

For discussion
on 18 January 2016

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL ON PUBLIC SERVICE

Policy Initiatives of the Civil Service Bureau

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the policy initiatives relating to the Civil Service Bureau (“CSB”) featured in the 2016 Policy Address and/or the Policy Agenda.

New Initiatives

(A) Setting up the sixth Families Clinic and enhancing specialised dental services for civil service eligible persons (“CSEPs”)

2. Civil servants, pensioners and their eligible dependants are entitled to medical and dental treatment that are provided by the Department of Health (“DH”) or the Hospital Authority (“HA”) free of charge¹, as well as reimbursement of expenses for items that are prescribed in accordance with medical necessity and are chargeable by HA or not available in HA and DH.

3. We will commence in 2016-17 the preparatory work for setting up the sixth Families Clinic in Sai Kung. This new facility will better serve the needs of CSEPs who work or reside in the New Territories East region. In 2016-17, we will also take forward the preparatory work for setting up seven specialised dental surgeries dedicated for providing prosthodontic services to CSEPs.

¹ Save for the charges applicable to hospital maintenance, dentures and dental appliances as provided for in the Civil Service Regulations.

(B) Increasing the number of awards under the Secretary for the Civil Service (“SCS”)’s Commendation Award Scheme

4. The SCS’s Commendation Award Scheme aims to give recognition to civil servants on a service-wide basis for exemplary performance. In order to qualify for an award, a civil servant should have achieved outstanding performance for at least five consecutive years. Nominations are made by Permanent Secretaries or Heads of Departments/Grades each year, from which awardees will be selected by SCS based on the recommendation of a committee comprising representatives of CSB and other bureaux/grades. Apart from a certificate of recognition and gold pin, awardees who have 20 or more years of service and have yet to enjoy government-sponsored travel outside Hong Kong will also receive a travel allowance². In 2015-16, there were a total of 84 recipients from 33 bureaux/departments (“B/Ds”).

5. Since the Scheme was introduced in 2004, the targeted number of awardees per annum has been kept at around 80. Members were informed at the Panel meeting last November that this target number will be increased to 100 from 2016-17.

On-going Initiatives

(A) Extending the service of civil servants

6. At the last Panel meeting held on 21 December 2015, we reported on progress made in implementing the package of initiatives announced by the Government in January 2015 for flexibly extending the service of civil servants. Since 1 June 2015, the retirement age for new recruits to the civilian grades has been raised to 65 and that for the disciplined services grades to 60. As regards serving staff, we have introduced a Post-retirement Service Contract Scheme which enables B/Ds to engage retired/retiring officers on contract terms to undertake ad hoc, time-limited, seasonal or part-time duties requiring civil service expertise or experience. Meanwhile, we have been engaging the staff sides about implementation details of the adjusted mechanism on further

² The accountable and one-off travel allowance is revised on 1 April each year with reference to the rate of change in package tour charges in the past 12 months ending February. The current rate is \$26,050. If an awardee is married, his/her accompanying spouse will also be entitled to receive the same travel allowance.

employment of civil servants beyond retirement age. These measures enable the Government, as an employer, to take early actions to address the challenges arising from an ageing population and provide B/Ds with a set of flexible tools to address manpower needs taking into account their respective operational circumstances and succession needs.

(B) Giving due consideration to additional manpower needs where justified for delivering effective services to the public

7. 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, streamlining and re-engineering, while injecting manpower in coping with additional workload through creation of new posts where justified. To this end, we have strengthened the civil service establishment by about 1% annually from 2007-08 to 2013-14 and by about 1.5% in 2014-15. The projected establishment as at 31 March 2016 as shown in the 2015-16 Estimates is 176 448, up by about 1.5% as compared with the preceding financial year. We expect a further increase in 2016-17, and related details will be published in the 2016-17 Budget on 24 February 2016.

(C) Maintaining broad comparability between civil service pay and private sector pay

8. The Government's civil service pay policy is to offer remuneration sufficient to attract, retain and motivate staff of suitable calibre to provide the public with an effective and efficient service; and such remuneration is to be regarded as fair by both civil servants and the public 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 the conduct of three types of survey -

- (a) a pay level survey ("PLS") every six years to ascertain whether civil service pay is broadly comparable with private sector pay;
- (b) a starting salaries survey ("SSS") every three years to compare the starting salaries of non-directorate civilian civil service grades with

the entry pay of jobs in the private sector requiring similar qualifications; and

- (c) a pay trend survey (“PTS”) every year to ascertain the average year-on-year movements in private sector pay³.

