

立法會
Legislative Council

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Establishment Subcommittee of the Finance Committee

**Minutes of the 9th meeting
held at the Legislative Council Chamber
on Wednesday, 18 June 2003, at 10:45 am**

Members present:

Hon CHAN Kwok-keung (Chairman)
Hon NG Leung-sing, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon James TIEN Pei-chun, GBS, JP
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, JP
Hon Eric LI Ka-cheung, JP
Hon Margaret NG
Hon Bernard CHAN, JP
Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP
Hon Howard YOUNG, JP
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP
Hon LI Fung-ying, JP
Hon Henry WU King-cheong, BBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Fu-wah, MH, JP
Dr Hon LO Wing-lok
Hon LAU Ping-cheung

Members absent:

Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Dr Hon David LI Kwok-po, GBS, JP
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon HUI Cheung-ching, JP
Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing, GBS, JP

Hon SZETO Wah
Hon Michael MAK Kwok-fung
Hon MA Fung-kwok, JP

Public Officers attending:

Mr Stanley YING, JP	Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury)
Miss Jennifer MAK, JP	Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service
Mr K K LAM	Principal Executive Officer (General), Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau (Treasury)
Mr Michael WONG	Deputy Secretary for Security
Mr Alan CHU	Principle Assistant Secretary for Security (D)
Mr K C CHOW, IDSM	Deputy Director of Immigration
Mr Raymond WONG, IMSM	Assistant Director of Immigration
Miss Eliza YAU	Principal Assistant Secretary for Security (E)
Mr NG Sek-hon, JP	Director of Finance, Administration and Planning Hong Kong Police Force
Mr David HOOI	Principal Management Services Officer Security Bureau

Clerk in attendance:

Miss Polly YEUNG	Chief Assistant Secretary (1)3
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Staff in attendance:

Ms Pauline NG	Assistant Secretary General 1
Ms Caris CHAN	Senior Legislative Assistant 1
Mr Frankie WOO	Legislative Assistant 2

Action

EC(2003-04)10 **Proposed retention of one supernumerary post of Chief Systems Manager (D1) in Immigration Department for a period of three years from 1 November 2003 to plan, manage and co-ordinate information technology related activities for the implementation of projects under the Updated Information Systems Strategy**

Members noted that the Panel on Security had been consulted on the present item on 5 June 2003.

2. Mr TAM Yiu-chung noted that under the present proposal, the proposed retention of the supernumerary post of Chief Systems Manager (CSM) (D1) in the Immigration Department (ImmD) for three years from 1 November 2003 to 31 October 2006 would be offset by the deletion of a directorate post in another department, namely, the deletion of a permanent post of Chief Superintendent of Police (CSP) in the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF). While reckoning that this was not a usual arrangement, Mr TAM nevertheless supported the present proposal on account the operational need for the post in question.

3. Given the ImmD's ongoing Updated Information Systems Strategy (ISS-2) and the need to take forward new information technology (IT) initiatives, Mr Henry WU questioned why the continued need for the post had not been put up in the last submission. In response, the Deputy Secretary for Security (DS(S)) confirmed that it was necessary to retain the post for three years up to 31 October 2006. He recalled that when the proposal to retain the CSM up to October 2003 was submitted for the Establishment Subcommittee's consideration on 23 May 2001, the Administration had not yet obtained funding approval for implementation of major projects under ISS-2, including Information Technology Infrastructure Upgrade, Automated Passenger Clearance and Automated Vehicle Clearance. As such, the Administration had proposed to retain the supernumerary CSM post for only a period of three years in accordance with the usual practice.

4. Mr Henry WU was concerned about the justification for retaining the supernumerary CSM post for a further period of three years. He and Miss Margaret NG queried that the Administration might seek to retain the supernumerary CSM post once every three years successively, thus rendering the post permanent in nature. Ms Emily LAU shared their concern.

5. Mr James TIEN said that Members of the Liberal Party appreciated the growing workload of ImmD over the years but were doubtful about the appropriateness of renewing the duration of a supernumerary post time and again. He considered that if there was a proven need for the CSM post beyond three years, the Administration should advise members accordingly and put up the necessary staffing proposal. Otherwise, the Administration should give an undertaking that the CSM post would not be further extended beyond 31 October 2006.

6. In response, DS(S) stressed that the need for the CSM post was project-based. He confirmed that at present, the Administration did not envisage a need to retain the post beyond 31 October 2006. However, should new project requirements arise which necessitated directorate support, the Administration would put up the necessary staffing proposal for members' consideration.

Admin

7. Referring to Enclosure 2 to the paper, Mr Henry WU requested the Administration to provide more quantitative information on the main duties and responsibilities of the proposed CSM post, such as the proportion of the postholder's time spent on each of the nine duties and how far the various tasks had been/would be accomplished. In this regard, the Deputy Director of Immigration (DD of Imm) advised that during the past three years, the CSM had been mainly engaged in the Smart ID Card project, at the same time overseeing the development of various IT plans and strategies. He undertook to provide the information requested by Mr WU after the meeting.

