

For discussion on
18 February 2019

Legislative Council Panel on Public Service

Update on Extension of the Service of Civil Servants

Purpose

This paper reports on the progress on the implementation of various measures for extending the service of civil servants.

Background

2. To respond to the demographic challenges of Hong Kong and facilitate bureaux/departments (B/Ds) to address their respective manpower requirement flexibly, the Government announced in January 2015 the adoption of a package of measures for extending the service of civil servants. These measures include –

- (a) raising the retirement age of new recruits who joined the Government on or after 1 June 2015 to 65 for civilian grades and 60, regardless of ranks, for disciplined services grades;
- (b) introducing a new Post-retirement Service Contract (PRSC) Scheme to enable B/Ds to engage retired/retiring civil servants on contract terms to undertake ad hoc, time-limited, seasonal or part-time tasks that require specific civil service expertise/experience;
- (c) revising the arrangements for processing applications for final extension of service of serving civil servants beyond retirement age, including raising the maximum period of final extension from 90 days to 120 days and suitably relaxing the approval criteria; and
- (d) adjusting the mechanism for further employment of serving civil servants beyond retirement age for a duration longer than 120 days (hereafter referred to as “FE”) by up to a maximum of five years.

We last updated Members at the Panel meeting on 26 February 2018 vide LC Paper No. CB(4)627/17-18(03) that all the above measures had been fully implemented and have been running generally smoothly. They provide B/Ds with flexible means to meet their specific manpower requirement in the light of operational needs and succession planning, and provide an avenue for retiring civil servants to continue to serve and share their valuable experience/expertise to upkeep the quality of public service.

3. As at June 2018, there were about 2 000 full-time PRSC staff employed by B/Ds under the PRSC Scheme. For final extension of service, as at August 2018, i.e. two and a half years after the implementation of the revised arrangements, around 5 400 applications were approved by B/Ds. As regards the adjusted FE mechanism, more than 1 500 applications have been approved since its implementation in June 2017.

4. We will continue to closely monitor the implementation of these measures and render necessary assistance to B/Ds in deploying relevant tools to retain suitable officers beyond retirement age.

The Option

5. At the abovementioned Panel meeting, we also updated Members on the progress on taking forward the initiative announced by the Chief Executive in her 2017 Policy Address to allow serving civil servants who joined the Government between 1 June 2000 and 31 May 2015 (hereafter referred to as “Eligible Civil Servants”) to choose to retire at the age of 65 (for civilian grades) or 60 (for disciplined services grades, regardless of ranks) (hereafter referred to as “the Option”). The initiative seeks to tie in with the goal of expanding the labour force and to respond to the aspirations of serving civil servants. Following the service-wide consultation conducted between 20 February and 30 April 2018, we refined the proposed implementation framework taking into account the views of the staff sides and the grade/departmental management. The implementation details were subsequently approved by the Chief Executive-in-Council (ExCo) on 19 June 2018 and a Legislative Council brief was issued on the same day to inform Members of the ExCo’s decision.

6. The Option was then launched on 27 July 2018 by promulgating the implementation details by way of Civil Service Bureau Circulars. The two-year option period commenced on 17 September 2018 and will end on 16 September 2020. In view that some civil servants would otherwise have ceased active service during the period between ExCo’s approval and the launch of the Option, a one-off special arrangement was made to grant a short extension of service to them such that they would not be excluded from taking the Option. For those Eligible Civil Servants who would otherwise

cease active service before the end of the two-year option period, transitional arrangements have been made to allow sufficient time for them to decide whether or not to take the Option. To help Eligible Civil Servants understand the arrangement, briefing sessions have been conducted and a set of Frequently Asked Questions have been issued. As at 16 December 2018 (i.e. three months after the commencement of the option period), more than 12 000 (or 23%) out of some 56 000 Eligible Civil Servants had taken the Option.

7. We will keep in view the implementation of the Option and render necessary assistance to Eligible Civil Servants as necessary.

Advice Sought

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

Civil Service Bureau
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