

To: SURREY POLICE AUTHORITY

Date: 13th OCTOBER 2011

By: ACC OLIVIA PINKNEY

Title: NATIONAL POLICE AIR SUPPORT (NPAS) PROPOSAL

Summary:

- 1.1 The National Police Air Support (NPAS) project commenced in 2009 following a review of the National Air Strategy by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO). The strategy harnesses air assets across the country to provide a coherent, effective and national service that is not limited by traditional police boundaries and makes the very best use of these expensive assets.
 - 1.2 Locally the proposal would see a change from the existing two helicopter capability provided by the South East Air Support Unit (SEASU) to coverage being provided by four aircraft. These would be based at Bournemouth (Dorset), Dunsfold (Surrey), Benson (Thames Valley), Southend (Essex) and Lippitts Hill (London).
 - 1.3 The ACPO lead is Chief Constable Marshall (Hampshire) with project lead responsibilities managed by Superintendent Watson (Kent).
 - 1.4 The NPAS concept was agreed in principle unanimously by the Chief Constables Council in October 2010 which outlined a national coverage founded on 20 bases with 23 aircraft. The spare three aircraft would be retained to be used as reserve aircraft during times of scheduled maintenance. This model indicated savings nationally in the region of 22% (£13.97m).
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Recommendation(s) -

- i). That Surrey Police Authority agrees to support the direction of travel and the further exploration of the National Police Air Service
 - ii) That before further firmer support is given, clarification and reassurance be provided in the following areas:
 - Operational coverage
 - Financial costs and benefits
 - Governance
 - Retention of Consortium Partnership
 - Location of local air support base
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Introduction -

2. Proposal

- 2.1 The sequenced introduction into NPAS is based on a number of issues balanced around operational coverage, contractual obligations and financial issues. The predicted date for the south east is July 2013, when the planned network of four airframes will be in place.

3. Transition

- 3.1 Subject to the required level of support for implementation of the NPAS by Police Authorities, there are a number of key areas where further information is awaited:

- Governance - options are being considered which include a lead Force model.
- Accountability - the ability of Police Authorities and Police & Crime Commissioners to hold NPAS to account on behalf of the public.
- Service Level Agreement - the proposal is that each Force would be able to access 1050 flying hours a year. The delivery of this in terms of performance and outcomes would need evaluation to ensure it is fit for purpose.
- Tasking protocol - a fast and effective service will be needed that ensures the nearest aircraft attends the incident as well as ensuring equity in bidding for an asset.
- Financial contributions - how costs will be calculated and the projection of savings.
- The viability of Dunsfold as an operating base.

- 3.2 SEASU has not yet been operational for a year which makes financial comparisons with NPAS that much harder to calculate. The picture will develop over time so that the costs of operating SEASU will be fully captured.

4. Benefits

- 4.1 There is an opportunity for air support to be delivered as a complete package to each Force, creating greater stability in financial planning.
- 4.2 It will also negate the need for Forces to fund expensive capital replacement aircraft as has been the case previously (replacement cost of a helicopter is approximately £6m). Both SEASU airframes will need replacing in the medium term.
- 4.3 The proposal will see extended hours of operation routinely available to the Force. Additionally the provision of pool aircraft retains the network of coverage at all times whilst air frame maintenance is conducted.

- 4.4 Assurances have been given by the NPAS team that no Force will pay more than they currently do.
- 4.5 Opportunities for future technical development are available as a part of a large procurement contract

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The recommendation acknowledges that further information is required and recognises that the decision to support NPAS as a 'direction of travel'. If the proposed benefits do not make for an adequate and affordable service then it will allow for the respective Authorities to make alternative air support arrangements.

Equalities and Human Rights Implications - None

6 Key Risks

- 6.1 Governance - NPAS is working towards a Lead Force Model and West Yorkshire Police have expressed an interest.
- 6.2 Dunsfold - NPAS have identified Dunsfold as the most viable location for the main base in the South East and the project team continue to develop this option.
- 6.3 Funding - Clarity is required around the funding of NPAS. The figures used by NPAS for savings are based upon an incomplete year for SEASU
- 6.4 Sequencing - The NPAS concept is dependent on other aircraft coming on line at the same time.
- 6.5 Consortium fragments - If the current SEASU Consortium ends and does not move to NPAS, coverage will be affected and costs increased.
- 6.6 Response times and coverage - There is a risk under NPAS that the response times to certain geographical areas will be extended.

Attachments and Background Papers None

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