

**To:** Finance and Resources Committee

**From:** Chief Constable

**Date:** 27 October 2011

## **AIR SUPPORT – UPDATE**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 In June 2011 both this Committee and the Full Authority received a (Part 2) report on Air Support. On recommendation from the Committee the Authority approved the development of interim arrangements for Air Support (with Chiltern and Eastern Region), subject to the savings quoted being at least equal to those reported. It also authorised the Chief Constable to conclude the contractual details and the Chief Executive and Treasurer to finalise the Section 23 Agreement in due course. Finally it agreed the proposals set out in the report for the National Air Support Service (NPAS).
- 1.2 Plans to secure a formalised split service provision from Chiltern and the Eastern Region have faltered due to the confirmation by NPAS that the aircraft base at Henlow is also identified for closure. This decision has been accepted by the Herts/Beds/Bucks Chief Officers. Cambridgeshire is now negotiating an arrangement where the strategic intent which supports the NPAS borderless ethos remains but provides for a deliverable interim service which is streamlined and cost effective.
- 1.3 The intention of this report is to update the Committee on national and regional progress with Police Air Operations. A framework for wider collaborative working arrangements for Cambridgeshire Constabulary is currently being considered to reduce costs and streamline services. This amounts to a new 'interim' proposal to that envisaged in June 2011.

### **2. Background**

- 2.1 There is clear regional and national impetus for all Air Operations Units (AOUs) to operate more effectively across regional areas through innovative collaboration. This is intended to achieve greater value for money and provide borderless air operations services to improve national resilience and capability.
- 2.2 A National Police Air Service (NPAS) is being developed and supported by ACPO to maximise the use of reduced assets and to realise savings. This project is complex and is still in its preliminary stages. NPAS implementation is expected to evolve over a number of years commencing formally on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 when Central and South East Region should begin operations. Initial

plans preclude Chiltern, Sussex and Surrey AOU's due to the Olympics. These will join in July 2013. It is expected that due to the intricacies of operational service and command and control requirements the Project will take some years to be fully realised. Intrinsic to the project plan for the South East Region is the full engagement of the Metropolitan Police Air Support Unit in support of the national collaboration plans. The operational demands associated with the 2012 Olympics precludes regional transition to a National body until after 2013 when the Metropolitan Police Air Support assets can become fully engaged in the regional plans.

### **3. NPAS Proposals**

- 3.1 The National Police Air Operations Strategy is being championed by Hampshire Chief Constable Alex Marshall on behalf of ACPO. The strategy identifies and recommends that the national police air operations fleet will be reduced from the current 32 aircraft to 22 rotary wing aircraft and 4 spare relief helicopters. The final disposition and number of fixed wing assets is yet to be defined but it is expected there will be 3 fixed wing aircraft to operate in support of the helicopter fleet. The post 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 national landscape for air operations is still far from clear as there are a number of Forces, in particular South Yorkshire, seeking to retain their existing helicopters although they are currently identified for withdrawal as part of the NPAS proposals. As part of the national model Cambridgeshire AOU has been identified for closure in 2012.
- 3.2 In the latest update from NPAS in August 2011, it was confirmed that 9 Police Authorities have supported the NPAS proposals as set out by Chief Constable Marshall in his correspondence to Chief Officers and Police Authorities in July 2011. NPAS gave assurance that it would continue to work closely with individual police authorities to answer specific questions to what NPAS will mean to their Force areas. The initial funding model proposed for NPAS indicated that every force area will pay less for air support than they currently do however due to local variations in the way air support is currently funded NPAS is currently reviewing the longer term funding model in consultation with the ACPO Finance Business Area. A longer term solution is to be determined based on usage, proximity of air craft and population/crime rates.

### **4. Business Case Proposal**

- 4.1 Cambridgeshire Constabulary fully supports the premise that air support is a highly valued and effective resource within the modern day police service and this is a view supported by ACPO through the 2009 review of the National Police Air Operations Strategy. It is clear that there are critical policing operations that can only be effectively managed with air operations support. It is the strategic intent that access to a resilient and cost effective air operations service must remain a tactical option for all commanders within the Force.

- 4.2 The complexities of the NPAS Project and the Olympic associated demands have delayed the formal opportunities to implement streamlined and cost effective business change for the South Eastern Region. Therefore partners involved within the regional operation are scoping business proposals which embrace the concepts of the NPAS strategy and allow for the development of an interim service model prior to full NPAS implementation
- 4.3 For Cambridgeshire it is proposed that the Air Operations Unit will move out of RAF Wyton by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 in line with NPAS proposals. The option now being considered is for an interim arrangement which would extend the current consortium agreement within the Eastern Region. Cambridgeshire would remain a full member of the Consortium and would continue to share maintenance, pilotage and Police Air Operators Certificate (PAOC) charges. As part of this interim arrangement the Cambridgeshire MD 902 aircraft would be retained as a consortium spare to be used during scheduled maintenance inspections or repairs of the two EC135s.
- 4.4 The costs of this interim solution are currently being worked up.

## 5. Recommendation

- 5.1 The Committee is invited to note the proposals for the further development of an interim Air Operations service for Cambridgeshire, provided by Eastern Region, whilst NPAS operations are finalised. An update on the costs will be reported in due course.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Source Document (s)	Contact Officer	Location
	ACC Mark Hopkins 01480 422205	Cambridgeshire Constabulary Hinchbrooke Park, Huntingdon, Cambs, PE29 6NP.