

ITEM FOR ESTABLISHMENT SUBCOMMITTEE OF FINANCE COMMITTEE

Head 74 – INFORMATION SERVICES DEPARTMENT Subhead 000 Operational expenses

Members are invited to recommend to Finance Committee the creation of the following permanent post in the Information Services Department –

1 Administrative Officer Staff Grade C
(D2) (\$116,650 - \$123,850)

PROBLEM

An Administrative Officer Staff Grade C (AOSGC) (D2) post in the Information Services Department is designated as the Press Secretary to the Chief Secretary for Administration and the Financial Secretary (Press Secretary to CS & FS). The duties and responsibilities of the post have become more complex over the years as both the Chief Secretary for Administration (CS) and the Financial Secretary (FS) are subject to increasing demands on the media and public relations (PR) fronts, locally as well as overseas. We need to provide adequate and effective media and PR support to the CS and the FS.

PROPOSAL

2. In order to provide the CS and the FS each with a Press Secretary, we propose the creation of an additional post of Press Secretary at the rank of AOSGC (D2) in the Information Services Department.

/JUSTIFICATION

JUSTIFICATION

3. The media plays an important role in the free flow of information in Hong Kong. It reports to the public the formulation and implementation of Government policies, and reflect public views to the Government. Since there is a growing expectation from the media and the community for a more open and transparent Government, senior Government officials are devoting more time to explain their policies to the public through the media. The rapid development of print and electronic media, coupled with technological advances in news dissemination and analysis on the internet and cable/satellite television, have also accentuated this demand. Therefore, we need to provide adequate media and PR support for the CS and the FS in the form of two separate Press Secretaries.

4. The main responsibilities of the Press Secretaries are to gauge and assess media reaction, community demands and public opinions on issues under the CS' or the FS' respective policy portfolios, and to help devise PR strategies and publicity programmes to ensure more effective and focused communication to the public of major policies and initiatives of an open and transparent Government. The Press Secretaries are required to sit through policy discussions and tender advice on possible public reaction as well as how a particular policy initiative should be presented. On issues cutting across a number of policy bureaux, the Press Secretaries are also required to ensure a co-ordinated approach on the PR front. The job nature of the two Press Secretaries is similar but the contents would be diverse as they will each deal with a large and different group of policy bureaux under the different portfolios of the CS and the FS respectively. With a dedicated and experienced Press Secretary each for the CS and the FS, the timeliness, effectiveness and quality of advice and support provided to the two principal officials should improve in terms of a firmer grasp of public reaction to existing and new policy initiatives, better co-ordinated media and public relations efforts, and a more proactive approach in dealing with members of the media and the community in general throughout the communication processes. At present, with one Press Secretary serving both the CS and the FS, effective press and PR support for one principal official is often made possible at the expense of the other. The current situation is clearly undesirable.

5. The current arrangement requires redeployment of the already stretched resources of ISD to meet the service demands of the CS and the FS on an ad hoc basis when both principal officials need public relations support. The problem is more acute during, for example, the preparation of the annual Budget which straddles over a few months and involves extensive consultations with LegCo members, political parties, business, the media and other community

/groups

groups, and intensive co-ordination with the relevant bureau secretaries throughout the process. The mapping out of pre-Budget and post-Budget publicity strategies and plans, and the oversight of the implementation programmes to ensure the FS' effective response to public reaction to the Budget, require focused attention and full-time efforts of the Press Secretary. During this period, it has been necessary for ISD to make special makeshift arrangements to provide the CS with the necessary media and public relations advice. Such an arrangement is unsatisfactory. Against the staffing constraints of ISD, the department already encounters difficulties in fielding an additional experienced officer from time to time to provide the necessary advice to the CS or the FS as the case may be. Furthermore, the makeshift arrangement implies that different information officers may be re-deployed for the ad hoc services at different times. There is hence no consistency in terms of service quality and the seeing through of a comprehensive PR strategy or publicity programme. As an indication, the number of functions and events that the CS and the FS each attended in Hong Kong in 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 was around 150 each year. On top of that, there were duty trips outside Hong Kong during which the CS and the FS were required to attend many public functions including media interviews and conferences. With the continued commitment of the Government to strengthening communication with the community and the media, it is expected that the figures will remain at a high level.

