

To: Finance and Resources Committee
From: Chief Constable
Date: 18 January 2012

TASER – FUTURE INTENTIONS

1 Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is

- 1) To share with the committee the chief constable's intentions in respect of extending the number of officers selected, trained and authorised to use TASER.
- 2) To note the concomitant alignment of deployment arrangements for TASER across the strategic alliance.
- 3) To take the opportunity to revisit the operational value of the use of TASER, usage data and monitoring arrangements for future scrutiny.

2. Background

- 2.1 In light of the Human Rights' Act the need for a range of 'less lethal' options, and personal safety tactical options in conflict management by police, has become an imperative for the service. Police are required to justify any use of force, showing that it was proportionate and legal, and that there was, at the time, an absolute necessity, particularly where potentially lethal force is used. Available less lethal technologies work in different ways and each may offer unique advantages in specific circumstances. There has been substantial development in less lethal technologies over the last ten years or so, incapacitant spray and TASER being foremost amongst them.
- 2.2 The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) believes that having a range of options available is likely to provide the most appropriate response to any given situation. It has been demonstrated that where TASER has been used, it has contributed to the effective resolution of the incident. TASER is not a replacement for existing personal safety tactical options, but is an option that should be considered alongside other personal safety tactical options, such as negotiation, batons, incapacitant sprays and dogs. These do not constitute a hierarchy of lawful force and should be viewed as a range of approved options from which the most proportionate and appropriate should be selected, according to circumstances, in order to meet the

obligations set out in legislation.

- 2.3 The TASER is a device designed to temporarily incapacitate a subject through the use of an electrical current, which temporarily interferes with the body's neuromuscular system.
- 2.4 The TASER is laser-sighted and uses cartridges attached to the end of the cartridge bay. The cartridges project a pair of barbs or darts attached to insulated wires. The maximum range of the device is currently 21 feet (6.4 metres); this being the length of the wires that carry the current and attach the barbs to the weapon. It may also be used in a "drive stun" mode.
- 2.5 The device delivers a sequence of high voltage pulses of very short duration through the wires. The normal reaction of a person exposed to the discharge of the TASER is the loss of some voluntary muscle control resulting in the subject falling to the ground or 'freezing' on the spot. The device relies on physiological effects other than pain alone to achieve its objective.
- 2.5 The Conflict Management Model (currently being replaced by the National Decision Model), contained within the ACPO Personal Safety Manual of Guidance sets out the process by which a measured and appropriate response can be made to any situation involving conflict. The police use of force is governed by:
 - Common Law
 - Section 3 Criminal Law Act 1967
 - Section 117 Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984
 - The Human Rights Act 1998
- 2.6 TASER technology has been subjected to rigorous assessment and testing by the Home Office Scientific Development Branch (HOSDB) to determine how well it meets the operational requirement. In addition, the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL) has undertaken a thorough programme of medical assessment. The results of these assessments have been considered by an independent body, the Defence Scientific Advisory Council's sub-committee on the Medical Implications of 'Less Lethal' technologies (DOMILL), who have issued medical statements in relation to TASER. It is important to note that, unlike a strike from a baton, or having been sprayed with an incapacitant spray, recovery from the direct effects of the TASER should be almost instantaneous, once the current has been turned off.
- 2.7 On 24 November 2008 the Home Secretary announced that the initial trial of the extension of TASER to Specially Trained Officers (STOs) had been

successful and therefore as of 1 January 2009 the extended use of TASER to STOs in all forces was authorised.

- 2.8 In light of this, in 2009, a project was initiated to roll out the extended use of TASER to STOs within Cambridgeshire and the constabulary secured and received an additional one hundred and fifty TASER units from the Home Office. However given the financial situation at that time this project was terminated. At present ten of these units are deployed with the TFU with the remaining one hundred and forty being in storage.

3. Current Situation

- 3.1 The chief constable has decided that the constabulary will train an additional 120 specially trained Officers adopting the National Guidance for the selection of staff to be trained as STOs

- Knowledge and understanding of the National Decision Making Model
- Sound judgement
- Maturity in the workplace
- Confirmed in the rank of constable

and ensuring all training and deployment is managed in line with the ACPO policy on operational deployment of TASER for specially trained units (2008).

- 3.2 Initial thoughts are to select officers from Local Policing Command and the ANPR teams who are trained members of the Police Support Units (PSU). They already have an increased amount of training in the use of force and meet the above criteria. The allocation to ANPR teams will allow the TASER capability to be harmonised during collaboration. The intercept teams are more likely to be in a position to support divisional colleagues than Road Policing Unit patrols who are focused on reducing 'killed and seriously injured' and patrolling the road network.

