ITEM NO. 7

Report for:
ACTION
Item Number: 6iii

Contains Confidential or Exempt Information	No – Part I
Title	**The WideNoise Initiative**
Responsible Officer(s)	Terry Gould
Contact officer, job title and phone number	Terry Gould – Head of Public Protection Tel: 01628 683501
Member reporting	Cllr Carwyn Cox – Lead Member for Environment
For Consideration By	Cabinet
Date to be Considered	24 January 2013
Implementation Date if Not Called In	Immediately
Affected Wards	"All"
Keywords/Index	WideNoise; Heathrow Airport; community noise; annoyance; community engagement

Report Summary

1. This report deals with a proposed collaborative initiative between several participating local authorities and University College London (UCL) that is designed to engage and empower local communities to conduct aircraft noise monitoring through the use of a mobile phone application named *WideNoise*.
2. It recommends that the Council embarks upon the initiative as soon as possible in light of current government deliberations on a new national aviation policy framework.
3. These recommendations are being made because this initiative effectively empowers and engages local residents in noise monitoring, reporting and tagging of aircraft operations and noise which are collated through an independent GPS system. The aim is build a useful data source for the on-going discussions and enquiries into airport-related expansion, whilst providing local residents opportunities to participate in the national debate at minimal cost.
4. If adopted, there are no additional financial implications for the Council that are not capable of being absorbed into existing resources.
5. An additional point to note is this initiative complements the Council's developing policies in respect of the transparency, Big Society and Localism agendas.

If recommendations are adopted, how will residents benefit?	
Benefits to residents and reasons why they will benefit	Dates by which residents can expect to notice a difference
1. Engaging residents in the proactive WideNoise initiative is more likely to significantly influence the formulation of the national Aviation Policy Framework and local mitigation measures if local views are directly made known to Government so they may be included in the development of future aviation policy.	This will depend ultimately on the government's programme for taking forward a future long term aviation policy.
2. Direct local representation through active and on-going participation will contribute to a greater understanding and a more informed debate regarding the impacts and effects of aviation noise upon local communities.	Through raising existing issues, whilst there is no guarantee of success, it is more likely to result in earlier intervention and mitigation of more local concerns in the short term that will be of benefit to local residents.

1. Details of Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION: That Cabinet;

   a) **Note and endorse the contents contained within this report relating to participating in the '*WideNoise'* project;**
   b) **Authorise and delegate responsibility to the Head of Public Protection to conclude the collaborative arrangements with the other participating local authorities and organisations party to the initiative, together with UCL, for the effective implementation of the project;**
   c) **Authorise and delegate responsibility to the Head of Public Protection to implement an effective marketing and public awareness campaign that encourages local participation in the project; and**
   d) **Issues a press release at the appropriate time.**

## 2.	Reason for Recommendation(s) and Options Considered

2.1	Background

2.1.1	Cabinet will be aware that historically, the Borough has adopted a robust position on the negative impacts arising from more local operations at Heathrow Airport, taking up a strong community leadership role and adopting a key role in several local authority consortiums committed to balancing the competing interests in seeking to secure a sustainable airport. Recent examples include:
– Opposition to night flights;

- Calling for the early abolition of the Cranford Agreement with the introduction of Easterly Alternation to afford local residents periods of respite;
- Voicing strong opposition to R3/T6;
- Advocating the need for enhanced noise mitigation packages for local communities.

2.1.2 A report submitted to the October 2012 cabinet meeting discussed the Borough's response to a government consultation entitled: *Draft Aviation Policy Framework.* A robust response was subsequently sent to the DfT.

2.1.3 In December 2012 a question submitted to Council calling upon the Borough to increase its activities for raising public awareness on aviation matters was unanimously agreed. This followed concerns over the recent increase in resident's complaints as a result of the changes being trialled as part of the Operations Freedom Trials (OFT) at Heathrow Airport. The OFT pilot studies are on-going and appear to be resulting in heightened awareness of the more negative aspects of aviation.

2.1.4 At a recent meeting of the Aviation Forum, a resident of Ham Island, Old Windsor advised of a project called 'WideNoise' that was being piloted around Heathrow villages. This is a collaborative study between HACAN Clearskies and University College London (UCL). Such was the interest and perceived usefulness of this particular initiative when reported to the Local Authority Aircraft Noise Council (LAANC) that officers from RBWM, together with London Boroughs of Wandsworth; Richmond-upon-Thames; and Hounslow have followed up enquiries and met with UCL advocating the study is widened, thereby embracing many more communities around the airport at a time that coincides with the current and on-going deliberations over a new national aviation policy framework and the Operational Freedoms Trials. UCL welcomed the local authorities' approach and discussions have ensued with a view to progress a widened study. Other local authorities are likely to participate in the initiative once the leading authorities are mobilised.

