

For information

Legislative Council Panel on Public Service

Written Response to the Motion on “General Overview of the Civil Service Strength, Retirement and Resignation”

Introduction

At the meeting of the Panel on Public Service held on 16 June 2008, Members passed the following motion -

“(This Panel) urges the Government to abolish the ‘3+3’ policy and practice for recruiting civil servants (i.e. new appointees are appointed on probationary terms for three years and on agreement terms for another three years before they are considered for appointment on the prevailing permanent terms).”

2. This paper sets out the response of the Civil Service Bureau to the above motion.

Response

3. Under the new civil service entry system implemented on 1 June 2000, new recruits at basic ranks are required to complete a three-year probationary period. For officers who have served in the civil service holding similar ranks or assuming similar duties, the appointment authority may reduce the probationary period for such new recruits by no more than half of the probationary period required for the new office. Staff concerned are then appointed on a three-year agreement, before they can be considered for appointment on permanent terms. Departments will consider whether further appointment on permanent terms should be offered to the officers concerned, having regard to the established criteria, including service need, the availability of vacancies on the permanent establishment to accommodate such officers and their work performance.

4. Individual grades are allowed to propose to the Civil Service Bureau and the Public Service Commission variations to the basic entry system to meet management needs and operational requirements. For example, for reason of stability, all disciplined services grades are permitted to offer appointment on permanent terms to new recruits after

they have satisfactorily completed the three-year probationary period.

5. The objective of the new entry system is to provide greater flexibility in the civil service appointment system and to allow for better quality control of staff. Unlike the practice adopted in the private sector, the Government seldom initiates layoffs or terminates the employment of civil servants prematurely due to decline in service needs. As such, it is imperative that the management is satisfied that there are long-term service needs for the posts concerned, and that new appointees to the civil service have demonstrated their suitability in all aspects before they are considered for appointment on permanent terms. Since the implementation of the new entry system in 2000, the Civil Service Bureau has kept in view the recruitment and retention of staff in various grades. We consider that the new system has been effective in achieving an appropriate balance between stability and flexibility. We will also continue to monitor the overall appointment situation of civil servants to ascertain whether it would be necessary to review the existing civil service appointment system.

Civil Service Bureau
July 2008