

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1) 1045/00-01
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/PS/1

Legislative Council
Panel on Public Service

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 15 January 2001 at 10:45 am
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building

Members present : Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP (Chairman)
Hon LI Fung-ying, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon HUI Cheung-ching
Hon CHAN Kwok-keung
Hon Howard YOUNG, JP
Hon Michael MAK Kwok-fung
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon LEUNG Fu-wah, MH, JP

Members attending : Hon NG Leung-sing
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP

Member absent : Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP

Public officers : **Item III**
attending

Mr Joseph WONG Wing-ping, GBS, JP
Secretary for the Civil Service

Mr D W PESCOD, JP
Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service (2)

Miss Jennifer MAK, JP
Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service (3)

Mr William NG
Director, Civil Service Training and Development Institute

Item IV

Mr D W PESCOD, JP
Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service (2)

Miss Jennifer MAK, JP
Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service (3)

Item V

Mr P C LEUNG, JP
Deputy Director of Administration

Mrs Lilian WONG
Director of Protocol

Mr D W PESCOD, JP
Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service (2)

Miss Jennifer MAK, JP
Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service (3)

Item VI

Dr Edgar CHENG, JP
Head, Central Policy Unit

Mr Thomas TSO, JP
Deputy Head, Central Policy Unit

Mr D W PESCOD, JP
Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service (2)

Miss Jennifer MAK, JP
Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service (3)

Clerk in attendance : Miss Salumi CHAN
Chief Assistant Secretary (1)5

Staff in attendance : Mr FU Ping-hong
Senior Assistant Secretary (1)7

Action

I. Confirmation of minutes of meeting
(LC Paper No. CB(1)437/00-01)

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2000 were confirmed.

II. Date of next meeting and items for discussion

(LC Paper No. CB(1)436/00-01(01) — List of outstanding items for discussion

LC Paper No. CB(1)436/00-01(02) — List of follow-up actions)

2. Members noted the list of outstanding items for discussion and agreed to discuss the following two items at the next regular meeting to be held on Monday, 19 February 2001:

- (a) Corporatization of the Survey and Mapping Office (SMO) of the Lands Department — Impact on the staff concerned; and
- (b) Review of the mechanism for adjusting the Housing Allowance.

3. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan pointed out that the Civil Service Bureau had issued a circular on "Employment of Non-Civil Service Contract Staff" on 9 January 2001. He proposed that the Administration be requested to monitor the situation of employment of non-civil service contract staff by various government departments after the issue of the circular, and to provide the Panel with the relevant information on the pay level and fringe benefits offered to the staff concerned on new contracts or renewal of contracts. The Chairman directed the Clerk to liaise with the Administration.

(Post-meeting note: With the concurrence of the Chairman, the Administration was requested to provide the relevant information for the period from the issue of the circular on 9 January up to 30 April 2001.)

III. Follow-up discussion on the three-year Training and Development Programme for civil servants

(LC Paper No. CB(1)436/00-01(03) — Paper provided by the Administration)

4. At the invitation of the Chairman, Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service (3) (DSCS3) briefed members on the three major focus areas of the three-year Training

and Development (T&D) Programme, namely, the training for the affected staff in the grades involved in the Voluntary Retirement (VR) scheme, the training in relation to the Civil Service Reform initiatives, and promotion of continuous learning culture.

Duration and purpose

5. Mr Michael MAK asked why the T&D Programme covered three years and not longer or shorter. Referring to paragraph 2 of the paper provided by the Administration where it was stated that the three-year T&D Programme "would enhance the long-term employability of civil servants", Mr MAK was concerned whether there was a hidden agenda under which training would be provided to civil servants to prepare them for the second round of VR scheme. Secretary for the Civil Service (SCS) advised that a three-year period was considered appropriate for the T&D Programme. The Programme was expected to enhance the knowledge and skills of staff, and therefore enhance their long-term employability. This would facilitate their application for any vacant posts at a higher level within the civil service. SCS assured members that the Programme was introduced for the benefit of staff and there was absolutely no hidden agenda.

