

STRATEGIC AIR SUPPORT

A meeting of the Strategic Air Support Panel was held on Tuesday 8 November 2011 commencing at 10.00am in the Members Conference Room at Police Headquarters.

PRESENT: Mr Peter Race MBE (ex officio), Mr Chris Coombs (Chair), Mr Ted Cox JP (Vice Chair), Mr Geoff Fell, Councillor Ron Lowes and Mr Mike McGrory JP.

ADDITIONAL MEMBERS No additional Members were in attendance.

OFFICIALS: Miss Rachelle Kipling (CE)
Mr Sean White, Mr Simon Wilkinson and Miss Kate Rowntree (CC)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Carl Richardson and Mayor Stuart Drummond (ex officio).

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations on interest.

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 26 JULY 2011

The minutes were held as a true and accurate record.

OUTSTANDING RECOMMENDATIONS

ORDERED that:-

1. The Outstanding Recommendations be noted and updated.

NATIONAL AIR SUPPORT SERVICE UPDATE

The Assistant Chief Constable (Crime Operations) presented the report to Members to update them on the latest developments concerning the proposals for a National Police Air Service (NPAS).

Members were informed that following the last NPAS update there had been two meetings in connection with the proposed new arrangements and a number of developments.

The meetings included a North East Regional Air Operations meeting, chaired by ACC White. At this meeting Forces were informed by an NPAS representative that they would be provided with further financial information regarding costs in connection with NPAS. Following this meeting, the NPAS Project Team indicated that Forces would not now be provided with any new figures until some time after September 2011. To date no further financial information had been provided, despite requests.

Members expressed concern and stated that they believed they were not in a position to make any sort of decision in regards to NPAS and asked if there would be any detrimental impact if they did not enter into this.

The Assistant Chief Constable (Crime Operations) informed Members that the NPAS could in the future be mandated through legislation although currently at least ten other Police Authorities were in the same position as Cleveland.

Members queried as to if any jobs would be lost as a result of the NPAS.

The Assistant Chief Constable (Crime Operations) informed Members that the NPAS would maintain less aircrafts so it would cause uncertainty.

The Chairman of the Authority stated that the Authority would not do anything until Value for Money was demonstrated, he pointed out that any final decisions should be delegated from the Strategic Air Support Panel to the Police Authority Executive.

The Chair of the Strategic Air Support Panel agreed with this.

ORDERED that:-

1. Members co-author a letter together with the T/Chief Constable requesting further information to Chief Constable Alex Marshall be agreed.
2. the contents of the report be noted.

AIR OPERATIONS UNIT PERFORMANCE UPDATE

The Assistant Chief Constable (Crime Operations) presented the report to update Members on the performance and finance of the Air Operations Unit.

Members were informed that during the period 1 July to 30 September 2011, the aircraft had flown for 220 hours, attended 632 incidents and made 129 arrests. In the same period in 2010 the aircraft flew 185 hours, attended 478 incidents and made 84 arrests. These figures showed 19% more flying time and 54% more arrests were achieved. The aircraft had flown for less flying hours in the same period last year, due to a major service on the old aircraft, which lasted nearly 4 weeks.

Members commented on the number of hits received on the Helicopter Watch page on both the Force and Authority website and asked if this type of PR could be maximized with the use of helicopter footage.

The Unit Executive Officer informed Members that a lot of aircraft footage cannot be used due to on-going Court cases.

Members asked if the helicopter still undertook visits to schools and local community fairs.

The Unit Executive Officer informed Members that the Unit tried to visit one school per month and attended high profile public events – operations permitting.

Members showed surprise at the number of letters of appreciation received as they thought it would be a greater number as feedback from the public was always excellent.

In regards to the Aircraft unavailability which was shown at Appendix A to the report, Members asked what unscheduled maintenance included and why they were unscheduled.

The Unit Executive Officer informed Members that the unscheduled maintenance included the roll equipment within the aircraft. These included problems with the aircraft cameras or other technology.

ORDERED that: -

1. the contents of the report be noted.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Members wished to pass on their support and appreciation to the Air Support Unit for the work in which they undertake and the success of this work.