

Legislative Council Panel on Housing

**Proposal for Retention of
Two Supernumerary Multi-disciplinary
Chief Architect Posts
in the Housing Department**

PURPOSE

The Housing Department will seek the Establishment Subcommittee (ESC)'s endorsement of the proposal to retain two supernumerary multi-disciplinary Chief Architect posts¹ for two years at its meeting of 21 February 2001. This paper briefs Members on the justification of the proposal and seeks Members' support of the proposal.

BACKGROUND

2. On 27 December 2000, an information paper (Paper No. CB(1) 372/00-01) proposing the creation/retention of the three supernumerary directorate posts in the Housing Department, as follows, were circulated to Members -

- (a) the creation of a supernumerary Assistant Director of Housing (AD of H) (D2) post for a period of 18 months to oversee and coordinate the implementation of quality housing initiatives and to launch the various management reforms; and
- (b) the retention of two supernumerary multi-disciplinary Chief Architect (CA) (D1) posts for two years to cope with the existing heavy workload and enhanced project management work.

3. At the ESC meeting on 17 January 2001, ESC Members supported the creation of the supernumerary AD of H post but requested the Department to consult the Housing Panel on the proposed retention of the two supernumerary multi-disciplinary CA posts before re-submission to the ESC.

¹ Open to all building disciplines

JUSTIFICATIONS GIVEN IN THE INFORMATION PAPER AND EC(2000-01)29

4. In March 1998, the Finance Committee, vide EC(97-98)76, approved the creation of three multi-disciplinary CA posts in the Development & Construction Branch (D&CB), departmentally known as Project Managers (PMs), to cope with increasing housing production, support the implementation of the streamlined housing development process², and achieve a clearer demarcation of project management and works functions. Of these three posts, one of them is a permanent post and the remaining two are supernumerary posts for three years due to expire in March 2001.

5. The Department has recently conducted a review on the continued need of these two supernumerary posts and concluded that it is necessary to retain them for a further period of two years for the following reasons -

- (a) currently, there are four PMs³ handling 182 projects comprising 294 000 flats⁴. Although the production level will be moderated in the coming two years (137 projects or 220 000 flats in 2001/02 and 117 projects or 207 000 flats in 2002/03), the workload will still be very heavy⁵;

² The production lead-time for standard domestic blocks was reduced from 62 months to 47 months. This could be achieved by carrying out feasibility study, planning and preparation of conceptual layout in parallel and by intensifying all activities at the early stage of a project.

³ Since March 1999, the post of CA/5 which was originally responsible for consultant management work was retitled as PM/4. From that time, all the four PMs are responsible for both project and consultant management work. Each PM is responsible for project management function on a geographical basis. PM/1 is mainly responsible for Tsuen Wan, Kwai Tsing, Lai Chi Kok, Hong Kong & Islands and part of Tung Chung. PM/2 is responsible for North District, Sha Tin, Tseung Kwan O, Lei Yue Mun, Yau Tong and South East Kowloon. PM/3 is responsible for Kowloon except South East Kowloon and PM/4 is responsible for Tin Shui Wai, Yuen Long, Tuen Mun and part of Tung Chung.

⁴ These include flats under all stages such as planning, design, tender, and construction.

⁵ According to a research conducted by the consultant of the Department, a Project Manager of equivalent rank with the private developer may have five or less projects

- (b) the implementation of the 50 quality housing initiatives requires continuous strong input from PMs. They have to spend more time and effort to ensure that the detailed designs and construction works are prepared/executed according to statutory requirements as well as requirements of the Housing Authority (HA);
- (c) the recent consultancy study on the Review of the Production Process of the HA Development recommends that the present system of project management should be enhanced. The application of a full project management system is being studied in greater detail by the consultant, on a basis similar to that used for external consultants. It is anticipated that this would result in new responsibilities for the PMs.

