

For discussion
on 21 October 2019

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL ON PUBLIC SERVICE

Policy Measures of Civil Service Bureau in the 2019 Policy Address

Purpose

This paper outlines the policy measures relating to Civil Service Bureau featured in the 2019 Policy Address and Policy Address Supplement.

Details

Suitably Increasing Civil Service Establishment

2. The civil service provides important support for implementing the Government's new policies and measures. In 2019-20, we continue to increase the civil service establishment suitably by supporting the creation of new posts with adequate justification to cope with additional workload. The civil service establishment will increase by around 1.8% in 2019-20, which will be within the stable growth level of about 1% to 2% in the past 10 years¹.

3. About 40% of the additional posts are for work related to people's livelihood, such as medical services provided by Department of Health, education, and support services for the underprivileged. Another 40% or so are invested on Hong Kong's future economic development, including infrastructure, land and housing as well as innovation and technology-related work. About 80% of the additional

¹ The year-on-year increase of the civil service establishment remained within 0.6% to 1.9% in the past ten financial years except for 2018-19 which saw a higher increase of 3.7% mainly for the commissioning of three new cross-boundary control points.

manpower belong to middle and lower ranks covering a number of frontline grades.

4. For implementing new measures and improving services, the civil service establishment has increased by about 13 500 posts (7.6%) in the first three years of the current-term Government (i.e. from 2017-18 to 2019-20). The projected establishment by end-March 2020 will be 191 816 posts.

Establishing a New Civil Service College

5. The Chief Executive announced in last year's Policy Address that a "Government, Institution or Community" site near the Kwun Tong MTR Station had been identified for composite development using the "single site, multiple uses" model. Apart from the civil service college, there will be more government and social welfare facilities in the composite development. The accessibility within the district will also be enhanced and more public open space will be provided.

6. Considering the size of the site and the neighbouring environment, we plan to construct two buildings, namely a high block and a low block. The high block will mainly house the civil service college and other civil service training and supporting facilities, while the low block will mainly provide social welfare facilities, including a centre for enhanced integrated vocational and skills training for persons with disabilities, a gerontechnology exhibition centre, a care professions training institute, an art gallery for artists with disabilities, a district health centre, a public transport interchange, etc. We also plan to include elevated walkways, public open space and a landscaped deck in the composite development so as to further enhance the connectivity of the surrounding areas and to make the overall planning and development more systematic. The proposed pedestrian deck will connect the Kwun Tong MTR station, the neighbouring Tsui Ping Road footbridge and Fuk Ning Road to the north to facilitate pedestrians in commuting more conveniently between the MTR station and the vicinity of Tsui Ping Road. Moreover, the pedestrian deck will be connected to the existing footbridges near the MTR station leading to the business area to the south of Kwun Tong Road. The Government consulted the Kwun Tong

District Council on the proposed facilities to be included in the composite development in May this year. District Council members attending the meeting generally supported the construction of the civil service college at the site concerned, but had expressed various views on the composite development project as well as the planning and facilities in the vicinity. Their suggestions are being considered in detail by the policy bureaux and departments concerned. We anticipate that the whole composite development project can be completed in 2026.

7. In response to the concern expressed by District Council members about congestion in the Kwun Tong Station during peak hours, the Government is also studying the feasibility of constructing a new elevated pedestrian platform to connect the composite development project, the Kwun Tong Town Centre Redevelopment Project and the Kwun Tong MTR Station, with a view to further enhancing the connectivity in the Kwun Tong town centre and creating space to alleviate the congestion in the Kwun Tong Station during peak hours. The Government will also, in conjunction with the MTR Corporation Limited, explore the feasibility of extending the Kwun Tong Station concourse and platform with a view to identifying a practicable option that could complement the future development of the district.

8. The Kwun Tong composite development project will not only provide a wide range of public facilities in Kwun Tong, the civil service college in the project will also enhance training facilities for civil servants. We will set up a civil service training advisory board comprising professionals and government officials to give guidance on training programmes for the civil service and its long-term development strategy. Through upgrading the training facilities and curricula, civil servants will be better equipped with the necessary skills to further enhance the quality of public services.

Improving the Long and Meritorious Service Travel Award Scheme

9. The Long and Meritorious Service Travel Award Scheme aims at recognising long and meritorious service of serving civil servants. The amount of the travel allowance for 2019-20 is \$26,140 per person, and the total number of awards is about 2 520 which is determined on the

basis of one award for every 27 eligible officers meeting the service requirement.

10. In the past, the awardees were only allowed to bring along their spouses as travelling companions and they received the same travel allowance as the awardees, and hence awardees who were single or whose spouses could not travel with them were unable to benefit from the scheme. As an improvement to the scheme, we have, starting from 2019-20, relaxed the restriction on travelling with spouse only to allow the awardees (whether married or not) to flexibly nominate a travelling companion who will receive the same travel allowance as the awardees. Among the awardees who used their travel award in the first six months of 2019-20, 99% of them enjoyed the travel allowance with a travelling companion, which compares favourably with an average of only about 80% of the awardees travelling with their spouses to enjoy the travel allowance in the past. The awardees in general welcome the improvement to the scheme.