2.1.5 Essentially, *WideNoise* is a 'smart phone' application for monitoring noise levels that can be up-loaded, online on to an interactive GPS mapping system. The initial project is supported by the European Seventh Framework programme and is being conducted by 5 European universities.

2.2 Project Scope

2.2.1 *WideNoise* uses smart phone technology and can be used by most up to date iPhone and Android devices. Free to download and use, the software effectively converts the mobile phone into a sound level meter. In addition, the facility accommodates 'tagging', providing an option for the operator to add text about a particular incident e.g. annoyance characteristics, etc, as well as recording location, time and date, thus providing a contemporaneous record of a particular incident. The information can then be cross-referenced and validated with other more sophisticated systems if necessary.

2.2.2 Whilst the application is not regarded as a scientifically accurate device, its usefulness is derived from the following:
- It 'legitimises' a resident's complaint;
- Provides an on-going record of indicative noise levels at particular locations;
- Facilitates community noise mapping;
- Provides affected households an independent opportunity for using their own hands-on device to record their complaints or experience;
- Builds a useful and wider data base of anecdotal evidence relating to the severity (or otherwise) of the impact of aviation upon local communities;
- Offers the potential to widen and consider the application to other community noise sources, mapping and investigation techniques.

UCL has undertaken a series of calibration tests on a range of smart phones to establish the relatively accuracy of particular devices. UCL has established a set of approximate correction factors when collating the data.

2.2.3 The follow up discussions with UCL et al have proved very positive. Not only is there universal support for engaging surrounding local authorities and their communities, but there is also now the prospect of extending the project utilising more accurate, static monitors in a lesser number of pre-selected properties. Officers are keen to ensure there is a representative spread of RBWM properties in any extended programme that are matched to local circumstances.

2.2.4 The key drivers for the Borough's interest in this project relate to:
- It allows engagement of those communities who are at risk of being most affected by changes in aviation operations at Heathrow;
- Complements the Borough's own transparency, localism and Big Society agendas;
- As stated, legitimises local complaints that have hitherto been largely dismissed;
- Significantly widens the Borough's monitoring capability without incurring significant cost; and
- Fulfils the council's commitment to raise the profile and publicity surrounding aviation issues at a time most needed.

2.2.5 Frequent exposure to aircraft noise has been proven through successive studies to have the potential of causing a range of negative public health impacts, other than simply 'annoyance'. The wider health impacts in the context of the World Health Organisation (WHO) definition of health include:
- Interference with communication
- Learning acquisition deficits e.g. impaired reading and comprehension
- Sleep disturbance and the consequential effects resulting from fatigue
- Performance effects
- Cardiovascular and psycho-physiological effects
- Annoyance
- Effects on social behaviour

2.2.6 Officers have also been in discussion with Recyclebank exploring the feasibility of including an incentivisation dimension to the WideNoise project

whereby participants might be encouraged to optimise community participation through the existing reward points programme. The outcome of these deliberations will be reported to cabinet.

2.2.7 Should cabinet agree to endorse this initiative, a public awareness campaign will be pulled together drawing upon the Borough's existing extensive media networks, facilities and experience.

Option	Comments
1) Participate in the project as outlined in the report	Resident's views reflecting their experience of the impact of existing operations at Heathrow Airport will be collated and forwarded to Government to be considered as part of the developing aviation policy framework.
2) Do not participate in the project	A lost opportunity in respect of developing a unique opportunity to invite local residents to participate and engage in a community-wide initiative that has such significant importance to national, regional and local issues.

3. Key Implications
What does success look like, how is it measured, what are the stretch targets

Defined Outcomes	Unmet	Met	Exceeded	Significantly Exceeded	Date they should be delivered by
Local resident's views and concerns are raised and included as part of new national Aviation Policy Framework through active participation in the WideNoise initiative	Poor participation with less than 40 additional participants in the programme by the 1st June 2013	A minimum of 40 RBWM participants in the programme by 1st June 2013	More than 40 additional participants in the programme by 1st June 2013 and at least 5 (no) RBWM households engaged in the 'static monitoring' programme by 1st October 2013	More than 100 additional participants in the programme by 1st June 2013 and at least 5 (no) RBWM households engaged in the 'static monitoring' programme by 1st October 2013	1st June 2013 for *WideNoise* smartphone application; and 1st October 2013 for the 'static monitoring'.

4. Financial Details
4.1 There are no anticipated financial implications or negative impacts upon the budget arising out of this initiative and any incidental expenditure e.g. promotion of the scheme, is capable of being absorbed into existing resources.

5. Legal Implications
5.1   None

6. Value For Money
6.1   Facilitation and coordination of this project through the engagement of local residents and associated collaborative working with UCL and other local authorities offers significant value for money.

7. Sustainability Impact Appraisal
7.1   Community empowerment and engagement are primary tenets of sustainability. This particular initiative is an example of best practice in terms of furthering positive sustainable behaviour.