8. In reply to Mr Henry WU's enquiry about the feasibility of re-shuffling the duties of the CSM post so that the ongoing responsibilities could be taken up by other existing staff, DS(S) pointed out that internal re-deployment of staffing resources had not been possible in this case owing to the growing workload of the ImmD. To illustrate, he said that the cross-border passenger flow had increased sharply from a daily average of some 170 000 in 1997 to the present 320 000. Related duties such as enforcement action against illegal immigrants had also risen. On the duties of the CSM, the Assistant Director of Immigration explained that earlier on, the CSM had mainly been engaged in the Smart ID Card project which was Phase 0 of ImmD's ISS-2. Following funding approval of Phase I and Phase II of ISS-2 on 11 January 2002 and 24 January 2003 respectively, the input of the CSM was also required for these projects. The forecast man-months required of the CSM in the aforesaid two Phases would be 15 man-months in 2003-04, 12 man-months in 2004-05, 7 man-months in 2005-06 and 4 man-months in 2006-07.

9. In reply to Mr LEUNG Fu-wah's enquiry about the difference, if any, in the current and future duties of the CSM, DD of Imm advised that the nature of work was similar. At present, the bulk of the CSM's duties was on the New ID Card Project. In future, after the roll-out of the Smart ID Card, the work of the CSM would focus more on subsequent Phases of the ISS-2.

10. Miss Margaret NG and Ms Emily LAU considered the job description of the proposed CSM post in Enclosure 2 to the paper abstract and sought elaboration. In reply, DD of Imm said that the post in question was a senior management post tasked to take forward large-scale IT plans and strategies. DS(S) clarified that the CSM would be required to assist in implementing the series of IT initiatives in various Phases of ISS-2. As the projects were time-limited, the Administration had therefore proposed to retain the CSM post for a period of three years only. It was expected that it would not be necessary to deploy such a high-ranking officer to oversee the projects when they were up and running.

11. On how increased cross-border passenger flow would impact on the work of the CSM, DD of Imm elaborated that one of the major tasks of the CSM was to provide the necessary steer in applying IT to enhance efficiency and the

quality of service in the face of increasing workload. DS(S) supplemented that enhancing the IT capability of ImmD would definitely enable the department to cope with rising workload with lesser manpower input. He referred members to the Immigration Control Automation System Enhancement Programme which had expedited the passenger clearance process.

Admin

12. Ms Emily LAU enquired about the impact of the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) on the workload of ImmD staff at the control points and whether the staff had been left with very little work to do. In response, DD of Imm informed members that with the exception of the control point at Lok Ma Chau, cross-border passenger flow had dropped significantly during the SARS outbreak. During the initial period, ImmD staff had assisted the Department of Health in duties such as the distribution of health declaration forms, until they were relieved by staff from the Auxiliary Medical Service and Civil Aid Service. Given the drop in workload during this period, some staff had been deployed for other duties such as visa control and enforcement action against illegal immigrant workers. The department had also taken the opportunity to allow the staff to take time-off for overtime work performed and to attend in-service training. As regards the percentage of staff at control points who had been deployed for other duties during the outbreak of SARS, DD of Imm agreed to provide the information after the meeting.

13. Responding to Ms Emily LAU's enquiry about the efforts of ImmD to achieve savings, DS(S) said that upon full implementation of all ISS-2 projects by 2006-07, about 425 posts could be deleted, resulting in tangible savings of some \$438 million per annum at 2002-03 price level.

14. Noting that the Administration had considered but decided against the option of engaging a non-civil service contract staff to take up the work of the CSM, Ms Emily LAU sought clarification on the Administration's concern about security and potential conflict of interest. She also enquired whether less staff cost would be incurred if a non-civil service contract staff was engaged.

Admin

15. In response, DD of Imm explained that as the ImmD had a large database of personal data, it would be more desirable from a security point of view to appoint a civil service officer to fill the CSM post. This arrangement could also avoid potential conflict of interest as the contract staff recruited from the private sector might have dealings with external consultants/service contractors prior to joining the department or after completion of contract. He also advised that given the expertise and experience required for the CSM post, engaging a non-civil service contract staff might not necessarily be less costly than appointing a civil servant to fill the post. In this connection, Ms Emily LAU said that to facilitate members' consideration, the Administration should also include the cost implications of the option of engaging non-civil service staff in future submissions. The Administration noted her view.

Admin

16. While commenting that the information on establishment changes in paragraph 17 of the paper was useful, Ms Emily LAU suggested that apart from providing the number of posts on the establishment of the department concerned, the Administration should also provide information on the actual strength of the department. This would enable members to ascertain the number of unfilled posts. The Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury) (DS(Tsy)) noted Ms LAU's request. He undertook to work out with the Civil Service Bureau on how the information could best be presented to also account for the reasons why certain posts were unfilled.

