

For discussion
on 19 January 2015

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL ON PUBLIC SERVICE

Policy Initiatives of the Civil Service Bureau

Purpose

This paper elaborates on the policy initiatives relating to the Civil Service Bureau (“CSB”) featured in the 2015 Policy Address and/or Policy Agenda.

New Initiatives

(A) Extending the service of civil servants

2. CSB released a consultation paper on “Extension of the Service of Civil Servants” on 3 April 2014 for four-month consultation until 2 August 2014. Taking into account the views received/collected during the consultation and examination of relevant issues including financial implications, we will adopt the four flexible retirement and employment initiatives proposed in the consultation paper with suitable refinements and/or appropriate mechanisms. Details are set out in a separate paper submitted to the Panel on Public Service for discussion on 19 January 2015.

(B) Implementing more family-friendly employment practices

3. To set an example as a good employer, we have encouraged bureaux/departments (“B/Ds”) to consider offering more part-time posts on non-civil service contract terms, in particular in meeting new or changing service needs. This would help foster a more family-friendly working environment by enabling more employees with family commitments to join the workforce.

4. Besides, the Government will continue to implement family-friendly employment practices. For example, the Government will continue to provide five days of paid paternity leave for eligible government employees. Subject to

exigencies of the service and sufficient personal grounds, the Government will give priority and sympathetic consideration to leave applications, including unpaid leave, submitted on family-care grounds. Another on-going family-friendly measure is the five-day week initiative. We will continue to encourage B/Ds to explore possible ways to migrate more staff to five-day week, subject to the four basic principles (i.e. no additional staffing resources, no reduction in staff's conditioned hours of service, no reduction in emergency services and continued provision of essential counter services on Saturdays/Sundays) and after staff consultation. Also, we will encourage B/Ds to arrange staff to work in five-day week posts by rotation where practicable and appropriate and are conducting a biennial survey on the implementation of five-day week.

On-going Initiatives

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

5. The civil service has supported the Fourth Term Government in implementing new policies and initiatives in a professional and effective manner. We will, on the one hand, continue to work with B/Ds to enhance efficiency through measures such as internal redeployment, streamlining and re-engineering, and on the other hand, render support to civil servants by strengthening the establishment to cope with additional workload. We will support creation of new civil service posts where operational need is fully justified and when the work involved cannot be undertaken by re-deployment of existing staff or through alternative modes of service delivery. To facilitate the delivery of new policy initiatives and improved services to the public, we have strengthened the civil service establishment by about 1% annually since 2007-08. The projected establishment as at 31 March 2015 as shown in the 2014-15 Estimates is 173 961, representing a growth of 1.5% as compared with the preceding financial year. We expect that the civil service establishment will be further increased in 2015-16 to meet the manpower requirements for the delivery of new policy initiatives and improvement to existing services. Details will be published in the 2015-16 Budget to be delivered on 25 February 2015.

(B) Strengthening training programmes and fostering a learning culture in the civil service

6. The Administration is committed to providing civil servants at different

ranks with training and development opportunities, thereby equipping them with the necessary skills, knowledge and mindset to serve the public. CSB, through the Civil Service Training and Development Institute (“CSTDI”), will continue to provide training programmes to boost the innovation and drive of civil servants and to foster a learning culture in the civil service. We have included elements of policy and social innovation, leading change and creative problem solving in our leadership programmes, workshops and seminars for civil servants at different ranks. Esteemed local and overseas educational and professional institutions are involved in the above-mentioned programmes where appropriate. We will also continue to enhance the quality and variety of the e-learning resources available at the Cyber Learning Centre Plus website to facilitate the pursuit of continuous learning among civil servants.

7. CSTDI also offers national studies and Basic Law training which takes into account the needs of civil servants of different levels and work nature. National studies training is organised in the forms of training courses, seminars, theme-based visits to the Mainland, civil service exchange programme and a dedicated website on Mainland-related information and development. On training on the Basic Law for civil servants, in addition to organising seminars and web courses, CSTDI also provides on-line resources and organises promotional activities to enhance understanding of the Basic Law amongst civil servants.

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

8. The Government, being an Equal Opportunities Employer, is committed to eliminating disabilities, race and other forms of discrimination in employment. We will continue to implement the policy and facilitating measures on employment of persons with disabilities with a view to facilitating job seekers with disabilities in applying for government jobs and helping government employees with disabilities fully integrate in the workplace. Also, we will continue with our efforts in implementing suitable measures to ensure that the ethnic minorities will continue to have equal access to job opportunities in the Government.

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

9. To uphold the highest standard of probity and integrity in the civil

service, the Administration has put in place a civil service disciplinary system under which disciplinary cases are processed promptly and fairly in accordance with the principles of natural justice and procedural propriety. A civil servant suspected of misconduct will be given a fair hearing and sufficient opportunities to defend himself/herself. We will keep the system under constant review to ensure its effectiveness and efficiency. In addition, to formalise the administrative arrangements for approval of legal or other forms of representation at disciplinary hearings¹, we are continuing the discussion with relevant disciplined services departments on the refinement proposals to amend the subsidiary regulations under disciplined services legislation (“DSL”)².

