

**Report of the Chief Constable to the Chair and Members
of the Strategic Air Support Panel
16th February 2011**

Executive & Presenting Officer: Mr David Pickard, Assistant Chief Constable (Crime & Operations)

Status: For information

National Air Support Service Update

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To update Members on the latest developments with the proposals for a National Air Support Service.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Members note the contents of the report.

3. Reasons

- 3.1 A briefing document was presented to Chief Constables Council on 15th October 2010 in respect of a National Police Air Service (NPAS) and this was supported by most Chief Constables. On the 20th October Chief Constable Marshall presented some elements of NPAS to Unit Executive Officers (UEO's) and other representatives from every unit in the Country. At this presentation it was reported that there were six Chief Constables who expressed reservations.
- 3.2 Since these meetings there has been little further information available. There has been one further meeting, chaired by the NPIA, with representatives of the North East forces on 24th November. At the meeting were representatives from Newcastle, Cleveland, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and Humberside.

- 3.3 The NPIA reported that there had been a lot of concern from many forces regarding the financial data within the paper that had been presented to Chief Constables Council. Much of the meeting was spent trying to explain how the financial assumptions had been made. It was also reported that it was now very likely that South Yorkshire would retain their helicopter, when it had originally been identified to be withdrawn.
- 3.4 During the meeting the NPIA requested that forces start to look at joint pilotage and maintenance contracts. It was reported that there would be no savings in the North until other aircraft had been withdrawn from the South East of the Country, or if some savings could be made from the use of joint contracts. The NPIA confirmed that we would need to pay the higher identified cost (as detailed in the paper to Chief Constables' Council) until at least 2016.
- 3.5 In January ACC Pickard met with Chief Constable Marshall and was provided with a further update regarding the national picture and it was suggested there was now less opposition to the plans than there had been previously. It was also agreed that NPIA would visit Cleveland Police and go through the financial data with the Force to try and explain the position.
- 3.6 At present it is still believed that by joining the National Air Service, we would be paying £535,000 more than our present budget, for the first 4 or 5 years, and then £300,000 more than our present budget after that. It is also still the intention that we would operate only 20 hours per day, with cover from other forces in the North East.
- 3.7 This finance meeting has been arranged for the 2nd February. A further meeting involving finance representatives from all the North East forces, together with the NPIA is scheduled for the 24th February. It is understood there may be some further detail presented to Chief Constables Council in March.
- 3.8 The position nationally at this time is that it is understood that only two regions will be joining the National Air Support Service at the start and these are Central and the North West. Other regions have stated they cannot join at this time for a number of reasons, such as the forthcoming Olympic Games. NPIA would like to see the North East join, but this appears dependent partly on the outcome of the finance meetings.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial

There are significant financial implications arising from this report, if the current proposals, as outlined above, go ahead. There are no further financial implications arising from this report to report to Members.

4.2 Diversity and Equal Opportunities

There are no diversity or equal opportunities implications arising from this report.

4.3 Human Rights Act

There are no Human Rights Act implications arising from this report.

4.4 Sustainability

There are no sustainability implications arising from this report.

4.5 Risk

There are substantial risk implications arising from this report in connection with the financial risk, the reputation risk and also the operational cover issue.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The plans for a National Air Support Service are still being progressed and it is still the sponsor's aim of having a fully operational national unit in place by April 2012. The aims of the scheme appear laudable and with the present financial pressures there could be the opportunity to make significant savings for the Force. However with the current understood financial proposal, this would actually significantly increase the cost to Cleveland.

Sean Price
Chief Constable