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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL ON PUBLIC SERVICE

The Civil Service Outstanding Service Award 2011 and other commendation schemes for civil servants

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the preparation of the Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme 2011 and three other commendation schemes for civil servants.

Background

2. The Administration is committed to upholding high standards of performance and conduct in the civil service. Maintaining a clean, effective and dedicated civil service is essential to ensuring the continued stability and prosperity of Hong Kong. To maintain an environment in which civil servants are motivated to deliver quality service that meets the rising expectations of the general public, we need a fair commendation system that would help to motivate proactive and sustained exemplary performance from civil servants.

3. There are four commendation schemes applicable to civil servants. They are the Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme which aims to provide recognition on a department/team basis and three other award schemes which are designed to recognise commendable performance of individual civil servants. These schemes are briefly described in the paragraphs below.

The Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme

4. Since 1999, the Civil Service Bureau (“CSB”) has been organising the Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme on a biennial basis. The objectives of the Scheme are to recognise the efforts of departments and teams which provide excellent service, to promote a customer-focused culture in the civil service, and to inspire departments and civil servants to emulate the best practices of award-winning departments and teams for continuous improvement in the delivery of public services.

5. The 2011 Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme is now underway. It has elicited a very positive response with 110 entries from 42 (out of 73) bureaux/departments. This reflects a high level of awareness of continuous enhancement in service quality and wide support for the Scheme in the civil service. Awards under the Scheme are presented at three levels, namely –

- the inter-departmental Partnership Award for quality services to the public through collaboration among departments;
- the departmental awards, comprising the Service Enhancement Award and the Best Public Image Award; and
- the team awards, comprising the Specialized Service Award, the Internal Service Award, the General Public Service Award, the Regulatory/Enforcement Service Award and the newly-introduced Crisis/Incident Support Service Award.

Public Engagement

6. The 2011 Scheme continues to emphasise the participation of the private sector, the public and community leaders in the adjudication process. As in previous years, we have invited the Hong Kong Management Association to co-organise the Scheme to enhance the interaction between the public and private sectors.

7. The inter-departmental Partnership Award, the departmental Service Enhancement Award and the team awards adopt a rigorous two-stage adjudication process. We have invited seasoned practitioners from different service industries to serve on the boards of examiners, which are tasked to conduct the first stage assessment, comprising screening of written submissions and interviews with participating departments and teams. The involvement of private sector practitioners helps enhance the objectivity of the assessment process and facilitate benchmarking with the private sector. It also helps to promote exchange between the public and private sectors on quality customer service and related standards. The first stage assessment was completed in April 2011, and 25 entries were short-listed for the final adjudication to be held in June 2011.

8. Members of the Legislative Council, District Council members, representatives from professional organisations, staff side members of the Central Consultative Councils and senior officials from CSB will be invited to serve on the Final Adjudication Panels. The Panels will conduct the second stage assessment, which requires the short-listed departments and teams to give a presentation and answer questions from the Panels. Based on the merits of the presentation, the Panels will decide on the winners for the Gold, Silver and Bronze prizes.

9. For the Best Public Image Award, a sample of randomly selected members of the public and all Members of the Legislative Council and District Councils will be invited to vote in a survey to select three departments with the best public image.

Publicity and Dissemination

10. In order to underline the importance of quality service, to give recognition to the outstanding achievements by the winning departments and teams and to inform the public of these achievements, a prize presentation ceremony of the 2011 Scheme will be held at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre on 12 September 2011. In addition, the awards will be recorded in the personal files of the civil servants concerned to register their contributions to winning the awards.

11. To let the public know more about the exemplary performance of the winning departments and teams, a one-hour TV programme will be produced by Radio Television Hong Kong and broadcasted on television, and supplements will be published in three newspapers after the prize presentation ceremony. To inspire other departments and civil servants to emulate the best practices of the winners of the Scheme, seminars will be held in January/February 2012 for the winning departments and teams to exchange experience and share good practices.

