

**Report of the Chief Constable to the Chair and Members  
of the Strategic Air Support Panel  
26<sup>th</sup> July 2011**

**Executive & Presenting Officer: Mr Sean White, Assistant Chief Constable  
(Crime & Operations)**

**Status: For information**

**National Police Air Service Update**

**1. Purpose**

1.1 To update Members on the latest developments with the proposals for a National Police Air Service (NPAS).

**2. Recommendations**

2.1 That Members note the contents of the report.

**3. Reasons**

3.1 Since the last report to members there have been several meetings in connection with the proposed NPAS and a number of developments.

3.2 The meetings included: a finance meeting in Cleveland with representatives from NPAS; a North East regional finance meeting; two North East Regional Air Operations meetings chaired by ACC White; and an NPAS meeting with ACC White representing the North East region.

3.3 The finance meeting in Cleveland was as a result of ACC Pickard expressing concerns over the costs to Cleveland for the NPAS. This meeting was attended by the Force Head of Finance and other representatives from Cleveland, together with representatives from NPAS and NPAA.

- 3.4 The finance figures presented were largely the same as had been provided at earlier meetings. These figures estimated that by 2012 our revenue costs would be around £1.8million if we were to continue as a stand alone unit. If we joined the NPAS and reduced our operating hours, the costs would be around £1.6million. However, we would only start paying this lower figure at some point up to several years after we joined the NPAS, as this would be after other savings have been made around the country.
- 3.5 The figures presented also detailed the capital costs. Again, these were the same as previously reported and showed we would need to pay an additional £399,000 per year to fund a national helicopter replacement programme. We would however get a payment back into Force in the region of £320,000, as compensation for us handing over our helicopter. These compensation payments would continue until the helicopter is 10 years old and then cease.
- 3.6 The Force Head of Finance expressed concern that the figures were based on data from two years ago and up to date figures would need to be presented before the Force could make any final decisions. It was further pointed out that we would continue to pay interest on the £3.2m loan for our helicopter in addition to the capital payments to NPAS. We have been advised that we will receive these updated figures by October 2011.
- 3.7 A regional finance meeting was attended by finance officers from all six North East forces and was chaired by a representative from the NPIA. The Police Authority Treasurer also attended this meeting.
- 3.8 At this meeting the same figures were presented again, but it was further explained that if South Yorkshire retains their helicopter, which had been identified as being cut, then this would lead to additional costs to all the forces in the region. There was criticism in connection with how NPAS intended raising capital for the replacement of assets.
- 3.9 A regional meeting of all the North East forces was held in April. The discussion centred on NPAS, specifically the financial and operational difficulties. It is worth noting that all the forces were expressing concerns, which is a change in position for the region. It was agreed that the Chair (ACC White) would write to the NPAS lead expressing the concerns of the region.
- 3.10 A second regional meeting was held in June, attended by representatives from each force together with a representative from the NPAS team. At this meeting the NPAS representative updated the latest position and addressed some of the concerns that had been raised by the Region.
- 3.11 The NPAS lead has written to the Chief Constable setting out the business case for NPAS and seeking support from Cleveland Police Authority by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2011. A copy of the business case is attached at Appendix 1.

- 3.12 ACC White attended a national NPAS meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2011 as the North East regional representative. At this meeting the ACPO Lead for the introduction of NPAS (Chief Constable Alex Marshall, Hampshire) remained confident that NPAS would be established from April 2012 and that forces would be invited to join from that point onwards. Whilst the principle of NPAS may be agreed by Chief Constables' Council there remains a great deal of financial and operational detail that is yet to be satisfactorily provided, considered and resolved.

## **4. Implications**

### **4.1 Financial**

If the current NPAS proposals go ahead as planned, there are significant financial implications for the Force.

### **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 Police Air Service are still being progressed but it has the potential to offer savings for the Force. However the present financial proposals still show we would be paying additional costs for a reduced service.

- 5.2 The Force and the Authority are currently in no position to make any final decision about joining the NPAS until we have received the updated financial information and it has been indicated these figures will not be available until the end of October. A complete and detailed briefing paper outlining the issues for Members, in full, will be presented at the Police Authority Executive meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2011. No decisions or further commitment to joining NPAS will be made without the Force and the Authority having consideration of accurate and complete financial and operational details.

Sean Price  
Chief Constable