- 3.3 The training for STOs is the same as that provided for the Authorised Firearms Officer (AFO), although as to be expected AFOs will initially be more confident in handling the TASER. It is proposed that Cambridgeshire will adopt the same national training package for STOs and that provided to AFOs, namely

- An initial 3 day course followed by half day public order input
- A 1 day recertification training day including the issue and return of TASER and post incident procedures

- 3.4 The requirement to authorise TASER will remain the same as that for

existing firearms officers. The authority for deployment is wide, encompassing incidents of violence or potential violence. Deployments are recorded for scrutiny and audit and when used officers are required to complete the necessary use of force forms.

- 3.5 It is proposed that the Local Policing Command is responsible for selecting and managing officers to be trained as STOs, and also for the storage of TASERs. The Learning and Development department would be responsible for delivering training.
- 3.6 At this time no decisions have been made as to where the TASER units should be allocated. As the new policing model for Cambridgeshire is rolled out and the Strategic Threat Risk Assessment is completed, a decision can be made based upon threat harm and risk as to the most appropriate police stations and the number of TASERs to be deployed.

4. Cost of Extended Use

- 4.1 In 2010 the initial forecast for the extended use of TASER to BCU's was £82,000. However, this total was reached with no firm decisions around the detail of how the training would be delivered, exactly who the TASERs would be issued to and where they would be stored. For these reasons, the figures provided should be regarded as no more than indicative. Using the same details as those used in 2010, the costing has been reviewed and a comparative costing is estimated at £87,000, this has been identified and put into the base budget for 2012/13 along with £46,000 for following years. This figure may be reduced pro rata to decisions around the number of officers trained and number of TASERs deployed.

5. Operational Use of Taser Authorities

- 5.1 Between 1 January 2008 and 1 January 2012 there were 2059 recorded extended use of TASER authorities within Cambridgeshire, with many more incidents where TASER may have been authorised if not limited by the availability of AFOs. From these authorities there have been 34 actual TASER discharges, 107 occasions where TASER was drawn from its holster but not used, 151 occasions where TASER was drawn and the "red-dot" deterrent used to resolve the situation and 5 occasions where it was "arced". None of the discharges relate to firearms incidents as these are treated separately. Of the 34 discharges 26 were for people armed with knives, broken bottles or syringes containing fluids. The other eight were for extremely violent offenders under the influence of drugs or in possessions of some other kind of blunt weapon. TASER is particularly useful in protecting people who may pose limited threat to others, but are determined to harm themselves. It is also useful, as the data both in Cambs and elsewhere suggests, in dealing with a threat from a bladed instrument or bottle, where

approaching a subject would be dangerous and conventional firearms may otherwise have been the only alternative.

- 5.2 It is important to note from the national usage statistics below which show that in almost 70% of occasions, over a 6 year period, simply the drawing, aiming, or activation of the TASER was sufficient to ensure a peaceful resolution, where other means may have had to be used had the equipment not been available.

22 April 2004 to 31 March 2010								
Usage details	Discharges	Drive-stuns	Arced	Red Dot	Aimed	Drawn	Not Stated	Total Used
Totals	2185	344	275	4434	354	1000	7	8599

6. Relevance to Collaboration

- 6.1 Within the strategic alliance one of the priorities for collaboration is the alignment of policy and procedure. Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire both utilise the extended use of TASER to protect the public and police officers. As there is a move to a fully collaborated Armed Policing Unit in April 2012 the implication for Cambridgeshire in not adopting a similar policy position may be the non- availability of TASER locally should the APU be deployed or committed within another county. Apportionment of cost for armed policing has been discussed and it has been agreed that this will be weighted to the use/demand for a function i.e. who has used APU the most will pay more. The implications are that if Cambridgeshire solely utilises the APU to provide TASER response and the other forces make use of STOs we could potentially face an increased financial cost for the APU as we are making more of a demand upon them. Hertfordshire Police make less use of the APU given that they have 125 STOs within Local Policing Command. By aligning policy and procedure the strategic alliance builds capability, capacity and interoperability and ensures that no partner within the alliance is disadvantaged by local practice.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 The committee is recommended to
- 1) Note the content of this report and the Chief Constable's decision to extend the number of officers trained to use TASER within Cambridgeshire Constabulary.

- 2) Discuss the appropriate level of monitoring of the extension of the availability of TASER.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Source Document (s)	Contact Officer	Location
	Chief Constable Simon Parr 01480 422319	Cambridgeshire Constabulary Hinchingsbrooke Park, Huntingdon, Cambs, PE29 6NP.