

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)957/05-06
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/PS/1

Panel on Public Service

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 16 January 2006 at 10:45 am
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

Members present : Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP (Chairman)
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon Bernard CHAN, JP
Hon Howard YOUNG, SBS, JP
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH
Hon KWONG Chi-kin

Member absent : Hon LI Fung-ying, BBS, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun, SBS, JP

Public officers attending : Agenda Item III

Mr Joseph W P WONG, GBS, JP
Secretary for the Civil Service

Mrs Rebecca LAI, JP
Permanent Secretary for the Civil Service

Mr K S SO
Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service (2)

Agenda Item IV

Mrs Rebecca LAI, JP
Permanent Secretary for the Civil Service

Mr K S SO
Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service (2)

Mr Albert LAI, JP
Deputy Head
Central Policy Unit

Mr Nicholas CHAN
Acting Research Director
Central Policy Unit

Agenda Item V

Mrs Rebecca LAI, JP
Permanent Secretary for the Civil Service

Mr Christopher WONG
Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service (3)

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

Staff in attendance : Ms Rosalind MA
Senior Council Secretary (1)8

Ms Guy YIP
Council Secretary (1)1

Mr Justin TAM
Council Secretary (1)3

Ms May LEUNG
Legislative Assistant (1)8

I. Confirmation of minutes of meeting

(LC Paper No. CB(1)674/05-06 — Minutes of meeting on 21 November 2005)

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2005 were confirmed.

II. Date of next meeting and items for discussion

(LC Paper No. CB(1)675/05-06(01) — List of outstanding items for discussion)

LC Paper No. CB(1)675/05-06(02) — List of follow-up actions)

Meeting in February 2006

2. The Chairman informed members that the Administration proposed that the following items be discussed at the next regular meeting:

- (a) Civil service establishment and related matters; and
- (b) Civil service-related issues featuring in the 2006 Budget Speech.

3. On paragraph 2(a) above, members noted that the Administration would brief the Panel on the progress in containing the civil service establishment and implementation of the civil service recruitment freeze. The Administration would also include in this item its response to the concern expressed by Ms LI Fung-ying, Mr WONG Kwok-hing and Mr KWONG Chi-kin, in their joint letter dated 11 October 2005 to the Chairman of the Panel (LC Paper No. CB(1)36/05-06(01)), on the impact of the civil service recruitment freeze on disciplined services departments. As regards paragraph 2(b), members noted that the Administration would brief the Panel on the civil service-related issues which might feature in the 2006 Budget Speech. Members agreed that the two items be discussed at the regular meeting in February.

4. The Chairman drew members' attention that as the Financial Secretary would present the Budget on 22 February 2006, the regular meeting of the Panel in February 2006 had been re-scheduled for Tuesday, 28 February at 2:30 pm.

Other discussion item

5. Members noted that in response to Mr LEE Cheuk-yan's earlier request for discussing the feasibility of implementing a five-day week in the civil service at a meeting of the Panel in the current session, the Administration had proposed to present a paper to the Panel on "Flexible work arrangement in the Government" in May 2006. Given the recent announcement by the Chief Executive (CE) at the Legislative Council (LegCo) Question and Answer Session held on 12 January 2006

that the Administration would set up a working group to examine the proposal and implementation details of introducing a five-day week in the civil service with effect from 1 July 2006, members urged the Administration to brief the Panel on the proposal as early as practicable, preferably before May 2006.

6. In response, the Secretary for the Civil Service (SCS) advised that CE had decided to set up a working group comprising representatives of the Civil Service Bureau (CSB), the Treasury Branch of the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau and the Efficiency Unit, to examine and work out the implementation details of the proposal, with a view to implementing the five-day week arrangement in the civil service with effect from 1 July 2006. The working group would look into the operational and staffing arrangements required to support the proposal. It would shortly invite Heads of Department to identify the essential services for continued operation on Saturdays and to draw up appropriate implementation plans. Civil servants would be consulted through the established departmental consultative channels on the proposal. SCS pointed out that the proposed five-day week arrangement would not be made mandatory for the private sector firms to implement. As it would take time for the working group to examine the proposal and for staff consultation, SCS said that it remained the Administration's plan to brief the Panel on the subject at its meeting to be held on 15 May 2006. Nevertheless, SCS undertook to review the situation in March and consider whether the briefing for the Panel could be advanced to April.

