

**COMMITTEE:** GRAMPIAN JOINT POLICE BOARD  
**DATE:** 4<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2011  
**TITLE OF REPORT:** BEST VALUE 2 AUDIT AND INSPECTION REPORT

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## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to invite Members of Grampian Joint Police Board to consider the terms of the Report prepared by Audit Scotland and Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary for Scotland (HMICS) following a joint audit and inspection of the Board and Grampian Police, which measured compliance with the requirements of Best value. The Board is thereafter invited to agree and action the Improvement Plan to implement the recommendations contained within the joint Audit Scotland HMICS report.

## 2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the Board

2.1 considers the contents of the joint Audit Scotland and HMICS report attached at Appendix 1,

2.2 agrees the Improvement Plan template attached at Appendix 2,

2.3 instructs both the Depute Clerk and Deputy Chief Constable to submit a final action plan for approval at the Board's meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2011, and

2.4 agrees to remit monitoring of the joint Improvement Plan to the Stewardship Sub-Committee and instructs officers to submit regular update reports to that Sub-Committee, with a final Report to be submitted to the Board once all of the improvement actions are implemented.

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## 3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The proposed Improvement Plan does not contain any actions which have not already been identified by the Board and Force for development. As such, there are unlikely to be any unexpected financial implications flowing from the Improvement Plan.

In terms of the recommendations around medium to longer term financial planning, then the Improvement Plan should improve the Board's ability to

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undertake this form of planning and monitoring, thereby having a positive impact on future years.

#### **4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT**

The findings of the Accounts Commission commend the Board for its community engagement and leadership. Implementation of the Action Plan should further strengthen the Board's community participation.

#### **5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

None

#### **6. REPORT**

6.1 Members will be aware that the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 introduced new statutory duties relating to Best Value and Community Planning. Its provisions apply to police authorities and require specifically that:

- Police authorities secure best value (defined as achieving continuous improvement in the performance of functions)
- Police authorities and chief constables participate in the community planning process

6.2 Grampian Joint Police Board and Grampian Police were subject to a Best Value 2 Audit and Inspection during June and July 2010. The key objectives of the joint audit and inspection were to:

- Assess the extent to which Grampian Joint Police Board and Grampian Police are meeting their duties under the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 and complying with Scottish Government guidance.
- Agree planned improvements with the Local Authorities, Force and the Board, to be reviewed by the external auditor and HMICS on an ongoing basis.

6.3 As a consequence of the audit and inspection, a report has been produced jointly by the Controller of Audit (Audit Scotland) and HMICS. Key areas were identified where the Force and the Board need to improve. These key areas are contained within the Improvement Plan attached.

6.4 As stated above, the audit and inspection carried out by Audit Scotland and HMICS sought to identify the extent to which the Board and Grampian Police are meeting their duties under the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 and complying with Scottish Government guidance. This was assessed against seven key areas, namely:

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- Vision and Strategic Direction
  - Partnership Working and Community Leadership
  - Community Engagement
  - Governance and Accountability
  - Performance Management and Improvement
  - Use of Resources
  - Equalities and Sustainability

- 6.5 Members will recall that the audit and inspection process involved the submission of evidence by both the Force and the Board, including Board reports and minutes. In addition, Members and community planning partners were invited to complete a questionnaire and both the Force and the Board submitted written statements outlining performance against the key audit criteria. This was followed up by a 4-week site visit, during which time Audit Scotland and HMICS interviewed Members, officers from the Board and Force, and other interested parties. Audit Scotland and HMICS also observed Board and sub-committee meetings.
- 6.6 Following completion of this site visit, a draft Report was prepared by Audit Scotland and HMICS. The Force and the Clerk's office were given the opportunity to comment on the factual accuracy of the draft Report. Thereafter a control version of the Report was prepared and submitted to the Accounts Commission for consideration.
- 6.7 The Accounts Commission considered the control version of the Report at its meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2011. During this meeting, Commissioners had the opportunity to seek further information and clarification from Audit Scotland and HMICS, after which the Accounts Commission determined its findings.
- 6.8 The Accounts Commission findings are set out at page 2 of the Report and summarised as follows –

The Commission welcomed evidence of the elements of best value demonstrated by the Board. In particular, the Commission welcomed the report's conclusions that—

- (i) The Board has a good understanding of its role and has established an active involvement and positive partnership with the force in developing a shared vision and a clear set of priorities.
- (ii) The Board's oversight ensures that the operations of the force are clearly aligned with the agreed priorities.
- (iii) Board members actively question and challenge the force on both strategic and operational matters in a constructive way that focuses on supporting improvement.
- (iv) The Board plays an effective community leadership role on local policing issues, and clearly demonstrates that it works to meet the needs of communities at both a strategic and local level.