Proposed funding allocation

6. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan noted that the proposed allocation of \$14 million for the provision of 19 000 training places for affected staff in the VR grades would mean an average of only about \$700 each. He queried whether the sum was sufficient for the purpose. He also queried why refund of course fees under the Training Incentive Scheme (TIS) would be subject to a ceiling of \$1,000. DSCS3 explained that TIS was launched to provide a financial incentive to encourage civil servants to take up self-initiated external study programmes or short courses that were employment-related to suit their personal development needs, interests, time and learning mode. In view of the limited resources available and the need to enable more staff to benefit from TIS, a ceiling of \$1,000 was set. The sum should be sufficient for a great majority of short courses available on market, such as those on personnel management. Responding to the Chairman's enquiry on the interpretation of the term "employment-related", SCS advised that clerical officers taking short courses on personnel management or computer operation would be regarded as taking employment-related courses.

7. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan considered that the \$1,000 ceiling for TIS should be raised, say, to \$2,000. He noted that some of the courses provided by the Employees Retraining Board (ERB) cost over \$1,000. The Chairman pointed out that while the computer courses offered by ERB might cost more, other courses such as language courses cost only around \$200. SCS advised that the proposed allocation of \$18 million for TIS would benefit some 18 000 staff, i.e. 10% of the civil service as a whole, throughout the three-year period. It was hoped that through TIS, a continuous learning culture would develop among civil servants. Having studied the course fees for various short courses available on market, the Administration considered it

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reasonable to set the ceiling at \$1,000. Nevertheless, the Administration would be monitoring the effectiveness of the T&D Programme.

8. Responding to Mr Michael MAK, DSCS3 added that the Civil Service Training and Development Institute (CSTDI) would be able to cope with the additional workload arising from the Programme through internal redeployment of resources. Moreover, external sources would be commissioned to conduct some of the courses.

Consultation

9. Mr LEUNG Fu-wah noted that the Administration had consulted the Civil Service Training and Development Advisory Board on the proposed T & D Programme. At Mr LEUNG's request, DSCS3 undertook to provide the membership list of the Advisory Board after the meeting.

(Post-meeting note: The membership list provided by the Administration was circulated to members on 14 February 2001 vide LC Paper No. CB(1) 592/00-01.)

Other issues related to training of civil servants

Scope of training courses

10. Mr LEUNG Fu-wah considered that the Administration should provide training courses at a macro level to broaden the horizon of civil servants, such as training courses on Hong Kong's sustainable development. In response, Director, Civil Service Training and Development Institute (D/CSTDI) advised that this type of training had been provided by CSTDI, for example, through the seminars for directorate staff. The video tapes of these seminars had been provided to various departments for reference and discussions by staff. So far, the feedback had been very positive.

Availability of staff for training courses

11. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said he noted from a press report that the number of civil servants who had attended training courses or taken up self-learning programmes had dropped by 30% and 50% respectively in the past year. Mr CHEUNG was concerned whether this significant drop was due to the fact that civil servants were hard pressed by the Enhanced Productivity Programme and could not afford the time to attend training courses. D/CSTDI clarified that the press report was inaccurate. According to the training statistics compiled by CSTDI, the number of civil servants who had attended training courses organized by CSTDI and the number of training days had dropped by just over 10% in the past year. Mr CHEUNG considered this a high percentage. DSCS3 pointed out that the percentage only

represented a decline in the number of staff attended classroom training, but not other modes of training, such as the training programmes offered through CSTDI's Cyber Learning Centre. In response to the views of some civil servants that they were not available to attend classroom training, the Administration would be exploring alternative options, such as conducting training programmes after office hours, and offering more self-learning packages in the form of cyber.

12. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong pointed out that some civil servants were unwilling to attend training courses because his work would have to be covered by his colleagues during his absence, or left undone for him to complete upon his return. DSCS3 advised that the Administration was fully aware of the concern of staff and had reinforced the message to departmental management that staff should be released for training as far as possible, and that appropriate arrangements should be put in place to cover the period of his absence.

