

**Legislative Council Panel on Public Service**

**Civil Service Establishment and Related Matters**

**PURPOSE**

This paper briefs Members on the progress of reducing the civil service establishment and related matters.

**REDUCTION OF CIVIL SERVICE ESTABLISHMENT**

2. In 2003, the Government set a target to reduce the civil service establishment to around 160 000 by the end of 2006-07. The Chief Executive reiterated this goal in his 2005-06 Policy Address. Through the implementation of the Second Voluntary Retirement (VR II) Scheme in 2003, the imposition of a general civil service open recruitment freeze since 1 April 2003, natural wastage and continuous efforts by bureaux and departments (B/Ds) to streamline and re-engineer their operations and mode of service delivery, the civil service establishment will be reduced to around 161 800<sup>1</sup> by 31 March 2007, thus broadly meeting the target set in 2003. Compared with early 2000 when the civil service establishment stood at around 198 000, some 36 200 posts (about 18%) will have been deleted over a period of seven years, and without causing any forced redundancy.

**VR II Scheme**

3. We launched the VR II Scheme in March 2003 under which staff of 229 designated grades with identified or anticipated surplus staff could apply to leave the civil service voluntarily with pension benefits and compensation. About 5 300 civil servants were approved to retire under the Scheme. All of them have retired, and a corresponding number of posts have been deleted.

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<sup>1</sup> Including about 1 640 judicial officers, ICAC officers and locally engaged staff in the various Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices.

### **Targeted VR Schemes**

4. Besides the service-wide VR II Scheme, a number of B/Ds have launched VR Schemes targeted at specific grades or ranks with existing or anticipated surplus staff since 2004. Housing Department launched a Voluntary Exit Scheme in July 2004 for surplus staff arising from the divestment of its retail and car-parking facilities. Education and Manpower Bureau has launched an Early Retirement Scheme for various teaching grades since 2005. The Office of Government Chief Information Officer also launched a Targeted VR Scheme in 2006 for the Computer Operator Grade. So far, a total of about 280 applications have been approved in these targeted VR schemes. As a general principle, the compensation package under each of these targeted VR schemes would not be more generous than that under the VR II Scheme.

### **General civil service open recruitment freeze**

5. We have imposed a general open recruitment freeze of civil servants from 1 April 2003. Heads of Department/Grade (HoDs/HoGs) can apply for exemption from a Panel co-chaired by the Chief Secretary and the Financial Secretary with the Secretary for the Civil Service (SCS) as member (the CS/FS Panel). Each application is considered on its own merits. As at end-February 2007, the CS/FS Panel has granted exceptional approval for 28 B/Ds to conduct open recruitment to fill about 5 660 vacancies, of which about 90% (about 4 950 posts) are in the disciplined services departments. Details are provided at [Annex A](#).

### **Open recruitment freeze of VR II grades**

6. We have imposed a separate five-year open recruitment freeze for VR II grades, from March 2003 (when the VR II Scheme was launched) to March 2008. To meet new service needs that were not foreseen when the VR II Scheme was launched and to alleviate the manpower shortage problem in certain VR grades arising from unexpected wastage, we have allowed, since April 2006, a very limited number of VR grades to resume open recruitment before the expiry of the five-year recruitment freeze if approved by the CS/FS Panel. We informed Members in December 2006 that the CS/FS Panel had given approval for 13 VR grades to conduct open recruitment to fill a total of 628 vacancies in 2006-07 and 2007-08. Since then, the CS/FS Panel has further approved the open recruitment of a total of 60 vacancies

in the Labour Officer and Labour Inspector grades. Details of these 15 VR grades are given at [Annex B](#).

