

立法會
Legislative Council

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LegCo Panels on Home Affairs and Public Service

**Minutes of joint meeting
held on Tuesday, 8 May 2001 at 2:30 pm
(immediately after the meeting of the Panel on Home Affairs)
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building**

Members Present : Members of the LegCo Panel on Home Affairs

Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo(Chairman)
Hon CHOY So-yuk (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Hon James TO Kun-sun
* Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Dr Hon TANG Siu-tong, JP
Hon Henry WU King-cheong, BBS
* Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon WONG Sing-chi
Hon IP Kwok-him, JP

Members of the LegCo Panel on Public Service

Hon LI Fung-ying, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon HUI Cheung-ching
Hon Howard YOUNG, JP

(* Also members of the LegCo Panel on Public Service)

Members Absent : Members of the LegCo Panel on Home Affairs

Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Hon LAU Wong-fat, GBS, JP

Hon Timothy FOK Tsun-ting, SBS, JP
Members of the LegCo Panel on Public Service

Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP (Chairman)
Hon CHAN Kwok-keung
Hon Michael MAK Kwok-fung
Hon LEUNG Fu-wah, MH, JP

Member Attending : Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung

Public Officers Attending : Mr Eddy YAU
Principal Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs
(Recreation and Sport)

Mr Duncan PESCOD
Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service

Ms Lolly CHIU
Deputy Director of Leisure and Cultural Services
(Administration)

Mr Issac CHOW
Deputy Director of Leisure and Cultural Services
(Leisure Services)

Mr Edward LAW
Assistant Director of Leisure and Cultural Services
(Administration and Planning)

Mr Johnny WOO
Assistant Director of Leisure and Cultural Services
(Leisure Services)

Attendance by Invitation : Government Recreation and Sport Service Staff Union

Mr William NG
President

Mr Francis WONG
Vice President

Ms Sylvia TANG
Chief Treasurer

Mr Leo WONG
Deputy Secretary

Mr Gene FUNG
Publication

Amenities Officers Association

Mr George NGAN
Chairman

Mr H K YUEN
Secretary

Union of Government Amenities Assistants

Mr CHUNG Shui-pang
Chairman

Mr KONG Wai-nam
Vice Chairman

Mr WONG Tsz-wei
DCC Member

Hong Kong Civil Servants General Union

Mr CHEUNG Kwok-bui, Felix
Chairman

Mr YAU Yan-hung
Vice-Chairman

Mr MAK Chi-chai
Secretary General

Mr HO Hung-kit
Vice-Chairman

Mr MOK King-po
Treasurer

Mr SHUM Man-lai
Vice-Treasurer

**Clerk in
Attendance**

: Miss Flora TAI
Chief Assistant Secretary (2)2

Staff in Attendance : Mr Stanley MA
Senior Assistant Secretary (2)6

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I. Election of Chairman

Since Mr TAM Yiu-chung, Chairman of the Panel on Public Service was absent due to other commitments and Mr Andrew CHENG, Chairman of the Panel on Home Affairs could only join the meeting later, Miss CHOY So-yuk was elected Chairman of the joint meeting by members attending the meeting.

II. Proposed merger of the Amenities Officer (AO) and Recreation and Sport Officer (RSO) Grades

Meeting with deputations

2. At the invitation of the Chairman of the meeting, representatives of the four deputations attending the meeting presented their views, the salient points of which were summarised in paragraphs 3 to 6 below.

Government Recreation and Sport Service Staff Union (GRSSSU)
[Paper Nos. CB(2)1360/00-01(01) and CB(2)1492/00-01(02)]

3. Mr William NG, President of GRSSSU briefed members on the salient points of the GRSSSU's paper tabled at the meeting [Paper No. CB(2)1492/00-01(02)]. He stressed that GRSSSU objected to the Administration's proposal and called upon Members of the Legislative Council (LegCo) to vote against it. He pointed out that as the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) was still conducting an overall review on the provision of recreational and sports services, it was not an opportune time to merge the two grades. Therefore, the submission of the merger proposal by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) to LegCo at this stage was not appropriate. In fact, the two grades operated in separate responsibility areas requiring different expertise and skills. The merger would lower the overall professional standards of the two grades, thereby affecting the quality of their services. Although the Administration would provide crash training courses lasting for five to eight and a half days to the staff concerned, it would still be difficult for staff members, upon completion of such short-term courses, to deliver quality recreational and sports services to the public under the new scope of responsibilities after the merger. As far as enhancing service quality was concerned, the Administration should first launch a pilot scheme of the one-stop service mode of operation instead of proposing the merger of the two grades in haste. Mr NG criticised the Administration for a complete lack of sincerity throughout the whole consultation process as it had

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neither responded positively to the concerns raised by the staff nor explained the details of the logistical arrangements and administrative support for implementing the new mode of operation.