17. Noting that the CSP post proposed to be deleted was of a higher rank than the CSM post, Ms Emily LAU asked whether ImmD would reserve the right to deploy the excess in savings thus achieved for other purposes, as previously informed by the Administration in connection with another paper (paragraph 20 of ECI(2003-04)2 considered at the meeting on 11 June 2003). In response, DS(Tsy) said that SCA had already given an explanation on the matter at the Subcommittee meeting on 11 June 2003. He added that as a general rule, when the Administration submitted establishment proposals to the Subcommittee, the submission would include information on the full annual staff costs at mid-point arising from the creation and deletion of directorate posts, as well as the savings achieved as a result. In case the Administration needed resources for meeting any new targets/implementing new initiatives, such savings could become relevant.

18. In reply to Ms Margaret NG's enquiry about the existing organization chart of ImmD which had not been appended to the paper, DD of Imm informed members that at present, the CSM reported to the Deputy Director of Imm (ID Card Project), which was a supernumerary post due to lapse on 1 November 2003. The CSM was currently overseeing five Sub-divisions, one of which was a Sub-division on ID Card Project which would also be deleted with effect from 1 November 2003. In this connection, Miss Margaret NG requested the Administration should provide members with the existing organization chart of ImmD for reference. Ms Emily LAU also considered that as a standard practice, the Administration should provide both the existing and proposed organization charts for members' easy reference.

19. In response, DS(Tsy) advised under the current practice in preparing the organisation charts, the Administration would consider how best to present the differences between the existing and proposed organizational structure in a most reader-friendly way, depending on the nature and extent of the changes. Where only minor changes were involved, the Administration usually consolidated the information in a single chart for easy reference. Nevertheless, he took note of Ms Emily LAU's view.

20. Mr Henry WU expressed reservation on the proposed deletion of a directorate post in another department to offset the proposed retention of the CSM

post in ImmD. Mr James TIEN expressed his view that notwithstanding the Administration's various offsetting arrangements, members can decide on staffing proposals based on the consensus reached by the Legislative Council's Seven Party Coalition.

21. Mr LEUNG Fu-wah stated his view that the present proposal should be supported on account of the need to roll out the new Smart ID Card. He also remarked that Hong Kong might be lagging behind other countries in areas such as electronic visit permits. Mr LEUNG considered that if there were new initiatives which could enhance the efficiency of immigration clearance and Hong Kong's international image, they should be supported. As such, his personal view was that under such circumstances, it might not be necessary to adhere strictly to the requirement to offset the creation of a directorate post with the deletion of a post of an equivalent or higher rank.

22. Ms Emily LAU recapped the consensus reached by the Legislative Council's Seven Party Coalition that the proposed creation of a directorate post should be offset by the deletion of an equivalent or higher-ranking post. In this regard, Mr Henry WU pointed out that apart from the offsetting requirement, members should also consider whether the deletion of posts could also yield real savings.

23. Mr Henry WU requested that his reservation on the item be recorded.

24. The item was voted on and endorsed.

EC(2003-04)11 Proposed deletion of six permanent posts of Chief Superintendent of Police (PPS 55) in the Hong Kong Police Force to streamline structure and enhance efficiency

25. Members noted that an information paper on the item had been circulated to the Panel on Security on 10 June 2003.

26. Mr Henry WU supported the present item. Regarding the six CSP posts proposed to be deleted, Mr WU noted that the CSP (Administration and Support) of the Marine Region was also responsible for overseeing the management of the region's marine fleet and training school, in addition to the administrative functions similar to those performed by a CSP (Administration) in a land region. He was keen to ensure that the management of the marine fleet and training school would not be affected as a result of the deletion of the post. He also highlighted the importance of maintaining security in the marine region to guard against cross-border crimes.

27. Noting Mr Henry WU's concern, the Principal Assistant Secretary for Security (E) explained that upon deletion of the CSP(Administration and Support) post, the Regional Commander Marine would continue to oversee the overall management of the region's marine fleet and training school, including important areas of work such as training strategies and planning and maintaining a well-equipped marine fleet. Meanwhile, the day-to-day duties of the CSP(Administration and Support) would be devolved to the Senior Superintendent of Police (Administration) who would report to the Deputy Regional Commander. Members noted that similar arrangements would take place in the land region following the deletion of the five CSP(Administration) posts.

28. In reply to Ms Emily LAU, the Director of Finance, Administration and Planning, HKPF (D of Fin, Adm & Planning, HKPF) reported that the trial scheme to streamline the regional command structure started in 2000. Ms LAU also asked whether the HKPF and other disciplinary forces would be able to achieve a 10% reduction in establishment by 2006-07. In reply, D of Fin, Adm & Planning, HKPF advised that the Force was making the best efforts to streamline its establishment structure.

29. Mr TAM Yiu-chung remarked that the present proposal was a move in the right direction as it was necessary for the HKPF to simplify its organizational layers.

30. Noting that the CSP posts in question had been left vacant since the implementation of the trial scheme, Ms Emily LAU enquired whether the relevant provisions for these posts had been retained by the HKPF for other uses. In response, DS(Tsy) advised that HKPF was one of the first batch of departments to implement a one-line vote system. Under this funding arrangement, the Controlling Officer was allocated a certain provision in the context of the Annual Estimates and he could deploy resources under his management, including any savings achieved, for purposes he deemed necessary.

31. The item was voted on and endorsed.

32. The Subcommittee was adjourned at 11:55 am.