The Commission welcomed the Board's awareness of its own improvement needs and commitment to addressing those needs and recommended that it considers the following areas in particular—

- (i) Further development of its role in longer-term strategic financial planning, and the use of its scrutiny role to ensure the best use of resources. The Board also needs to develop its leadership and challenge role to help realise further efficiencies through various partnership and shared services initiatives.
- (ii) Development of a more active role in informing and agreeing continuous improvement priorities and monitoring progress, and providing more strategic leadership on sustainability and equalities issues.
- (iii) Effective arrangements for an independent custody visiting scheme must be implemented quickly.
- (iv) Ensuring that its contribution to accountability and governance, and its effective partnership with the force, is properly reported to the public.
- (v) In continuing to review its governance arrangements, the Board should address the fact that it is not good scrutiny practice for the convener to chair its two main subcommittees.

In addition to the above, the Board is required to consider the specific improvement recommendations made by Audit Scotland.

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6.9 HMICS found that Grampian Police is performing well and that the Force demonstrates many of the elements of best value. In particular:

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(i) Grampian Police benefits from an effective and appropriately challenging working relationship with the Board and they have worked in tandem to determine a strategic direction which has community policing as its cornerstone.

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(ii) The Force executive provides strong leadership and has created a culture of performance improvement within the organisation.

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(iii) Crime rates are falling within the Grampian Police area and levels of public satisfaction are high and improving.

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(iv) During 2010, the Force introduced a new policing model which has delivered increased numbers of officers working and patrolling within local communities.

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The Report indicated areas where there is scope for the Force to improve, particularly:

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(i) the Force should make efforts to better understand the causal factors which are reflected in the rise in racially motivated crime and complaints against the police

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(ii) there is scope for the Force to improve performance reporting by incorporating more comparative information and to report performance in a balanced way

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(iii) the Force should have a better understanding of the costs of specific policing activities to inform difficult decisions about where resources will need to be directed in future to sustain performance in priority areas.

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6.10 The Board is required to consider the terms of the Report and the Accounts Commission findings within three months of receipt and there is a requirement to publicise this meeting within a local newspaper. As such, a public notice was published within the Press and Journal on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> February. The Board is also required to produce a plan which addresses the improvement agenda set out in the Report.

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6.11 A template joint Improvement Plan has been prepared by the Force and the Depute Clerk for consideration, and comment by the Board. The completed Improvement Plan will set out each of the improvement actions, assign ownership and suggest how the required improvements will be achieved. It also details and impacts and consequences e.g. resource implications. Members are invited to comment on the required improvements and how these might be progressed. Thereafter, the Depute Clerk and Deputy Chief Constable will work jointly to populate the Improvement Plan. The completed Improvement Plan shall be submitted to the next meeting of the Board for approval.

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6.12 It is important to note that these improvements form part of a wider action/development plan which is currently being implemented. Members will recall that significant work has been undertaken over the last couple of years to review and modernise the work of the Board. This includes a wholesale review of Standing Orders, reworking of sub-committee remits and role descriptions for Board Members. The improvement actions identified by Audit Scotland and HMICS are encompassed within this wider development action plan and as such, the Report is a welcome endorsement of the Board's direction of travel in terms of its continuous improvement agenda.

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6.13 It is recommended that responsibility for ensuring the delivery of the joint Improvement Plan be remitted to the Stewardship Sub-Committee as that sub-committee's remit includes the implementation of best value. It is intended that officers from the Force and Clerk's office will submit regular reports to the Stewardship Sub-Committee, updating Members as to progress against the agreed action points. It is also proposed that a further report be submitted to the Board once the Improvement Plan actions have been implemented.

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6.14 Members will note that some of the improvement recommendations apply to the Force only. These recommendations will be incorporated

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into the Force business plans and progress will be reported quarterly as part of the normal governance arrangements, with exception reporting taking place on a monthly basis.

**7. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS**

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**8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

**Karen M Donnelly**  
**Depute Clerk**  
**23<sup>rd</sup> February 2011**

**Colin McKerracher**  
**Chief Constable**  
**23<sup>rd</sup> February 2011**