

**For discussion on  
3 August 2023**

## **LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL ON PUBLIC SERVICE**

### **Promotion of a Clean Civil Service**

#### **Purpose**

This paper briefs Members on the work of the Civil Service Bureau (“CSB”) in promoting integrity management in the civil service in collaboration with the Independent Commission Against Corruption (“ICAC”).

#### **Background**

2. According to the Corruption Perceptions Index 2022, Hong Kong was ranked the 12th least corrupt place among 180 countries/territories surveyed and was one of the best performing places in Asia-Pacific. In the World Competitiveness Yearbook 2023, Hong Kong also maintained high rankings by being ranked the seventh most competitive among 64 economies surveyed and the tenth in respect of the “Bribery and corruption do not exist” indicator concerning “Government Efficiency”.

3. The civil service is the backbone of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. An honest and clean civil service is not only conducive to preserving Hong Kong’s integrity and global competitiveness but also vital to maintaining public confidence in the civil service. To this end, the Administration is committed to upholding a high standard of probity and conduct in the civil service so as to instill and sustain the culture of integrity.

#### **Strategy in promoting a clean civil service**

4. CSB and ICAC have been working closely with bureaux and departments (“B/Ds”) to promote and enhance the culture of integrity and probity in the civil service through a three-pronged approach, namely, prevention and regulation, training, and sanctions.

## Active prevention and regulation

5. The provision of clear rules plays an important part in prevention. In this regard, CSB has devised various integrity-related systems in the civil service through issuing the Civil Service Regulations, Civil Service Bureau Circulars and Civil Service Bureau Circular Memoranda, covering topics such as handling of conflict of interest situations, acceptance of advantages and entertainment, sponsored visits, private investments, outside work, etc. These systems provide civil servants with clear guidelines and procedures to follow and manifest the policies of the Administration in a lucid manner, providing guidance to civil servants in handling the relevant situations and devising proper mechanisms for approval and declaration. B/Ds can also devise and promulgate more specific internal codes or guidelines for compliance by their staff having regard to their own circumstances and operational needs. Besides, through assignment studies and consultation services, ICAC provides suggestions on the civil service integrity management systems as well as relevant practices and procedures.

## Enhancing integrity training

6. CSB has implemented the Ethical Leadership Programme (“ELP”) jointly with ICAC for years with a view to instilling and deepening the integrity culture and value in the civil service through the leadership and active participation of the senior management of B/Ds.

7. Under ELP, senior directorate officers are designated by B/Ds to serve as an important bridge of communication with CSB and ICAC. These designated officers assist CSB in promoting activities and spreading integrity messages at the bureau/departmental level, and providing valuable feedback so that the relevant initiatives could better suit the needs of colleagues. Moreover, they also assist in mapping out and taking forward bureau/department-based activities (including talks, seminars and publicity activities) with appropriate support provided by ICAC.

8. Since the launch of ELP in 2006, CSB and ICAC have been conducting thematic workshops regularly on various topics for the senior management of B/Ds. A total of four workshops have been conducted for as many as 970 officers since 2020. The latest thematic workshop conducted on 29 June 2023 was themed “Proper Handling of Acceptance of Advantages and Entertainment”. In addition to the speakers from CSB and ICAC, an officer from the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (“EMSD”) was invited to give an account

of their experience in obtaining the ISO 37001 Anti-bribery Management Systems Certification. EMSD is the first government department to obtain this certification in recognition of their efforts in integrity management. We hope to introduce this certification and its benefits to other departments through the said thematic workshop.

9. To strengthen connection and facilitate experience-sharing on integrity management among the designated officers, CSB and ICAC conducted three small-group sharing sessions for their representatives from over 30 B/Ds according to their work nature. During the sharing sessions, ICAC offered targeted advice on corruption prevention with regard to the respective work areas of B/Ds so as to strengthen their integrity promotion. Besides, CSB and ICAC offered assistance to different B/Ds in conducting promotion activities for their respective staff, such as organising regular corruption prevention programmes for new recruits and serving staff, arranging appropriate officers to speak in various training programmes and providing suitable presentation materials.

10. The Civil Service College (“CSC”) has been collaborating with ICAC to provide integrity management training for civil servants. Starting from July 2022, all new recruits are required to complete within the probationary period a foundation training programme, which includes briefings on the anti-corruption laws and mechanism by ICAC officers, in order to enhance the awareness on integrity issues among civil servants and ensure that they actively uphold the value of integrity and probity in discharging their duties and serve the public with honesty and trustworthiness. In addition, CSC also invited ICAC officers to share different cases in its leadership development programmes so that supervisors can better understand their roles and responsibilities, and lead by example to promote the culture of integrity management.

