



WEST YORKSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

20 April 2018

Response to the HMICFRS Study on Police Air Support

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To provide an overview of the report of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services' (HMICFRS) study on police air support and an update against the recommended actions.
- 1.2 A detailed background is provided for those members who are not familiar with the National Police Air Service (NPAS).

2. Background

- 2.1 In November 2017 HMICFRS published a study report entitled 'Planes, drones, and helicopters, an independent study of police air support.'
- 2.2 The report was commissioned by the then National Police Chief Aviation lead, Chief Constable Simon Byrne of Cheshire Police. (The NPCC identify a Chief Officer to act as their subject matter lead for thematic areas of policing.)
- 2.3 The National Police Chief Council (NPCC) Chief Aviation Lead role does not have a function in the direction and control of NPAS resources and personnel and is not within the governance framework authorised and regulated by the Civil Aviation Authority. The role does however have a key influence in determining the "user requirement" for police aviation on behalf of policing in England and Wales.
- 2.4 HMICFRS does not have a performance framework for the assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of NPAS so it was not possible for an inspection to be undertaken. HMICFRS sought instead to assess the financial and operational benefits that could be evidenced as a result of the development of a national aviation operating model.
- 2.5 The NPAS National Strategic Board are the strategic decision making body that oversees NPAS on behalf of policing in England and Wales. The board is made up of six Police and Crime Commissioners and six Chief Constables across the country with attendance from representatives from Counter Terrorism Command

and the Mayor's Office of Police and Crime in London. The Police and Crime Commissioner for West Yorkshire is Chair of the Board.

- 2.6 West Yorkshire Police operate the National Police Air Service ('NPAS') under the lead force model on behalf of the police forces of England and Wales through a section 22 (Police Act 1996, as amended) collaboration agreement. The Lead Local Policing Body in the collaboration agreement is the Police and Crime Commissioner for West Yorkshire. As a corporation sole the Commissioner owns all of the assets, insurances and leases.
- 2.7 The Chief Constable is the Police Air Operations Certificate Holder with a designated Accountable Manager who is legally responsible for the safe and efficient delivery of flight operations. Aviation support is delivered nationally via an operating and governance structure approved by the Civil Aviation Authority.
- 2.8 Under EU regulation (216/2008) responsibility for the governance of flying in support of police operations lies with national aviation authorities. In the case of the UK this is the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). This EU Regulation is enshrined in UK law through the Air Navigation Order 2009 (ANO). The CAA undertake regular assessment of NPAS.

3. Overview of the HMICFRS Study Findings

- 3.1 The report recognises the contribution of the West Yorkshire PCC and the West Yorkshire Chief Constable in turning the concept of NPAS into an operational reality and recognises the challenges faced in doing so.
- 3.2 The study provides useful affirmation of the key areas that are recognised as priority area for further development following the completion of phase one of the creation of NPAS. Phase one was to bring all 43 Home Office forces into the NPAS collaboration and this was achieved when Humberside Police joined the National Police Air Service in September 2016.
- 3.3 The study included a number of recommendations which have been incorporated into an action plan by the Chief Operating Officer for NPAS shown at appendix A to detail how they will be taken forward. The owners of the actions are wide ranging, they include NPAS, the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) Aviation Lead and the NPAS National Strategic Board.
- 3.4 Broadly the recommendations fall into the key areas listed below:
 - Understanding the demand for police air support
 - Articulating a refreshed NPCC strategy for police air support
 - Revising performance reporting so that the value of using air support can be more clearly understood
 - Reviewing governance arrangement and the legal agreement that underpins NPAS to ensure all parties have a greater understanding

- 3.5 The study raises the limitations of the baseline information regarding air support activity and air support costs prior to the inception of NPAS and for that reason is unable to robustly conclude on the financial and operational benefits of a national model. This limitation also provides a challenge when articulating the benefits to forces of NPAS, and is a key lesson for policing moving forward for any other large scale collaborations.
- 3.6 Many of the areas raised within the study already had ongoing strands of work which are long term, complex projects in their own right that will strengthen the delivery of NPAS and Police Aviation in its wider sense, for example use of Drones which are not within the remit of NPAS. Many of these projects are referred to in Appendix A. A number of projects are highlighted below to give an idea of the depth of working ongoing:
- A refresh of the police user requirement for air support led by the NPCC
 - An update of the Police Aviation Strategy led by the NPCC
 - A review of drones use led by the NPCC lead for drones
 - A fleet replacement strategy led by NPAS with significant stakeholder consultation and challenge
 - A review of the formula that allocates the cost of NPAS across the collaboration forces led by a working group made up predominantly from NPAS Board Members
 - A review of performance reporting led by the Independent Assurance Group made up of senior officers across policing in England and Wales that challenge the performance of NPAS
- 3.7 The above list clearly demonstrates the extensive activity already in progress at the time of the study, but none the less, the report provides useful confirmation that the right areas are being prioritised.
- 3.8 The report does not recognise sufficiently the challenge of delivery to a wide range of stakeholders and the complexity that it brings in terms of governance. Phase three of the NPAS project is to review the governance arrangements and determine whether or not a section 22 collaboration agreement with a Lead Policing Body is the best delivery vehicle. It is likely that this work will be undertaken once phase two, the delivery of the new 14 base operating model, has had more opportunity to embed and progress with the above projects has been made, to enable a better informed review to take place.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 The report has been discussed at the NPAS National Strategic Board with actions agreed. Updates have been provided where relevant for specific strands of work.
- 4.2 The report has been shared with the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) and the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) with updates provided.

- 4.3 The successes of NPAS and the plans for further progression have been discussed in a meeting with the Minister for Policing and Fire since the publication of the report.
- 4.4 Further updates will be provided to these groups as the above projects progress with regular consultation with stakeholders.
- 4.5 The action plan at Appendix A details planned activity.