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Councillor David Parker
Chair of Scottish Borders Community Planning Strategic
Board
Scottish Borders Council
Newtown St. Boswells
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21 July 2014

Dear Councillor Parker

As you will be aware, Audit Scotland recently visited Scottish Borders CPP to follow-up on the progress made since our audit in 2012. I am writing to you, as Chair of the Community Planning Strategic Board, to provide feedback from our visit.

We were encouraged to see the progress made by the CPP against its improvement agenda. The sense of energy and commitment among partners to driving this agenda forward was evident at the Joint Delivery Team meeting we attended in June.

It is clear that the CPP is taking action to address all of the areas in its improvement agenda. In particular, I would like to highlight the following:

- Partners are now taking more responsibility for the community planning process than at the time of our initial audit in September 2012. Changes to the governance structures of the CPP and the agreement of a small number of key priorities in the SOA have clearly been contributory factors to this change. We are encouraged to hear that partners are beginning to align the priorities of their own organisations with those of the CPP, and to identify where they can most effectively contribute towards them. The Joint Delivery Team, and the establishment of three new programme delivery teams, should help to target partnership activity towards these shared priorities.
- Partners are demonstrating more of a leadership role in the CPP. For example, the Chief Executive of Eildon Housing Association chairing the Future Services Reform delivery programme, and chief officers from various partner organisations leading on different aspects of the improvement agenda. Whilst some of this work is still at an early stage it nonetheless demonstrates a positive direction of travel.
- The work currently being undertaken to align the budgets of partners to the themes of the CPP is an important first step in identifying the resources available to deliver agreed outcomes. This should help to inform discussions between partners about the extent to which they can share or better target resources (including people, buildings and other assets) to deliver the shared priorities in the SOA. We will look forward to hearing more about how you are progressing with this work when we revisit the CPP in 2015/16.
- We heard during our visit of the work that is ongoing to develop a performance management framework for the partnership, and recognise the complexities of this. This is a critical development for the CPP, which is essential to enable it to monitor and evaluate progress and demonstrate continuous improvement.

As you know, we are planning to undertake a formal follow-up audit visit in 2015/16 when we will have a chance to review what further progress you have made since this year's visit.

If you would like to discuss any of these points further, please get in touch. The findings from our follow-up visit will help inform the next national community planning overview report that we are planning to publish towards the end of the year.

I would like to thank the Joint Delivery Team for inviting us to their meeting, the partners who gave up their time to speak to us, and Shona Smith for coordinating our follow-up visit.

Yours sincerely

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Antony Clark
Assistant Director, Performance Audit and Best Value

cc. Tracey Logan, Chief Executive, Scottish Borders Council
Shona Smith, Communities and Partnership Manager, Scottish Borders Council