### **PROJECTED CIVIL SERVICE ESTABLISHMENT BY END 2007-08**

7. We see a continued need to maintain strict control on the size of the civil service. B/Ds will consider filling existing vacancies or creating and filling new posts only after critically reviewing their manpower situation and exploring the feasibility of other options for service delivery. However, in view of the increasing demand on public service, we consider it justified to allow a moderate increase of about 0.7% (about 1 100 posts) in the civil service establishment in 2007-08, i.e. from about 161 800 in end-March 2007 to about 162 900 in end-March 2008. Besides providing new and improved services, some of these posts will be created for replacing Non-Civil Service Contract (NCSC) positions the duties of which have been identified as more appropriate to be taken up by civil servants (see paragraph 9 below).

### **LIFTING OF GENERAL CIVIL SERVICE OPEN RECRUITMENT FREEZE**

8. To complement the filling of vacancies and new posts to be created and to pre-empt possible succession problems arising in the civil service, we will resume open recruitment of civil servants from 1 April 2007. However, the recruitment freeze will continue to apply to the VR II grades, unless otherwise approved. We will shortly be issuing a circular to all B/Ds on the resumption of open recruitment.

### **REPLACEMENT OF NCSC POSITIONS**

9. We informed Members in December 2006 that a special review conducted by CSB jointly with B/Ds indicated that some 4 000 NCSC staff are carrying out duties that should more appropriately be performed by civil servants. Their positions will be replaced over a period of time by filling existing and anticipated vacant civil service posts and, as necessary, creating new posts. In 2007-08, B/Ds concerned plan to replace half of these NCSC positions, of which around 1 300 will be through filling existing and anticipated vacancies (including re-grading of existing vacant posts) and another 700 will be through creating and

filling new civil service posts. B/Ds aim to replace the remaining around 2 000 NCSC positions by existing or new civil service posts in 2008-09. In implementing the phasing-out plan, B/Ds will take into consideration the end-dates of the current contracts of the relevant NCSC staff and the lead-time for filling the civil service posts by open recruitment. B/Ds will also ensure that information relating to recruitment of civil servants into their B/Ds is drawn to the attention of their serving NCSC staff.

## **WAY FORWARD**

10. We will continue to keep the size of the civil service under control. We will ensure that new posts will only be created when the operational need is fully justified and when alternative means of service delivery, such as outsourcing, are considered not feasible. We will also continue to improve efficiency through streamlining, re-engineering, computerization, etc.

Civil Service Bureau  
March 2007

**Posts that have been or will be filled by open recruitment with the approval of  
the CS/FS Panel  
(Position as at 28 February 2007)**

| <b>Bureau/<br/>Department</b>                         | <b>Rank</b>  | <b>No. of posts</b> |
|---|--|---------------------|
| Architectural Services<br>Department                  | Assistant Landscape Architect /<br>Landscape Architect     | 14                  |
|   | Maintenance Surveyor                                       |                     |
|   | Assistant Maintenance Surveyor                             |                     |
| Agriculture, Fisheries and<br>Conservation Department | Forestry Officer   | 8                   |
|   | Veterinary Officer   |                     |
|   | Fisheries Officer  |                     |
| Chief Secretary's Office                              | Deputy Head, Efficiency Unit                               | 1                   |
| Civil Aviation Department                             | Senior Operations Officer (Senior<br>Operations Inspector) | 35                  |
|   | Senior Operations Officer<br>(Airworthiness)               |                     |
|   | Student Air Traffic Control Officer                        |                     |
| Civil Service Bureau                                  | Administrative Officer                                     | 100                 |
| Commerce, Industry and<br>Technology Bureau           | Government Chief Information Officer                       | 1                   |
| Correctional Services<br>Department                   | Assistant Officer II                                       | 320                 |
|   | Officer  |                     |
|   | Industrial Officer   |                     |
|   | Instructor   |                     |
|   | Clinical Psychologist                                      |                     |
| Customs & Excise<br>Department                        | Inspector of Customs & Excise                              | 886                 |
|   | Customs Officer  |                     |
| Department of Justice                                 | Government Counsel   | 64                  |
|   | Deputy Principal Government Counsel                        |                     |
|   | Law Officer  |                     |

