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News release

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Strathclyde Police Authority has made little progress in improving its performance but is now moving in the right direction

The body charged with overseeing Strathclyde Police has done little so far to improve its performance over the past year but is now showing some positive signs.

A report published today by the Accounts Commission and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland (HMICS) criticises Strathclyde Police Authority for failing to act on concerns they raised in a joint Best Value audit and inspection in July 2011. That report found the force itself was performing well but the authority needed to do much better in holding the force to account with more support and training to help councillors fulfil their scrutiny role.

The authority is unique among Scotland's police forces in having a dedicated office of eleven staff to support it. But most of the recommendations for improvement have still not been fully implemented and there has been little evidence that the authority was actively involved in shaping future policing priorities. Last winter, the force invited all 34 councillors on the authority to come to strategic planning workshops but only three attended.

In its findings today, the Commission says there has been progress in some areas such as strengthening its scrutiny of the force's performance and financial monitoring. But there remains an absence of genuine joint decision-making and limited evidence that the chief executive is being held to account for the performance of the office or delivery of the improvement agenda.

The authority's composition changed considerably following the election of new councillors and a new convener in May this year. The Commission says while it is disappointed with overall progress made since last year, it is encouraged by the current authority's adoption of a new improvement plan.

Chair of the Accounts Commission, John Baillie, said: "We welcome the new convener's commitment to addressing the underlying issues. This plan needs to be implemented fully and within the timescale set out. It is essential that the authority's chief executive and his team provide effective support to the convener and councillors in addressing the continuing business of the authority, the improvement plan and the work involved in the introduction of the national police force. The Commission will continue to monitor progress in the months ahead."

For further information contact Chris Holme, Audit Scotland, tel 0131 625 1653

Notes to Editors

1. The July 2011 report on Strathclyde Police Authority can be accessed here: <http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/media/article.php?id=171>
2. The Accounts Commission checks whether local authorities, fire and police boards spend public money properly and effectively.
3. HMICS operates independently of police forces, police authorities and the Scottish Government and exists to monitor and improve the police service in Scotland.