The need for the two supernumerary posts will be critically reviewed again towards the end of the period, taking into account the prevailing and projected workload at that time as well as any other structural and organizational changes of the Project Management Section. The job descriptions for the two posts and the organization chart of the D&CB are at Enclosures 1 and 2 respectively.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

6. At the meeting on 17 January 2001, ESC Members noted the gradual decrease in housing production in the coming two years and sought further clarification on the need for the two supernumerary multi-disciplinary CA posts. Members may wish to note that the level of housing production is only one of the workload indicators. The actual workload of the PMs can more reliably be measured by the complexity and scope of project management. In the past year, the Department has implemented a great number of new strategies and initiatives to meet the rising public expectation for better quality public housing. These measures have increased considerably the workload of PMs, which are elaborated in the following paragraphs.

each depending on the project size. Although the scope of services provided by PMs in the private sector and the Department is not entirely identical and it is difficult to make an accurate comparison, the figure, at least, could show that the PMs of the Department are handling more projects than PMs in the private sector.

Adoption of Site Specific Design Approach

7. For many years, the housing production of the HA has been based on a high degree of standardization and mass production. As Hong Kong moves into a new era and public expectation on the built environment rise to new dimension, HA needs to take a proactive stance to adopt a site-specific and value driven delivery strategy to optimize site potential, enhance identity, improve diversity and lessen the impact of territory-wide standardization. In July 2000, the Building Committee (BC) of HA agreed to proceed with four pilot projects based on the site specific design approach. It is expected that the gradual migration from standard-block design to site-specific design⁶ will be the future direction of public housing production. Under this approach, the PMs are required to tailor-make client project brief to fulfil the specific requirements of individual sites and to take conscious design decision on each individual project in order to produce the best possible design for each site. Moreover, programme and budgets would also be considered on a site-specific basis. All these departures from past established practice in respect of standard blocks would create extra workload for PMs.

Implementation of the Quality Housing Initiatives

8. In April 2000, the HA endorsed the implementation of 50 quality housing initiatives with a view to uplifting its building quality. Although a supernumerary AD of H post has been created for formulating policies, coordinating the views of stakeholders and drawing up implementation plan for these initiatives, the actual implementation of these initiatives require the input and effort of officers in various ranks and functional posts. In particular, some require the input of the PMs-

a. New Sets of Procurement Strategies

In August 2000, the BC revisited the current procurement strategies and introduced four new strategies, namely design and build contract, enhanced two-envelope system, direct appointment of consultants, and open competition. The former three strategies require PM's greater involvement. For the design and build mode of procurement, PMs

⁶ The site specific design approach would provide the flexibility for the adoption of either standard blocks or non-standard design or any combination thereof to address the specific site conditions.

need to articulate a clear, detailed and precise design brief at an earlier stage in the construction process. Tender assessment will be more complicated and difficult than the conventional procurement method. For the enhanced two-envelope system, PMs are required to sit on two assessment panels⁷ and would have a significant involvement and influence in the selection of consultants. For the direct appointment of consultant, sub-consultants of other professional disciplines will no longer be under the direct management of the lead consultant⁸. PMs are therefore required to manage more consultants and to align the roles amongst disciplines in order to ensure effective functioning of the direct appointment system.

b. Enhancement of Project Partnering

To reinforce the partnering spirit with contractors and consultants during project implementation, new project partnering arrangement⁹ has been tried out in eight pilot projects since November 1999. Initial feedback from the pilot projects are very positive. In August 2000, the BC endorsed to roll out the project partnering arrangement to other selected projects. Under this new arrangement, PMs are required to participate actively in these meetings/workshops and assist in driving and nurturing the success of the partnering relation.

c. Quality Control

PMs are required to put additional effort in monitoring the quality of the housing flats through programmed visits to construction sites during

⁷ These are Pre-qualification Assessment Panel for pre-qualification of Architectural, Engineering and Building Services Engineering Consultants, and Design Assessment Panel for assessment of design proposals of Architectural Consultants.

⁸ Under the current architect-led appointment system, the lead consultant will line up with sub-consultants such as structural engineers and building services engineers to deliver professional services. However, in some cases, it would be desirable to have the flexibility to directly appoint individual consultants of different disciplines.

⁹ Project teams hold partnering meetings with all project consultants and contractors at contract commencement stage so that the project communication and implementation approach can be mapped out and agreed beforehand. Monthly progress meetings are held to facilitate the resolution of works-related problems and post completion workshop will be conducted to appraise the overall implementation process and identify areas for improvement.

construction stage. They need to interview the contractors/consultants as and when required. For those problematic sites, they will draw the attention of the senior management and render advice on rectification work. To strengthen the support to PMs in this aspect, four Chief Technical Officers (Building Works) have been redeployed to assist PMs in the programmed visits with effect from March 1999.