Amenities Officers Association (AOA)

[Paper No. CB(2)1425/00-01(01)]

4. Mr George NGAN, Chairman of AOA said that after thorough discussion, AOA members was open-minded about the proposed merger of the two grades and did not object to the latest proposal put forward by the Administration. Expressing AOA's support for the delivery of one-stop service to the public, he firmly believed that its members had adequate expertise and ability for planning and developing recreational and sports services of the new grade after the merger. While the entry qualification for Amenities Officer (AO) was pitched at matriculation level, more than 75% of the serving AOs had acquired professional diplomas and among them, about 20% had obtained relevant bachelor degrees or master degrees. He added that since the Administration had discussed the merger proposal with AOA for almost 18 months, it hoped that the proposal could be implemented as soon as possible so as to avoid affecting the morale of AOA members, spoiling the harmonious relationship between AOA and GRSSSU, and compromising the overall quality of leisure and recreational services. He stressed that the AO grade would not benefit from the implementation of the merger proposal. Should the proposal be voted down by LegCo, AOA members would be prepared to accept the current structure and responsibilities of the grade.

Union of Government Amenities Assistants (UGAA)

[Paper No. CB(2)1467/00-01(01)]

5. Mr CHUNG Shui-pang, Chairman of UGAA said that while UGAA had no strong view on the proposed merger of the two grades, its members were generally concerned about the possible impact of the merger on their current responsibilities. He urged the Administration to widely consult UGAA members on the proposed merger and explain in detail the impact of the proposal on the work of Amenities Assistants. He considered the explanation and information provided by LCS D at the briefing on 27 March 2000 incomprehensive. Therefore, the Administration should strengthen its communication with staff members so that the two parties could reach a consensus as soon as possible.

Hong Kong Civil Servants General Union (the General Union)

6. Mr Felix CHEUNG, Chairman of the General Union considered that more in-depth discussions should be held among the Administration, LCS D and the two staff unions on the proposed merger with a view to working out a proposal which was mutually acceptable. He stressed that the General Union objected to the Administration's submission of the proposal to merge the two grades to LegCo before reaching a consensus with their staff. He suggested that the

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Administration should further consult relevant staff unions on the following issues -

- (a) The Government should not downgrade the professional requirements of the two grades on the ground of streamlining structure and enhancing efficiency. He considered that the policy direction of replacing professional grades by general grades was incorrect;
- (b) The entry qualification for the new Leisure Services Manager (LSM) Grade should be raised for the purpose of enhancing the overall quality of service;
- (c) LCSD should provide its staff with adequate professional training so as to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills for discharging new responsibilities and meeting operational requirements after the merger, so as to avoid unsatisfactory performance due to incompetence which would ultimately lead to no annual increase in salary or involuntary early retirement;
- (d) The pay scales of Assistant Leisure Services Manager (ALSM) I and ALSM II should be pitched at Master Pay Scale (MPS) 27 to 33 and 11 to 26 respectively so as to reflect the actual responsibilities of the new grade;
- (e) A feasible option acceptable to staff members should be made available to those staff who failed to adapt to the new working environment after the merger;
- (f) Reasonable arrangements such as voluntary retirement should be worked out for those staff who opted not to join the new grade;
- (g) LCSD should guarantee that the posts to be created under the merger proposal would not be deleted subsequently; and
- (h) The method of appraising the performance of the staff of the new grade after the merger should be specified.

Discussion

7. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan enquired about the differences in the major duties and responsibilities between the AO and RSO grades.

8. Mr George NGAN, Chairman of AOA responded that the AO grade had been established since 1970's and had been responsible for and involved in the development and planning of recreational services and activities. After the realignment of the work of the department concerned in 1985, the AO and RSO grades started to operate in different professional areas in the delivery of

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recreational and sports services. The former was mainly responsible for planning and developing recreational and amenities projects including the management of recreational venues and facilities whereas the latter was mainly responsible for promoting and organising recreational activities and public sports programmes. However, some AOs were also responsible for planning and implementation work similar to those undertaken by RSOs. For example, there were RSOs responsible for managing holiday camps in the New Territories whereas there were also AOs responsible for managing holiday camps in urban areas. Furthermore, many recreational projects such as the “Hong Kong Flower Show” and the “Green Hong Kong Campaign” involved management of recreational facilities and planning of recreational activities. The AOs who were responsible for these projects had actually taken up the responsibilities of RSOs. Mr NGAN further pointed out that the demarcation of responsibilities in the area of recreation between the two grades lagged behind the times and the delivery of one-stop services which could provide better services to the public had become the trend. Therefore, AOA supported the proposal of delivering one-stop services to the public as long as it had no impact on the remuneration and promotion prospects of its members.

