

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)1101/02-03
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/PS/1

Panel on Public Service

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 17 February 2003 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 HUI Cheung-ching, JP
Hon CHAN Kwok-keung
Hon Bernard CHAN, JP
Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun, SBS, JP
Hon Howard YOUNG, JP
Hon Michael MAK Kwok-fung
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon LEUNG Fu-wah, MH, JP

Members absent : Hon Kenneth TING Woo-shou, JP
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP

Public officers attending : **Agenda Items III & IV**

Miss Jennifer MAK, JP
Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service

Mr Cletus LAU, JP
Director of General Grades

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

Staff in attendance : Ms Rosalind MA
Senior Assistant Secretary (1)9

Miss May LEUNG
Legislative Assistant

Action

I. Confirmation of minutes of meetings

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)873/02-03 — Minutes of special meeting on
15 January 2003
LC Paper No. CB(1)878/02-03 — Minutes of meeting on 20 January
2003)

The minutes of the meetings held on 15 January 2003 and 20 January 2003 were confirmed.

II. Date of next meeting and items for discussion

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)877/02-03(01) — List of outstanding items for
discussion
LC Paper No. CB(1)877/02-03(02) — List of follow-up actions)

Items for discussion at the next meeting

2. Members agreed that the following two items be discussed at the next regular meeting scheduled for 17 March 2003:

- (a) Civil service-related issues featuring in the 2003 Budget Speech; and
- (b) Organizational review of the Civil Service Bureau (CSB).

Civil service pay adjustment

3. Responding to Mr Howard YOUNG's enquiry, the Chairman advised that the civil service pay adjustment issue originally scheduled for discussion at this meeting had been deferred at the Administration's request. According to the Administration, the issue was not ready for discussion at this meeting. Mr YOUNG was concerned when the Administration would brief the Panel on the issue. The Chairman advised that subject to the development of the issue, a special Panel meeting might be convened as and when necessary.

(Post-meeting note: A special Panel meeting was held on 25 February 2003 to discuss the civil service pay adjustment issue.)

III. Staff Suggestions Scheme in the Civil Service

(LC Paper No. CB(1)877/02-03(03) — Paper provided by the Administration)

Briefing by the Administration

4. At the Chairman's invitation, the Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service (DSCS) briefed members on CSB's initiative to enhance the operation of the Staff Suggestions Scheme (SSS) with a view to achieving savings for the Government. She advised that SSS was an incentive award system introduced to encourage civil servants to make improvement suggestions on three aspects, namely, efficiency and effectiveness of the civil service, quality of service to the public, and financial savings/gains in revenue. To tie in with the Government's top priority task of tackling the fiscal deficit through a three-pronged approach: to boost economic growth, to reduce public expenditure and to raise revenue, CSB would launch a publicity campaign in March 2003 to further promote SSS within the civil service to encourage staff to submit suggestions which could contribute savings under the theme of 3"R" and 1"M", i.e. re-prioritizing businesses, re-engineering operations, re-organizing set-up, and making greater use of market in service delivery. Moreover, as a one-off measure, the cash award would be raised to \$30,000 for proposals which might save over \$1 million for the Government. To give a highlight to the scheme, CSB would take stock of the suggestions received in June 2003 and give awards to those deserving ones. DSCS also said that having regard to the experience gained in this campaign, CSB would review how best SSS should be positioned in the long run.

Discussion

Effectiveness of SSS in achieving savings and enhancing service delivery

5. Referring to paragraphs 4 and 5 of the paper, Mr LEUNG Fu-wah enquired about the amount of financial savings or gains in revenue generated through the suggestions made by staff under SSS for 1999-00, 2000-01 and 2001-02, the amount of cash award granted under the scheme for each of these three years and the types of suggestions involved. DSCS undertook to provide the information after the meeting. She also pointed out that the scope of SSS was not limited to improvement suggestions on financial savings/gains in revenue. Good suggestions for improvement in other aspects, such as those for enhancing departmental image and work environment, would also be awarded under SSS. The level of award was determined by the extent of improvement in efficiency and effectiveness likely to be brought about by the suggestion.

(*Post-meeting note:* The information provided by the Administration in response to Mr LEUNG's request in paragraph 5 above was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)1100/02-03(01) on 11 March 2003.)

6. Mr Howard YOUNG asked whether a mechanism was in place for the application of good improvement suggestions throughout the civil service. DSCS advised that suggestions with service-wide implications or relating to policy bureaux would be processed by the Central Staff Suggestions Committee under CSB while suggestions concerning a department would be processed by the respective Departmental Staff Suggestions Committee. CSB would publicize the winning suggestions as a form of experience sharing of good practices for other departments to consider adopting where appropriate.