6. To provide proper PR support for the two most senior principal officials of the Government, the Press Secretaries must be experienced and mature enough to handle a wide range of policy issues for the CS and the FS and in dealing with the media. The incumbents should also have comprehensive understanding and good grasp of Government policies promulgated by the different bureaux generally. To this end and as an integral part of a Press Secretary's duties, he is required to sit on the policy groups or committees of the CS and the FS and advise the principal officials of the possible media and public reaction to the proposed policies or initiatives, and help devise effective publicity programmes to promulgate and explain the new policies or initiatives. The Press Secretary will also be required to co-ordinate with the relevant bureau secretaries regularly to fine-tune the PR strategy and publicity programmes to ensure effective implementation of the strategy. In this regard, we consider it appropriate and necessary to pitch the Press Secretary post at the level of AOSGC (at D2 level).

7. The current Press Secretary to CS & FS is established at AOSGC level, and the core competencies called for include strategic foresight, comprehensive and meticulous planning ability, effective communication skills, sound judgment and political acumen, and analytical skills. It would be essential to require the same competencies and qualities of the Press Secretary proposed for the FS, should Members agree to provide two dedicated Press Secretaries, each for the CS and the FS.

8. It is relevant to note that there is no D1 rank in the Administrative Service or the Information Officer Grade. Similar to the existing Press Secretary establishment, the proposed Press Secretary for the FS will be working on his own; there will not be any officer or subordinate support to the post holder. With the establishment of a permanent post of AOSGC to serve as the Press Secretary to the FS, the existing post of Press Secretary to CS & FS will be re-designated as Press Secretary to the CS. The proposed job descriptions of the two posts are set out at Enclosures 1 and 2.

Encls. 1
& 2

9. The Director of Information Services will provide guidance and supervision to the Press Secretary to the FS in the same way as he now does to the Press Secretary to CS & FS.

10. The Director of Information Services has considered carefully alternative means including possible re-deployment of existing departmental posts to meet the increasing service requirement. As the other directorate officers of the department are fully engaged in their existing work schedules, they cannot be re-deployed permanently to take up the job. The current proposal is considered the most appropriate, bearing in mind the need to ensure efficiency and effectiveness. An organisation chart showing the distribution of business of these directorate posts, upon the proposed creation of post, is set out at Enclosure 3.

Encl. 3

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

11. The additional notional annual salary at mid-point of the post is \$1,443,000. The additional full annual average staff cost of the proposal, including salaries and staff on-cost, is \$2,415,000. We have included sufficient provision in the 2001-02 Estimates to meet the cost of this proposal.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

12. We consulted the Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs on 12 June 2001. Based on the information then available, the Panel did not support the proposal though Members had expressed diverse views. Supplementary information requested by Panel Members has been set out in the paragraphs above as appropriate. The remaining information regarding manpower support for the Secretary for Justice and the policy bureaux is set out at Enclosure 4.

Encl. 4

/CIVIL

CIVIL SERVICE BUREAU COMMENTS

13. The Administration considers this proposal the most appropriate way to proceed. Having regard to the justifications put forward, the Civil Service Bureau supports the creation of the proposed permanent directorate post and considers the grading and ranking of the post to be appropriate. As at 1 May 2001, there are 11 directorate posts out of a total of 504 posts in ISD.

ADVICE OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON DIRECTORATE SALARIES AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

14. The Standing Committee on Directorate Salaries and Conditions of Service has advised that the grading proposed for the post would be appropriate if the post were to be created.