9. Mr William NG, President of GRSSSU said that although part of the duties of the two grades were very similar (e.g. the management of water sports centres and holiday camps), the overall demarcation of professional responsibilities between the two grades had been affirmed in 1985. Therefore, it was inappropriate to merge the two grades at present.

10. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan enquired when LCSD had started to hold meetings with the staff unions concerned to consult their members on the proposed merger.

11. Mr George NGAN, Chairman of AOA said that since 1985, the Administration had been liaising and exchanging views with the two staff unions on the merger of the two grades. Based on the recommendations set out in the consultancy report released in March 1997, the Administration had put forward the first merger proposal in November 1999 for the consideration of the two staff unions which, however, found it unacceptable. The Administration continued negotiating with the two staff unions on the merger proposal. On 23 March 2001, the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services issued a letter to all staff of the two grades advising them of LCSD’s decision to submit the merger proposal to the Finance Committee of the LegCo for consideration. LCSD had subsequently conducted four staff briefing sessions to explain the proposed merger package and departure arrangements. Mr NGAN stressed that while AOA did not object to the Administration’s latest proposal in principle, it strongly urged the Administration to make a decision on the merger as soon as possible so that staff could accommodate themselves with the new job requirements at the earliest opportunity. He pointed out that the Administration had conducted ample consultation on the merger proposal and excessive consultation would only mean nuisance to the staff concerned.

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12. Mr William NG, President of GRSSSU said that the Administration had indeed discussed the merger proposal with GRSSSU during the past 16 months. However, the Administration had not been able to put forward an acceptable option which could address the expressed concerns of GRSSSU.

13. Mr Andrew WONG said that the proposal to merge the two civil service grades involved among other things the dignity of individual grades and consideration of subsequent benefits. A case in point was the proposal of merging the Executive Officer and Liaison Officer grades which had not been accepted by the former. He hoped that the staff unions concerned could consider the Administration's proposal rationally from the perspective of the civil service as a whole instead of from the perspective of the interests of individual grades. In this connection, he invited views from representatives of the General Union.

14. Mr Felix CHEUNG, Chairman of the General Union responded that GRSSSU was an affiliated member of the General Union. The General Union had all along objected to the policy direction of converting professional duties to non-professional ones. It considered that such policy would only bring about additional workload to non-professional staff so as to reduce staffing costs. Citing the difference in job nature between Western and Chinese medical practitioners, and between workers in the masonry trade as examples, he said that the work of different professions should not be merged indiscriminately. He stressed that the General Union's objection to the merger proposal was concluded after a rational consideration as to whether the proposed merger would in practice achieve the intended result. Since neither the entry qualification for the new grade nor the maximum pay for the corresponding ranks were raised under the merger proposal, he queried the Administration's intention as to improving the quality of recreational and sports services through the merger.

Meeting with the Administration

[Paper Nos. CB(2)1447/00-01(01) and CB(2)1492/00-01(01)]

15. At the invitation of the Chairman of the joint meeting, Deputy Director of Leisure and Cultural Services (Administration) (DDLCS(A)), Assistant Director of Leisure and Cultural Services (Leisure Services) (ADLCS(LS)) and Assistant Director of Leisure and Cultural Services (Administration and Planning) (ADLCS(A&P)), with the aid of power-point presentation facilities introduced the salient points and merits of the merger proposal [see appendix - Paper No. CB(2)1492/00-01(01) (in Chinese only)].

Entry qualifications and pay structure

16. Mr IP Kwok-him sought specific details as to whether the majority of serving AOs met the entry qualifications for the new grade. He also asked whether LCSD's proposal was in line with the mode of managing recreational and sports venue and facilities adopted by the former Provisional Regional Urban Council.

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17. ADLCS(A&P) responded that based on the personal particulars furnished by staff members, LCSD had computed that a total of 175 staff members (77%) met the entry qualifications for the new grade. As far as the management of venues and facilities was concerned, the proposed management structure in the merger proposal had made reference to the mode of management adopted by the former Regional Urban Council for some recreational venues and facilities. ADLCS(LS) added that existing tasks which were currently performed by AOs and RSOs included planning and research work relating to recreation, management of recreational and sports services at the district level, as well as management of holiday camps and water sports centres.

18. Ms LI Fung-ying was concerned about the substantive effects of the merger on the pay scales of individual ranks. She asked about the arrangements available to staff members who opted not to join the new grade.