10. We have an established mechanism to remove persistent under-performers under section 12 of the Public Service (Administration) Order³ and will keep up our efforts in promoting a performance-based culture that is conducive to improving efficiency and productivity in the civil service.

(E) Enhancing communication with the staff sides and encouraging fuller use of various schemes to recognise and motivate exemplary performance

11. We are committed to fostering a partnership culture among civil servants by continuing to encourage more communication between the management and staff, especially colleagues in the front line. We will continue to consult and engage staff through the existing staff consultative machinery both at the central and departmental levels. Our objective is to provide an open and caring work environment and to better understand the views and experience of staff, so that they will be motivated to perform at their best to facilitate the implementation of various policy initiatives.

12. To recognise meritorious performance at the department and team levels, we have introduced the biennial “Civil Service Outstanding Service

¹ The Court of Final Appeal ruled in *Lam Siu Po v Commissioner of Police* (FACV 9/2008), amongst other points, that an accused officer should be allowed to be legally represented at disciplinary hearings where fairness so requires.

² The DSL refers to the Customs and Excise Service Ordinance (Cap. 342), the Fire Services Ordinance (Cap. 95), the Government Flying Service Ordinance (Cap. 322), the Immigration Service Ordinance (Cap. 331), the Police Force Ordinance (Cap. 232) and the Prisons Ordinance (Cap. 234). For the purposes of this paper, the DSL also includes the Traffic Wardens (Discipline) Regulations (Cap. 374J).

³ The Public Service (Administration) Order is an Executive Order made by the Chief Executive under Article 48(4) of the Basic Law. Under section 12 of the Order, an officer may be required to retire in the public interest on grounds of persistent sub-standard performance.

Award Scheme” since 1999. The Scheme aims to recognise departments and teams that are committed to continuous improvement and strive to provide high quality customer-oriented services to the public. Awards are granted at the team, departmental and inter-departmental levels, and the best practices of the winning departments are widely publicised. The Scheme will be run again in 2015. Besides, in keeping with our policy to encourage meritorious performance at the individual level through proper recognition, we have introduced the annual Secretary for the Civil Service’s Commendation Award Scheme since 2004. A total of 81 civil servants from 33 B/Ds received the awards in 2014.

13. The Long and Meritorious Service Travel Award Scheme is also an important scheme for sustaining staff morale. The Scheme’s objective is to recognise and reward long and meritorious service of serving civil servants. All local non-directorate officers with a continuous service of 20 years or more, who have track records of consistently very good performance and have not received any Government travel award before, are eligible for consideration for the grant of an award. The award is in the form of travel allowance⁴, payable also to spouses who accompany the selected officers on the trip. There are 2 473 awards in 2014-15.

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

14. 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

⁴ The rate of the travel allowance is revised on 1 April each year with reference to the rate of change in package tour charges in the Consumer Price Index (C) in the past 12-month period ending February. The rate for 2014-15 is \$26,450.

- (c) a pay trend survey (“PTS”) every year to ascertain the average year-on-year movements in private sector pay⁵.

15. The Standing Commission on Civil Service Salaries and Conditions of Services has completed the 2013 PLS and submitted its findings and recommendations to the Chief Executive (“CE”) on 30 October 2014 vide its Report No. 52. The Administration has briefed this Panel on the findings and Standing Commission’s recommendations on its application to non-directorate civilian civil servants at the meeting on 17 November 2014. As the PLS does not cover the disciplined services and directorate grades, we have sought views from the staff bodies and the advice of the Standing Committee on Disciplined Services Salaries and Conditions of Service and the Standing Committee on Directorate Salaries and Conditions of Service on whether and how the 2013 PLS findings should be applied to the disciplined services and directorate grades respectively. We are finalising our recommendations before seeking the CE-in-Council’s decision. We will brief this Panel on the CE-in-Council’s decision when it is available.

16. Apart from the PLS, the next three-yearly SSS should be conducted in 2015. Having sought views from the staff bodies, the Administration has recently invited the Standing Commission, which has rich experience in conducting SSS⁶ and commands respect by the staff, to conduct the 2015 SSS. We will brief this Panel on the work plan in taking forward the survey subject to Standing Commission’s agreement to the invitation.

(G) Enhancing medical and dental benefits for civil service eligible persons (“CSEPs”)

17. Preparatory work has been kick-started in 2014-15 and renovation work will commence in early 2015 for a new families clinic in order to enhance the provision of civil service medical benefits for CSEPs. Equipped with 10 consultation rooms in Fanling, this new families clinic is tentatively scheduled to commence operation in the first quarter of 2016. We will continue to explore further areas where medical services for officers injured on duty may be enhanced. For dental services, we will continue to enhance the service

⁵ The annual PTS is commissioned by the tripartite PTS Committee comprising representatives of the staff sides, representatives of the Administration and members from two independent advisory bodies on civil service pay and conditions of service.

⁶ The Standing Commission conducted the 1999 Starting Salaries Review and the 2009 and 2012 SSSes.

capacity of the Department of Health by setting up more general dental surgeries.

Way Forward

18. In taking forward the above initiatives, we will consult departmental management and staff and seek Members' views as appropriate. We are committed to maintaining a civil service with high standards of integrity, efficiency and performance in order to contribute to the effective governance of the Government.

Civil Service Bureau
15 January 2015