Extending the Service of Civil Servants

11. To tie in with the goal of expanding the labour force and to respond to the aspirations of our serving colleagues in the civil service, we introduced in July 2018 the option for serving civil servants who joined the Government between 1 June 2000 and 31 May 2015 to choose to retire at the age of 65 (for civilian grades) or 60 (for disciplined services grades, regardless of ranks). Eligible civil servants can decide whether or not to take the Option within the two-year option period commencing from 17 September 2018.

12. As at 16 September 2019 (i.e. one year after the commencement of the option period), about 24 000 (or 43%) out of the 56 000 or so eligible civil servants had taken the Option. We will continue to closely monitor the implementation of the Option. At the same time, having regard to factors such as their overall manpower situation (e.g. wastage rate), operational needs and succession arrangement, departments have been flexibly using the various pliable measures for extending the service of civil servants, including the Post-retirement Service Contract Scheme, final extension of service and

the adjusted further employment mechanism, to retain civil servants reaching their retirement age to meet their manpower needs and to allow inheritance of experience.

Promoting Employment of Persons with Disabilities

13. As an employer, the Government has all along been leading by example in its commitment to eliminating disabilities and other forms of discrimination in employment. We have implemented facilitating measures to assist persons with disabilities to apply for government jobs to ensure that they enjoy equal opportunities in this respect. We have also enhanced our effort in providing students with disabilities with internship opportunities in the Government. Starting from 2018, we have doubled the number of internship places for students with disabilities from an average of 50 per year in the past to 100 per year. We will continue to assign them with diversified jobs during the internship in the light of their aptitude and interests. As of September 2019, more than 260 students with disabilities had participated in the internship scheme and completed the internship.

Extending Maternity Leave for All Female Government Employees

14. With immediate effect from the date of the announcement of the 2018 Policy Address by the Chief Executive (i.e. 10 October 2018), the maternity leave for all eligible female employees of the Government has been extended from 10 to 14 weeks to allow them more time to take care of their new-born children. As at 30 September 2019, more than 1 500 Government employees had benefited from this measure.

Enhancing Medical and Dental Benefits for Civil Service Eligible Persons (“CSEPs”)

15. Following the Chief Executive’s announcement in her 2018 Policy Address of introducing Chinese Medicine as part of the civil service medical benefits, we have immediately proceeded to work out the appropriate arrangements for providing Chinese medicinal services to CSEPs. To expedite the commencement of the new service, we plan to start it at two Chinese Medicine Centres for Teaching and Research (CMCTRs) in the form of a pilot scheme in the first quarter of 2020. At

present, CMCTRs are operated under a tripartite collaboration model involving Hospital Authority, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and local universities, and the NGOs are responsible for the management and daily operation of the CMCTRs. We will set up Chinese Medicine clinics for civil servants at two CMCTRs located in Eastern District of Hong Kong Island (Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital) and in Tsuen Wan of the New Territories (Yan Chai Hospital) to provide free general Chinese medicinal consultation services and acupuncture services to CSEPs. It is expected that the number of civil servants discs for the pilot scheme will be around 63 000 per year.

16. Furthermore, we will implement two new service programmes in the families clinics in Q1 of 2020, namely the “Integrated Care Programme” (formerly known as “Risk Assessment and Management Programme”) for improving the quality of care for patients with diabetes mellitus and the “Stable Drug Use Pilot Programme” for reducing the risk of patients with chronic diseases who are required to take multiple types of drugs improperly using medication. We will also continue to enhance general and specialised dental services for CSEPs.

Strengthening Support for Non-ethnic Chinese

17. The Civil Service Bureau completed in February 2018 a comprehensive review on the Chinese language proficiency requirements (LPRs) for appointment in all civil service grades. Civil Service Bureau will continue to monitor the recruitment situation of the concerned grades and remind Heads of Department / Grade to keep reviewing the Chinese LPRs for their civil service grades while maintaining their satisfactory performance.

18. Separately, we have also launched an internship programme for non-ethnic Chinese university students on a pilot basis in 2019. A total of sixteen non-ethnic Chinese university students nominated by the eight universities funded by the University Grants Committee took part in the programme and were attached to various government departments for an internship lasting about eight weeks. In view of the positive feedback we have received from the participants, we will continue to hold the internship programme next year to provide opportunities for more

non-ethnic Chinese students to acquire work experience and help them gear up for employment.

19. The Civil Service Training and Development Institute will also strengthen training on cultural sensitivity / equal opportunities for new recruits and front-line staff. We expect that about 1,600 officers will receive such training in 2019, doubling that of 2018.

Advice Sought

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

Civil Service Bureau
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