19. Referring to the existing and the proposed pay structures as set out in paragraph 10 of the paper provided by the Administration [Paper No. CB(2)1447/00-01(01)], ADLCS(A&P) elaborated the changes in the pay scales of different ranks after the merger. He pointed out that most RSO grade staff would fit into a pay scale with a higher starting pay and/or maximum pay, and most AO grade staff would fit in a pay scale with the same range of pay points upon the merger. In particular, he pointed out that AOIIs might suffer financial loss upon regrading to ALSMII since the maximum pay would be cut by three points from MPS 26 to 23. To ensure that the merger of the two grades would attract as many staff as possible to opt to join the new grade, LCSD had proposed allowing serving AOs II to retain their personal pay scale. The proposal had the support of the Standing Commission on Civil Service Salaries and Conditions of Service. As for those staff who opted not to join the new grade, they would not be entitled to any promotion prospects in the new grade.

Objective of the merger and development of a long-term policy on the provision of leisure services

20. Mr Albert CHAN said that while he agreed with the view that it was not in the interest of the public to have two different grades to provide recreational and sports services, the proposed merger mainly affected AOs and RSOs who were of middle and lower ranks. The impact on higher ranks was relatively minor. He asked about the benefits of implementing the merger proposal in terms of promoting recreational and sports activities and nurturing athletic talents.

21. DDLCS(LS) responded that the main objective of the merger proposal was to improve the delivery of leisure services to the public. He explained that merging the two grades would help LCSD meet the demand for professional and one-stop services at its recreational venues. Upon the implementation of the merger, instead of having two groups of staff attending to venue management and sports programming respectively in district offices, LCSD would only deploy an ALSM II to take care of both venue management and sports programming in

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each of the 220 recreational venues and facilities. Members of the public would then be able to obtain on-the-spot advice on the usage of facilities and enroll on any sports programmes available at each venue. In the long run, LCSD would be able to develop a 500-odd-strong multi-skilled professional workforce responsible for managing facilities and organising sports programmes for the purpose of promoting the development of recreation and sport. He pointed out that the proposed merger had nothing to do with the sports policy review, but would develop more professional staff to promote sports and implement new policies for sports development in a more effective manner.

22. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan queried whether the merger proposal would achieve the objective of developing a multi-skilled and professional workforce. ADLCS(LS) explained that many existing jobs such as management of holiday camps and water sports centres could be performed by either AOs or RSOs. The merger proposal would in effect extend such arrangement of jobs to staff of lower ranks and new recruits.

23. Miss Cyd HO queried why the Administration did not consider other alternatives of improving services. She further asked why the Administration rushed to submit the merger proposal to the Establishment Subcommittee for consideration instead of waiting for the outcome of the sports policy review. Miss HO suggested that LCSD should consider improving administrative measures and strengthening the use of information technology such as providing venue booking services and enrolment services for recreational and sport activities on the Internet. In so doing, it would not be necessary for LCSD to put forward the proposal to merge the two grades before the conclusion of the sports policy review. In her opinion, there were both merits and demerits in providing one-stop services.

24. In response, ADLCS(LS) pointed out that the merit of providing one-stop service was not confined to facilitating venue booking and enrolment on sports programmes. Members of the public could also seek professional advice and assistance regarding the organisation of activities and venue utilisation in the office of each recreational venue. He pointed out that LCSD had considered strengthening the use of information technology facilities for the convenience of the public. However, it was believed that some elderly and young people might not fully utilise such facilities.

25. Mr Andrew CHENG asked whether LCSD would consider deferring the submission of the merger proposal to the Establishment Subcommittee of the Finance Committee for consideration having regard to the views of the deputations. In so doing, LCSD could further discuss with the staff representatives the specific arrangements for the merger to facilitate its smooth implementation.

26. DDLCS(LS) responded that LCSD hoped to elaborate the objective of the merger proposal to Members and seek funding support at the meeting of the Establishment Subcommittee on 20 June 2001 as scheduled. He pointed out

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that consultation on the proposed merger had commenced in 1985. He did not believe that a further delay of several months could help resolve those issues on which a consensus had yet to reach after almost 15 years of discussion. For the long-term development of recreation and sport, he considered that the proposal should be implemented as soon as possible.

27. Mr Albert CHAN asked the Chairman of the meeting whether the Panels should indicate their position about the merger proposal. He reiterated that as HAB had set up a Sports Policy Review Team, the Administration should consider pursuing the merger proposal upon completion of the review. The Chairman of the meeting suggested that if the Administration submitted the merger proposal to the Establishment Subcommittee at its meeting on 20 June as scheduled, members could express their views at the meeting.

28. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 4:40 pm.

Legislative Council Secretariat
23 July 2001