

**Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs**

**Creation of an Administrative Officer Staff Grade C  
post in the Information Services Department**

**PURPOSE**

This paper briefs Members on the Administration's proposal to create an additional Administrative Officer Staff Grade C (AOSGC) (D2) post in the Information Services Department to serve as the Press Secretary to the Financial Secretary.

**BACKGROUND**

2. 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 from the media and public relations fronts, locally as well as overseas. We need to provide adequate media and public relations support to the CS and the FS.

**PROPOSAL**

3. We propose the creation of an additional post of AOSGC (D2) in the Information Services Department to serve as the Press Secretary to the Financial Secretary.

**JUSTIFICATION**

4. The media play an important role in the free flow of information in Hong Kong. They watch over the formulation and implementation of government policies, and reflect public views to the Administration. Since there is a growing expectation from the media and the community for a more open and transparent government, senior government officials have been devoting more time to media and public relations to explain government policy and answer media enquiries. The rapid development of print and electronic media, coupled with technological breakthroughs such as publication of news analysis reports on the internet and cable/satellite television, have also accentuated the demand. To meet such growing demands for

information on government policies/decisions, we need to reinforce the media and public relations support for the CS and the FS. The quality of support that is required to match the importance and increasing complexity of issues under the CS' and the FS' policy schedules is such that each will require the dedicated service of a press secretary.

5. The CS and the FS look after different sets of policy portfolio. The major function of the press secretary includes assisting the CS and the FS to map out proactive PR strategies to facilitate clear and effective presentation of the Administration's position on various policies and issues of interest to the media, both locally and internationally. The press secretary has to attend policy group meetings and senior official meetings under CS' and FS' respective portfolio to contribute to and advise on the public relations dimension for individual policy initiatives. The press secretary is required to keep in view upcoming contentious issues and to help co-ordinate consistent lines-to-take among bureaux and departments. To help keep the CS and FS abreast of public sentiments and media focuses on topical issues, the press secretary monitors and analyses media reactions on a daily basis.

6. The press secretary has to accompany the CS and the FS to public programmes and functions, locally and overseas; co-ordinate points-to-make for deployment; oversee press arrangements; monitor press response to fast moving issues; and assess the impact of press reports. To provide quality support, the CS and FS need officers able to dedicate full-time attention and efforts, particularly for major public events or in times of unexpected major crisis. With the CS' and the FS' commitment to strengthening communication with the community and the media, one press secretary is simply no longer sufficient to serve both the CS and the FS effectively and satisfactorily at the same time. As an indication of the magnitude of the problem, the number of functions and events, including media sessions and interviews, that the CS attended in 2000-01 amounts to some 230, including 80 during overseas duty visits. The figure in respect of the FS is around 225, also including about 80 overseas. As a result, there have been events which clash in terms of timing resulting in competing demands for the press secretary's attention on planning and deployment of resources.

7. We propose that the CS and the FS should each be provided with separate, dedicated press secretary support to improve the provision and co-ordination of information to the media and thus facilitate the public's understanding of government policies. Given the level of responsibility, we propose to create a permanent post of AOSGC to serve as the Press Secretary to FS. The existing post of Press Secretary to CS & FS will be re-designated as Press Secretary to CS.

8. The Director of Information Services will provide guidance and supervision to the Press Secretary to FS in the same way as he now does to the Press Secretary to CS & FS. The revised job description of the re-designated post of Press Secretary to CS and the proposed job description of the new post of Press Secretary to FS are at Enclosures 1 and 2.

9. 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.

### **WAY FORWARD**

10. The proposal will be submitted to the Establishment Subcommittee at its Meeting to be held on 20 June 2001 for recommendation to the Finance Committee for approval. We welcome the views and comments of Members on the proposal.

Home Affairs Bureau  
June 2001

**Revised Job Description of the re-designated 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:-

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

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