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III. Review of fringe benefit type of civil service allowances

(LC Paper No. CB(1)675/05-06(03) — Paper provided by the Administration)

LC Paper No. CB(1)675/05-06(04) — Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat)

7. The Chairman drew members' attention that the written submission from the Police Force Council (PFC) Staff Side was tabled at the meeting.

(Post-meeting note: The written submission from PFC Staff Side was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)727/05-06(01) on 17 January 2006.)

Briefing by the Administration

8. At the invitation of the Chairman, the Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service (2) (DSCS2) briefed members on the progress of the review of fringe benefit type of civil service allowances. DSCS2 advised that the Administration had issued a consultation note on 22 September 2005 containing the revised package of change proposals for staff consultation. A copy of the note had also been sent to LegCo Members on the same day (LC Paper No. CB(1)2298/04-05). At the end of the consultation period on 21 November 2005, the Administration had received a total of

28 submissions from individual staff and staff associations. A summary of the specific comments on individual proposals with the Administration's preliminary response and copies of all the submissions received were in Annexes II and III respectively to the paper provided by the Administration. DSCS2 advised that the Administration's assessment was that apart from some individual submissions, civil servants in general considered the latest package of change proposals mild and acceptable. He then referred members to paragraphs 7 and 8 of the paper provided by the Administration for a brief account of the views and concerns expressed by central consultative councils (CCCs) and staff associations on the change proposals.

9. On the way forward, DSCS2 informed members that the Administration had forwarded the submissions received during the consultation period together with the Administration's preliminary response to the comments raised therein to the advisory bodies on civil service salaries and conditions of service for advice. Taking into account the comments received during the consultation period, the views of the advisory bodies and all relevant considerations, the Administration would draw up its final proposals and seek the necessary approval from the Finance Committee (FC) before implementation. The Administration's target was to implement the change measures as early as possible in 2006.

Discussion

10. Referring to the written submission from the PFC Staff Side tabled at the meeting, Mr KWONG Chi-kin pointed out that the PFC Staff Side was very dissatisfied with the way CSB had presented the comments received on the change proposals in its information paper to the Panel. Mr KWONG said that representatives from the PFC Staff Side had approached him on 13 January expressing their dissatisfaction that CSB had ignored the opposition raised by the four Police Force associations (i.e. the Superintendents' Association, the Hong Kong Police Inspectors' Association, the Overseas Inspectors Association and the Junior Police Officers Association) and the Police Force Management against the change proposals. The PFC Staff Side considered that the proposals represented a major reduction in the conditions of service of police officers and were unlawful, unfair and unacceptable. Their views were echoed by the Police Force Management in the detailed submission to CSB. However, the views of the Police Force Management were not mentioned in the main content of the paper provided by CSB to the Panel. In this connection, Mr KWONG queried whether and how the Administration would respond to the strong views of the PFC Staff Side and the Police Force Management.

11. In response, DSCS2 said that the Administration noted the written submission from the PFC Staff Side to the Panel. He also confirmed that CSB had received a detailed submission dated 21 November 2005 from the Police Force Management, a copy of which was attached for members' information at Annex III to the paper provided by CSB. DSCS2 explained that the submission from the Police Force Management sought to provide the Administration with the staff concerns and views on the change proposals collected through departmental consultative channels,

as well as to set out the strong staff sentiment about the proposals. While the Police Force Management had urged the Administration to take full account of the staff sentiment and comments and make accurate assessment regarding the significant impacts on staff morale and motivation when drawing up the final proposals, it did not express an opposing stance to the change proposals. Referring to paragraphs 7 and 8 of the paper provided by CSB, DSCS2 clarified that while CSB had provided an overall assessment of staff comments in the submissions in paragraph 7, it had also given an account of the comments received from the staff side, in particular from CCCs, in paragraph 8. The PFC Staff Side's views and their opposition to the change proposals were highlighted in paragraph 8, just as the views expressed by the other CCCs.

