

AGENDA ITEM 8

CENTRAL SCOTLAND JOINT POLICE BOARD

Subject: POLICE USE OF FIREARMS
Meeting: CENTRAL SCOTLAND JOINT POLICE BOARD
Date: 28 AUGUST 2008
Author: CHIEF CONSTABLE

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Police Board with an update on a number of different aspects of the police use of firearms, both within the Central Scotland Police area and also at national level.

1.2 The Board will be aware that the police use of firearms in Scotland is overseen by a Sub-Group of ACPOS Operational Policing Business Area. This group, the ACPOPS Working Group on Armed Policing, is Chaired by Strathclyde Police, and its terms of reference include:

- reviewing the training of Firearms Strategic (Gold), Tactical (Silver) and Operational (Bronze) Commanders, offering recommendations or guidance as appropriate.
- reviewing the training and/or equipment for use by any other officers in firearms operations/incidents throughout Scotland and offering recommendations and/or guidance as appropriate.
- reviewing the details of significant firearms operations/incidents which have, since the date of its previous meeting, involved the deployment of Authorised Firearms Officers and, as appropriate, to make recommendations or offer guidance arising from said deployments.
- examining and considering, within a Scottish context, matters of policy highlighted by ACPO and, as appropriate, making recommendations or offering guidance arising from said policy.
- considering any other matters thought suitable, by the group, for discussion.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In October 2006, the ACPOS Protective Services Capacity and Capability Review (Police use of Firearms Workstream) (hereinafter referred to as the C&C Review) presented several recommendations for consideration by ACPOS Council. These recommendations took note of the highly variable sizes of the eight Scottish police forces, and the impact of this upon several forces' practical abilities to develop adequate and diverse firearms capabilities unilaterally.
- 2.2 The recommendations were approved on 6 November 2006 by ACPOS Council, and subsequently progressed through a dedicated working group, reporting to the Chair of the ACPOS Firearms Training Advisory Group (now the ACPOS Working group on Armed Policing). The dedicated working group took direction from an earlier meeting of the ACPOS Policing Capability Review Group, which had suggested the creation of eastern and western Strategic Alliance Co-ordination Units (SACUs), relative to the police use of firearms workstream, and with the purpose of delivering greater convergence of practice and interoperability in this area of policing than hitherto. Central Scotland Police was located within the eastern SACU.

3 HMICS THEMATIC INSPECTION ON THE POLICE USE OF FIREARMS

- 3.1 The 2006 C&C Review proposed a thematic inspection by HMICS two years after the Review's publication.
- 3.2 The thematic report, published in January 2009, provided a useful commentary on the governance and management of the police use of firearms in Scotland. It noted that little progress appeared to have been made in relation to the objectives of the C&C Review.
- 3.3 The SACU structure, and the delivery of the vision articulated in the C&C Review, are currently being reviewed by the ACPOS Working Group on Armed Policing. This process has only recently been initiated and it is therefore too early to provide the Board with any indications as to a future direction of travel. Nevertheless, any review of this structure will have potential ramifications in relation to the delivery of the C & C recommendations. Any developments of significance will be communicated to the Board as appropriate.
- 3.4 The report concludes with the recommendation that all forces should work to achieve NPIA licensing within six months from the date of publication of the report. While the six month timescale is not realistic, Central Scotland Police has initiated contact with NPIA with a view to commencing the licensing process.

4 NPJA LICENSING

- 4.1 Police training in the use of firearms within Central Scotland Police is conducted according to the National Police Firearms Training Curriculum (NPFTC), which is adopted UK-wide. In order that a force can demonstrate that it trains officers according to the NPFTC guidelines, it must be awarded a licence of curriculum compliance by the NPJA. This is an important quality assurance measure, which is achieved by making a submission to the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPJA) in relation to teaching materials, assessment processes and standard operating procedures (SOPs) used, and by production of a firearms Strategic Threat and Risk Assessment (STRA).
- 4.2 Licensing is a two-stage process. Following initial assessment by NPJA, and the agreement of a gap analysis and associated action plan, a provisional licence of curriculum compliance will be issued. This will be monitored by NPJA through visits and 'health checks'. Following full implementation of the action plan, the forces will then make a further submission to the NPJA. This will result in the issue of a full licence, a full licence with a development programme attached, or an improvement notice.
- 4.3 There is a significant volume of work associated with the licensing process and, from the experiences of police forces in England and Wales, it is envisaged that receipt of a full licence could take up to two years. To facilitate the process, a Sergeant and a Constable, both highly experienced in the police use of firearms, will be committed to the licensing project on a full time basis. The vacancies created, which are both within the specialised Firearms Support Unit, are business-critical in relation to the delivery of NPFTC training and will be back-filled through a temporary promotion and a transfer. Both back-fill appointments will impact upon front line officer numbers.
- 4.4 The force has recently produced its second firearms STRA. While this document recognises that the criminal use of firearms is an ongoing concern within the central belt of Scotland, the analysis suggests that the overall threat to the Central Scotland Police area through the criminal use of firearms is low.

5 ARMED RESPONSE VEHICLE (ARV) OPERATIONS

- 5.1 The Board will recall that, in May 2008, Central Scotland Police introduced a mobile armed response capability. This is located within the Roads Policing Unit and is staffed by officers who perform a dual roads policing/armed role.
- 5.2 A full review of ARV operation and deployment is currently under way

within the Force. While the findings of this review will be shared with the Board when available, statistical data which will be of interest to the Board is presented in Appendix 'A' to this report. The data relates to the first thirteen months of the ARV's operation. Of particular interest is the fact that, despite a total of 313 tactical uses of ARV crews, only 205 hours abstraction from RPU activity has been incurred since May 2008.

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Delivery of the team of two police officers to progress NPJA licensing will incur a fiscal cost of £1300 in temporary salary uplift in relation to the Sergeant back-fill. There are no other financial implications for consideration at this stage.

7 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Over a two year period, two Constable posts will be redeployed from operational duties to back-fill the posts vacated by the licensing team.

8 DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no diversity implications arising from this report.

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 It is recommended that members note the content of this report.

Chief Constable

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APPENDIX A

ARV ACTIVITY BRIEFING

26 May 2008 – 30 June 2009

TOTAL USE of ARV resources – 313 occasions

Tactical Relocation (no authority to arm)	256
Tactical Relocation (authority granted)	27
Rendezvous Point (no authority to arm)	1
Rendezvous Point (authority granted)	5
Deployment	24

ARV use by Area Command

FALKIRK	165
STIRLING	73
CLACKS.	75

Monthly total time extracted from RPU duties –

2008

May	16 minutes
June	13 hours, 58 minutes
July	21 hours, 29 minutes
August	9 hours, 1 minute
September	30 hours, 35 minutes
October	15 hours, 28 minutes
November	12 hours, 43 minutes
December	15 hours, 28 minutes

2009

January	18 hours, 34 minutes
February	11 hours, 47 minutes
March	8 hours, 33 minutes
April	6 hours, 26 minutes
May	17 hours, 49 minutes
June	23 hours, 47 minutes

Total time extracted from RPU duties – 205 hrs, 54 mins.