

APPOINTMENT OF NEW STACC CHAIRMAN SOME CONSIDERATIONS

Introduction

Under my Contract for Services with STAL, I have given notice of my intention to retire as Chairman of the Committee and as a member of the Committee with effect from the end of the Annual Meeting in June this year. I thought that to retire after ten years as Chairman would be good for me and would certainly be good for STACC as committee organisations such as ours should always periodically refresh themselves. I hope that at the June meeting there will be an opportunity for me to say a few words of thanks to you all.

Background Matters

In the appointment of my successor there are I think a few background or contextual matters which the Committee might wish to bear in mind.

1. The most recent DfT Guidelines for Consultative Committees published in April 2014¹ are worth referring to in their entirety as they deal mainly with the role of the Committee and therefore by implication the governance role of the Chairman. Whilst the Guidelines do not have statutory force, it is of course advisable for Committees to have proper regard for them as they seek to ensure that Consultative Committees and their Chairmen function in a constructive and effective way. Certain sections of the Guidelines however have an immediate relevance and resonance.
 - a. Section 2.2 on page 10 states it is important that Committees *“...are and are perceived as being independent from the airportand that chairs should be appointed through an open and transparent process”*
 - b. Sections 3.2 and 3.3 - entitled Chairs on page 15 - state *“One of the most important ways in which committees can ensure their independence is by appointing a chair through an open and transparent process with the involvement of the Committee itself. The chair should not be closely identified with any sectional interest. Thought should also be given to a term limit for chairs (for example, two terms of a maximum of five years) or at least reviewing the chairmanship periodically. The section concludes by saying “It is important that consultative committees have an effective chair who is able to gain the respect of the other committee members and should have the ability to draw together a wide range of views into a coherent conclusion”.*

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/.../guidelines-airport-consultative-committees.pdf>

2. Alongside the Guidelines, it is worth bearing in mind the ‘Best Practice’ consultation principles agreed with STAL² and which are set out as ANNEX I.
3. Point 2 in the Membership Section of our own Constitution³ states that *“There shall be an independent Chairman of the Committee appointed by the Committee in accordance with arrangements approved by the Committee from time to time”*.
4. As part of the Overall Financial Arrangements⁴, Section 14 states that *“Any appointment or termination of the appointment of Chairman shall be with the agreement of STAL - any such agreement not to be unreasonably withheld - and any fee for the services of the Chairman shall be agreed by STAL prior to any appointment of a Chairman being made”*.
5. Job Descriptions and Objectives of the Committee Office Holders⁵ including those of the Chairman are set out as ANNEX II. In conjunction with these (as perhaps adjusted by the Committee), it would probably be helpful for the Committee to agree some kind of Person Specification for the position of Chairman setting out what personal qualifications and experience the Committee would be looking for in a successful candidate.

Some Thoughts on Process

1. The Committee might wish to keep at the forefront of its thinking most if not all of the above Background Matters.
2. Before considering any steps towards an actual appointment, the Committee might think it prudent to review the current role of the Committee, its structure, working arrangements and the fee structure applied to the Committee Chairman and the two Working Group Chairmen. Before setting the appointment process formally in motion, the applicable overall annual grant and fees should be agreed in advance with STAL bearing in mind the Committee’s usual work programme.
3. A Job Description, Person Specification, Term of Office and Fee to be paid are the minimum that should be agreed before the actual appointments process gets seriously under way. ‘Tweaking’ these to secure the right person should be acknowledged as being realistic although this should not mean altering any major matters, matters of principle or our Constitution without reference to the Committee itself.
4. The appointment will differ from when I was appointed - which was solely by STAL. It will be by the Committee but with the agreement of STAL (see above). In my view it would be sensible and prudent to

² Approved by the Committee in April 2015.

³ Approved by the Committee in April 2014 with minor later amendments.

⁴ Approved by the Committee in June 2015.

⁵ Approved by the Committee in their amended form in April 2016

involve STAL in the appointment process from the outset not just to avoid any potential later impasse or embarrassment but also because in the real world, the Chairman needs to have the respect and trust of the STAL CEO and of the wider airport management if he (and indeed the Committee) are to be effective.

5. Whilst for the purpose of transparency, the Committee should be kept regularly updated about progress in the appointment process, perhaps for practical purposes the detail of advancing the process should be delegated to an Appointments Panel. This might comprise say five members together with appropriate representation from STAL⁶.
 - a. Committee Panel members might include representation from each of the three statutory categories of interest on the Committee⁷ plus two other members - perhaps in the light of their experience, the Chairmen of the two Working Groups.
 - b. The Panel should be serviced by the Secretary and Technical Adviser.
6. In the interests of Chairman independence and perceived independence, any Committee member who wished to be considered for the Chairmanship should neither be '*closely identified with any sectional interest*'⁸ nor of course should she or he be a member of the Appointments Panel!
 - a. Being eligible for the Chairmanship would exclude therefore elected councillor politicians and representatives of single focus groups such as SSE.
7. Unlike when I was appointed, it would be good practice as '*an open and transparent process*'⁹ for such a public appointment to be advertised.
 - a. It would be prudent to secure agreement that the cost of any advertising and any incidental costs of the appointments process could be found from within either the STACC budget or, given the exceptional nature of the expenditure, from STAL or from a combination of both sources.

Conclusion

1. It may well be that the Committee should consider all of the above specific points as well as the overall matter of the appointment generally either at a special STACC meeting or at an 'Away' morning or afternoon convened solely or principally for the purpose. If that is

⁶ In addition to a senior representative of STAL, it might also be helpful to have some STAL HR advice to support the recruitment process.

⁷ In effect 1) airport users, 2) local authorities and 3) organisations representing the interest of persons concerned with the locality in which the airport is situated.

⁸ See DfT Guidelines Section 3.2 above.

⁹ See DfT Guidelines Section 2.2 above.

agreed, the Committee might wish to fix a date at this meeting inviting appropriate representatives from STAL to all or part of the meeting.

2. Candidates with the suitable qualifications, experience and the requisite degree of independence will not necessarily be easy to find so getting the process underway immediately is essential. June will arrive very quickly!

Stewart Ashurst
Chairman
January 2017.