

Please contact: (01634 332013)

Your ref:

Our ref: Tracker 30

Date: 02 August 2013

Mr W.E.McLennan
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Democratic Services
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Chatham
Kent ME4 4TR
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Dear Mr McLennan

Petition: Say NO to Rochester Airport Masterplan

Thank you for your petition that was received at Council on 25 July requesting Medway Council does not sign or commit to a 25-year lease in respect of Rochester Airport

The petition sheets refer to four matters and so this response considers each in turn.

1. The Council will not complete or legally commit to complete the new 25-year leases at Rochester until the Master plan has been agreed by the Council. The improvement works at the airport (including the paved runway) cannot be carried out until planning consent has been obtained and the Civil Aviation Authority's approval has been obtained. Amongst other things, the planning system will consider any environmental impacts likely to result from the proposals and the Civil Aviation Authority will consider safety issues.

Given these various processes and the safeguards that they provide it is not considered appropriate to arrange for a Community Impact Study or a public hearing.

2. Local residents and business people are being consulted as part of the process of the adoption of the Council's Master plan for the site and will also be consulted on any subsequent planning applications. There have been a number of studies that have considered the potential of the airport – for example the current Economic Development Strategy for Medway and all the work and public engagement that fed into the Core Strategy. Accordingly it is not considered that a further study as you propose is justified.
3. The Council has already decided that it is prepared to invest up to £4M in improving its airport. However the investment will not be made until the Master Plan is agreed and all necessary consents have been obtained for the works and the works are being carried out to the Council's satisfaction. The Council has selected an operator and tenant (who will carry out the improvement works which the council will contribute towards) through a transparent procurement process and the amount of investment is below the limit at which the Council has to follow European Procurement rules. The Council has followed its published procurement

process and also a governance process in line with the published constitution. It is not felt necessary to have that process independently assessed. As far as the “fiscal” i.e financial aspects of the process please see point 4 below.

4. All expenditure made by the Council is subject to an independent audit process as set out in the Local Government Code of Audit Practice. Similarly under Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 (as amended by s137 of the Local Government & Public Involvement in Health Act 2007) the Council is required to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

If you do not consider that the issues raised in your petition have been addressed, then please can you let the Head of Democratic Services know (by Friday 9 August) of your request to refer the petition to the next Regeneration, Community and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Wednesday 14 August, where the Rochester Airport Masterplan consultation will be discussed.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Kalley
Democratic Services Officer