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News release

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Strathclyde police service is good, but authority needs to be more involved and proactive

Strathclyde Police Force performs well and communities receive a good policing service. However the force, and Strathclyde Police Authority and its support function, should establish more effective joint working to ensure they are delivering best value. The authority needs to become more involved in shaping priorities for the area and to develop its scrutiny role.

The Best Value Audit and Inspection: Strathclyde Police and Strathclyde Police Authority provides an overview of how both these bodies are meeting their best value duties. It is a joint report from the Accounts Commission and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland (HMICS).

The force is performing well and demonstrates many of the elements of best value. It has strong leadership and a culture of assessing its performance and driving forward improvements. A programme has been introduced to prepare the force for the challenges ahead and recent changes have further strengthened its commitment to community policing. There are now more officers working directly with and within their local communities, addressing the issues that most affect citizens. Overall crime rates are falling and detection rates have increased.

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary, Andrew Laing, said: "Strathclyde Police force is delivering a good level of policing addressing the issues which most affect its citizens and their quality of life. It has clear strategic aims, effective and visible leadership and a performance management culture which works well."

His findings highlight areas for further improvement, including the administrative arrangements for complaints handling and understanding the cost of policing activity. The force also needs to continue to develop its strategic approach to change, including managing staff engagement, communication and evaluation measures.

The Accounts Commission found that **the police authority** needs to strengthen its arrangements for oversight of the police service and its leadership of the force's continuous improvement agenda. Authority members need to be clearer about their role. Improved support and training would help them develop their understanding, build their skills and gain greater confidence in holding the chief constable to account.

The Commission highlights that the authority is not yet getting sufficient value from its dedicated support function, although this has substantial resources and capacity. Better support would enable it to carry out its governance and scrutiny role more effectively. The authority should be clearer about what professional support it expects and should monitor the support function's performance, including holding the chief executive to account for the delivery of improvements within agreed timescales.

Chair of the Accounts Commission, John Baillie, said: "Strathclyde Police Authority knows it needs to improve. It needs to become more involved in shaping policing priorities for the area and more proactive and consistent in holding the force to account. There needs to be more effective joint working between the authority, its support function and the force to ensure they are delivering Best Value for local people. Greater clarity is needed on the roles and responsibilities of authority members and the staff employed in its support function. The support function needs to improve its management of authority business and the authority should ensure this happens."

The force and the board will now produce an improvement plan to show how they intend to address the findings. The Accounts Commission has asked for a further report in about 12 months' time so it can review the authority's progress in fulfilling its role more effectively and in getting better value from the resources available to it.

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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. Strathclyde Police Authority is responsible for setting the police budget, holding the chief constable to account and ensuring that best value is achieved. As a joint police board it is made up of councillors from the twelve constituent local authorities in the Strathclyde Police area. There are eight members from Glasgow City Council, four from North Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire Councils and two each from Argyll & Bute, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Inverclyde, North Ayrshire, Renfrewshire, South Ayrshire and West Dunbartonshire Councils. Strathclyde Police Force provides police services for this 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. Best Value is the duty placed on local authorities by the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003. It requires local authorities to demonstrate their on-going commitment to providing better services to local people
6. John Baillie and Andrew Laing will be available for interview on Wednesday 13 July. In his role as chair of the Accounts Commission John Baillie will be able to talk about the best value performance of Strathclyde Police Authority. Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary Andrew Laing will be able to talk about both the police force and Strathclyde Police Authority.