

For discussion
on 24.4.2001

**Panel on Administration of Justice and Legal Services of
The Legislative Council**

**Proposed Retention of One Supernumerary Post
of Assistant Principal Legal Aid Counsel
in the Legal Aid Department
from 1 July 2001 to 10 September 2002**

PURPOSE

This paper seeks Members' support to the proposed retention of a supernumerary post of Assistant Principal Legal Aid Counsel (APLAC) (at DL1 on the legal directorate scale) to act as Project Director (PD) to implement the Information System Strategy (ISS) in the Legal Aid Department (LAD). In the light of the change in the implementation schedule of the ISS in LAD, the supernumerary APLAC post which was approved by the Finance Committee (FC) at its meeting on 18 February 2000 [FCR (1999-2000) 63] has not yet been filled. The approved period of the post needs to be revised in order to tie in with the revised ISS core implementation period.

PROPOSAL

2. DLA, with the support of the Director of Administration, proposes to retain the existing supernumerary APLAC post for the period from 1 July 2001 to 10 September 2002 to continue to oversee the implementation of the ISS.

BACKGROUND

3. At its meeting held on 18 February 2000, FC approved the creation of a supernumerary APLAC post for a period of 15 months from 1 April 2000 to 30 June 2001 to oversee the implementation of the ISS. Incumbent of the post would assume the role of Project Director (PD). As mentioned in the ESC submission, this was the core period during which the post of PD would be required.

4. Unfortunately, in the open tendering exercise for acquisition of the ISS system conducted in early 2000, the only conforming tender proposal received was not acceptable to the Government. Subsequent negotiation with the tenderer also failed to achieve a desirable result. In the circumstances, Government has no alternative but to cancel the tender.

5. The ISS project consists of the implementation of the personnel management system, the assets management system, infrastructure system and the case management and case accounting system. A brief description of the ISS system is at Enclosure 1. In the light of the unsuccessful tendering exercise, LAD had reviewed the manner and schedule of implementation of the ISS project. Instead of repeating the same exercise for the whole project, LAD, in consultation with Information Technology Services Department (ITSD), decided to (a) re-tender only the development work of the case management and case accounting system (CM&CAS) which is the major part of the ISS system; and (b) engage contractors under the existing Government Bulk Purchase Contract to construct the remaining systems, including the personnel management system, assets management system and supporting infrastructure.

6. In view of the revised schedule of implementation of the ISS project, DLA has reviewed the extent of involvement of a full-time PD in implementing personnel management system, assets management system and the supporting infrastructure. DLA noted that as opposed to the CM&CAS, both the personnel management system and assets management system are relatively small in scale and involve only a small number of staff in operation. Moreover, the development of the supporting infrastructure involves mainly technical work. LAD has the assistance rendered by ITSD in the said systems. DLA considered that a significant part of the work of the APLAC would be to oversee the implementation of the CM&CAS since as the PD, he would be in charge of the coordination with different Divisions/Sections/Units to consult them on the system requirements; and liaison with the contractors to ensure the system to be installed complies with those specific requirements. The PD would also, inter alia, be responsible for the liaison with other departments on information interexchange. In the circumstances, DLA decided to withhold the filling of the supernumerary APLAC post until a suitable contractor is engaged for the development of CM&CAS under the new contract.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

7. A new tender for the CM&CAS part of the project was called in October 2000 and closed in December 2000. Progress on technical assessment and price evaluation has been satisfactory and it is expected that the contract can be awarded in June 2001.

JUSTIFICATION

8. After awarding the new contract, the implementation of the CM&CAS part will require very substantial contribution from LAD, as it supports major workflow of the Department relating to the provision of legal aid services to the public. Apart from computerizing the business processes including applications processing, case assignment, case monitoring (in-house and assigned-out), case accounting and payments to the legally aided persons and assigned lawyers, the ISS system will provide vital information and statistics in formulating management decisions. It will have critical impact on the future operation of LAD.

9. The time required for the development of the CM&CAS part remains as originally planned at 15 months. Having regard to its scale, and number of staff involved, the requirement to appoint a dedicated officer with sufficient standing and knowledge of the operation of the LAD to closely supervise and monitor the project remains unchanged. DLA therefore considers it necessary to fill the supernumerary APLAC post so that the PD can devote himself fully to the job during the core implementation period of the project. The main justifications for the PD post was detailed in the last submission to the ESC, extracts at Enclosure 2.

