

For information

**LegCo Panel on Public Service
Follow-up to Meeting on 21 December 2004**

**Suggestion of introducing a new award scheme to commend
retired civil servants for participation in voluntary activities**

Background

At the Panel meeting held on 21 December 2004, a Member proposed that a new award scheme be put in place to commend those retired civil servants who actively participate in voluntary or charitable activities after their retirement. In the context of the award systems already in place for giving recognition to the good deeds of volunteers, the Administration undertook to consider the proposal and report back to the Panel.

Participation of Civil Servants in Voluntary Work

2. Given the Administration's commitment to building a more caring society in Hong Kong, the promotion of voluntary work has all along been a major support service within the ambit of Social Welfare Department (SWD). The "Volunteer Movement" is one of the large scale campaigns launched by SWD since 1998. The campaign aims at promoting volunteer services and facilitating volunteer teams in joining/organizing volunteer activities in a more coordinated manner. Volunteer teams may register with SWD as participating organizations. As at December 2004, over 470,000 Hong Kong citizens have been registered as volunteers, providing a total of over 11 million hours of volunteer services in 2003.

3. Within the civil service, we encourage civil servants to participate in voluntary work. To promote 'volunteerism' in the civil service and as one of the events in celebration of the 5th anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), the Civil Service Bureau and SWD launched the Civil Service Volunteer Work Programme in June 2002. The programme aims at encouraging bureaux and departments to set up volunteer teams and utilize their spare time to help those in need. Apart from encouraging staff to bring in their families and friends to participate in

voluntary work, retired civil servants are also welcome. These volunteer teams have provided different forms of volunteer services, for example, visiting the elderly and organizing activities for the disabled persons, running information technology courses for the public and civic education programmes for children. As at May 2005, some 60 bureau/departmental volunteer teams have registered with SWD.

4. For both serving and retired officers, they are welcome to participate in the activities organized by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or the volunteer teams of their respective bureaux/departments. Retired civil servants may also join the retiree associations, many of which are actively engaged in voluntary work. Since retired civil servants are not required to obtain approval to do voluntary work, we do not maintain a record of their involvement in voluntary service.

Giving recognition to the work of volunteers

5. Generally speaking, any member of the public who has rendered outstanding public and community services including voluntary services may be considered for an award under the Honours and Awards System of the HKSAR.

6. A separate system for giving recognition to the good work of individual volunteers and participating organizations has also been established by the Steering Committee on Promotion of Volunteer Service under the purview of SWD. Under this system, volunteers and organizations will be awarded Certificates (Gold/Silver/Bronze) according to the number of service hours accumulated annually. Other awards include the Award for the Highest Number of Hours Served and the Long Service Award, which are presented on a yearly basis.

7. In addition, certain voluntary organizations have established their own award systems in order to promote participation in volunteer work. For instance, we understand that the Agency for Volunteer Service is considering having a separate category of award for civil service retirees participating in voluntary services.

8. Within the civil service, and as a measure to boost enrolment, it is a common practice in bureaux/departments to publicize, in the bureau/departmental newsletters, participation of civil servants in voluntary

work and their achievements. Participation of civil servants and retired officers in voluntary work is also given due publicity and recognition on a service wide basis through the Civil Service Newsletter.

Concluding remarks

9. A number of avenues exist for giving due recognition to the exemplary contributions of individual Hong Kong citizens engaged in community service, including civil servants and retirees (please see paragraphs 5 to 7 above).

10. We have examined whether another commendation scheme should be developed by CSB to give credit to the good deeds of retired civil servants in volunteer and charitable activities. Over the years, SWD has developed (in conjunction with NGOs) an integrated platform for volunteers to look for service opportunities, to participate in volunteer services, and to receive awards and recognition. That platform is expanding. We believe the purpose of having an added avenue for giving proper recognition to the good deeds of civil servants as volunteers and individual citizens, including serving officers or retirees, would be well served by an award scheme built on that expanding platform.

11. We will continue to work closely with SWD and NGOs in encouraging serving and retired civil servants to engage in voluntary work for the community.