12. As to the legal basis of the change proposals, DSCS2 referred to paragraph 10 of the paper and pointed out that as advised by the Department of Justice, the conditions of service of civil servants might be varied, though not without limits, under the Basic Law and the Government's contractual arrangement with civil servants. It should be noted that the Memorandum on Conditions of Service issued to all civil servants, including police officers, on appointment included a standard variation clause, whereby the Government reserved the right to alter any of the officer's terms of appointment and/or conditions of service should the Government consider that to be necessary.

13. While the Administration might have legal basis for altering the conditions of service of civil servants, Mr KWONG Chi-kin was concerned how the Administration would manage and contain the staff sentiment in the police force and whether it had assessed the impact of the change proposals on staff morale. Mr KWONG also pointed out that while the Administration had provided members with a copy of the submission from the Police Force Management, it had not given its response in full to the comments raised in the submission. The Chairman shared Mr KWONG's view.

14. In reply, DSCS2 explained that CSB had prepared a summary of the specific comments made in submissions from departmental management, staff bodies and individual officers together with CSB's preliminary response in Annex II to its paper. He stressed that in taking forward the review, CSB abided by the guiding principles of lawfulness, reasonableness and fairness. CSB fully appreciated that certain staff who would be directly affected by the change proposals were, understandably, more concerned about the possible impact of the change proposals on them. It had forwarded the submissions together with its preliminary response to the comments raised therein to the advisory bodies on civil service salary and conditions of service for advice. Taking into account the comments received, the views of the advisory bodies and all relevant consideration (such as whether the payment of the allowances was in line with present day circumstances, impact on staff morale, etc.), CSB would draw up a set of final proposals which would be acceptable to the majority of the civil servants and the community at large.

15. SCS drew members' attention to the background of the comprehensive review of civil service allowances. He pointed out that the administration of civil service allowances had been a heated topic repeatedly raised by Members in recent years at meetings of the LegCo and its committees, including meetings of this Panel and special meetings of FC to examine the annual estimates of expenditure. Since the commencement of the phase one review of fringe benefit type of allowances in 2004, the Administration had gauged staff views on the possible changes and noted that some civil service staff bodies had strong views in this regard. The review had subsequently been withheld in view of the Government's appeal to the Court of Final Appeal (CFA) in relation to the pay adjustment ordinances. Based on the legal principles established by CFA's judgment in the pay adjustment ordinances, the Administration had subsequently examined the permissible scope for changes to the fringe benefits. Having taken into account staff views expressed during the phase one review, the Administration had then revised the change proposals and released them for consultation in September 2005. SCS pointed out that as reflected from the comments from staff and the public, the latest package of change proposals were generally considered mild and acceptable. SCS stressed that the Administration had taken forward the review in a transparent and open manner. The Administration would draw up the final package of change proposals having regard to all relevant factors, including staff comments, impact on civil service staff morale, and whether the proposals could adequately respond to calls from the LegCo and the community for modernizing the administration of civil service allowances. SCS reiterated that the implementation of the final package of change proposals would be subject to FC's approval.

16. In concluding the discussion, the Chairman advised that the Administration would brief the Panel on the final package of change proposals under the review in April before submitting the proposals to FC for approval.

