

**Report of the Chief Constable to the Chair and Members
of the Strategic Air Support Panel
8th November 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 concerning the proposals for a National Police Air Service (NPAS).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Members note the contents of the report.
- 2.2 That Members co-author a letter together with the T/Chief Constable requesting further information to Chief Constable Alex Marshall (see para 5.4).

3. Reasons

- 3.1 Following the last NPAS update report to Members there have been two meetings in connection with the proposed new arrangements and a number of developments.
- 3.2 There has been a meeting of North East regional air operations, chaired by ACC White, where forces were informed by an NPAS representative, that they would be provided with further financial information regarding costs in connection with NPAS. This information was expected in early September

2011 and would outline our air support commitment for the next 10 years. This information would assist Cleveland Police and Cleveland Police Authority to make an informed decision on whether to join NPAS, by 30th September 2011, as requested by the NPAS lead and reported upon in the last Police Authority meeting.

- 3.3 The North East regional forces were also informed that West Yorkshire Police have volunteered to host NPAS (as an independent organisation) and this was being looked upon favourably. 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 (revenue or capital) has been provided, despite repeated requests.
- 3.4 A further meeting on 14th September 2011 was attended by Police Authority treasurers and force finance leads from Durham, Cleveland and Northumbria. Representatives from the NPAS team briefed the authorities and finance leads, to assist them in making a decision regarding joining NPAS (or not), prior to the 30th September 2011 cut off date. A full briefing note following that meeting is contained at Appendix A to this report.
- 3.5 Another issue of note within our region, is the decision by South Yorkshire Police Authority that they were not joining NPAS and are going to retain their own helicopter locally.
- 3.6 A preliminary meeting has taken place between Cleveland, Durham and Northumbria forces, at the operational level, to explore areas where collaboration can occur. This meeting was very productive and further meeting(s) are planned in the future with respective Police Authorities to be properly sighted on developments, as they emerge.
- 3.7 It is understood that a number of police authorities around the country have fully supported joining NPAS, but have still requested up to date financial information. A number of other authorities are understood to have supported the strategic direction of NPAS and will continue to engage, but again have stated that they need to see the full financial profile to fully understand the implications. No information concerning finances has been provided to any police force or authority to cover the period beyond 2013/14 and it is difficult to understand how any properly informed decision can be made in the absence of such data.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial

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

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 reputational risk and also the operational cover risk.

5. Conclusions

5.1 The implementation of a National Police Air Service has strong support from the ACPO Lead (CC Alex Marshall) but is at risk of starting in some form, without a robust financial model having been agreed and many operational decisions still to be resolved. There is a significant risk that it could fail to deliver and could even be unpicked within the first two years of operation.

5.2 The Force and the Authority are currently not in a properly informed position to make any final binding decisions about joining NPAS until they have received updated and accurate financial information and that there is greater clarity regarding how the new service will operate and what level of cover would be provided for Cleveland. However, it may be prudent to make this position clear to the NPAS lead, so they do not assume Cleveland Police and Cleveland Police Authority have agreed otherwise. Albeit, the Force recognises and acknowledges that NPAS, as an entity, is supported and endorsed by Chief Constable's Council.

5.3 The level of engagement, support and information provided by the NPAS Project Development Team has not been satisfactory with many commitments being unfulfilled and unmet. Air support is iconic and vitally important to effective modern policing and the problematic development and implementation of NPAS poses a significant strategic and operational threat to the Force and the Police Authority. Additionally, the significant revenue and capital costs associated with air support are of such importance that absolute clarity over the total costs are essential to underpin any decisions to commit (or not) to NPAS.

5.4 It is strongly recommended that a joint letter from the Chair of the Strategic Air Support Panel and the T/Chief Constable is sent to the NPAS Project Lead (CC Marshall) requesting the revenue and capital financial information (that has previously been requested) and that the project Manager A/Supt Richard Watson be asked to attend a routine or extraordinary meeting of the

Cleveland Police Authority Strategic Air Support Panel to update Members personally concerning the development of NPAS and the particular position of Cleveland Police.

- 5.5 Finally, Mr Marshall has indicated for a significant period of time that the key premise of NPAS is to; 'provide at least the same level of air support cover at a reduced rate, for all forces'. It seems that problems in equalising and balancing the overall budget of NPAS mean that this intention is potentially no longer achievable and Cleveland Police and Cleveland Police Authority should properly ascertain the proposed arrangement as they affect the air support of the Force.

Jacqui Cheer
Temporary Chief Constable

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