

LEICESTERSHIRE POLICE AUTHORITY

PAPER MARKED

TO FOLLOW

Meeting **FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

Date **TUESDAY 9 DECEMBER 2008 -10.00 A.M.**

Report of **CHIEF CONSTABLE**

Subject **EXTENDED USE OF TASER**

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to inform members of the recent announcement by the Home Secretary of plans to allow Chief Constables the discretion to allow non-authorized firearm officers to use Taser where they face violence, or threats of violence, of such severity that they would need to use force to protect the public or themselves.

Background

2. In April 2005, following a 12 month pilot by selected forces, the Home Secretary authorised the use of Taser as a less-lethal option for deployment by AFOs (Authorised Firearms Officers) at incidents meeting the criteria for the issue of firearms. Locally, AFOs have had Tasers available as a tactical option since 1 August 2005.
3. On 21 July 2007, the Home Secretary authorised the extension of the use of Taser to incidents not meeting the criteria for the issue of firearms but meeting the criteria of an authorised officer, as detailed at Paragraph 1 above.
4. The intention was to improve public and officer safety but restricted the use of Taser to AFOs. The Chief Constable adopted the extension for use of Taser by AFOs on 26 November 2007.
5. On 1 September 2007, the Home Secretary authorised the 12 month limit for the use of Taser to be further extended for use by other specially trained units (ie non AFOs). The results of the ten force trial and further background information are contained in Appendix A attached.

Current Position

6. Members will be aware, from the significant media interest, that the Home Office has announced consent to a national extension in the deployment and use of Taser to Specifically Trained Units (STUs). Some media reports state that Taser is to be issued to all 'front line officers'. The Home Office has agreed to provide funding for up to £10,000 additional Taser units. There is no agreement between the ACPO and the Home Office that the full amount will be accepted and the ACPO **has not** agreed to provide Taser to a set number of officers working in any force area or particular environment.

7. It is for each Chief Constable to consider clearly the detail of their bid for additional funding, reflecting local force threats and risk assessments.
8. The proposed extension to the use of Taser is intended to enhance the range of options available to an officer.
9. There are clearly concerns, in some quarters, about the safety of the Taser if not used appropriately. It should be noted that the use of force, by any means, carries a degree of risk of harm and/or injury. The pilots have shown that the simply drawing, sparking and aiming of Tasers has proven effective with over 75% of cases achieving compliance without recourse to discharging the Taser.
10. Chief Officers are currently giving careful consideration to the Home Secretary's announcement of a national expansion in the issue and use of Taser. The 'business case' reflecting local experience risk assessments and the various options and related costs have yet to be considered. Chief Officers are also (at the time of writing this report) yet to speak with the staff associations to learn of their views, concerns etc.
11. Members of the Police Authority are in a position to give their views on the public reaction to a wider deployment of Taser. Chief Officers have worked hard with colleagues to develop both the style and tone of policing locally and are keen to learn of the views of all members about the possible extended deployment of Taser.

Recommendations

- 12.1 Members are asked to note the background to the recent Home Secretary's announcement on the national expansion in the use of Taser.
- 12.2 Members are invited to give their views on the potential extension in the use of Taser locally and any concerns on the possible impact on public confidence.

Background Papers

Appendix A: ACPO Strategic Firearms & Conflict Management Taser Trial by Specially Trained Units (STUs)

Officer to Contact.

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