IV. Proposal to create one directorate post to provide support to the expanded Commission on Strategic Development

(LC Paper No. CB(1)675/05-06(05) — Paper provided by the Administration

LC Paper No. CB(1)675/05-06(06) — Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat)

Briefing by the Administration

17. At the invitation of the Chairman, the Deputy Head, Central Policy Unit (DH/CPU) briefed members on the Administration's staffing proposal to strengthen the Secretariat of the Commission on Strategic Development (the Commission) to provide the necessary support to the expanded Commission. DH/CPU said that at present, the Commission Secretariat comprised seven officers, i.e. the Secretary to the Commission (Administrative Officer Staff Grade B (AOSGB) (D3)), a Government

Town Planner (GTP) (D2) and five supporting non-directorate officers. Following the Chief Executive (CE)'s announcement in his Policy Address on 12 October 2005 that the membership of the Commission would be substantially expanded, 152 non-official members had been appointed to and four committees set up under the Commission. To support effectively the operation of the expanded Commission, the Administration proposed to create one permanent directorate post of AOSGC (D2), designated as Assistant Secretary to the Commission, to strengthen the Commission Secretariat with immediate effect subject to the FC's approval.

Discussion

Roles and functions of the Commission

18. Pointing out that the major function of the Commission was to advise CE on Hong Kong's long-term development needs and goals, Mr WONG Kwok-hing expressed concern about overlaps in the roles and functions of the Commission with those of policy bureaux, other advisory bodies, as well as Panels of Legislative Council (LegCo). In this connection, Mr WONG enquired whether and how issues discussed and views expressed at meetings of the Commission would be effectively conveyed to the relevant policy bureaux, advisory bodies and LegCo Panels.

19. In reply, DH/CPU explained that the Commission provided a platform for talents from different sectors of the community to study and provide advice on issues of significant impact on the long-term development of Hong Kong. Given the clearly defined mandate of the Commission, there was no overlapping in the roles and functions of the Commission with policy bureaux or other advisory bodies. As a matter of fact, CE had clarified on a number of occasions that the Commission would not replace the role of any existing policy bureaux or advisory bodies. DH/CPU also pointed out that the Commission Secretariat would convey views expressed at meetings of the Commission to relevant bureaux/departments as well as advisory bodies for information or follow-up. In the event that the issues discussed were relevant to the subjects for consultation with LegCo Panels, the Secretariat would also arrange to convey the views expressed at meetings of the Commission to the relevant Panels. To facilitate communication between the Commission and the LegCo, a standing arrangement had recently been made for the provision of agendas and papers of the Commission and its four committees to LegCo Members for information.

Justifications for the staffing proposal

20. Mr Howard YOUNG appreciated the increase in workload of the Secretariat arising from the expansion in the membership of the Commission and the setting up of the four committees. However, he pointed out that civil service directorate establishment had been kept under close scrutiny by LegCo Members in recent years, and that the Administration had provided, at Members' request, a paper to the Establishment Subcommittee (ESC) in November 2005, giving an overview of the establishment position of civil service directorate posts and the posts being planned

for creation and deletion in the 2005-06 legislative session (ECI(2005-06)6). Responding to Mr YOUNG's enquiry, the Permanent Secretary for the Civil Service (PSCS) confirmed that the current staffing proposal had been included in the paper provided to the ESC.

21. Mr Howard YOUNG said that while he supported the staffing proposal in principle to provide the necessary support to the expanded Commission, he considered that the need for keeping the post on a long-term basis should be reviewed in due course, having regard to any changes in workload of the Commission Secretariat upon the expiry of the current term of office of the Commission members on 30 June 2007 or the dissolution of any of the four committees under the Commission. In this connection, Mr YOUNG enquired whether the four committees would operate on a long-term basis, or would dissolve upon completion of the studies they were tasked to conduct.

22. Referring to Enclosure 2 to the paper provided by the Administration on the terms of reference of the four committees under the Commission, DH/CPU pointed out that the work of the committees covered a wide range of important issues relating to Hong Kong's long-term development. While the current term of office of the Commission members would last until 30 June 2007, the Administration considered it appropriate to make staffing arrangements for the Secretariat on a long-term basis. DH/CPU assured members that the Administration would review the staffing requirements for the Commission Secretariat in due course and report any changes to the LegCo.

