

For discussion on
26 February 2018

Legislative Council Panel on Public Service

Update on Extension of the Service of Civil Servants

Purpose

This paper reports on the progress on implementing the initiatives for extending the service of civil servants.

Background

2. In January 2015, the Government announced the adoption of a package of measures for extending the service of civil servants. These measures seek to equip bureaux/departments (B/Ds) with scalable solutions to deal with their respective manpower requirement flexibly in the short to medium term, while enabling the civil service to meet the forecast demographic challenges of Hong Kong in the longer term. We last updated Members at the Panel meeting on 20 February 2017 vide LC Paper No. CB(4)554/16-17(06) on the progress of the implementation of the following measures –

- (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 as a long-term solution to address the demographic challenges;
- (b) introducing a new Post-retirement Service Contract (PRSC) Scheme in November 2015 to provide B/Ds with a flexible means 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; and
- (c) revising the arrangements for processing applications for final extension of service of serving civil servants beyond retirement age since February 2016, which include raising the maximum period of final extension from 90 days to 120 days and suitably relaxing the approval criteria, to meet the different operational and succession needs of B/Ds.

Progress Update

3. Another measure announced in January 2015 is to provide for the further employment of serving civil servants for a duration longer than 120 days. Further to the Panel meeting on 20 February 2017, we had completed the consultation with the staff sides on the implementation guidelines for the adjusted mechanism for further employment of serving civil servants for a longer duration (hereafter referred to as “FE”). The adjusted FE mechanism has been implemented with effect from 1 June 2017. Under the mechanism, B/Ds are provided with greater flexibility to retain experienced civil servants who have reached retirement age by up to five years in the light of operational needs, succession planning and recruitment situation of individual ranks.

4. Specifically, if the relevant head of department/grade has determined that there is a need for FE in a rank after taking into account relevant objective criteria, applications for FE will be invited from all eligible civil servants. An FE selection board will be conducted to consider the applications received having regard to the factors adopted in determining the need and number of vacancies identified for FE as well as the physical fitness, performance and conduct of the applicants. The period that may be approved in each FE selection exercise should normally be 12 calendar months or less for promotion ranks, and 12 or 18 calendar months for entry ranks/one-rank grades. On checks and balances, the approving authority has to seek the Civil Service Bureau’s comments and the advice of the Public Service Commission (PSC) (for ranks under PSC’s purview) before approving FE. Thus far, more than 20 FE exercises have been launched.

5. With the implementation of the adjusted FE mechanism in June 2017, all the measures announced in January 2015 have now been fully implemented.

New initiative announced in the 2017 Policy Address

6. The above measures notwithstanding, it is expected that the challenges arising from an ageing population and shrinking labour force will continue. According to the latest population projection published by the Census and Statistics Department in September 2017, the labour force of Hong Kong is projected to decline from the peak of 3.68 million in 2021 to 3.51 million in 2031 and hover around the low level of about 3.50 million until 2038 before declining further. In view that the majority of serving civil servants who joined the Government between 1 June 2000 and 31 May 2015 will reach their current retirement age 15 to 25 years later (i.e. around 2030 to 2040), to tie in with the goal of expanding the labour force and to

respond to the aspirations of serving civil servants, the Chief Executive announced in the 2017 Policy Address that serving civil servants who joined the Government between 1 June 2000 and 31 May 2015 will be allowed to choose to retire at 65 (for civilian grades) or 60 (for disciplined services grades).

7. Further to the Policy Address announcement, we have drawn up a proposed implementation framework. The framework covers such implementation issues as eligibility, employment terms of the civil servant who has taken up the option, period within which the option should be exercised, and special arrangements for those retiring before or soon after the option period expires. We are launching a consultation to seek views of the staff sides and grade/departmental management on the implementation issues. Taking into account the feedback received, we will finalise the implementation details with a view to launching the initiative as soon as possible.

Advice Sought

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

Civil Service Bureau
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