

For discussion on
20 April 2020

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL ON PUBLIC SERVICE

Implementation of Five-day Week in the Government

PURPOSE

This paper updates Members on the position of the implementation of five-day week (FDW) in the Government.

POLICY ON FIVE-DAY WEEK

2. The Government has implemented the FDW initiative in three phases starting from 2006¹. The policy objective is to improve the quality of civil servants' family life without compromising the level and efficiency of public services or incurring additional costs to taxpayers. To achieve this policy objective, bureaux and departments (B/Ds) are encouraged to migrate staff to FDW following the four basic principles below –

- (a) no additional staffing resources;
- (b) no reduction in the conditioned hours of work of individual staff;
- (c) no reduction in emergency services; and
- (d) continued provision of essential counter services on Saturdays/Sundays.

IMPLEMENTATION OF FDW IN THE GOVERNMENT

3. The FDW work pattern includes working on a “Monday-to-Friday” basis, a “five-day-on, two-day-off roster in every seven days”, or “fewer than five days/shifts in every seven days”. Upon the third phase of implementation in July 2007, a total of some 94 300 out of around 145 500 civil servants (i.e. around 65% of the then civil service strength) were working on a FDW work pattern.

4. The Government conducts biennial surveys to keep in view the implementation of FDW for staff in B/Ds. At the meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Public Service (the Panel) on 15 April 2019, the Government reported (LC Paper No. CB(4)728/18-19(05) refers) on the position of the

¹ The three phases started from 1 July 2006, 1 January 2007 and 1 July 2007 respectively.

implementation of FDW in the Government as at 30 September 2018. In overall terms, as at 30 September 2018, there were around 123 500² civil servants (i.e. around 75% of the then civil service strength) working on an FDW pattern. The relevant figures, in terms of both the number and percentage of civil servants working on FDW, were the highest since the implementation of FDW in July 2006.

5. Separately, there were around 41 300 civil servants (i.e. around 25% of the then civil service strength) delivering social welfare services, immigration counter services, cultural and leisure services, postal services, environmental hygiene services, or engaged in law enforcement, passenger/cargo clearance, management of penal institutions, etc., working on a non-FDW work pattern as at 30 September 2018.

6. The Government is now preparing for the next survey which will capture the position of the implementation of FDW in the Government as at 30 September 2020. We expect that we will complete collecting the relevant data in the first quarter of 2021.

LATEST DEVELOPMENT

7. As at 30 September 2018, there were still 22 departments which had not fully implemented FDW. All along, the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) has encouraged departments to explore the feasibility of trial schemes in a pragmatic manner in order to facilitate the migration of more staff to FDW. Since our last report to the Panel in April 2019, there has been further progress in the migration to FDW in the Government as set out below –

Successful Migration to FDW

- (a) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department: the trial scheme for the Shop Front Extension Control Task Forces and the Technical Support Unit of the Transport Section was completed, resulting in about 120 staff formally migrated to FDW since August 2019;
- (b) Leisure and Cultural Services Department: about 90 civil servants working in parks, playgrounds, public libraries and offices in various districts as well as the Transport Section have migrated to FDW from March 2019 to early April 2020; and

² Following the approach adopted in previous surveys, this figure included staff who were on FDW trial schemes, but excluded civil servants working in government schools, the Judiciary, the Hospital Authority, the Vocation Training Council, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, the Independent Commission Against Corruption and the Legal Aid Services Council.

- (c) Post Office: about 20 members of the Postal Officer grade of the International Mail Division have migrated to FDW during the period from March 2019 to March 2020.

Trial Schemes in Progress

- (a) Correctional Services Department (CSD): trial schemes involving about 160 correctional services staff in three correctional institutions are underway. Taking into account the actual progress of the trial schemes and the views of the participating staff, CSD management will monitor the trial schemes regularly and review their effectiveness as appropriate; and
- (b) Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF): trial schemes involving about 450 police officers in selected Task Force Sub-units (TFSUs), Rural Patrol Units and TFSUs (Enforcement and Control) of Regional Traffic, as well as about 900 police officers in the Emergency Units of the Hong Kong Island, New Territories South and Kowloon East Regions are underway. HKPF management will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the trial schemes as appropriate.

8. The above examples demonstrate that although the scale of trial schemes varies, individual departments can still explore or further implement FDW through various arrangements without compromising the four basic principles. Despite some posts or jobs will have to remain in a non-FDW pattern unavoidably, the Government has a responsibility to balance all relevant factors, including the expectation of civil servants towards FDW, proper use of public resources, the maintenance of the quality of public services and the effective management of the civil service establishment, as well as to continue upholding the four basic principles.

LEAVE DEDUCTION ARRANGEMENT FOR NON-FDW OFFICERS

9. As regards those departments which have not fully implemented FDW, CSB has since 2013 invited them to explore the feasibility of revising the existing leave deduction arrangements (LDA)³ for their non-FDW civil servants, provided that the relevant basic principles⁴ can be complied with. For example, CSD conducted a six-month pilot scheme for about 1 500 non-FDW disciplined officers from December 2018 to June 2019. Under the pilot scheme, only 10 days (instead of 10.5 days to 12 days) of vacation leave were deducted for a continuous absence of 14 calendar days. As the pilot scheme has been smooth in general, CSD decided, after review, to extend the pilot scheme and conduct the second phase of it, which would last for two years starting from January 2020 and cover all of those about 4 200 non-FDW disciplined officers in the department. Other departments conducting revised LDA pilot schemes include the HKPF and the Customs & Excise Department, covering more than 11 000 non-FDW civil servants in total. The aforementioned departments carry out regular reviews during the course of the pilot schemes and will consider in due course the possibility of implementing the revised LDA on a long-term basis. CSB has also shared the information about the revised LDA pilot schemes of the aforementioned departments with those departments which have not fully implemented FDW for reference, and encourage them to consider implementing the revised LDA as far as practicable.

WAY FORWARD

10. CSB will continue to encourage those departments which have not fully implemented FDW to enable more civil servants to work under a FDW pattern in compliance with the four basic principles or to explore the feasibility of conducting a pilot scheme on revised LDA for non-FDW civil servants, and where possible, arrange staff to rotate to FDW or to reduce instances of non-five-day work required each month. CSB also welcomes continued dialogue between the staff side and their departmental management with a view to putting forth proposals to implement FDW.

³ In general, leave deduction is made on a “one-to-one” basis, i.e. one day of vacation leave to be deducted for absence of one day. The number of days of vacation leave to be deducted to cover the same duration of absence for civil servants on different work patterns may be different. For instance, for leave absence of two weeks, 10.5 days of vacation leave will be deducted for officers working on alternate Saturday-off duty pattern while 10 days of vacation leave will be deducted for civil servants working on a Monday to Friday pattern.

⁴ These basic principles include no reduction in the conditioned hours of work of individual staff; no additional manpower and maintenance of the level of service to public; and other existing leave rules applicable to individual civil servants should remain intact.

ADVICE SOUGHT

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

Civil Service Bureau
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