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23. Given that the major functions of the Commission were to conduct studies and give advice to CE on different issues but not to involve in actual decision-making or policy formulation, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong and Mr LEE Cheuk-yan queried the need for the Commission to be supported by three directorate officers, i.e. the proposed permanent AOSGC (D2) post as Assistant Secretary to the Commission and the existing two directorate posts (the Secretary to the Commission and GTP at D3 and D2 levels respectively). Mr CHEUNG was of the view that as the Commission Secretariat would only be required to service 24 meetings each year, it should be able to cope with the increased workload with its existing directorate staff and some additional non-directorate staff. In this connection, he pointed out that some of the duties of the proposed Assistant Secretary post, such as organizing the logistics of the four committees and keeping proper records of committee meetings, could be taken up by non-directorate officers. Both Mr CHEUNG and Mr LEE considered that the proposed creation of the AOSGC post was not justified and was a waste of public resources.

24. In reply, DH/CPU explained that apart from providing support at committee meetings, the Commission Secretariat had to undertake a wide range of duties to facilitate the exchange of views between committee members outside the meetings through various channels such as e-mails. Quoting the preparatory work for the first meeting of the Committee on Governance and Political Development as an example,

DH/CPU pointed out that the Commission Secretariat had liaised with each committee member before the meeting to solicit their input for the items for discussion. As members of the Commission were prominent figures in different sectors of the community, it was considered appropriate for the liaison work to be taken up by an officer at the directorate level. At present, the Secretary to the Commission was supported at the directorate level by GTP (D2). The latter's input laid in the professional aspects of development trends and demographic issues which had impact on Hong Kong. Given that the expanded Commission involved mainly additional work at the policy level, the Secretary to the Commission needed one more directorate officer to assist him in providing effective support to the expanded Commission. Having regard to the wide range and complexity of the work involved, and the status of the Commission as the Government's most important advisory body, the Administration proposed to create a permanent post of AOSGC as the Assistant Secretary to the Commission.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration subsequently confirmed that the Commission Secretariat had liaised with each committee member before the second meeting of the Committee on Governance and Political Development to solicit their input for the items for discussion.)

25. As the Commission was mainly an advisory body, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong and Mr LEE Cheuk-yan were not convinced of the need for the Commission to be supported by three directorate officers. In their view, the liaison work by phone and by e-mail could be undertaken by non-directorate officers. In this connection, Mr LEE considered that the Administration should not adopt a rank-conscious approach in the deployment of officers for undertaking liaison and coordination work. Noting that the proposed post would also be required to undertake policy research and analysis, Mr LEE considered it more appropriate for research officers to perform such duties. Mr CHEUNG shared Mr LEE's view.

26. DH/CPU clarified that undertaking policy research and analysis was only one of the duties of the proposed Assistant Secretary post. The post-holder was required to assist the Secretary to the Commission in providing secretariat and administrative support to the expanded Commission, such as preparing papers for the Commission's committees. The creation of research officer posts could not meet the demand for such services.

27. Given that the Commission was being supported by two directorate officers, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong and Mr LEE Cheuk-yan maintained their view that it was not justified to create an additional directorate post. Mr CHEUNG also queried whether the staffing proposal had been critically examined before its submission to the LegCo for consideration.

28. In response, PSCS assured members that all staffing proposals were subject to strict internal scrutiny before their submission to the LegCo for consideration. In scrutinizing staffing proposals, the Administration was mindful of the need to ensure

the effective use of public resources and to address the concerns of LegCo Members in this regard. In general, the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) would critically examine the operational requirement of every staffing proposal in terms of workload, job nature and level of responsibility of the posts on the basis of the job descriptions. CSB would only give its support in principle to the proposals which were fully justified. Moreover, the Treasury Branch of the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau would also vet the submission of staffing proposals from departments/bureaux prior to consultation with relevant Panels and before seeking the endorsement of ESC and approval of FC. As regards the current staffing proposal, PSCS referred members to the duties and responsibilities of the proposed Assistant Secretary post set out in Enclosure 4 to the paper provided by the Administration. She pointed out that in addition to providing support services including meeting logistics and record keeping, the post-holder would also be required to perform a wide range of complex duties, such as liaising with government bureaux/departments and other organizations in coordinating issues for discussion by the Commission's committees and in following up their advice and recommendations. All these duties required an officer of high ranking to perform. The Administration therefore considered it appropriate to pitch the proposed Assistant Secretary post at D2 level.

29. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong was of the view that, despite the procedures involved in the internal vetting, the support of CE was the prime determining factor in the Administration's consideration of the current staffing proposal. In response, PSCS reiterated that all staffing proposals were subject to strict internal scrutiny in which the operational need of the posts concerned would be critically examined. There was no question of staffing requirement being determined based on senior official's personal opinion. By way of illustration, PSCS advised that the original staffing proposals to provide support for the expanded Commission set out in the paper provided to the ESC in November 2005 included two proposals, namely, the proposed upgrading of the post of the Secretary to the Commission from D3 to D4 level and the proposed creation of the Assistant Secretary post at D2 level. Having critically examined the case during the internal scrutiny process, the Administration had finally decided not to pursue the upgrading proposal. Pointing out that some of the D4 posts in the Government were serving as Head of Departments and responsible for a full range of complex duties, Mr CHEUNG did not consider it justified to upgrade the post of the Secretary to the Commission to D4 level.

30. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong also queried the need for creating the proposed D2 post on a permanent basis. Given that the functions of the Commission might change after the expiry of the current term of office of the CE and Commission members on 30 June 2007, he considered it not justified to create at this stage additional posts on a permanent basis. In response, PSCS advised that during the internal scrutiny process, the need or otherwise for the proposed D2 post on a permanent basis had been examined. Given the important role of the Commission in enhancing the transparency and public participation in policy formulation for the future development of Hong Kong, PSCS said that the Commission would exist on a

long-term basis and permanent staffing support to its Secretariat should therefore be required.

31. Referring to his personal experience as the chairman of the Elderly Commission, the Chairman opined that officers at the directorate level could provide more effective support to the commission chairman in various aspects of work, such as coordinating subjects for discussion and following up the progress of issues with relevant bureaux and departments.

32. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong requested the Administration to re-examine the justifications of the staffing proposal and explore alternative options for providing support to the expanded Commission. In his view, it was more appropriate to create non-directorate posts, such as research officer and secretary posts, to undertake the required duties. Mr CHEUNG also stressed that the additional posts should not be created on a permanent basis.

33. PSCS took note of members' views and concerns over the staffing proposal and undertook to consider Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's request. At the request of the Chairman, PCSC undertook to inform the Panel of any changes made to the present staffing proposal before submitting the proposal to ESC for consideration.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration's response in respect of paragraph 33 above was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)818/05-06 on 1 February 2006.)

Way forward

34. In concluding the discussion, the Chairman advised that the Administration intended to submit the staffing proposal to ESC for endorsement at its meeting scheduled for 8 February 2006. Views expressed by members at this Panel meeting would be referred to ESC for information. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong requested the attendance of government officials at the relevant FC meeting to respond to members' questions on the staffing proposal. The Chairman suggested that members might put up such requests at the relevant ESC meeting or before the relevant FC meeting, if they so wished.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration subsequently withdrew the staffing proposal at the ESC meeting held on 8 February 2006 in view of members' strong views against the proposal.)

V. Enhanced training for civil servants

(LC Paper No. CB(1)675/05-06(07) — Paper provided by the Administration)

Briefing by the Administration

35. At the invitation of the Chairman, the Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service (3) (DSCS3) briefed members on the measures taken to enhance the training and development (T&D) programmes for civil servants. DSCS3 advised that at present, bureaux/departments provided vocational training to meet the job-specific needs of staff while CSB and bureaux/departments complemented each other in the provision of generic training. Pointing out that the Administration had presented to the Panel an overview of the national studies programmes and activities offered to civil servants at the last meeting on 19 December 2005, DSCS3 highlighted for members' information the other T&D activities CSB was engaged in, as follows:

