

My name is Councillor John Savage. I wish to put myself forward as chair of the Southampton International Airport Consultative Committee (ACC).

As a City Councillor for six years I have a track record of representing local residents and communicating complex issues between stakeholders on a wide range of issues. Some of my early work as a councillor involved work with NESTA to set up the “Clean Air Café” in St Denys (Southampton). This community engagement continued on to establish the St Denys Active Travel Zone, attracting huge sums of government money, requiring sensitive consultation between stakeholders with mixed views around changes to road access, but ultimately with increased safety and reduction of traffic in residential streets.

I also chaired the Southampton Planning and Rights of Way Panel for two years ensuring that all the views of the disparate parties were clearly represented and later went on to chair the Southampton City Council scrutiny inquiry panel into “A Carer Friendly Southampton”.

My work has always involved communication between different organisations and individuals, seeking a wide-as-possible consensus towards service improvement and support to find the best outcomes, compromising where possible, and explaining rationale to stakeholders when it is not.

I believe my experience places me in a good position to promote greater understanding both to the surrounding community about airport operations and to the airport operator about the impact of those operations, and through fellow members of the committee, to reach a common understanding between interested groups, so that issues can be resolved amicably.

For some time, the ACC has been chaired by members from Eastleigh Borough Council. Given the recent judicial review and the understanding that the runway extension is likely to go ahead as planned, it is time that a councillor for an area more highly impacted by the potential increase in passenger numbers takes over the role as chair.

In my view, the ACC to date has not provided sufficient challenge. It is very important that as these plans go ahead, the committee’s role in holding the airport to account by monitoring the implementation of post-extension commitments is monitored and challenged when necessary.

During this period of change, I believe it would be important to set up an annual work plan for the committee to identify priorities, draw together a wide range of views and obtain meaningful feedback on the work of the committee. For example the committee may wish to consider:

- The airport plans for changes to early morning schedules as flights increase or as different aircraft come into use
- Changes to road traffic patterns
- Construction management plans and associated impacts locally
- Changes to service levels as passenger numbers in the terminal increase
- Noise mitigation schedules
- The allocation of funds to the community

If we are not careful, the ACC can too easily fall into being a cheerleader for the airport rather than the being a critical friend to the airport company. Given the impending runway extension, this role of listening, advising, and supporting the airport while holding the airport to account for assurances made, has never been more important.

Cllr John Savage