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Press release

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Lothian & Borders Police and Police Board perform well and have sound basis for future development

Lothian & Borders Police force and the Lothian & Borders Police board have an effective working relationship and work well together and with partner organisations to provide policing services to communities. They are building on the progress they have achieved to make further improvements.

The Lothian & Borders Police and Lothian & Borders Police Board: Best Value Audit and Inspection provides an overview of how both 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 force performs well and overall crime rates continue to fall. The force has a distinctive and long-term strategy towards tackling the root causes of crime through effective community policing and local partnerships. Police numbers have been maintained whilst at the same time measures are being taken to manage a reduction in the police budget.

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary, Andrew Laing, said: "The overall performance of Lothian & Borders Police is good. The force has a clear long-term strategy aimed at tackling the root causes of crime, and crime continues to fall. The force should continue to consider how serious crimes of violence could be reduced, how crime detection can be improved and what more could be done to monitor and understand service user satisfaction."

The report also says there is room to improve understanding of Lothian & Borders' overall, long-term policing strategy at all levels in the force and that the force and board should work together to develop clear measures against which progress can be assessed.

The Accounts Commission found that the board generally performs well. The essential elements of best value are in place, and the board is clear on where it can make further improvements. The board should now look at improving the way in which it scrutinises the force and ensure that members have a consistent and shared understanding of all aspects of their roles and responsibilities.

Chair of the Accounts Commission, John Baillie, said: "Lothian & Borders Police Board is committed to improvement. It has strong leadership and good self awareness of where it needs to improve further. It now needs to build on the steps taken so far and develops its arrangements for scrutinising the force."

The Commission also highlights the possibility of changes to the composition of the board following the local government elections in May 2012 and the ongoing deliberations around police reform. It says the board should assess the implications and maintain its commitment to improvement and partnership work with the force during this period of transition.

The force and the board 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 police board is made up of councillors from the local authority areas the force covers. In the case of Lothian & Borders there are nine members from The City of Edinburgh Council, three from West Lothian Council and two from each of the other three councils i.e. East Lothian Council, Midlothian Council and Scottish Borders Council.. The 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.