

**Report of the Chief Constable to the Chair and Members
of the Operational Policing Panel
22nd January 2010**

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

Status: For information

Roll Out of Tasers

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To inform Members as to the Force's use of tasers as a less lethal option and in particular as to its roll out to specifically trained unarmed officers.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Members note the contents of the report.

3. Reasons

- 3.1 Historically, and in line with previous Home Office Guidelines, Cleveland Police has only issued Taser to its Authorised Firearms Officers (AFOs). Tasers provide a less lethal option during every deployment of armed officers and are permanently worn by our Armed Response Vehicle staff. Taser provides our officers with an alternative to lethal force when faced with incidents of serious violence that fall below the threshold for the use of firearms and is very successful in assisting to safely resolve such incidents.
- 3.2 For this purpose Cleveland Police possesses 29 Tasers spread between those issued to the ARV (10), those utilised in training (6), and those held within the force armoury (13).
- 3.3 The 'use' of Taser includes those incidents when a Taser is drawn, pointed, fired or used in 'drive stun' mode. Drive stun means the removal of the

cartridge exposing the probes in the Taser, which is placed directly against the subject, rather than firing 'barbs'.

- 3.4 Over recent years Taser has been deployed in Cleveland to arrest offenders, quell incidents of serious domestic or public disorder and prevent subjects from self harm. By far the greatest proportion of 'use' is during incidents involving subjects armed with some form of edged weapon.
- 3.5 In 2008 Taser was deployed on a total of 33 occasions, yet on only eight of those occasions was Taser actually fired. To date in 2009 the position is very similar with Taser having been deployed on 29 occasions, only six having necessitated an actual discharge.
- 3.6 It is clear that Taser carries with it a significant deterrent effect as in 80% of incidents in 2009 when the device was either drawn or aimed, the subject became compliant and was arrested without the need for alternative uses of force. In addition, in the small proportion of incidents where Taser was actually discharged, the effects of the device were immediately successful in resolving the incident, again without the need for alternative uses of force.
- 3.7 Current position
In December 2008, following a successful trial period involving 10 UK forces, the Home Secretary authorised the roll-out of Taser to Specifically Trained Units (STUs) and provided funding to cover the cost of acquisition. STUs are otherwise unarmed officers specially selected and trained in the use of Taser. The Home Office invited each force to consider their needs against the threat faced and submit a bid for Tasers. Cleveland Police submitted an initial bid to the Home Office for 70 Tasers.
- 3.8 It quickly became apparent that across the UK some forces had bid for fewer devices than was expected and there was subsequently 'spare' funding should forces wish to increase their initial bid. Cleveland Police made a further bid for an additional 70 Taser devices on the clear understanding that the additional number would be stockpiled for any future incremental roll-out should it be considered desirable.
- 3.9 The Home Office also recognised that there was concern amongst forces that although Taser devices were being provided on a funded basis, the necessary cartridges for the initial training were not provided and this meant that forces were facing a large budgetary pressure amounting to approximately £400 per officer to cover those costs. As a result the central funding was increased and each Taser was supplied with 16 cartridges to cover the initial training of officers.
- 3.10 Our bids were successful and in early 2009 Cleveland Police took delivery of 140 Taser devices and the associated 2,240 cartridges.

- 3.11 The development of policy and procedures for the use of Taser by STUs is now complete with the finalised documents having been approved at the Strategic Development Group on 14th December 2009. The logistical planning and preparation for roll-out is also complete with a venue and instructors identified. The selection of officers from within our response teams is underway and the initial training will take place in February and March 2010.
- 3.12 The future
After careful consideration the Force has taken the decision to issue Taser to a proportion of our response officers as they are the officers most likely to face spontaneous incidents of violence when Taser may become necessary. The only additional officers to receive training during the initial phase are those posted to the Air Operations Unit, (to assist in their safety should there be an attack on the aircraft).
- 3.13 It is intended that the primary response to any spontaneous incident, or pre-planned operation where Taser may be necessary, will remain the ARV staff as they are better trained and more tactically aware than their STU colleagues. It is not intended for STUs to become a separate tier of fast response to such incidents and the procedures documents have been written to reflect this.
- 3.14 The command and control of spontaneous incidents or pre-planned operations will mirror that currently in place for firearms incidents. The involvement of trained Spontaneous and Cadre Silver Commanders will help to ensure that Taser deployments are managed correctly.
- 3.15 It can be expected that there will be some increase in Taser use across the force area as a result of spontaneous confrontations where the officer involved is in possession of a Taser and 'self authorises'. Its use under these circumstances will need to be specifically justified. Having conducted research with other forces this rise is not expected to be large.
- 3.16 Each 'use' of Taser will be subject to robust monitoring and evaluation to identify any deployment patterns and to ensure that our strict deployment protocols are adhered to.
- 3.17 To date throughout 2009, the Force has received only one complaint that is logged as being as a result of Taser use. However, it transpires that incident did not in fact involve Taser, the complainant having been stung by a dog shield during an incident involving a dog. The complaint was finalised by local resolution.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial

During the initial roll-out phase we will use 70 Tasers, and the associated 1,120 cartridges supplied. We will however be training 93 officers who will

each need 18 cartridges, a total of 1,674. The shortfall of 554 cartridges will cost approximately £11K and be met from existing force budgets. The alternative would be to use some of the cartridges supplied with the stockpiled Tasers however this would only store up problems for the future should further incremental roll out be authorised. Providing funding now puts the force in a strong position for the future when budgetary pressures may be more significant.

4.2 The Force has also identified funding to cover the full costs of the initial training and secure storage for each location across the force area where Tasers are to be stored.

4.3 Diversity and Equal Opportunities

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

4.4 Human Rights Act

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

4.5 Sustainability

There are no sustainability implications arising from this report.

4.6 Risk

There are no risk implications arising from this report.

5 Conclusions

5.1 Taser provides our officers with an alternative to lethal force when faced with incidents of serious violence that fall below the threshold for the use of firearms and is very successful in assisting to safely resolve such incidents.

5.2 The Force will continue to use Taser as a less lethal option during the deployment of armed officers.

Sean Price
Chief Constable