

For discussion
on 21 November 2016

Legislative Council Panel on Public Service

Overview of Responsibilities and Objectives of Civil Service Bureau

Purpose

This paper sets out for Members' information the major responsibilities and policy objectives of Civil Service Bureau ("CSB").

Main Responsibilities of CSB

2. CSB is primarily responsible for formulation and implementation of policies concerning management of the civil service. In so doing, we strive to foster a visionary, motivated and knowledgeable workforce capable of delivering quality service to the community whilst upholding the core values of the civil service. Specifically, the main responsibilities of CSB include -

- (a) overall management of human resources within the Government (including civil servants and those appointed on non-civil service terms, but excluding judges, judicial officers, staff of the Independent Commission Against Corruption and politically appointed officials); development of the overall policies regarding the management of human resources; and advising other bureaux and departments ("b/ds") on the implementation of these policies;
- (b) formulation of training policies and provision of generalist training, and rendering support to other b/ds in training matters; and

- (c) support the Government's official languages policy¹.

Major Policy Objectives

3. In discharging the responsibilities set out in paragraph 2 above, CSB's work is guided by seven major policy objectives as set out in the ensuing paragraphs.

(A) Defining and safeguarding the core values of the civil service

4. As the backbone of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, the civil service supports the Chief Executive and the Government of the day in formulating, explaining and implementing policies, conducting administrative affairs, delivering public services and undertaking law enforcement and regulatory functions. While politically appointed officials have to assume political responsibilities for various policy decisions, civil servants have the administrative responsibilities to tender impartial and objective advice and carry through decisions made. Civil servants are required to uphold the following core values as stipulated in the Civil Service Code promulgated in September 2009 -

- (a) commitment to the rule of law;
- (b) honesty and integrity;
- (c) objectivity and impartiality;
- (d) political neutrality;
- (e) accountability for decisions and actions; and
- (f) dedication, professionalism and diligence.

5. In safeguarding the core values and defining the standards of conduct, CSB has issued and put under regular review service-wide

¹ In accordance with Article 9 of the Basic Law, in addition to the Chinese language, English may also be used as an official language by the executive authorities, legislature and judiciary of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

regulations, rules and guidelines governing, among other issues, avoidance of conflict of interest, acceptance of advantages and entertainment, as well as declaration of private investments. In the light of specific operational circumstances, individual b/ds may also draw up additional guidelines for compliance by their staff.

6. The Government is committed to upholding integrity and probity in the civil service under a three-pronged approach, namely prevention, education and training, and sanction. The emphasis of prevention is placed on the provision of clear policies and guidelines, and proper checks and balances. On education and training, the Government continues to provide integrity education and training at all levels in the civil service. On sanction, the Government takes a serious view of offences and misconduct committed by staff, particularly those involving a breach of trust in the public office or misuse of power. The Government is determined to take disciplinary action against the staff concerned to achieve a punitive, deterrent and rehabilitative effect. All disciplinary cases are processed expeditiously subject to the requirements for due process and procedural propriety, as well as adherence to principles of natural justice.

(B) Recruiting a high calibre workforce for and ensuring smooth succession within the civil service

7. It is the Government's policy that appointment to the civil service is based on the principle of open and fair competition. Candidates who meet the basic entry requirements are required to go through a competitive selection process, whereby assessment will be made having regard to their ability, potential and performance as well as relevant qualifications and experience. Measures are also in place to ensure that ethnic minorities and persons with disabilities have equal access, like other applicants, to job opportunities in the Government.

8. The Secretary for the Civil Service ("SCS") personally meets with Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Department on a regular basis to examine the succession situation in individual departments and grades with a view to identifying early any succession problems so that remedial actions can be taken in a timely manner.

9. To support b/ds in grooming promising officers for succession, the Civil Service Training and Development Institute (“CSTDI”) of CSB offers various leadership and management training programmes. Sponsorship is also provided to high potential officers to attend executive programmes at renowned overseas institutions. Career postings and attachment of promising departmental officers to work at policy bureaux are arranged to help broaden their exposure and perspectives.

(C) Ensuring reasonable terms and conditions of service for civil servants

10. The Government’s civil service pay policy is to offer remuneration sufficient to attract, retain and motivate staff of suitable calibre, and such remuneration is to be regarded as fair by both civil servants and the public whom they serve by maintaining broad comparability between civil service and private sector pay. Civil service pay is compared with private sector pay on a regular basis through three types of market surveys, namely the pay trend survey (“PTS”) which ascertains year-on-year pay adjustment in the private sector²; the triennial Starting Salaries Survey which compares the starting salaries of civil service civilian grades with the entry pay of jobs in the private sector requiring similar qualifications; and the six-yearly Pay Level Survey which ascertains whether civil service pay is broadly comparable with private sector pay.

