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## Press release

Embargoed until Thursday 17 December, 00.01 hours.

# Tayside police force is making good progress but joint board is not achieving best value

**Members of Tayside Joint Police Board need to gain a better understanding of their role before the board will be able to achieve best value. However Tayside police force is making good progress in important areas.**

The *Best Value Audit and Inspection: Tayside Police and Tayside Joint Police Board* is the first Best Value report on a Scottish police force and police authority. It provides an overview of how these bodies are meeting their best value duties and is a joint report from the Accounts Commission and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland (HMICS).

The Accounts Commission has concluded that there is a strong commitment from the board to supporting the Chief Constable and that working relationships between the board and the force are good. But the board is not achieving best value.

Chair of the Commission, John Baillie said: "Board members have an important role to play in the governance of police services. But until members of the Tayside Joint Police Board have a clearer understanding of what that role is it will not be able to achieve best value or effectively hold the Chief Constable to account. Members need more support to improve their knowledge and understanding of their role, which should include setting the direction and priorities of the force and scrutinising its performance."

The Commission believes that a lack of clarity about the respective responsibilities and expectations of the board and the Chief Constable may not be unique to Tayside. It says if this proves to be the case it will recommend that the Scottish Government, COSLA and ACPOS should consider whether the existing guidance on the expectations of boards and board members is clear enough.

HMICS's performance assessment of the police force showed that it has been successful in reducing offences associated with anti-social behaviour and is proactive in targeting drug dealing.

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary Bill Skelly said: "Recorded crimes of vandalism are often used as a measure of anti-social behaviour. It is encouraging to see that in Tayside these went down by 10 per cent in 2008/09. The force's proactive approach to targeting drug dealing also resulted in it recording its highest ever number of class A offences in 2008/09. However the public perception is that anti-social behaviour and drug related problems have both increased. More emphasis on community engagement would help to address this."

The force also has strong financial control and management and is making good progress in some important areas of best value, including improving services, equalities and working with partners to deliver joint solutions to local issues. However, it lacks a force-wide approach to issues like community engagement and planning. It also needs to give the joint board more opportunities to fulfil its best value duties by providing it with more comprehensive performance reports.

The board and the force will now produce an improvement plan to show how they intend to address the findings.

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## Notes to Editors

1. The Accounts Commission for Scotland was set up in 1975. The Commission checks whether local authorities, fire and police boards spend public money properly and effectively.
2. HMICS operates independently of police forces, police authorities and the Scottish Government and exists to monitor and improve the police service in Scotland.
3. A joint police board is made up of councilors from the local authority areas the force covers. In the case of Tayside there are seven members from Dundee City Council, six from Perth and Kinross Council and five from Angus Council. A joint police board is responsible for setting the budget for the force; ensuring that best value is attained and holding the chief constable to account. A police force provides police services in the force area.
4. Both the Accounts Commission and HMICS have the power to examine how well Scottish police authorities are delivering best value. HMICS also has a statutory duty to inspect police forces and report on their state and efficiency. Both organisations would have been entitled produce their own report on each police authority but this would have created duplication of work and is not in keeping with the spirit of the recommendations of the Crerar report and with the current drive to streamline scrutiny. Also a joint report gives the public an overall view of how well the police authorities in their area are meeting their duties to provide best value. It was decided that a joint report would be the most efficient way for both bodies to exercise their best value duties.
5. John Baillie and Bill Skelly will be available for interview on Wednesday 16 December. In his role as chair of the Accounts Commission John Baillie will be able to talk about the best value performance of Tayside Joint Police Board. Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary Bill Skelly will be able to talk about both the police force and Tayside Joint Police Board.