

STRATEGIC AIR SUPPORT

An meeting of the Strategic Air Support Panel was held on Thursday 27 May 2010 commencing at 2.00pm, in the Members Conference Room at Police Headquarters.

PRESENT: Mr Peter Race MBE (Chair), Mr Ted Cox JP (Vice Chair), Mr Chris Coombs, Councillor Ron Lowes

OFFICIALS: Mr John Bage (CE)
Mr Dave Pickard, Mr Simon Wilkinson and Miss Kate Rowntree (CC)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Dave McLuckie (ex officio), Councillor Mary Lanigan

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS INFORMAL MEETING HELD ON 2 MARCH 2010

The minutes were held as a true and accurate record

AIR OPERATIONS UNIT PERFORMANCE & FINANCE

The Assistant Chief Constable Crime Operations informed Members that the purpose of the report was to provide Members with an update on the performance and finance of the Air Operations Unit.

Members were informed that during the period February to April 2010, the aircraft had flown for 193 hours, including 20 hours mutual aid, resulting in 96 arrests, recovered £52,500 worth of property, and undertaken 4 casualty evacuations. The detailed performance figures are shown at appendix A to the report.

The Assistant Chief Constable Crime Operations informed Members that the budget for the 2010/11 financial year is £1,097,600 and included a requirement for income generation. Lately the income generation had slowed down but it is believed that this is mainly down to the poor weather and slightly because of a lack of availability.

Members were informed that for the reporting period, there had been 7 letters of appreciation and no letters of complaint.

Members requested information on how many occasions the crew had been directly involved in the reported 96 arrests over the reporting period.

Members were informed that the main role of the Unit was to direct ground staff so that arrests could take place, but it was noted that on a number of occasions the observers had made arrests. Members were assured that if the Unit had not been involved with the various air activities, up to 75% of all arrests would not have occurred.

Members noted that there was no materialized risks highlighted with-in the report, but did query whether there was a financial risk to the Authority due to the recent volcanic ash cloud.

The Assistant Chief Constable Crime Operations informed Members that the Unit did have permission to fly into the 'no fly area' and would have done so in an emergency. The Unit Executive Officer (UEO), was updated every six hours by the Meteorological Office. As with the rest of the aviation business, advice had also been taken from the CAA and the engine manufacturer on the ash cloud's movements / effects and amended their flying capabilities accordingly. Members were informed that the helicopter gets a 'chemical' wash as appropriate.

Members noted that complaints about noise had been non existent. As a result of visits to community venues, members of the public were reassured and welcomed the use of the helicopter.

Members sought an update as to the present use of Laser type devices shone at the helicopter.

The Unit Executive Officer updated Members on a number of recent cases and assured Members that Courts take very seriously this type of crime, handing down heavy sentences when proven.

The Chair sought an update on the security implications for the helicopter and Air Support Unit.

The Assistant Chief Constable Crime Operations fully briefed the Panel on these matters.

The Chair requested future finance information to be presented in a more standard manner.

ORDERED that:

1. Finance information to be presented in the standard finance reporting manner.
2. Members noted the report.

**ACC Crime
Ops**

PROCUREMENT UPDATE IN RELATION TO THE PURCHASE OF THE NEW HELICOPTER

The Assistant Chief Constable Crime Operations informed Members that in September 2008, Cleveland Police Authority placed an order for a new helicopter to replace our present aircraft. The new helicopter is a Eurocopter EC135 P2i.

Cleveland's new helicopter is currently being built and will be delivered to Eurocopter UK some time in the next few weeks. Once it arrives at Eurocopter UK, the Unit Executive Officer (UEO) will go through a short acceptance process which involves accepting it as a working helicopter together with examining all the associated paperwork.

Members were informed that when the helicopter has had all the role equipment installed, the UEO must return to Eurocopter UK for the full acceptance process. This will involve testing all the equipment and rectifying any faults. This process takes up to 2 weeks and on completion it is likely there may still be a few minor faults. It is a decision for the UEO to decide whether these faults are of such a minor nature that the aircraft can be accepted. Part of this decision will be the confidence that the faults will get rectified in a short time scale following delivery.

The exact delivery date is unknown as it depends on a number of factors and how quickly Eurocopter UK install the role equipment. The expected date is either December 2010 or January 2011.

The Assistant Chief Constable informed Members that there was a number of risk elements to the process such as the current CAA exemption pertaining to night flying. This exemption will run out in December 2010, but current information suggests that future short term exemptions are likely to be granted, as a new helicopter in service would be imminent. Similarly, current currency fluctuations will have an effect on the final costing. However these are being monitored daily.

Members sought clarification on any additional training needs for pilots and observers upon receipt of the new helicopter.

The UEO informed Members that there would be a period of learning for both pilots and observers. However Members were reassured that the extra training for the pilots is likely to be less than the additional training for observers, due to the fact that the majority of change is to the additional new role equipment on the helicopter and not necessarily the operation of the manual flight controls.

ORDERED that:

1. the report be noted.

NATIONAL AIR SUPPORT SERVICE UPDATE

The Assistant Chief Constable Crime Operations informed Members that on the 18th June 2009 the report 'Review of the National Strategy for Police Air Operations' was put before Chief Constables Council. This report proposed setting up a national air support service with borderless tasking of aircraft and all assets being owned by the national body.

Members were informed that the current position regarding helicopters in the North had been discussed, and it was accepted that the two aircraft currently based in the north is the bare minimum. There are on-going discussions as to what extra assets would be in the area as part of a national service.

The plans for a national air support service are progressing, with the aim of having a fully operational national unit in place by April 2012. Members were to be kept fully informed on future discussions.

ORDERED that:

1. the report be noted.

ANY OTHER ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair requested an update regarding security provisions for the helicopter at Durham Tees Valley Airport

The Assistant Chief Constable Crime Operations gave Members a full briefing on the security provisions at Durham Tees Valley Airport.