Home Affairs Bureau
June 2001

**Proposed Job Description of the post of
Press Secretary to the Chief Secretary for Administration
(AOSGC)**

To assist the Director of Information Services in providing the following service to the Chief Secretary for Administration (CS) –

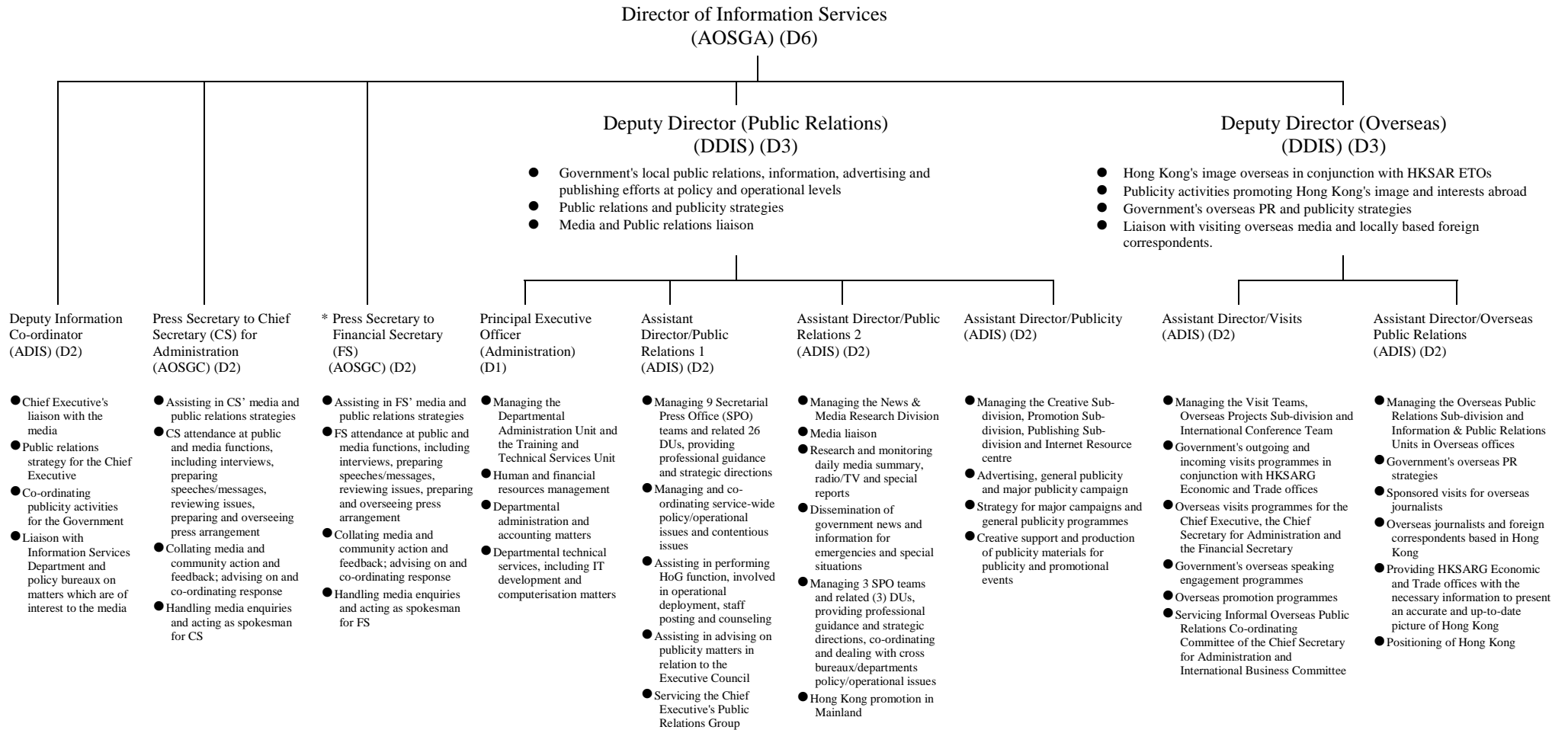
- (a) gauging and assessing media and community views and opinions on issues under CS' policy schedules, collating feedback and advising on responses;
- (b) advising and participating in implementation of media and public relations plans and strategies;
- (c) handling media enquiries relating to the CS, and acting as his spokesman;
- (d) preparing public speeches and messages for the CS , and reviewing issues which may have a bearing on the CS' media and public relations responses;
- (e) assessing media and public relations requests for the CS, and overseeing the press arrangements for the CS; and
- (f) liaising and advising bureaux on Government responses under the CS' policy schedules where appropriate.