8. Risk Management

Risks	Uncontrolled Risk	Controls	Controlled Risk
None			

9. Links to Strategic Objectives
9.1   The '*WideNoise'* initiative is aligned with the following strategic objectives:

Residents First
- Encourage Healthy People and Lifestyles
- Improve the Environment, Economy and Transport
- Work for safer and stronger communities

Value for Money
- Deliver Economic Services
- Improve the use of technology

Delivering Together
- Enhanced Customer Services
- Deliver Effective Services
- Strengthen Partnerships

10. Equalities, Human Rights and Community Cohesion
10.1   A first stage EQIA has been conducted. This initial screening confirmed the initiative positively contributes and complements Equality, Human Rights and Community Cohesion considerations. A second stage assessment is not required.

11. Staffing/Workforce and Accommodation implications:
11.1   None

12. Property and Assets
12.1   None

13. Any other implications:

13.1   None

14. Consultation

14.1   This matter is to be considered by members of the Highways, Transport and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel. Any comments will be included in this report and reported to cabinet.

15. Timetable for Implementation

15.1   A detailed timetable is pending clarification with UCL and partner authorities. Not withstanding, RBWM's WideNoise implementation timescales for community engagement are listed under Paragraph 3 of this report

16. Appendices

16.1   None

17. Background Information

- Report to Cabinet: Draft Aviation Policy Framework 25th.October 2012

18. Consultation (Mandatory)

Name of consultee	Post held and Department	Date sent	Date received	See comments in paragraph:
Internal				
Cllr Burbage	Leader of the Council	07/01/13	10/01/13	Embedded throughout report
Cllr Cox	Lead Member for Environment	03/01/13 Revised 11/01/13	04/01/13	Embedded throughout report
Mike McGaughrin	Managing Director	03/01/13	04/01/13	Embedded throughout report
Maria Lucas	Head of Legal Services	11/01/13		
Mark Lampard	Finance Partner	11/01/13	14/01/13	Noted.
External				
	Police, voluntary Organisation, AN Other etc			

Report History

Decision type:	Urgency item?
Non-key decision	Yes

Full name of report author	Job title	Full contact no:
Terry Gould	Head of Public Protection	01628 683501

Environmental Services - The WideNoise Initiative

Cabinet considered a proposed collaborative initiative between several participating local authorities and University College London (UCL) that was designed to engage and empower local communities to conduct aircraft noise monitoring through the use of a mobile phone application named *WideNoise.*

The Lead Member explained that the idea had been suggested following a question from Councillor Beer at full Council in December 2012. The free smartphone app allowed residents affected by the impact of aircraft noise to take part in a scheme to register that impact and feed into a wider analysis. The proposal supported the council's Big Society and Localism agenda. There was still work to be undertaken on the collaborative arrangements.

Councillor Lenton, as Chairman of the Aviation Forum, thanked the Head of Public Protection for his work. He commented that although the scheme would not be scientifically accurate, time would tell as to how useful the data would become. He expressed concern that the scheme could lead to biased data and also that residents were being encouraged to complain by the award of Recyclebank points. It would also be important to ensure the council did not give the impression that it was hostile to aviation. The council should recognise the impact but acknowledge that Heathrow was a large employer and also brought visitors to the area.

The Lead Member commented that UCL was leading on the project and would look at filtering and monitoring mechanisms. He disagreed with Councillor Lenton's concern about incentivisation, as he felt the scheme encouraged people to take part rather then to complain. The council was aware of the importance of Heathrow but it was also important that any future plans for the airport were assessed in light of evidence.

Councillor Bicknell suggested devices could be calibrated to improve accuracy. At minimum, the scheme would show the volume of people affected. The Chairman commented that the scheme would allow data to be crowdsourced.

Councillor Beer explained that LAANC had considered the scheme, which had started in Isleworth, and had been apprehensive about its accuracy. However it had been found that adjustments could be made to certain types of phones to improve accuracy. He felt that issues related to Heathrow were more widely promoted in the London boroughs affected and therefore a scheme that could involve borough residents should be welcomed. It would also be useful information when competing with the aviation industry which had better access to data.

The Lead Member for Policy and Performance commented that his ward was the most affected by aircraft noise. He welcomed the proposal but urged officers to focus on output. A scheme was either both scientifically accurate and useful, or neither. The Lead Member responded that UCL would be responsible for the scientific aspects. Calibration software had been developed for 9 different smartphones.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That Cabinet:

a) **Note and endorse the contents contained within this report relating to participating in the '*WideNoise'* project;**

b) **Authorise and delegate responsibility to the Head of Public Protection to conclude the collaborative arrangements with the other participating local authorities and organisations party to the initiative, together with UCL, for the effective implementation of the project;**

c) **Authorise and delegate responsibility to the Head of Public Protection to implement an effective marketing and public awareness campaign that encourages local participation in the project; and**

d) **Issues a press release at the appropriate time.**