9. In fact, the implementation of various quality initiatives has increased the workload of project staff on all fronts. From mid to end 2000, a total of 176 temporary non-directorate posts¹⁰ have been created for two years for handling new works projects even though the production level is decreasing gradually. Having said that, the Department has been successful in obtaining savings from other area of work, and have achieved a continuous negative growth in its establishment in the past three years, from 15,117 posts in 1997/98 to 14,729 posts in 1999/2000. It is expected that its establishment will be further decreased to 14,213 by the end of 2000/01 (-6%).

DISCUSSION

10. The paper is presented for Members' discussion at the meeting on 5 February 2001.

Housing Department
January 2001

C:\DATA\AS2-PANEL\CREATE-POSTS-E.DOC

¹⁰ These comprise 154 site supervisory posts and 22 professional posts.

Job Description
Project Manager 1 and 2

Rank: Chief Architect (D1) (open to building disciplines)

Major Duties and Responsibilities

Responsible to Project Director (Assistant Director of Housing)(D2) for the following –

1. To monitor the programme and budget of public housing projects assigned through all stages of the development process, prepare project status report and assist respective Project Director in the overall monitoring of the public housing production and financial management.
2. To assist the Client to establish the Client's requirements and development parameters on sites included on the Control List for public housing development.
3. To co-ordinate the preparation of feasibility studies of the identified housing sites.
4. To oversee the preparation of development proposals by Design Team Leaders, including conceptual layout plans and associated project estimates for public housing projects.
5. To coordinate with the concerned departments on the implementation programme of public housing project (i.e. rezoning, clearance, resumption, infrastructure provision, site formation and cost), ensure their progress of works in accordance with the agreed programme, and resolve any inter-departmental conflicts at the district level.
6. To ensure the scheme and detailed designs prepared by the Design Team Leaders are in compliance with the Client's requirements, development parameters and financial requirements.
7. To ensure the works executed on site under the supervision of the Contract Manager are in compliance with the Client's requirements, development parameters and financial requirements.

8. To monitor the progress and expenditure of various types of contracts for housing development and in case of deviation liaise with the Design Team Leaders and Contract Managers on ways to take corrective actions.
9. To represent the Housing Authority in dealing with the Ombudsman, LegCo, District Council, utility companies, other government departments, local related/inter-departmental committees and clients on issues related to business of the Section.
10. To supervise the staff of the Section, monitor and coordinate the work and staff with a view to maintaining consistent professional standards.
11. To plan and manage resources, report on staff performance and ability, and to handle various human resources management functions within the Section.
12. To identify and recommend the need for outsourcing in order to provide necessary resources and expertise to meet Clients' requirements and the housing programme.
13. To assist in the selection and appointment of consultants and to manage them including their performance.

Organization Chart of Development & Construction Branch

Deputy Director/Works

Business Director/Development

Assistant
Director
/Quality
Management
Review@

Project
Director
/West

Project
Director
/East

Project
Director
/Central

Assistant
Director
/Development

Senior Manager
/Quality Task Force (1)
Senior Manager
/Quality Task Force (2)
Senior Manager
/Quality Task Force (3)
Senior Manager
/Quality Task Force (4)
Senior Manager
/Quality Task Force (5)
Senior Manager
/Quality Task Force (6)

Project Manager /1 * Project Manager /4 Chief Architect /1 Chief Structural Engineer /2	Project Manager /2 * Chief Architect /2 Chief Planning Officer Chief Building Services Engineer /1 Chief Civil Engineer	Project Manager /3 Chief Architect /3 Chief Structural Engineer /1 Chief Geotechnical Engineer Chief Quantity Surveyor /Projects	Chief Architect /Design & Standards Chief Architect /Vetting Chief Structural Engineer /3 Chief Building Services Engineer /2 Chief Quantity Surveyor/Construction Services
--	---	--	---

* Supernumerary posts proposed for a further retention of 2 years

@ Supernumerary post endorsed for creation of 18 months