Number of training days

13. Mr HUI Cheung-ching noted from paragraph 14 of the paper provided by the Administration that according to a survey conducted in 1998/99, of the 86 departments/bureaux surveyed, staff in 72 departments/bureaux received over 2.5 days training per year on average. He asked whether this figure was on the low side. D/CSTDI pointed out that the average number of training days for non-disciplined service civil servants was 4.6 days per year, which was comparable to those of overseas major countries and major corporations in Hong Kong. For example, according to a study conducted by the American Society for Training and Development in 1998, the average figure in respect of staff training for the United States was 4.1 days per year. In 1999, the Administration commissioned a consultancy company to conduct a survey on staff training provided by major corporations in Hong Kong, and it was found that the average figure was around 4 days per year.

14. In reply to Mr LEUNG Fu-wah's enquiry, DSCS3 advised that the average number of training days for civil servants in the disciplined service was 20 days per year. In view of the nature of their work, they were required to undergo more training than other civil servants.

(Post-meeting note: The Finance Committee (FC) approved on 9 February 2001 the creation of a new commitment of \$50 million for launching the T&D Programme.)

IV. Exercise of the delegated authority for creation of supernumerary directorate posts for not longer than six months

(LC Paper No. ESC 12/00-01 — An extract from the minutes of the Establishment Subcommittee meeting on 15 November 2000

LC Paper No. CB(1)436/00-01(04) — Paper provided by the Administration)

15. The Chairman advised that this item was referred by the Establishment Subcommittee to this Panel for consideration.

16. At the invitation of the Chairman, Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service 2 (DSCS2) briefed members on the paper provided by the Administration. He highlighted that supernumerary directorate posts, be they created under delegated authority or with the approval of the Establishment Subcommittee (ESC) and FC, were all considered very carefully and only created when justified to do so. Under the existing mechanism, Heads of Departments were required to justify their proposals for creation of supernumerary directorate posts before creating the posts under delegated authority or submitting the proposal to ESC. DSCS2 further pointed out that the staffing situation at all levels of the civil service, including the senior levels, was very tight. In the circumstances, the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) had been working closely with the Finance Bureau and various departments to ensure that there was proper planning for the creation of supernumerary directorate posts. Moreover, CSB would monitor the situation to ensure that the posts were retained for as short a period as possible.

17. Mr Albert CHAN queried what a supernumerary directorate post created for six months could achieve. He was concerned that such posts were created to accommodate directorate officers who had posting problems. In response, DSCS2 advised that supernumerary directorate posts were normally created to handle ad-hoc or short-term tasks and a six-month-period was adequate for a number of these tasks, such as recruitment boards. In fact, some of these posts lapsed after three or four months. In any case, only officers who could perform the duties effectively within such a short time frame would be deployed to fill the posts. As regards officers who had posting problems, the Administration would assess their ability and potential through other established mechanisms, such as the performance appraisal system, and make appropriate arrangements.

18. Referring to paragraph 7 of the paper provided by the Administration, Mr Albert CHAN and Mr Michael MAK requested the Administration to provide further information on the 73 and 29 supernumerary directorate posts created under delegated authority in 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 (up to December 2000) respectively. They would like to know the rank and purpose of the posts, the bureaux or departments involved, which of the posts were subsequently put to ESC and FC for further

retention, and the number of posts which lasted less than six months. DSCS2 undertook to provide the information after the meeting.

(Post-meeting note: The relevant information provided by the Administration was circulated to members on 16 February 2001 vide LC Paper No. CB(1) 616/00-01.)

V. Staffing proposal for Protocol Division under the Chief Secretary for Administration's Office

(LC Paper No. CB(1)436/00-01(05) — Paper provided by the Administration)

19. At the invitation of the Chairman, Deputy Director of Administration (DD of Admin) briefed members on the paper provided by the Administration. The Administration proposed to create a Principal Executive Officer (PEO) post (D1) in the Protocol Division on a permanent basis with effect from 1 March 2001 to maintain sufficient directorate support in the Division after the lapse of the existing supernumerary post of Deputy Director of Protocol (D1) on the same date. The cost of the new post would be offset by the deletion of a Chief Executive Officer post and a Personal Secretary II post in the Division.

