Chapter 5. The Effective Organisation

(A) INTRODUCTION

The previous chapters have examined how staff development, managing the process of change, and establishing effective strategies for preventing and dealing with corruption and police misconduct can create the foundations of an accountable police organisation able to protect human rights and promote an ethos of service excellence. However, effective management practices and a competent workforce alone cannot provide for maximum organisational effectiveness. The organisation should have a clearly defined structure and be able to direct and deliver effective services in accordance with a strategic vision. It should have clear and direct lines of communication and coherent systems of command and control. The structure of the organisation and the defined roles and responsibilities of managers and supervisors need to be integrated so that all functions and departments cooperate with each other and provide a unity of purpose that serves the needs of the state and its citizens.

In promoting the need for accountability, the European Code of Police Ethics recommends that, “the police organisation shall provide for a clear chain of command within the police. It should always be possible to determine which superior is ultimately responsibly for the acts or omissions of police personnel.” 388 The following sections of this chapter examine how this can be achieved. First it is helpful to examine the effects and consequences of management neglect, lack of direction and lack of clarity of purpose.

(B) ORGANISATIONS IN CRISIS

The author’s involvement in police reform and development projects around the world has provided the opportunity to engage with police officials from many nations. These include nations in transition following the collapse of communism, nations attempting to achieve peace and security following civil war, and developing countries attempting to reform and modernise their police organisations. Observation and research, including discussions with operational police officials of all ranks, has revealed that inefficient practices and wasteful use of resources are widespread in some countries. It is often in the less wealthy nations where government finances are limited and the need for careful expenditure is critical that these inefficient and wasteful practices appear to be most prevalent. The most common are characterised as follows:

388 European Code of Police Ethics, supra note 13.
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(a) Lack of integration of personnel engaged on general uniform patrol duties

Some police leaders fail to recognise and promote the value and worth of police officials deployed to general uniform patrol duties who represent the majority of personnel in most police organisations. Some senior officials will not even communicate directly with a lower rank except through a supervisor. Patrol officials are the front-line of policing, having routine day-to-day contact with citizens at every level of society. Notwithstanding the importance of this role, in many organisations it is represented or perceived as the lowest level of policing, and of lesser importance and status when compared with specialist roles such as criminal investigation or traffic policing. General patrol policing is not seen as exciting or glamorous. Consequently, more able officials are quickly transferred to specialist branches or other elite units. Managers use redeployment to general patrol duties as a form of punishment, and as a ‘dumping ground’ for the less able. Patrol officials become demoralised and complain that they are the forgotten members of the organisation.

A demoralised and marginalized section of the workforce that believes it is neglected and has little status is more likely to have an uncaring attitude towards citizens, behave corruptly and abuse human rights. Police leaders should recognise and praise general uniform police patrol duties as having the highest value and worth. Police leaders should declare that general uniform police duties represent the foundation of policing and carry the image of the organisation. They fulfil the most important role of providing a high quality service to citizens. Most other policing functions are there to support professional patrol officials in their important tasks. The climate should be such that more able officials will aspire to become effective patrol officials as an essential part of their career development.

(b) Lack of direction and purpose

Police managers and supervisors fail to deploy uniform general patrol officials in stimulating and interesting work that addresses the problems affecting the community. Whilst managers and supervisors complain about lack of resources, junior ranking police officials including patrol officials are to be found idling around police stations or at fixed roadblocks without any direction or purpose. Unnecessarily large groups of officials are posted to static points outside the entrances to police stations, ostensibly on forms of security duty.

Many officials are not tasked before being deployed, and patrol in an aimless and undirected way. Managers and supervisors should brief patrol officials, and allocate them tasks and duties that improve the policing of the community and the quality of life of its citizens.