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Press release

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Community planning is progressing but complexities make aims difficult to achieve

An Audit Scotland report, *A review of community planning in Scotland*, published today, says community planning partnerships have made progress but need to do more to show how their work is improving public services. The report also says that their complex remit makes it difficult for them to achieve their aims and calls on the Executive to support community planning more effectively.

Councils are required to establish community planning partnerships to help public services work together

Today's report finds that:

- All councils have established community planning partnerships but it is too soon to find much evidence of the effectiveness of individual partnerships in improving local services.
- Different geographic boundaries and accountabilities can make it hard for organisations to work well together
- The large number of national policy initiatives each with their own funding arrangements can make it difficult for partnerships
- Some partnerships have agreed a limited number of priorities based on the needs of their area. In others the progress is slower
- Partnerships now need to do more to demonstrate improvements for communities.

Alastair MacNish, Chair of the Accounts Commission for Scotland, said:

"Community planning partnerships are vital for the delivery of better services to our communities. It is imperative that councils and other public sector organisations make community planning work.

"The complexities of the current system make it difficult for partnerships to achieve their aims. The Scottish Executive needs to help them to overcome problems they face, such as by agreeing a limited number of policy priorities and reviewing the number of funding streams and partnerships required.

"There are some excellent examples of organisations working together, and some interesting developments such as Glasgow's recent initiative (Glasgow CP Ltd). But overall progress with community planning is still patchy. Local authorities and their partners need to become more focused and show that partnerships are improving public services and community wellbeing. To do this, partnerships need to improve how they plan and report on progress and ensure that they are organised as effectively as possible. Councillors have a particularly important role to play in community planning as both civic leaders and community representatives, and need to get more involved."

Robert Black, Auditor General for Scotland, said:

"Scotland's legislation is leading the way for community planning but the Scottish Executive should work with community planning partnerships to consider whether some of the more complex arrangements could be simplified."

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Notes to editors

1. Today's report includes a series of recommended actions for the Scottish Executive, local authorities and other organisations involved in community planning and for the partnerships themselves. It also includes an evaluation framework, designed by Audit Scotland based on the report findings, as a starting point for assessing the performance of individual community planning partnerships in the future.
2. The Accounts Commission arranges audits of Best Value and Community Planning in relation to individual councils and has a statutory duty to direct councils, police and fire authorities to publish information which facilitates drawing conclusions in relation to community planning. Today's report findings will inform the Accounts Commission's work in this area.
3. The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 (the Act) provides the statutory basis for community planning. It requires local authorities to initiate and facilitate community planning, and NHS boards, the enterprise networks, the police, the fire and rescue services, and Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority (now the Strathclyde Partnership for Transport) to participate in the process. The 2005 Transport (Scotland) Act also requires the other statutory Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs) to participate. Scottish ministers (through the Scottish Executive and its agencies) have a duty to promote and encourage community planning.
4. Audit Scotland is a statutory body set up in April 2000, under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act, 2000. It provides services to the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission.
5. The Auditor General is responsible for securing the audit of the Scottish Executive and most other public bodies in Scotland, except local authorities. He investigates whether spending bodies achieve the best possible value for money and adhere to the highest standards of financial management. The Auditor General is independent and is not subject to the control of the Scottish Executive or the Scottish Parliament.
6. The Accounts Commission is responsible for securing the audit of 32 Scottish councils and 34 joint boards, including police and fire services. The Commission investigates whether spending bodies achieve the best possible value for money and adhere to the highest standards of financial management. The Accounts Commission is independent and is not subject to the control of the Scottish Executive or the Scottish Parliament.