Cash award and other forms of award

7. Referring to the statistics for 1999-00, 2000-01 and 2001-02 provided in paragraph 5 of the paper, Mr LEUNG Fu-wah and Mr Howard YOUNG expressed concern about the downward trend in the number of suggestions received under SSS. DSCS pointed out that the number of suggestions received had only been slightly decreased from 1 060 in 1999-2000, to 1 008 in 2000-01 and to 935 in 2001-02. In the first half of 2002-03, over 400 suggestions had been received. It was expected that the total number of suggestions for 2002-03 should be more or less the same as that in 2001-02. To encourage staff participation, a publicity campaign would be launched in March 2003 and the ceiling of the cash award would be raised as a one-off measure. DSCS further pointed out that as there were continuous changes in the work procedures and requirements, there was considerable new scope for staff to put forward improvement suggestions.

8. To encourage staff participation in SSS, Mr Howard YOUNG was of the view that apart from cash award, other forms of award should also be considered. In this connection, he pointed out that in some private companies, staff offering good improvement suggestions would be awarded accelerated promotion or additional pay increase. However, it seemed that no flexibility was provided under the existing civil service promotion system and pay adjustment mechanism for these forms of award. Mr LEUNG Fu-wah echoed Mr YOUNG's view.

9. In response, DSCS advised that different forms of award had been used under SSS, including cash award, letters/certificates of appreciation, and remarks made in the appraisal reports of the staff concerned to recognize his contribution. While the existing civil service promotion system and pay adjustment mechanism did not provide flexibility for awarding the staff concerned by accelerated promotion or additional pay increase solely on the basis of putting forward good suggestions, DSCS pointed out that the incentives for staff to put forward improvement suggestions were not limited to material awards. In fact, the acceptance of a suggestion and its

subsequent implementation in the workplace in helping to enhance the quality of service as well as the recognition from supervisors and colleagues gave the staff concerned a sense of satisfaction.

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10. In view of the pressing need to address the fiscal deficit problem, Mr LEUNG Fu-wah considered that the staff offering suggestions which could achieve savings for the Government should be awarded accelerated promotion or additional pay increase so as to encourage more staff to put forward such suggestions. DSCS said that the Administration would note Mr LEUNG's views for reference in future review of the promotion system and pay adjustment mechanisms.

11. Mr HUI Cheung-ching supported the implementation of SSS to encourage civil servants to make suggestions for enhancing service delivery or achieving financial savings. Apart from cash award, he suggested that consideration be given to award presents to the staff concerned.

12. Responding to Mr LEUNG Fu-wah's enquiry, DSCS said that the names and suggestions of the staff concerned would be publicized through departmental presentation ceremonies and service-wide/departmental publications.

IV. Civil Service Customer Service Award Scheme

(LC Paper No. CB(1)877/02-03(04) — Paper provided by the Administration)

Declaration of interests

13. The Chairman declared that he was a member of the adjudicating panel of the Civil Service Customer Service Award Scheme (CSAS) for 2002-03.

Briefing by the Administration

14. At the Chairman's invitation, the Director of General Grades (DGG) highlighted the major features of CSAS for members' information. In 1999, CSB introduced CSAS at central level to recognize the efforts of civil servants in customer service and to promote a customer service culture in the public sector. Under the scheme, outstanding civil servants and departments were awarded for their achievements in providing excellent customer service and making continuous efforts to enhance the quality of public service. Good practices of customer service were shared among government departments with a view to making further improvement in the standard of public service delivery. In 2002-03, 23 departments had enrolled to participate in the scheme. An Outstanding Customer Service Award would be presented to those departments, which had excelled in customer service under the selection criteria of service quality, efficiency and cost-effectiveness. The adjudication process included assessment of written submissions from departments,

visits to departments by a consulting firm and presentations of the shortlisted departments to an adjudicating panel. Members of the public were also involved in the adjudication process through voting for the best department in a telephone interview survey and providing comments on further improvement measures. The top three departments obtaining the highest number of votes would be presented a Best Public Image Award. DGG also advised that a large-scale exhibition would be organized between 20 to 23 February 2003 at the Central Library on the services of 48 departments, to be followed by the prize presentation ceremony of the Outstanding Customer Service Award on 24 February 2003.