20. Mr Albert CHAN and Mr Howard YOUNG asked for statistics to substantiate that there had been an increase in the scope and volume of work of the Protocol Division since the reunification on 1 July 1997. Director of Protocol (D of P) advised that administration and servicing of the Consular Corps (CC) and personnel of International Organizations (IO) in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region was one of the main functions of the Protocol Division. The number of Consular posts and missions of IO had increased from 95 at the time of the reunification to 103 at present. Apart from liaising with and providing host government services to the local CC and IO representatives, the Protocol Division had to administer consular/diplomatic privileges and immunities in accordance with the 103 international agreements signed between China and other countries, and local legislation. In this connection, the Protocol Division had to provide input in the preparation of orders under the new Consular Relations Ordinance (Cap. 557) passed in 2000. Moreover, since the reunification, the Protocol Division had assumed the new and important duty to plan and coordinate visit programmes and reception arrangements for visits of national leaders and official visits of heads of states/heads of governments to Hong Kong. Since July 1997, the Protocol Division had co-ordinated over 40 such visits. As regards national and international dignitaries visiting or transiting Hong Kong, the Protocol Division had to ensure that they were accorded appropriate courtesies. In the past, the Division had facilitated around 100 such inbound VIP visits to Hong Kong per year. So far in this financial year, however, the number had already reached 140.

21. Mr Howard YOUNG appreciated the importance of the work of the Protocol Division and the need to strengthen the services to be provided for official visitors.

22. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong asked how the list of nominations for of honours and awards was determined. D of P replied that the nominations were normally made by various policy bureaux and departments after consulting the parties concerned. The D of P served as the Secretary to the Honours Committee and the two Minor Honours Subcommittees which considered all such nominations. The Honours Committee which was chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration (CS) would make recommendations to the Chief Executive (CE) for his final decision. In response to Mr CHEUNG's further question, D of P advised that nominations from the community had also been considered.

23. Mr Albert CHAN expressed concern about the Administration's proposal to retain a post at the senior level by deleting two posts at the lower levels. He considered this practice unfair to civil servants at the lower levels and that it might affect their morale. In response, DSCS2 said that all posts, be they senior or junior, had to be justified. He pointed out that the ratio between the directorate and non-directorate posts over the last 8 years had been at a fairly constant level of 0.7% to 0.8%. He assured members that there was no such policy as to create posts for one group of civil servants at the expense of another.

(Post-meeting note: The staffing proposal for the Protocol Division was endorsed by ESC on 17 January 2001.)

VI. Staffing proposal for Central Policy Unit

(LC Paper No. CB(1)436/00-01(06) — Paper provided by the Administration)

24. At the invitation of the Chairman, Head of the Central Policy Unit (H/CPU) briefed members on the main streams of responsibility of the Central Policy Unit (CPU), i.e. the coordination of the annual Policy Address exercise, the provision of secretariat support to the Commission on Strategic Development (CSD) and the analysis of major and important policy issues, with a view to providing advice to its three clients, namely, CE, CS and the Financial Secretary. The Administration proposed to create the following three posts in CPU on a permanent basis with effect from 1 March 2001 upon the lapse of the three existing supernumerary posts on the same date:

- (a) one Administrative Officer Staff Grade B (AOSGB) (D3) post (i.e. Secretary, CSD);
- (b) one Government Town Planner (GTP) (D2) post (i.e. GTP(CSD)); and

- (c) one Administrative Officer Staff Grade C (AOSGC) (D2) post (i.e. Research Director).

25. Mr Howard YOUNG asked for a comparison of the scope of work of CPU before and after the reunification on 1 July 1997. H/CPU advised that since the reunification, the number of research studies undertaken by CPU had increased. The studies straddled a number of policy areas and included various economic, social and political issues. Some of the studies were conducted in response to requests by CPU's three clients, while some were initiated by CPU. Moreover, CPU had been tasked to provide secretariat support for CSD since its establishment in February 1998.

26. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong considered that the work of CSD lacked transparency, and queried whether it was justified to create the D3 and D2 posts mentioned in paragraph 24(a) and (b) above on a permanent basis to provide secretariat support to CSD. In response, H/CPU advised that CSD aimed to ensure that Hong Kong kept up with world trends in competitive terms and that the vitality of Hong Kong's economic development was maintained. In the report published by CSD in 2000, it analyzed the challenges to be faced by Hong Kong in the next two or three decades and made recommendations, after conducting a study on the subject and discussing with 180 groups/individuals. Having regard to CSD's mandate and workload, there was a need to retain the D3 and D2 posts on a permanent basis. The Deputy Head of CPU (DH/CPU) added that in view of the complexity and level of difficulties of the studies conducted by CSD, the requirement for coordinating inputs from concerned parties as well as the need for frequent liaison with different parties inside and outside of the government, the Administration considered it appropriate for the Secretary to CSD to continue to be pitched at AOSGB (D3) level. Moreover, the work of CSD involved long term strategic planning for Hong Kong and other planning related issues. To support its work on an on-going basis, it was necessary to retain the existing supernumerary GTP (D2) post in CPU on a permanent basis. The GTP would continue to provide the Secretary to CSD with professional and technical support, and assist the Secretary in studying the global, regional and mainland development trends which had significant impact on Hong Kong. DH/CPU also pointed out that the ranking of the two posts was considered appropriate by ESC and FC when the two supernumerary posts were approved for a period of 3 years in 1998.

27. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong and Mr Albert CHAN were concerned that the studies conducted by CSD overlapped those conducted by other government departments, such as the Planning Department. DH/CPU advised that there was no overlap between the two. He pointed out that while the studies conducted by the Planning Department focused on the impact of population growth on the demand for land, housing and other resources, the studies conducted by CPU had different focuses and perspectives, for example, to study the impact of the world-wide trend of information technology development on Hong Kong.

28. Mr Albert CHAN however pointed out that the Planning Department was studying how to improve links with the Mainland, a subject on which CSD would also conduct further research. He was concerned that CPU would be overriding or replacing other bureaux and departments by taking over their functions and responsibilities. H/CPU and DH/CPU confirmed that that was not the case. DH/CPU pointed out that the studies conducted by the Planning Department focused on the implications of the development of southern China on the future development of Hong Kong. The study to be conducted by CSD would focus on how the links with the Mainland could be strengthened in order to achieve Hong Kong's long term vision to become Asia's World City and a major city of China. CSD would liaise closely with various bureaux but not override or replace them.

29. Mr Albert CHAN queried the need for the creation of the GTP (D2) post in CPU. He considered that CPU could request the Planning Department to provide the reports of the relevant studies. In response, DH/CPU advised that the creation of the GTP post in CPU was needed to support the work of CSD in long term strategic planning for Hong Kong. The GTP would liaise with other government bureaux and departments, and ensure coherence between the CSD's work and the Planning Department's territorial planning process. He also pointed out that it was a common practice for departmental grade staff to be seconded to other departments. Statisticians, for instance, were often seconded from the Census and Statistics Department to various bureaux and departments.

30. In response to Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's question on the views of CSB on this staffing proposal, DSCS2 replied that CSB was satisfied that the posts were needed and at the appropriate level. Mr CHEUNG did not see the need for the creation of both the D3 and D2 posts for providing support to CSD. He quoted the Education Commission as an example and pointed out that it was not supported by two directorate officers at D3 and D2 levels. In response, DH/CPU said that a direct comparison with other secretariats might not be appropriate. As far as he knew, the Secretary General of the Standing Commission on Civil Service Salaries and Conditions of Service was a D4 post, who was also supported by a D2 officer. The Secretary-General of the University Grants Committee was again a D4 post.

31. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong was not convinced and stated that Members from the Democratic Party, including Mr Albert CHAN and himself, had reservation about this staffing proposal.

(Post-meeting note: The staffing proposal for the Central Policy Unit was endorsed by ESC on 17 January 2001.)

VII. Any other business

32. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:00 pm.

Legislative Council Secretariat

20 April 2001