9. The last SSS and PLS were conducted by the Standing Commission on Civil Service Salaries and Conditions of Service (“Standing Commission”)⁴ in 2012 and 2013 respectively. In 2015, the Government invited the Standing Commission to conduct the next SSS which is now targeted for completion within the first quarter of 2016. Upon receipt of the survey findings and the Standing Commission’s recommendations, CSB will consult this Panel, the Standing Committee on Disciplined Services Salaries and Conditions of Service⁵, the staff sides and other stakeholders before seeking the Chief Executive in Council’s decision on how the findings of the survey should be applied to the civil service.

(D) Enhancing medical and dental benefits for CSEPs

10. As part of our on-going efforts to enhance civil service medical and dental benefits, the fifth Families Clinic in Fanling is expected to commence operation in early 2016. For dental care, we will continue to enhance the service capacity by setting up more general dental surgeries.

³ The annual PTS is commissioned by the tripartite PTS Committee comprising representatives of the staff sides, representatives of the Government and members from two independent advisory bodies on civil service pay and conditions of service.

⁴ The Standing Commission is an independent advisory body made up of members (including its Chairman) from different professional background (including business/professional, human resources, academic, etc.) responsible for advising and recommending the Chief Executive on matters relating to the pay and conditions of service of non-directorate civil service (with the exception of judicial officers and disciplined services staff).

⁵ The Standing Committee on Disciplined Services Salaries and Conditions of Services, like the Standing Commission, is an independent advisory body which advises and makes recommendations to the Chief Executive on matters concerning the pay and conditions of service of the disciplined services.

(E) Providing training programmes and fostering a learning culture in the civil service

11. The Government is committed to providing 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 offer vocational training to meet job-specific requirements, the Civil Service Training and Development Institute (“CSTDI”) under CSB 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. CSTDI also promotes a culture of continuous learning in the civil service through diversified means such as e-learning resources. At the last Panel meeting held in December 2015, we provided Members with an overview of the provision of training and development for civil servants and outlined the main activities carried out by CSTDI.

(F) Maintaining a rigorous, effective and efficient disciplinary system against misconduct in the civil service

12. The Government has a well-established system to handle promptly alleged misconduct cases of civil servants with due regard to the principles of natural justice and procedural propriety. We keep the system under constant review and are working with the disciplined services departments to refine their administrative arrangements concerning legal representation for the defendant.

(G) Fostering close partnership with the civil service and encouraging fuller use of various commendation schemes to recognise and motivate exemplary performance

13. Since a progressive and motivated workforce is pivotal to effective service delivery, we attach great importance to fostering partnership between the management and staff sides at all levels. Leading by example, SCS has stepped up the frequency of his visit programme to keep abreast of latest achievements and emerging challenges faced by individual departments as well as to exchange views directly with frontline staff on issues of concern. Similarly, departmental management has been encouraged to seek proactive

dialogue with their team to align corporate vision, set common goals and review actual outcomes.

14. Civil servants are subject to a great deal of pressure when carrying out their daily duties due to rising public expectation. 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's Commendation Award Scheme, the Commendation Letter Scheme and the Long and Meritorious Service Travel Award Scheme to recognise good performance and boost morale. Members were briefed on the relevant details at the Panel meeting held in November 2015.

(H) Implementing measures to ensure that persons with disabilities or the ethnic minorities will continue to have equal access, like other applicants, to job opportunities in the Government

15. The Government is a strong advocate for elimination of disability, race and other discrimination in employment. We will put in place specific measures to facilitate persons with disabilities and ethnic minorities in applying for government positions and integrate them seamlessly into the workplace. This subject will be touched upon at a Panel meeting scheduled for the second quarter in 2016.

Way Forward

16. We remain firmly committed to maintaining a civil service with high standards of integrity, efficiency and performance. Input will be solicited from Members as appropriate when taking forward the above initiatives.

Civil Service Bureau
January 2016