

LegCo Panel on Public Service Meeting on 19 June 2000

Promotion of Integrity in the Civil Service

Purpose

The purpose of this Paper is to inform Members of the work of the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) in the promotion of integrity in the Civil Service.

Overview

2. The Administration is determined to uphold the highest standard of integrity in the Civil Service. CSB has been working closely with ICAC and departments to promote a clean Civil Service.

3. In May 1998, a high-level seminar on “Maintaining Integrity in the Civil Service” was jointly organized by CSB and ICAC. Following the seminar, a user-friendly civil servants’ guide to good practices was issued. The guide sets out the standards of behaviour expected of our staff from the most senior managers down to front-line officers. It contains guidance on how to avoid conflict of interest and advice on how to maintain high standards of integrity in both official businesses and private life.

4. To sustain the effort in promoting civil service integrity, CSB and ICAC jointly organized a two-day “Ethical Leadership Forum 2000” in March this year. The Forum was attended by over 1,000 business leaders and government officials from 11 regions and places to explore how ethical management could address the challenges faced by leaders in the new millennium.

5. The current initiatives in promoting integrity in the Civil Service include:

- (a) Civil Service Integrity Programme;
- (b) Preventive Efforts;
- (c) Follow up action on Survey of Business and Public Services Ethics; and
- (d) Handbook “Ethical Leadership in Action” for senior managers.

Civil Service Integrity Programme

6. The joint CSB and ICAC Integrity Programme is targeted at three levels :—

- (a) Central level - Reviewing, updating and consolidating central circulars and memoranda and related Civil Service Regulations governing conflict of interest and conduct related matters to ensure their adequacy and clarity as central guidelines for staff management.

So far, we have completed the review of the circulars and memoranda covering conflict of interest and acceptance of various forms of advantages such as entertainment, complimentary tickets, raffle tickets and passages. We are reviewing the remaining circulars and memoranda relating to acceptance of other types of advantages. We aim to complete the review for promulgation of updated central guidelines later this year.

- (b) Departmental level – Under Phase I of the Programme, visits were paid to 21 departments to discuss with them the general ethical issues as well as the problem areas identified in their operations. We are assisting these departments in drawing up supplementary guidelines on conduct and discipline specific to their departmental operations. So far, 13 departments have issued updated guidelines and the rest have commenced their review work. Phase II of the Programme has started. We are approaching the remaining 46 departments to help them review and develop, where appropriate, departmental guidelines on conduct and discipline.
- (c) Service-wide – Tailor-made training courses for individual departments are in progress to raise staff awareness of the standard of integrity expected of a civil servant. Since April 1999, over 700 training sessions for civil servants have been held for about 22,500 officers of all grades and ranks in the 21 departments visited under Phase I of the Programme. Training sessions for departments scheduled for Phase II of the Programme will be organized in 2000/2001.

Preventive Efforts

7. Apart from our efforts to promote integrity at both central and departmental levels, it is important to incorporate checks and balances into our service systems to prevent and deter abuses. To this end, the Corruption Prevention Department (CPD) of ICAC has assisted departments in carrying out preventive work. CPD provides consultancy service to departments in the form of assignment studies on their work systems and procedures. The aim is to strengthen system control to eliminate and reduce opportunities for corruption and malpractices and to ensure that adequate and sound procedures are in place for departmental functions to be discharged in a fair, equitable and accountable manner. Priority is given to corruption-prone areas revealed in Operations Department cases. CPD also advises departments on corruption prevention implications in relation to any proposed changes in policy, legislation or procedure. It monitors the implementation of recommendations through regular checking with departments. In 1999, CPD completed 77 assignment studies in 32 bureaux/departments.

Survey of Business and Public Service Ethics

8. To take stock of our past efforts for the purpose of forward planning, CSB commissioned a survey company to conduct a survey among directorate officers in the Civil Service on work ethics. The survey aimed to :-

- (a) understand the perception of senior government officers on the ethical standards in the public and business sectors; their attitudes towards the problem of corruption, including their dealings with the business sector; and
- (b) acquire information on what needs to be done further to enhance ethical standards in the public sector.

9. The survey report was completed in April 2000. The information gathered from the survey provides useful indicators on the noteworthy areas. We have taken note of the information in the promotion of integrity in the civil service in the following ways –

- (a) to incorporate salient points in the central guidelines where appropriate;
- (b) to advise departments of the problem areas through the Civil Service Integrity Programme;
- (c) to assist departments in drawing up supplementary guidelines on specific areas; and
- (d) to address various concerns in the integrity training programmes tailor-made for individual departments.

Handbook for Senior Managers

10. Senior managers play an instrumental role in setting and maintaining the ethical standards of their organizations. To enhance their awareness of the importance of ethical management in an organization, CSB and ICAC have jointly produced a management guidebook to provide handy reference for managers to strengthen ethical values among their staff and guard against corruption in their organizations. Apart from providing the gist of the statutory provisions relating to bribery offences, the Handbook also offers a comprehensive set of practical suggestions on the best practices conducive to building up an ethical culture. Examples of vulnerable areas such as conflict of interest, indebtedness and high-risk work areas that are worthy of senior managers' attention are included. In addition, a list of relevant CSRs and CSB circulars is also appended for managers' easy reference. The handbook will be released shortly to senior managers at MPS Pt. 45 and above, including all directorate officers.

Way Forward

11. CSB will continue to work closely with ICAC and departments to promote a clean Civil Service. We shall monitor the effectiveness of the initiatives currently in progress with a view to identifying areas for further improvements.

Civil Service Bureau
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