



DIRECTORATE OF  
TELECOMMUNICATIONS

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# GOOD COMMUNICATIONS

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*A Strategy for the Future*

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Signed

Steven R. Cole  
8<sup>th</sup> April 2006

## INTRODUCTION

1. Much work has been undertaken in the last three years on ways of improving the efficiency of the Directorate. We have been looking at our objectives, our functions, our management and organisation – indeed the whole future role for the Directorate for the 1990s and beyond.
2. The aim has been to ensure that the Directorate gives value for money to the Department and to the emergency services.
3. This leaflet sets out a strategy for the future – what we plan and need to do to improve our performance so that we can continue to provide an effective and efficient service to our customers.

## BACKGROUND

4. Many of the recent consultancy studies (eg into our headquarters organisation and the accounting and reporting framework) have their origins in the Government's financial management initiative. The initiative is directed to the three "E"s – economy, efficiency, effectiveness.
5. It is concerned with common-sense management principles:
  - are the objectives of the organisation clear?
  - are responsibilities within the organisation clear?
  - is the best use being made of resources?
  - do staff have the information and training to do their jobs properly?
  - where is money going and what are we getting for it?

## THE STRENGTHS OF THE DIRECTORATE

6. The Directorate offers a number of substantial advantages to its customers.
  - it is a public sector organisation accountable to the Home Secretary.
  - it is able to offer a wide ranging consultancy service in respect of mobile radio systems and equipment and has unrivalled

specialist expertise in the communications requirements of the police and fire services.

- as system design authority, it ensures effective integration of systems and equipment.
- it offers the best value for money commercial equipment available on the basis of objective assessment and rigorous evaluation.
- it has a trained and skilled maintenance workforce providing a high grade, 24 hour, 365 days per year service.
- it responds quickly and effectively to urgent operational requirements.

## AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

7. But one of the purposes of the financial management initiative is to make us ask whether in any areas, there is room for improvement. The honest answer for any organisation must be yes.

8. For the Directorate, in particular, we believe, we need:

- a clearer view of our objectives.
- an improved organisational and management structure.
- a better project management methodology.
- better information systems eg for financial management and stock control.
- output measures (ie we need to know objectively whether we are achieving our targets).
- more sensible charging arrangements.

## OBJECTIVES

9. Clear objectives are crucial. If we do not know what we are trying to achieve, we are unlikely to achieve it!

10. The objectives of the Directorate in the past were perhaps simpler than they are today. The overriding requirement was then (and indeed remains) to provide effective operational support to the Home Office and the emergency services. But previously the emphasis was perhaps more on effectiveness than efficiency. The object was to provide the highest level of service possible; considerations of cost, in the last resort, often carried lesser weight.

11. Constraints on public expenditure in recent years – both for the Home Office and local authorities – however, now mean that we

must consider much more critically the cost-efficiency of the services we are providing. We need to strike the right balance between level of service and cost.

12. We can no longer presume – if we ever could – that police forces and fire brigades are willing to accept the services of the Directorate, whatever the cost. We rightly pride ourselves on providing a high level of service. But the level of service must be one that our customers can afford.

13. Our principal objective for the future is to ensure that we provide services to our customers more effectively, efficiently *and* economically than any other supplier. In short that we demonstrate value for money both to the Home Office and to the emergency services.

## FUNCTIONS: THE BUSINESS PLAN

14. How then do we establish and demonstrate value for money? First, we need a *business plan*. We need to review our functions and decide those things we do well and those we do not. In the latter case, we then need to decide whether we can improve our cost-efficiency. If we cannot, we may conclude that there are certain activities which we should no longer pursue.

15. Improving efficiency involves looking at different ways of doing things. The recent standing offer arrangements for the supply of personal radios to police forces is a good example both of how valuable a role the Directorate can play in helping forces get value for money from direct purchase and how we can streamline our maintenance operation to match the best that the private sector can offer.