- (a) Development and learning opportunities for senior executives
- A one-week "Leadership Enhancement and Development" programme led by a team of faculty from the Harvard University was offered to directorate officers.
 - A 3-week programme called "Leadership in Action" was offered to senior professionals with potential for advancement.
 - Advanced management workshops of about one day or 1½ days led by prominent speakers from various fields.
 - Selected officers were sponsored to attend executive development programmes at renowned overseas institutes.
 - The on-line resource centre, namely the "Leaders' Corner", had been revamped and consolidated for senior staff to extract useful tools and information for their work and continuous development.
- (b) Development and learning opportunities for staff at other levels
- Close to 250 items of web courses and job aids were offered through the enhanced "Cyber Learning Centre Plus" website. CSB planned to add at least another 20 items during 2006-07, particularly in the areas of Putonghua, English language and information technology.
 - To encourage civil servants to pursue continuous learning to enhance their knowledge, personal effectiveness and qualifications, the Administration had launched training sponsorship schemes to provide financial assistance to the civil servants concerned. CSB planned to expand the coverage of the two schemes launched in 2005 by increasing the number of recognized courses. In working out other enhancement measures for the schemes, CSB would take into consideration possible changes in civil servants' interests and habits of pursuing further studies if the five-day week arrangement was implemented in the civil service.
 - Classroom training on a broad range of subjects were offered by the Civil Service Training and Development Institute (CSTDI). Apart from courses to enhance language proficiency at different

levels to suit the needs of civil servants of different ranks and grades, CSB would enhance the classroom training by focusing on specific training needs, e.g. contract management, performance management and customer service, in 2006-07.

36. On the way forward, DSCS3 assured members that CSB would continue to strengthen and diversify the range of training opportunities open to civil servants through more systematic planning, encouraging wider use of e-learning, and helping departments to put the annual departmental T & D plans to good use.

Discussion

Training and development opportunities for senior directorate officers and professionals

37. Mr Howard YOUNG supported the provision of a wide range of training programmes for senior executives in the civil service to broaden their horizons. In this connection, Mr YOUNG suggested that apart from offering training programmes in collaboration with universities and institutes in the United States, the United Kingdom and the Mainland, the Administration could make full use of other available training resources offered by renowned overseas institutes, such as “INSEAD”, a famous business school established in Europe.

38. The Permanent Secretary for the Civil Service (PSCS) thanked Mr YOUNG for his suggestion and advised that the Administration had been making use of training programmes offered by “INSEAD”. She assured members that the Administration would continue to offer training opportunities to senior executives through suitable programmes run by different renowned overseas institutes, such as the seminars on specific topics offered by the “Salzburg Seminar”, an international institute in Europe. The seminars were in the form of five-day sessions with the objective of broadening and deepening perspectives to promote informed action and far-sighted decision-making among key professionals worldwide. Responding to Mr Howard YOUNG’s further enquiry, PSCS advised that the Government had access to up-to-date information on management programmes offered by major universities and institutes all over the world. She also pointed out that in addition to programmes on public administration, senior executives in the civil service also participated in general management programmes designed for senior executives in the private sector.

39. Pointing out that some senior officers at the directorate level or professional grades were not well-equipped of the required communications skills in handling media enquiries and were sometimes unable to apprehend public aspirations, the Chairman urged the Administration to consider providing tailor-made training programmes to enhance the competencies of senior officers in these aspects. In addition, for senior professionals, the Chairman suggested that training programmes be provided to enhance their communication and presentation skills, in particular in

answering questions from Members at committee meetings of LegCo or from the media in public forums. PSCS thanked the Chairman for his suggestions.

Training and development opportunities for staff at other levels

40. Mr KWONG Chi-kin and Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong opined that while officers at the senior ranks were provided with ample T&D opportunities, the training opportunities offered to civil servants of the lower and middle ranks appeared to be inadequate. They urged the Administration to provide more training programmes for staff of lower and middle ranks to enhance their knowledge and skills. In this connection, Mr KWONG considered that the Administration should consult staff associations/unions on the training needs of their members in the formulation of T&D plans. Mr CHEUNG shared his view.