10. Since the existing supernumerary APLAC post is due to lapse on 1 July 2001, DLA proposes to retain the post until 10 September 2002 so as to tie in with the revised core implementation period. The period for which the post will be filled will remain at 15 months as a major part of the work for APLAC is yet to be accomplished. DLA confirms that the duties and level of responsibilities of the PD post should remain the same. The job description is at Enclosure 3. He will be responsible to the Deputy Director of Legal Aid (Policy and Administration) (DL3) who heads the Administration Division. The proposed organisation chart of the Administration Division of the LAD following the creation of the APLAC post is at Enclosure 4.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

11. The additional notional annual salary of the proposal at MID-POINT is \$1,213,200. The additional full annual average staff cost of the proposal, including salaries and staff on-cost, is \$2,117,000. We have included sufficient provision in the 2001-02 Estimates to meet the cost of this proposal. This proposal has no direct consequence on the non-directorate establishment of LAD.

ADVICE SOUGHT

12. Members are requested to support the proposal. The proposed APLAC post will be created through the Establishment Sub-committee in the normal way.

Legal Aid Department
April 2001

Brief Description of the ISS System Legal Aid Department

The ISS System of the Legal aid Department will comprise the following parts -

(a) **Case Management System & Case Accounting System**

The case management system will support all business activities involved in legal aid cases covering application processing, means assessment, allocation of cases in-house, assignment of cases to lawyers in private practice, monitoring of case progress and case costing for both assigned-out cases and litigation conducted in-house. It will capture almost all information of legal aid cases.

The case accounting system will capture all accounting information and will support the accounting function of legal aid cases including payment, collection of money, finalisation of accounts etc.

(b) **Personnel Management System**

The personnel management system will maintain the personal particulars, posting history, training and performance records of staff.

(c) **Assets Management System**

The assets management system will maintain a comprehensive record of all equipment and maintenance contracts of the Department.

(d) **Infrastructure Applications**

Six hundred users of the Department will be provided with a networked environment to facilitate access to corporate applications, e-mail facilities and Internet and common office automation facilities. Disaster recovery facilities will also be installed.

The main justifications for creation of the PD post

- (a) The PD will co-ordinate departmental efforts to ensure that the new system will meet the overall system and function requirements of the various units of the Department. He should be a legal professional who is familiar with the operation and information needs of the Department;
- (b) In the course of implementation of the project, the PD will consolidate the specific system requirements, including defining screens, data elements and business rules. This will require co-operation of all units, sections and divisions and will involve extensive consultation with staff at all ranks, including Division Heads and Section Heads at directorate levels. The ranking of the post holder must be sufficiently senior to ensure the co-ordination is smoothly and effectively done;
- (c) Business process re-engineering will be necessary in implementing the ISS in order to exploit maximum advantage of the integrated system to be installed. The PD must have appropriate authority to work closely with the contractors to examine, recommend or decide areas of improvement and to resolve any problems and conflicts which may arise from the changes;
- (d) The PD will also be the Department's representative in liaising with suppliers/contractors and other government departments. He will meet the suppliers/contractors regularly and will be delegated appropriate authorities to make prompt and sound decision on behalf of the Department so as to avoid delays in implementing the system; and
- (e) The PD will plan and monitor progress of the ISS, deploy resources at different stages of the development, and monitor the expenditure for the project. He will also be required to develop departmental policies on data administration and right of access to information in the system.

**Job Description of Project Director
(APLAC) (DL1)
Legal Aid Department**

Responsible to Deputy Director of Legal Aid (Policy and Administration) for overseeing the implementation of Information Systems Strategy (ISS). The major duties and responsibilities include -

- (a) To lead an ISS Team in planning, monitoring and co-ordinating the implementation of the ISS in the Department and to control its expenditure amounting to \$44 million;
- (b) To co-ordinate with Divisions/Sections/Units and to consult their Heads on the specific information and function requirements of the new system including data capture, screen display, reports to be generated and business rules to be set up;
- (c) To identify and manage business process re-engineering actions arising from the ISS implementation including examining possible areas of improvement in workflow, co-ordinating the changes and resolving problems and conflicts arising from such implementation;
- (d) To work closely with the contractors to map out the framework for development, testing and installation of the new system and to supervise their performance;
- (e) To liaise with other government departments on information interchange with their systems including negotiation of inter-departmental agreements for data inter-change;
- (f) To develop departmental policies on data administration (i.e. the standards and controls of data capture, storage, security, retrieval, retention and destruction) and access rights to data.

Proposed Organisation Chart of the Administration Division, Legal Aid Department