16. We shall continue to examine different ways in which the communications needs of our customers can best be met – not only through procurement, but in the provision of systems consultancy advice and the regulation of the frequency spectrum. But our business strategy will keep firmly to the forefront the relationship between greater freedom of procurement for the customer and the cost efficiency of a central installation and maintenance service. We believe we can achieve a community of interest with the emergency services. Commonality of equipment between forces (and brigades) is as much in the operational interests of the emergency services as the business interests of ourselves.

17. We shall only consider ceasing activities where it is clearly not

cost-effective to continue them. There is always understandable nervousness about giving up marginal activities. It can be seen as the beginning of a slippery slope. But there is a much greater risk that if we carry on with uneconomic tasks it will adversely affect the commercial competitiveness of the whole of the Directorate.

18. We shall need also to consider carefully any additional task we are asked to take on. We have always regarded ourselves as a "can do" organisation, ready to carry out every new task for the emergency services. But we must recognise that our resources (and in some areas, our experience and expertise) are limited. We shall gain nothing – and lose a great deal in the eyes of our customers – by volunteering to take on commitments which we do not have the capacity to discharge. It is much better to do fewer things well than to stretch our resources so thin that we end up doing a lot of things badly.

19. *The production of the business plan is a central objective of top management in the Directorate. The target is to have it completed and approved by the end of the year.*

## MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

20. To implement successfully the future strategy for the Directorate, we need an effective management structure. And we need the machinery for establishing a continuing and close dialogue with our principal customers, the emergency services. To try to produce our business plan in a vacuum would be a nonsense. We need to talk to the police and fire services (and our Home Office customers). We need to take fully into account their views and those of the local authorities who have to meet the cost.

21. To achieve this, we propose to establish an *Advisory Board*, on which the emergency services and the local authority associations will be represented. This body, as the name implies, will be advisory not executive. It will be modelled on the boards which already operate successfully for the Police National Computer Unit and the Forensic Science Service. Its role is to help us to establish what the priorities of our customers are and how they can most cost effectively be met.

22. And to improve the management of the Directorate, we have already established an *Executive Committee*, under the Chairmanship of the Head of the Police Science and Technology Group. The committee comprises the Director and senior managers, the Head of the Police Requirements and Support Unit and Mr Martin Rosenhead, who has wide executive business and consultancy experience with major companies such as ICI and Reed

International. The role of Mr Rosenhead, it should be emphasised, is to bring the commercial and business acumen and expertise that will enable the Directorate, as a public sector organisation, to compete effectively with the private sector. His role is not – nor is it any part of this management strategy – to privatise the Directorate.

23. The Executive Committee takes the major management decisions. We have spent a great deal of time analysing the problems of the Directorate. The need now is for positive leadership and firm and decisive action.

## ORGANISATION

24. A constant theme of our consultancy studies has been the need to remedy organisational weaknesses in the Directorate. If we are to be efficient as an organisation, responsibilities need to be better defined. Staff need to know clearly what their role is within the Directorate, what is expected of them, and how their activities relate to others. We cannot afford duplication of effort with staff in different parts of the organisation performing the same functions, still less those “black holes” where no-one admits to responsibility for a particular activity and nothing gets done.

25. The Touche Ross organisation study and the subsequent report by a Directorate team represent a major step forward in improving our headquarters organisational structure. The recommendations to be implemented include:

- clearer definition of responsibilities (including detailed job specifications).
- a coherent engineering planning function (to lessen the interface difficulties arising from the previous mobile radio/static systems split).
- integration of the purchasing and supply functions.
- a much higher priority for customer liaison, with an in-house commercial manager reporting to the Director.
- greater emphasis on effective resource allocation and management in the Field Service organisation.
- higher priority for project management (with an immediate strengthening of the WARC project management arrangements).
- the bringing together of personnel and training functions.

26. All this is integral to improving effectiveness and efficiency – and ensuring that we can take full advantage of the improved information systems we are now seeking to develop.

