

# NORTHERN JOINT POLICE BOARD

13 MAY 2009

Agenda Item	
Report No	

## BEST VALUE AUDIT:

### NORTHERN CONSTABULARY AND NORTHERN JOINT POLICE BOARD

#### Report by the Clerk and Chief Constable

#### **Summary**

This Report advises Members of a forthcoming joint Best Value Audit by the Accounts Commission and HM Inspectorate of Constabulary of Northern Constabulary and the Northern Joint Police Board. This will be one of two Best Value Audit pilots of police authorities and forces to be conducted in 2009. The report sets out actions to be taken to commence the process of preparing for the audit and inspection process.

#### **Introduction**

1. The Accounts Commission and HM Inspectorate of Constabulary wrote to the Chief Constable and Convener on 10 March 2009, setting out proposals for taking forward a programme of Best Value Audits of police authorities and forces. The consultation document detailed the joint approach proposed and comments were invited. The Convener's response is detailed at Appendix 1.
2. Further to this, the Accounts Commission and HM Inspectorate of Constabulary wrote to the Chief Constable and Convener to confirm that Northern Constabulary and Northern Joint Police Board would be one of two Best Value Audit pilots to be conducted in 2009.
3. The Policy and Finance Working Group, on 1 May 2009, discussed this matter further and in particular the following issues were raised:
  - The Board would need to ensure that sufficient staff resources are in place to undertake the additional work associated with the preparation and management of the audit
  - An early meeting was necessary with Audit Scotland to understand in more detail the timetable and process for the audit
  - The Board's involvement in the pilot presented an opportunity for the Board to influence the audit process to ensure that a 'one size fits all' approach is not taken and that audits take into account the differing characteristics and priorities of different authorities
  - Further meetings of the Policy & Finance Working Group and, possibly, the Board would be required to ensure Member engagement in the audit process.

## **Audit Approach**

4. A guide for forces and authorities has been prepared by Audit Scotland and HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, to assist in the preparation and planning work of the audits. A copy is attached at Appendix 2. The guidance outlines:
- the statutory provisions
  - the audit and inspection process
  - the audit and inspection approach
  - the main stages of audit and inspection.

5. The Best Value Audit and Inspection Framework outlines the areas that will be included within the corporate assessment including:
- Vision and Strategic Direction
  - Governance and Accountability
  - Partnership Working and Community Leadership
  - Community Engagement
  - Performance Management and Improvement
  - Use of Resources

A key difference from previous audits and inspections is that the scope will be agreed following a joint risk assessment which takes into account the context and identifies strengths and weaknesses of the authority and force. It is expected that this risk assessment will be based on evidence from previous audit and inspection work and from a self assessment process, which both the Board and the Force will need to complete.

6. The main stages of the audit and inspection will be:
- Initial set up meetings
  - Teams presentations to the Authority and Force and reciprocal presentations made by the Authority and Force
  - Overview/Scoping
  - Detailed Audit and Inspection (including on-site work)
  - Draft Reporting (including overall judgement)
  - Draft Joint Report to Authority and Force
  - Report to HMICS, Accounts Commission and Ministers
7. Members of the Board will be involved in the process through the self assessment, which will inform the scope of the audit and inspection work, and during the on-site audit and inspection stage. The audit and inspection team will want to directly engage with the Force Executive, Board Members, staff and representatives from partner organisations. This could be through one to one interviews, focus groups or, potentially, through observing Board and Working Group meetings.

## **Next Steps**

8. The Clerk has contacted Audit Scotland to request an early meeting to clarify the timescale and process to be followed for the audit of the Board. The Chief Constable has met with HM Inspectorate of Constabulary.
9. Agreement has been reached between the Convener, Chief Constable and Clerk for a secondment of an officer from Northern Constabulary to the Clerk's Office in order to support the audit and inspection process.
10. It is proposed to establish a Joint Planning Team, between Northern Constabulary and the Clerk's Office, to progress the necessary planning and preparation work.
11. A further progress report will be made to the Policy and Finance Working Group in June and arrangements will be made, as required, to ensure that Members are briefed and engaged in the process.

## **Recommendation**

The Board is asked to note:

- i. the proposal for the Best Value Audit of Northern Constabulary and Northern Joint Police Board; and
- ii. the actions, detailed in paragraphs 8-11 above, to be taken to commence the process of preparing for the audit and inspection process.

Signature

Designation Clerk

Date 6 May 2009

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