11. Civil servants enjoy a range of fringe benefits depending on their terms of appointment, rank, length of service and other relevant rules. In general, civil servants are provided with retirement benefits under either the pension legislation or the Civil Service Provident Fund Scheme. Civil servants, pensioners and their eligible dependants are also entitled to medical and dental benefits provided by Department of Health and the Hospital Authority. Over the years, we have implemented a series of measures to improve civil service medical and dental benefits.

² The net Pay Trend Indicators derived from the PTS each year, together with other relevant factors (including the state of Hong Kong’s economy, changes in cost of living, the Government’s fiscal position, the pay claims of the staff sides and civil service morale) will be taken into account by the Chief Executive-in-Council in determining the annual civil service pay adjustment.

12. For staff appointed on non-civil service terms, their employing b/ds may determine the employment package having regard to market situation and other relevant considerations, provided that the package is, overall speaking, no less favourable than that provided for under the Employment Ordinance, but no more favourable than those applicable to civil servants at comparable civil service ranks or with comparable levels of responsibilities.

(D) Promoting a culture of continuous learning within the Government

13. The Government is committed to providing its employees, particularly civil servants, with learning opportunities that would equip them with the skills, knowledge and mindset necessary for providing quality service to the public. While b/ds provide vocational training to meet job-specific requirements, CSTDI focuses on training programmes that fulfill the common training needs of civil servants, such as leadership and management, language and communication, national affairs and the Basic Law. In addition, CSTDI provides consultancy services to b/ds on human resource management, and promotes a culture of continuous learning in the civil service.

(E) Maintaining a lean and efficient workforce for the Government

14. The civil service provides essential support to the Government in rolling out new policies and initiatives. We assist b/ds in enhancing efficiency through internal redeployment, reprioritisation, streamlining and re-engineering, while injecting manpower to cope with additional workload through creation of new posts where justified. To this end, we have strengthened the civil service establishment by about 1% to 1.5% annually between 2007-08 and 2015-16. The projected establishment as at 31 March 2017 is 178 495, up by about 1.3% as compared with the preceding financial year, whereas the actual establishment of the civil service as at end-August 2016 was 176 208.

15. Non-civil service manpower is engaged to supplement the civil service where appropriate. Under the Non-civil Service Contract (“NCSC”) Staff Scheme, NCSC staff may be engaged by individual b/ds to meet service needs that are time-limited, or may be subject to market

fluctuations, or where staff are required to work less than the conditioned hours, etc. Agency workers (i.e. manpower supplied by employment agencies under a service contract to work under b/ds' supervision) are, on the other hand, for meeting urgent, unforeseen and very short-term service needs. We have set out in a separate paper for the panel meeting the latest situation on the employment of NCSC staff within the Government.

(F) Fostering close partnership with the civil service and recognising exemplary performance

16. Since a progressive and motivated workforce is pivotal to effective service delivery, we attach great importance to fostering partnership between management and staff at all levels. Leading by example, SCS has increased the frequency of his visits to individual departments to keep abreast of latest achievements and emerging challenges faced by them as well as to exchange views directly with frontline staff on issues of concern. Similarly, departmental management is encouraged to seek proactive dialogue with their team to align corporate vision, set common goals and review actual outcomes.

17. There is also a well-established staff consultative machinery at both the central and departmental levels. Centrally, there are four central staff consultative councils, namely the Senior Civil Service Council, the Model Scale 1 Staff Consultative Council, the Police Force Council and the Disciplined Services Consultative Council. Through these councils, the Government consults staff on issues which affect their conditions of service and exchanges views with them on matters of mutual concern. Major service-wide staff unions are also consulted on civil service-wide issues from time to time. At the departmental level, there are some 90 Departmental Consultative Committees which aim to enhance co-operation and understanding between management and staff.

18. Due to rising public expectation, civil servants are subject to a great deal of pressure when carrying out their daily duties. As a complement to injection of manpower, we will continue to make full use of various means, including the Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme, the SCS' Commendation Award Scheme, the Commendation Letter Scheme, and the Long and Meritorious Service Travel Award Scheme to recognise good performance and boost morale.

(G) Facilitating the effective use of official languages in the civil service

19. We set guidelines and standards for the use of the official languages in the civil service. We also provide b/ds with a wide range of language-related support, including translation and interpretation services, as well as compiling glossaries and writing aids for reference. Language training courses and learning programmes are organised from time to time to enhance the proficiency of the Government's workforce in the use of the official languages.

Advice Sought

20. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

Civil Service Bureau
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