## INFORMATION SYSTEMS

27. Effective management of an organisation the size of the Directorate requires efficient information systems. For an organisation that is concerned with advanced communications technology, our administrative systems are woefully antiquated. In consequence, despite the dedicated efforts of the staff concerned, there remain major weaknesses in our systems eg for financial management, stores accounting and stock control.

28. The Directorate has therefore instituted an action programme to begin remedying these deficiencies and to ease administrative burdens within the organisation.

29. The programme comprises:

- the design of a computerised general ledger system by Touche Ross Management Consultants to improve financial management and control.
- the design and implementation of a computerised stores accounting and stock control system for Bishop's Cleeve.
- the enhancement of the WARC project management information system, and development of a general project management methodology.
- the prototype development within the Home Office of a computerised purchasing system.
- encouragement of the prototype development of microcomputer applications at depots for eg rental invoicing, local project management and output measurement to assist resource deployment.

30. These systems, taken together, will substantially improve our efficiency. And they represent a significant investment by the Home Office in the future of the Directorate.

## SKILLS

31. The Directorate also needs to acquire new skills to assist it in meeting the requirements of its customers cost effectively. In the longer term, we would look through our recruitment and training programmes to develop all necessary experience in-house. But in the short term, we need to strengthen our expertise in eg accounting, purchasing, information technology in support of administrative applications, and project and commercial management. We already

now have in post a professional accountant and a head of purchasing and supply. We have a dedicated team from Establishment Division 5 working on our administrative IT requirements. We are seeking professional project management support for the WARC programme and, as part of the business plan, we shall address the need for commercial management skills.

## CHARGING

32. At the end of the day, however, our success or failure is likely to be measured by the customer not only in the level of service he receives, and the professionalism of our organisation, but what he has to pay. He will be asking the same question, as we asked of ourselves at the beginning – where is the money going and what are we getting for it.

33. There are a number of weaknesses in our present charging arrangements. Costs are not always readily identified. The equipment rental scheme lacks flexibility and can result in over recovery of costs both on equipment kept in service beyond its expected operational life and on component spares. And the way in which the police service meets its share of the labour and overhead costs of the Field Service organisation (a per capita charge based on the number of officers in the force) means there is no direct relationship between what services a force gets from the Directorate and what it has to pay.

34. In short, as we have found to our cost with one force in recent months, the present arrangements make it effectively impossible for the Directorate to offer its customers a choice between different levels of service (at different levels of cost) and to compete with the private sector in providing a level of service and cost tailored to an individual user's requirement.

35. We propose to address these deficiencies immediately. We have sought consultancy support to undertake an urgent charging review, in which we shall closely involve our customers. The review is directed to implementing sensible and justified changes in charging arrangements by 1 April, 1988.

36. And we shall also be asking the consultants to examine the adequacy of the existing "contractual" arrangements between the Directorate and police forces and fire brigades for the supply of goods and services. Both the Directorate and its customers need a stable foundation on which future business and resource planning can be undertaken.

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## COMMUNICATIONS

37. There is one last issue which is crucial to the success or failure of this whole strategy – and that is the whole-hearted commitment of all of us – managers and staff – to “getting it right”. That requires us – as management – to communicate with you much more effectively than we have of late. As the strategy has been formulated, modified and developed, we have been anxious not to give you partial information, which could have been confusing and misleading. We have also been anxious to ensure that the strategy had the endorsement of senior management in the Home Office.

38. We are resolved to improve communications with staff and this leaflet is a first step. It will be followed with meetings at headquarters and in the regions, when we will explain the strategy in greater detail. We shall also be consulting fully with the Trade Union Sides. We want you to understand and be a part of what we are trying to do.

## CONCLUSION

39. The strategy outlined in this leaflet, is directed to securing the future of the Directorate as a long term and cost effective operational support service to the Home Office and the emergency services. As the strategy develops, there will no doubt be changes in emphasis and direction. It is not – and should not be regarded as – a tablet of stone. The ability of any organisation to survive depends on its ability to adapt to change. Our unchanging target is however that the Directorate should succeed – and we cannot succeed without you.