12. In addition, the factors contributing to the success of the winners will be developed into training and self-learning materials for further dissemination in the civil service. A video series capturing the lesser-known, behind-the-scene efforts and commitment of civil servants in serving the public will be produced. The videos will be broadcasted next year through different channels, including government websites, the Internet and public waiting areas in government venues, to help the public better understand the work of civil servants.

The Honours and Awards System of the HKSAR

13. This is a community-wide honours recognition system and is not limited to civil servants only. Each year, members of the public and public officers (including civil servants) are nominated for various honours and awards having regard to their contribution to Hong Kong and their public and community service. The recipients of the different types of awards (e.g. Bauhinia Awards, Bravery Awards, Disciplined Services and ICAC Awards, Medal of Honour, Chief Executive's Commendation) are decided by the Chief Executive on the recommendation of an Honours Committee comprising government officials and eminent community leaders. An average of around 140 civil servants received awards under this system annually for the past five years, including around 50 who received the Chief Executive's Commendation for Government/Public Service and around 50 who received various Disciplined Services Awards¹.

¹ The award recipients were officers of the six major disciplined services, namely Hong Kong Police Force, Fire Services Department, Immigration Department, Customs and Excise Department, Correctional Services Department and Government Flying Service.

The full list of recipients is published every year. The Chief Executive personally presents the award to each recipient, in the presence of guests invited by the recipients, at a ceremony held in Government House each year.

The Commendation Letter Scheme

14. This is a civil service-specific recognition scheme and is administered at the bureau/departmental level. Under the Commendation Letter Scheme, Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Departments may issue commendation letters to civil servants who have provided consistently outstanding service for at least three consecutive years; or have made significant contribution towards enhancing the efficiency or the image of their bureaux/departments; or have performed a meritorious or brave act warranting special recognition. Nominations may be made all year round and they are considered by a commendation committee set up by individual bureau/department under the chairmanship of a directorate officer. An average of around 1,400 civil servants received commendation letters annually for the past five years.

Secretary for the Civil Service (SCS)'s Commendation Award Scheme

15. In 2004, we introduced this civil service-specific scheme as a separate tier of award between the Honours and Awards System of the HKSAR and the bureau/departmental Commendation Letter Scheme. Each year, SCS, on behalf of the Administration, gives recognition to selected civil servants on a service-wide basis for consistently outstanding and exemplary performance. To qualify for an award under the Scheme, a civil servant needs to have provided outstanding performance for at least five consecutive years. The number of recipients per annum is targeted at 80, which may be relaxed for exceptionally deserving cases. Nominations are made by Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Departments/Grades. The recipients of awards are selected by SCS on the recommendation of an Award Committee, comprising representatives of CSB, relevant bureaux and Heads of Grades.

16. The awards are presented by SCS at a ceremony held annually, in the presence of guests invited by the recipients and representatives from their bureaux/departments. Each award recipient receives a certificate of recognition and a gold pin. For those award recipients who have 20 or more years of service and have not enjoyed government sponsored travel outside Hong Kong before, they will also receive a travel award. If the award recipient is married, the travel award will also cover the spouse, provided that he/she travels with the award recipient. In 2010, a total of 72 civil servants from 33 bureaux/departments received the award.

17. Regarding the SCS' Commendation Award for 2011, a total of 121 nominations from 32 bureaux/departments have been received. The Award Committee will hold a meeting in June 2011 to select the deserving nominees for a decision by SCS. We will organise an award presentation ceremony in November 2011 to give recognition to the award recipients. In addition, the award will be recorded in the personal files of the recipients to show appreciation of their outstanding and exemplary performance.

18. We will invite the press to interview some of the award recipients and make arrangements to produce feature stories on the exemplary services of the award recipients. We will also upload onto the government news website feature stories with video coverage on the achievements of some of the award recipients for public viewing. In addition, we will publicise the achievements of the award recipients through various internal communication channels such as the Civil Service Newsletter and departmental newsletters.

Conclusion

19. Award schemes are useful management tools to give recognition to good performance, to boost staff morale and to encourage further improvements in the delivery of public service. We will continue to make use of them judiciously.

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

Civil Service Bureau
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