41. In reply, PSCS explained that CSB and bureaux/departments complemented each other in the provision of training for civil servants. In general, vocational training designed to meet the job-specific needs of staff of certain grades or departments would be provided by the bureaux/departments. CSB would focus more on common needs across departments. Given the relatively smaller number of senior executives in individual departments, it would be more cost-effective for CSB to provide training programmes to meet their needs. As the paper provided a summary of the T&D activities that CSB was engaged in, the vocational programmes designed and provided by departments were not covered in the paper. PSCS said that a number of training opportunities were open to civil servants at other levels. For example, CSTDI had been assisting bureaux/departments in the development of e-learning resources and the enhancement of e-learning platforms so as to encourage more staff to take up learning on-line. In 2005, the Administration launched two training sponsorship schemes to provide financial assistance to frontline and junior civil servants who wished to pursue learning to enhance their knowledge, personal effectiveness and qualifications. In addition, CSTDI offered classroom training on a broad range of subject including language and communication.

42. As to members' concern about consultation with staff associations/unions, DSCS3 said that CSB requested departments to draw up annual T & D plans in consultation with their staff. Some departments had set up special working groups to examine the training needs of their staff in detail while others gauged the views of their staff members through their Departmental Consultative Committees. DSCS3 added that CSTDI partnered with departments in organizing regular seminars and workshops for experience sharing. Views of staff on their training needs could also be collected during these experience sharing sessions. DSCS3 assured members that there were channels for civil servants to give views on their training needs although their needs might not be fully met due to resources constraints. In this connection, he welcomed members' suggestions on training programmes for civil servants. PSCS also pointed out that the T&D opportunities offered to staff was an on-going topic of concern at meetings between the Administration and the staff sides of the four CCCs, in particular the Model Scale I Staff Consultative Council. She assured members that the Administration would collect staff views on T&D programmes as far as possible. As a matter of fact, the training sponsorship schemes for frontline and junior civil

servants were launched in response to staff views collected during meetings of the CCCs.

Enhanced e-learning resources

43. Noting that resources were provided to facilitate civil servants in e-learning, Mr Howard YOUNG pointed out that e-assessment was widely used in the private sector for staff to make on-line assessment of their learning progress. Mr YOUNG enquired whether such an assessment tool was also made available for civil servants. Mr YOUNG opined that as the implementation of the proposed five-day week in the civil service would give civil servants more free time during weekends to pursue continuous learning through the internet, the provision of e-assessment might be a further motivation in this regard.

44. In response, PSCS confirmed that e-assessment tool was currently made available to civil servants. Under the current arrangement, the Administration purchased a licence from the service providers which allowed a fixed number of users to log on the system for e-assessment. Interested civil servants would be able to use the tool under a quota system. PSCS assured members that the Administration would continue to facilitate e-learning in the civil service. Responding to Mr Howard YOUNG's further enquiry, PSCS advised that apart from the limited quotas for e-assessment allowed under a licence, there was no restriction on the time and location for civil servants to pursue e-learning through the internet.

Training and promotion

45. Mr KWONG Chi-kin enquired whether there was any relation between training and promotion. PSCS advised that in general, there was no direct relation between the two. While the attainment of professional qualifications might be the pre-requisite for advancement to certain ranks in some works or disciplined services departments, PSCS pointed out that for the majority of the civil service grades and ranks, training programmes attended by the officers during the appraisal period were included in the annual appraisal report as a record. In succession planning at the directorate level, officers with potential for advancement would be identified for participation in tailor-made training programmes to prepare them for taking up responsibilities at a higher level. PSCS stressed that the training opportunities were offered to better equip the officers for higher responsibilities but should not be taken as a guarantee or pre-requisite for promotion.

VI. Any other business

46. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:35 pm.

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