| <b>Bureau/<br/>Department</b>                | <b>Rank</b>   | <b>No. of posts</b> |
|--|---|---------------------|
| Financial Secretary's Office                 | Government Economist                                      | 4                   |
|  | Economist   |                     |
| Fire Services Department                     | Station Officer   | 674                 |
|  | Fireman   |                     |
|  | Ambulance Officer   |                     |
|  | Ambulanceman  |                     |
| Food and Environmental<br>Hygiene Department | Veterinary Officer  | 27                  |
|  | Scientific Officer (Medical)                              |                     |
|  | Pest Control Officer/<br>Assistant Pest Control Officer   |                     |
|  | Pest Control Assistant/<br>Student Pest Control Assistant |                     |
| Department of Health                         | Senior Medical and Health Officer                         | 48                  |
|  | Medical and Health Officer                                |                     |
|  | Pharmacist  |                     |
| Government Flying Services                   | Cadet Pilot   | 8                   |
| Highways Department                          | Works Supervisor II (Civil)                               | 34                  |
| Hong Kong Observatory                        | Scientific Officer  | 1                   |
| Hong Kong Police Force                       | Chief Inspector of Police (Specialist)                    | 2 458               |
|  | Inspector of Police                                       |                     |
|  | Police Constable  |                     |
|  | Police Communications Officer                             |                     |
|  | Special Photographer II                                   |                     |
| Hongkong Post                                | Assistant Postmaster General (Business Development)       | 1                   |
| Immigration Department                       | Immigration Officer                                       | 607                 |
|  | Immigration Assistant                                     |                     |
| Intellectual Property Department             | Solicitor   | 9                   |
| Judiciary                                    | Judiciary Administrator                                   | 2                   |
|  | Chief Steward   |                     |
| Leisure and Cultural Services Department     | Assistant Librarian                                       | 168                 |
|  | Assistant Leisure Services Manager II                     |                     |
|  | Amenities Assistant III                                   |                     |

| <b>Bureau/<br/>Department</b>              | <b>Rank</b>  | <b>No. of posts</b> |
|--|--|---------------------|
| Marine Department                          | Surveyor of Ships (Nautical)                                   | 2                   |
| Office of the Commissioner<br>of Insurance | Assistant Commissioner of Insurance<br>(Long Term Development) | 1                   |
| Official Receiver's Officer                | Solicitor  | 10                  |
| Social Welfare Department                  | Assistant Social Work Officer                                  | 163                 |
|  | Social Security Assistant                                      |                     |
| Transport Department                       | Transport Officer II   | 11                  |
| University Grants<br>Committee             | Secretary-General, University Grants<br>Committee              | 1                   |
|  | <b>Total:</b>  | <b>5 658</b>        |

**VR II grades approved by the CS/FS Panel to conduct open recruitment  
(Position as at 28 February 2007)**

| VR II Grade                           | Number of vacancies to be filled<br>through open recruitment |            | Total      |
|---------------------------------------|--|------------|------------|
|                                       | 2006-07  | 2007-08    |            |
| Health Inspector                      | 119  | 34         | 153        |
| Chemist                               | 2  | 9          | 11         |
| Science Laboratory<br>Technician      | 7  | 21         | 28         |
| Air Crewman Officer                   | 4  | 2          | 6          |
| Auditor                               | 2  | -          | 2          |
| Trade Officer                         | 22   | -          | 22         |
| Assessor                              | 48   | -          | 48         |
| Accounting Officer                    | 13   | 1          | 14         |
| Treasury Accountant                   | 8  | 2          | 10         |
| Executive Officer                     | 190  | 50         | 240        |
| Information Officer                   | 32   | 1          | 33         |
| Inspector (Graduate)                  | 30   | 3          | 33         |
| Education Officer<br>(Administration) | 25   | 3          | 28         |
| Labour Officer                        | -  | 39         | 39         |
| Labour Inspector                      | -  | 21         | 21         |
| <b>Total:</b>                         | <b>502</b>   | <b>186</b> | <b>688</b> |