11. CSB also conducted other activities under ELP to promote a clean and honest culture, including regular seminars on the offence of “Misconduct in Public Office”. Since 2020, a total of 15 seminars have been held. In September 2022, CSB updated the “Knowing more about the Offence of Misconduct in Public Office” booklet to enhance the awareness of guarding against this offence among civil servants at all levels. In carrying out such work, we stepped up publicity and promotion at the departmental level through the designated officers of B/Ds under ELP. The relevant activities are introduced on CSB and ICAC’s respective social media platforms so as to increase the visibility of these initiatives.

12. All in all, in 2022 we provided more than 590 training programmes on corruption prevention, integrity and probity, and avoidance of conflict of interest for over 27 000 civil servants. In 2023, CSB will maintain cooperation with ICAC in organising various activities under ELP, and provide departments with necessary assistance in fostering the integrity culture in the civil service at different levels.

13. Apart from the above face-to-face activities, CSB also promotes the message of integrity by actively using online resources, including the “Integrity Management e-learning Platform for Civil Servants” on the “Cyber Learning Centre Plus” website, as well as the “Electronic Resource Centre on Integrity Management in the Civil Service” intranet, with a view to strengthening civil servants’ understanding of anti-corruption laws and regulations, and enhancing their alertness to corruption and other integrity issues.

14. In order to achieve the desired effect on integrity management, CSB and ICAC will closely monitor the overall situation of the civil service, and stay connected with the designated officers of B/Ds from time to time in offering support to and facilitating their promotion efforts.

### Sanctions

15. The Administration attaches great importance to the conduct and integrity of civil servants and adopts a zero-tolerance approach in dealing with civil servants who have breached the laws or misconducted themselves. If individual officers are found to have committed corruption-related offences or have not acted with integrity, the Administration will definitely handle their cases in a serious manner.

16. Over the past few years, the overall corruption scene in the civil service has remained generally stable (see **Annex**), indicating that corrupt activities have been under effective control and integrity upheld in the civil service. The number of corruption complaints involving government departments dropped significantly in 2022 as compared to 2021, accounting for less than one-third of the total number of corruption complaints received. The number of corruption complaints and pursuable complaints involving government departments went down by 17.4% and 12.7% respectively as compared to the previous year (i.e. 2021). While the number of civil servants referred by ICAC to B/Ds for consideration of disciplinary or administrative action in 2022 is more than that of the previous year, this is mainly due to the fact that there were a few cases

involving a relatively large number of officers. In any event, the Government will remain cautious and closely monitor the situation.

17. During the past five years (i.e. from 2018 to 2022), a total of 16 staff have been removed from office owing to conviction of an offence under the Prevention of Bribery Ordinance or the offence of Misconduct in Public Office, and another 19 staff have been removed from office after having been found culpable of misconduct following departmental investigation upon referral by ICAC. All these figures convey a clear message that the Administration will not tolerate any staff who have committed corruption-related offences or have not acted with integrity.

### **Advice sought**

18. CSB will continue to join hands with ICAC and B/Ds in enhancing integrity management and stepping up promotion efforts. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

**Civil Service Bureau**  
**July 2023**

**Figures on Corruption Complaints, Prosecutions and Convictions  
involving Government Officers<sup>Note 1</sup>**

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Corruption complaints involving government departments received by ICAC					
➤ No. of cases received	706	647	629	645	533
➤ No. of pursuable complaints	435	401	400	426	372
Government officers prosecuted for/convicted of corruption and related offences					
➤ No. of staff prosecuted	13	13	5	14	20
➤ Among those prosecuted during the year, number of government officers subsequently convicted <sup>Note 2</sup> (as of 31 May 2023)	10	11	3	9 <sup>Note 3</sup>	5 <sup>Note 3</sup>
Government officers referred by ICAC to B/Ds for consideration of disciplinary or administrative action <sup>Note 4</sup>					
➤ No. of officers referred	87	91	107	65	116 <sup>Note 5</sup>

Note 1: “Government officers” includes civil servants and government contract staff.

Note 2: As the trials take time, government officers prosecuted may not be convicted in the same year.

Note 3: Some of the cases prosecuted in 2021 and 2022 are pending plea/trial.

Note 4: For cases where no prosecution is made against individual staff after investigation but possible misconduct or malpractice has been revealed during the ICAC investigation, ICAC may, on the advice of its Operations Review Committee, refer them to the B/Ds concerned for consideration of disciplinary or administrative action.

Note 5: The number of officers referred to B/Ds for consideration of disciplinary or administrative action in 2022 is higher than that of 2021 because the number of staff involved in individual cases was relatively large.