addition the Forum review group at its meeting on 16 October has agreed that the community representation is changed to 1 group from south Belfast, 3 from east Belfast and 3 from North Down. This reduces the representation from south Belfast and increases the North Down representation quota. This has been agreed with the Community groups who were present at the meeting and have

fully agreed to this change. There is potential to have this quota reviewed from time to time. A new form of words was added into the constitution to reflect this, i.e: 'Membership of the Forum Committee may be reviewed from time to time. Such a review [would] be instigated by request from Forum Committee members securing a majority of the Committee. The review [would] be carried out by the Forum Committee or a Sub Committee appointed by the Forum Committee. Where the review is carried out by a Sub Committee, the recommendations of the Sub Committee shall be put to the Forum Committee for approval'.

### **Key Issues**

The EIP recommendations for revised arrangements for the Airport Forum led to a review of the make up of the Forum and its terms of reference and this was carried out by a sub-group earlier this year. Siobhan Toland was part of the subgroup. It reported its findings to the full Forum on the 30 April 2008. As a result the Forum Chairman, Alan Crowe, has now formally written to the Council's Chief Executive asking for nominations of 2 members and 2 officers onto the revised Forum, now termed the 'George Best Belfast City Airport Forum' (GBBCAF) (see Appendix 1).

The review recommends that each Council, Belfast and North Down, has increased representation comprising 2 elected members of the Council and 2 officer observers (one from the Environmental Health Service and one from the Development Department). See attached Forum Constitution in Appendix 2.

This report seeks the nomination of a Member from the Health and Environmental Services Committee to the Forum. A similar report will also be taken to the Development Committee later this month requesting the nomination of a second Member. The Chief Officers' Management Team recommended that both the Health and Environmental Services Department and the Development Department should nominate an officer observer. The Health and Environmental Services Department is recommending that the Environmental Health Manager (Environmental Protection) is nominated.

### **Environmental Implications**

A stronger, more comprehensive relationship should ensure that future developments consider sustainability and incorporate appropriate environmental controls in a way that sustains quality environments and has a positive effect on the local community.

### **Resource Implications**

An extended relationship between the Council and the Airport will have some implications in terms of both staff and Member time. A separate report is being brought forward on the new Planning Agreement.

### **Recommendations**

The Committee is asked to agree to:

- Support increased representation on the George Best Belfast City Airport Forum;
- Nominate a Member to sit on the Forum;
- Nominate the Environmental Health Manager (Environmental Protection) as an officer observer to the Forum;
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### **Key to Abbreviations**

EIP- Examination in Public

### **Documents Attached**

Appendix **1A**: Letter from Chairman of Forum, Alan Crowe, to the Council's Chief Executive.

Appendix **2B**: Belfast City Airport Forum Constitution 2008

Appendix **3C**: Extract from the Constitution on the Election of Chairman and Deputy Chairman.