

Meeting	Strategy, Policy and Performance Committee
Date	8 May 2019
Location	Pacific Quay
Title of Paper	Deployment of Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS)
Presented By	Barry Sillers, SPA Director of Strategy
Recommendation for Members	For Discussion
Appendix Attached	No

PURPOSE

To report to the committee on Police Scotland's deployment of Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) as a contribution to the Police Scotland air support capability in particular the deployment in support of searches for missing people.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The 10-year strategy '*Serving a Changing Scotland*' places a considerable importance on modernising the police service in Scotland through the introduction of new technologies and new and innovative ways of working to address changing and growing demands on the service.
- 1.2 Police Scotland informed the SPA of its intention to purchase two Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems RPAS (also known as Unmanned Air Vehicles UAV or more colloquially as drones) on 19 December 2017 at the SPA's Board Meeting in Dundee. The policy intent behind the proposal related primarily to searching for missing persons in challenging and remote geographical terrain and in adverse weather conditions – where traditional air support methods can encounter difficulties, thus increasing the reach and capability of the air support unit in a cost effective manner.
- 1.3 Invitations to tender had been issued on the Public Contracts Scotland website with a deadline of 4 December 2017 and an award was subsequently made to Martek Drones Ltd on 26 February 2018.
- 1.4 The RPAS capability became operational on 1 May 2019 and there has been one deployment to date on the island of Raasay by the RPAS based at Inverness. This deployment was at the request of the local police commander in support of an ongoing search for a missing person.

2. GOVERNANCE AND ASSURANCE PROCESS

- 2.1 The paper provided by Police Scotland to the SPA Board in December 2017 described the work that Police Scotland had undertaken, including examining best operating practice through exploratory visits with other police forces who were already operating RPAS. Police Scotland provided a commitment that prior to any operational deployment of RPAS it would:
 - produce an Operating Safety Case and Operations Manual;
 - undertake a full Privacy Impact Assessment;
 - undertake an Equalities impact assessment;
 - comply in full with the General Data Protection Regulations;
 - develop a robust internal and external communications strategy;
 - and
 - undertake a full community impact assessment.

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- 2.2 Police Scotland provided a subsequent update to the SPA Board meeting on 27 February 2018, reporting that RPAS training courses had been procured from National Air Traffic Services (NATS) and that it was intended that 3 RPAS would be purchased, to be based at Aberdeen, Inverness and the Air Support Unit in Glasgow.
- 2.3 Further information was provided on RPAS by Police Scotland when Police Scotland brought the 3-year implementation plan to the Board for approval in May 2018. The implementation plan referenced the intention to deploy RPAS in support of achieving the objective set out in the 10-year strategy to *"invest in our use of information and technology"*.
- 2.4 In December 2017 Police Scotland shared with the SPA its Data Protection Impact Assessment and its Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment for the RPAS deployment. In February 2019 Police Scotland completed a data protection impact assessment. Police Scotland also gave advanced notice to the SPA of its intention to deploy RPAS in Aberdeen and Inverness with effect from 1 May 2019, providing detail to the SPA on its plans to deliver internal and external communications in support of and in advance of the intended deployment date.
- 2.5 Police Scotland have informed the SPA that given the mobility of the RPAS to be deployed across many communities, the approach being taken to community assessment will be at a local level. This means the RPAS deployment team engage with the search advisor and local area police commander to consider the community impact. Considerations taken into account include the nature of the tasking and the other policing activity already carried out in the community. If a community impact assessment is deemed necessary that is carried out locally. The RPAS team carry bespoke leaflets to provide local residents with information on the RPAS. Use is also made of social media such as twitter, to inform the local community of the use of RPAS, either before deployment or shortly thereafter depending on the nature of the search.

3. **RPAS IMPACT AND CONTRIBUTION TO OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE**

- 3.1 Whilst recognising that this deployment is an operational policing matter, the Committee retains a responsibility for the oversight of the impact these systems will have on the local delivery of policing.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The deployment of RPAS is a far more cost effective way of delivering air support than by helicopter.

5. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The deployment requires the training of suitably qualified operators. This training has been provided by NATS.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Scottish Police Authority has a statutory duty to assess policing performance and establish outcomes, objectives and accompanying measures as part of the strategic planning process. Sections 34 and 39 of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 sets out the Scottish Police Authority's statutory responsibilities in more detail.

7. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are positive reputational implications associated with the deployment of RPAS in terms of being able to provide an increased air support capability to enhance the ability to safeguard vulnerable people.

8. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no social implications associated with this paper.

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 9.1 The improvement in the air support capability particularly outside the central belt will enhance community safety.

10. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The enhanced air support capability will have a positive impact on vulnerable missing people.

11. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The carbon footprint and environmental impact of RPAS deployment is far less than the comparable helicopter deployment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to:

Consider Police Scotland's deployment of Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) as a contribution to the Police Scotland air support capability in particular the deployment in support of searches for missing people.