

Legislative Council
Panel on Administration of Justice and Legal Services

Initiatives on Efficiency Savings in the Judiciary

Introduction

In its paper for the Panel meeting on 25 November 2002, the Judiciary Administration advised Members of the approaches adopted in promoting efficiency initiatives in the Judiciary. This paper sets out in more detail the specific initiatives for achieving the target of saving 1.8% in recurrent expenditure in 2003-04, which is roughly \$18 million.

Departmental Expenses

2. Measures will be made to tighten up spending of Departmental Expenses. Apart from continuous efforts to reduce electricity expenditure and paper consumption, the Judiciary Administration will :

- (a) streamline contract management for the provision of information technology services;
- (b) re-prioritise enhancements to and upgrading of information technology systems;
- (c) tighten up payment of overtime allowance; and
- (d) cease Dialect Allowance for Putonghua interpretation.

3. Together with other minor items, we are aiming at savings of about \$8 million.

Support Staff at Magistrates' Courts

4. The Judiciary Administration has undertaken an internal management review on the registries and judicial support services of the nine magistrates' courts. The objective is to identify areas for re-engineering work processes and explore means to enhance operational efficiency and effectiveness.

5. One of the major findings of the review is that the workloads of the Accounts Offices of the magistrates' courts have been decreasing over the past few years. This could be attributed to the implementation of the Public Payment System in April 2001, by which payments for Fixed Penalty tickets and fines for offences allowing plea of guilty by letter can be made at automated teller machines. We estimate that the workload of the Accounts Offices would be further decreased in 2003. We therefore plan to reduce

the number of payment counters and rationalize the staffing structure of the Accounts Offices.

6. Arising from the observations in the same management review, the division of responsibilities in the magistrates' courts will be re-organised by merging of sections and expanding their scope of responsibilities.

7. The various initiatives from the business process re-engineering at the magistrates' courts would result in savings of about \$6.5 million.

Court Language Section

8. We plan to merge the Use of Chinese and Judgment Translation Units and achieve economies of scale and more flexible deployment of resources. In addition, the supervisory structure of Court Interpreters will be de-layered by removing the regional managers.

9. The two measures to be introduced by the Court Language Section would achieve savings of about \$4.5 million.

Typing Services

10. Given that more and more staff are having their own computers for word processing and using e-mails as a means of correspondence, the demand on the services of central typing pools has decreased. We plan to rationalize the staffing of the three typing pools in the Corporate Services Division and merge them into one. This measure would yield savings of about \$0.8 million.

Impact on Services

11. The above proposals would produce savings of about \$19.8 million for 2003-04. They are mainly the result of business process re-engineering initiatives and cover mostly internal support services. The Judiciary Administration anticipates that the consequences on services for the public would be minimum.

Future Initiatives

12. Given that (i) further savings would be required in the years 2004-07 at the rate of 1% per annum; and (ii) in addition, savings, which are much more substantial, are being considered and may be required in the years 2004-07, consideration is being given to rationalizing the number of magistrates' courts, reducing the number of temporary judges and perhaps leaving some judicial posts vacant. No conclusion has been reached at this stage.

13. The Chief Justice has stated that despite budgetary constraints, the quality of justice must be maintained, even if it may mean lengthening of waiting times for some cases to be heard.

Judiciary Administration Directorate Staff

14. The Panel has requested the Judiciary Administration to provide the number, rank, salary and the type (contract or civil service posts) of the directorate posts. The information is as follows :

Post	Rank	No.	Type
Judiciary Administrator	D8	1	Contract
Deputy Judiciary Administrator (Operations)	D3	1	AOSGB
Deputy Judiciary Administrator (Development)	D3	1	AOSGB
Assistant Judiciary Administrator (Development)	D2	1	AOSGC
Assistant Judiciary Administrator (Corporate Services)	D2	1	SPEO (Supernumerary)
Assistant Judiciary Administrator (Quality)	D1	1	PEO (Departmental grade acting)

15. There are 170 Judges and Judicial Officers posts equivalent to Directorate positions in the civil service.