Discussion

Cost implications

15. Mr HUI Cheung-ching supported the implementation of CSAS to promote a customer-oriented service culture in the civil service. He however expressed concern about the cost for organizing the large-scale exhibition on the services of 48 departments. In view of the present stringent fiscal position, he considered that the Administration should exercise more vigorous cost control in the administering of the scheme. DSCS responded that the Administration was fully aware of the need for cost control and had tried to minimize the cost for the exhibition through various means. For example, the use of the Central Library as the venue would incur no additional cost. Moreover, a roving exhibition would be conducted in major shopping centres and government office buildings from March to June 2003 so as to make the best use of the exhibition materials. At Mr HUI Cheung-ching's request, DGG undertook to provide the cost for organizing the exhibition after the meeting.

Scope of CSAS

16. Mr Howard YOUNG noticed that customer-oriented service culture had been gradually built up among the frontline staff. He enquired whether the Administration had any plans for promoting such culture in other parts of the civil service, including those civil servants who were not directly involved in providing service to the public. Mr YOUNG pointed out that in some private companies, staff working in the personnel or accounting division were advised to treat their colleagues as customers. DGG responded that customer-oriented service culture was promoted throughout the civil service. He also pointed out that the focus of the Outstanding Customer Service Award in 2002-03 was on the overall performance of the departments in which team spirit and leadership skills could be manifested. In other words, all staff in the departments concerned had to demonstrate their commitment to providing quality public service.

17. Mr Albert CHAN was not convinced that customer-oriented service culture was promoted throughout the civil service. He considered it unfair for the Administration to require only the frontline and lower rank staff, but not the Chief

Executive (CE) and the Principal Officials under the Accountability System, to adopt this culture. This would render CSAS meaningless. In response, DGG advised that CSAS was not only targeted at the frontline and lower rank staff. In fact, the departments participating in CSAS would be assessed in the aspects of team spirit and leadership skills, and these two aspects required close cooperation among all staff of the departments concerned. As regards CE and the Principal Officials under the Accountability System, they were not appointed on civil service terms and not covered by the scheme.

18. Mr Albert CHAN considered that CSAS should be cancelled if it did not cover CE and the Principal Officials under the Accountability System. DGG pointed out that the scheme had its own merits and had, since its introduction in 1999, promoted a customer-oriented service culture in the civil service.

Service culture transformation

19. Mr Michael MAK indicated his support for CSAS. He considered that there should be a service culture transformation in the civil service for treating the public as customers and not only users. He considered that all civil servants, including the disciplinary forces, should adopt a customer-oriented attitude in performing their duties. In this connection, he asked for the measures put in place by the Administration to build up a customer-oriented service culture in the civil service, particularly in the law enforcement departments such as the Police Force.

20. DGG advised that various Government departments had set their own performance pledge, set up working groups for service improvement, set up customer liaison groups, and conducted regular surveys to obtain the feedback from the public on their services. Moreover, there were a number of award schemes administered by individual departments to promote good practices of customer service. The Civil Service Training and Development Institute had designed specific training courses for enhancement of customer service in the civil service. DSCS also pointed out that the Administration had, over the years, worked hard towards building up a customer-oriented service culture in the civil service. This was an on-going process. She assured members that the Administration would continue its efforts in this respect. .

21. Mrs Sophie LEUNG supported the Administration's efforts in fostering a quality service and customer-oriented culture in the civil service. She considered that the focus should not only be placed on the team spirit and leadership skills manifested by Government departments, but also on the initiative of individual civil servants to do their best to serve the community. She urged the Administration to review the focus and objective of CSAS annually for greater achievement in this respect. Mrs LEUNG also considered that Government departments should work together as a team for the delivery of quality service to the public instead of confining the improvements within individual departments.

22. Mrs Sophie LEUNG further pointed out that in assessing the overall performance of a department for the customer service award, it would not be adequate to consider only from the perspective of customers. The contribution of the services provided by the department to the community as a whole, including its work efficiency, should also be taken into consideration. DGG affirmed that the work efficiency and quality of service would be considered in the assessment of the award. In fact, the objective of the CSAS was to foster a customer-oriented service culture that offered the best services to respond to the needs of the community and to meet the rising expectation of the public on the quality and standard of the public service.

Participation of Government departments in CSAS

23. Mr LEUNG Fu-wah requested the Administration to provide the lists of participating departments for each of the past three years since the introduction of CSAS in 1999-00, highlighting those which had participated in the first/first two years but not in the following year/years. DGG undertook to provide the information.

(Post-meeting note: The information provided by the Administration in response to members' requests in paragraphs 15 and 23 above was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)1100/02-03(02) on 11 March 2003.)

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24. Responding to Mr LEUNG Fu-wah's further enquiry, DGG advised that departments participating in CSAS were grouped according to their size in the adjudication process. He undertook to explore other grouping methods for better comparison of service delivery by the participating departments.

V. Any other business

25. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 11:45 am.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
11 March 2003