**Proposed Job Description of the post of
Press Secretary to the Financial Secretary
(AOSGC)**

To assist the Director of Information Services in providing the following service to the Financial Secretary (FS) –

- (a) gauging and assessing media and community views and opinions on issues under the FS' policy schedules, collating feedback and advising on responses;
- (b) advising and participating in implementation of media and public relations plans and strategies for issues under the FS' policy schedules;
- (c) handling media enquiries relating to the FS, and acting as his spokesman;
- (d) preparing public speeches and messages for the FS, and reviewing issues which may have a bearing on the FS' media and public relations responses;
- (e) assessing media and public relations requests for the FS, and overseeing the press arrangements for the FS; and
- (f) liaising and advising bureaux on Government responses under the FS' policy schedules where appropriate.

**Distribution of Businesses of Information Services Department
After the Proposed Creation of Post**



* Proposed AOSGC(D2) post to be created.

Manpower support for the Secretary for Justice and Policy Bureaux

There are twelve Secretariat Press Office (SPO) teams set up to support Government bureaux. They are responsible for advising bureaux officials on public relations matters, assisting in formulation and implementation of public relations and publicity plans, handling media and public enquiries, preparing press releases, and organising press conferences and briefings and special promotional activities.

2. Each SPO team is headed by a Chief Information Officer (MPS 45-49), who will normally be supported by a PIO (MPS 40-44), an SIO (MPS 34-39) and/or an IO (MPS 28-33)/AIO (MPS 11-27), depending on service need and operational requirements.

3. Separately, a dedicated team headed by a CIO, supported by a PIO and an IO serves the Secretary for Justice and the Department of Justice. The CIO serves the Secretary for Justice in a similar way as the Press Secretary does to the CS and the FS. But as compared with the Press Secretary to the CS and the FS, the CIO is required to look after a smaller scope of policy areas which require a lesser extent of co-ordination. To ensure quality service and support to the Secretary for Justice and the Department, the CIO receives strategic direction and professional guidance from the ADIS(Public Relations) in ISD. The ranking of the post is based on the span of responsibilities and service need.

4. The twelve SPO teams and their complement are as follows –

- Security (1 CIO, 1 PIO, 1 SIO, 1 AIO)
- Constitutional Affairs (1 CIO, 1 SIO, 1 IO)
- Home Affairs (1 CIO, 1 SIO, 1 IO)
- Civil Service (1 CIO, 1 PIO, 1 IO)
- Commerce and Industry & Economic Services (1 CIO, 1 PIO, 1 SIO, 1 IO)
- Education and Manpower (1 CIO, 1 PIO, 1IO)
- Finance (1 CIO, 2 PIO, 1 SIO, 1 IO)
- Environment and Food (1 CIO, 1 PIO, 1 SIO, 1 IO)
- Health and Welfare & Information Technology and Broadcasting (1 CIO, 1 PIO, 2 SIO, 1 IO)
- Works (1 CIO, 1 PIO, 1 SIO, 1IO)
- Planning and Lands (1 CIO, 1 PIO, 1 SIO, 1 IO)
- Housing and Transport (1 CIO, 1 PIO, 1 SIO, 1 IO)