

**立法會**  
**Legislative Council**

LC Paper No. CB(1)372/06-07  
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**Panel on Public Service**

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

**Members present** : Hon Howard YOUNG, SBS, JP (Chairman)  
Hon LI Fung-ying, BBS, JP (Deputy Chairman)  
Hon Margaret NG  
Hon James TO Kun-sun  
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong  
Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun, SBS, JP  
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP  
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH  
Hon KWONG Chi-kin

**Member absent** : Hon LEE Cheuk-yan

**Public officers attending** : Miss Denise YUE, GBS, JP  
Secretary for the Civil Service

Mr Andrew H Y WONG, JP  
Permanent Secretary for the Civil Service

Miss Jennifer MAK, JP  
Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service 1

Mr K S SO, JP  
Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service 2

Mrs Rosanna URE, JP  
Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service 3

Mrs Margaret CHAN  
Acting Director of General Grades  
Civil Service Bureau

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

**Staff in attendance :** Ms Pauline NG  
Assistant Secretary General 1

Mr Andy LAU  
Chief Council Secretary (1)2

Mr Noel SUNG  
Senior Council Secretary (1)4

Mr Justin TAM  
Council Secretary (1)3

Ms May LEUNG  
Legislative Assistant (1)8

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Action

**I. Briefing by the Secretary for the Civil Service on the policy initiatives of the Civil Service Bureau featuring in the Chief Executive's 2006-07 Policy Address**

(LC Paper No. CB(1)39/06-07(01) — Paper provided by the Civil Service Bureau

Relevant documents

- (a) Address by the Chief Executive at the Legislative Council meeting on 11 October 2006 — "Proactive, Pragmatic, Always People First"; and
- (b) The 2006-07 Policy Address — "Policy Agenda".)

Briefing by the Secretary for the Civil Service

The Secretary for the Civil Service (SCS) referred members to the paper which set out the Civil Service Bureau (CSB)'s plan to follow up the five on-going initiatives on the management of the civil service under the chapter of "Effective Governance" of the 2006-07 Policy Agenda. She pointed out that all along, the civil service was the pillar of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government, assisting the Government-of-the-day in implementing various policy initiatives and achieving effective governance. The civil service consisted of

experienced, conscientious and impartial officers who were appointed on a long term basis to ensure continuity in the governance of Hong Kong. Over the years, the civil service had served with dedication in providing efficient and quality services to the community. In this regard, SCS expressed appreciation to her colleagues in the civil service for their efforts.

## Discussion

### *Development of an improved civil service pay adjustment mechanism*

2. Ms LI Fung-ying noted that CSB aimed to complete the Pay Level Survey (PLS) field work within 2006 with a view to considering the application of the survey results in early 2007. Given that the PLS had taken longer time than initially expected, Ms LI was concerned about the delay on the timing of the next round of civil service pay adjustment exercise.

3. In response, SCS explained that while she and her colleagues were anxious to complete the PLS as soon as possible, they were mindful of the importance of staff consultation in taking the survey forward. In fact, some staff associations had asked for more time to consult their members at various stages of the PLS. Based on the current progress, CSB hoped to conclude the discussion with the staff side on how the findings of the PLS should be applied to the civil service by the end of the first quarter of 2007. If it was considered necessary to adjust civil service pay as a result of the PLS, the adjustments would probably be implemented in the second or third quarter of 2007. Responding to Ms LI Fung-ying's enquiry, SCS advised that as the purpose of the PLS was to find out whether civil service pay was comparable to private sector pay, no pay adjustment for the civil service could be considered before the completion of the PLS.

### *Containing the size of the civil service*

4. Pointing out that there was a gap of several thousand posts between the establishment and strength of the civil service, Mr KWONG Chi-kin was concerned about the impact of the large number of vacancies on the operation of the departments concerned, especially the disciplined services departments which required considerable time for training new recruits before they could take up their duties. He urged CSB to consider how the situation could be improved.

5. SCS explained that a gap between the establishment and strength of the civil service would exist at any one time for a number of reasons. For example, some vacant posts were not filled pending the completion of recruitment exercises; some were retained for officers who were being tried out in another grade and would only be filled after the officers concerned had been confirmed in their new grade; and some were retained to accommodate officers on overseas training, etc. Moreover, some vacant posts were not filled because of the general recruitment freeze introduced for the civil service since 2003. However, where operational needs so warranted, bureaux or departments might apply for exemption from the general recruitment freeze from a

panel co-chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration and the Financial Secretary (the high-level panel). In the case of disciplined services departments, given the large intake required each year, the high-level panel had given approval, where justified, to these departments conducting open recruitment for a stated number of posts in the disciplined grades in a fiscal year. This arrangement had enabled the departments concerned to better synchronize the recruitment process and the time required for training of new recruits. Since 2003, the high-level panel had granted exceptional approval for disciplined services departments to conduct open recruitment to fill a total of about 4 500 to 4 800 posts. SCS also informed members that CSB was reviewing whether the general recruitment freeze and the existing mechanism for applying exemptions should continue to apply. CSB would report to the Panel, after completion of the review by the end of the 2006-2007 financial year, on the outcome of the review and proposed policy changes, if any.

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6. Mr KWONG Chi-kin welcomed the review initiated by CSB. He considered that since the Government had almost achieved its target of reducing the civil service establishment to 160 000 posts, consideration should be given to lifting the general recruitment freeze. Moreover, the Government should not implement any new outsourcing programmes so as to maintain the stability and morale of the civil service. In this connection, Mr KWONG pointed out that some civil servants in the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) had conveyed to him their worries about losing their jobs if the department continued to outsource its services. He requested CSB to look into the issue. SCS agreed to look into the situation of LCSD and inform Mr KWONG of the outcome.

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*Employment of non-civil service contract (NCSC) staff*

7. Mr WONG Kwok-hing was pleased to note SCS's opening remarks that the civil service was the pillar of the Government and civil servants were appointed on a long term basis to ensure continuity in the governance of Hong Kong. In this connection, Mr WONG expressed his grave concern about the NCSC staff in various government departments who were not appointed on a long-term basis. Quoting the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) as an example, he pointed out that over 100 frontline staff had been performing the most repulsive work such as exhumation, eradication of rodents and mosquitoes, etc. As far as he knew, the staff concerned had been employed on contract terms for at least eight years, and in one extreme case, the staff had his contract renewed for 23 times with each contract ranging from three months to about a year. Mr WONG considered such arrangement unfair to the staff concerned, as they were required to perform duties to meet long-term service needs but appointed on short-term contracts. The lack of job security had given rise to their worries about income and prospects. While the staff concerned had expressed their worries to the Chief Executive (CE) at a forum held last year between the CE and the labour sector, their situation had not been improved so far. Mr WONG requested that the Administration should consider offering long-term appointments or contracts of longer durations, say three to five years, to the staff concerned.

8. In reply, SCS explained that the NCSC Staff Scheme was introduced in 1999

to enable Head of Departments (HoDs) to employ staff on fixed term contracts outside the civil service establishment to meet service needs that were short-term or required staff on a part-time basis, or where the mode of delivery of the service was under review or likely to be changed. The length of contract for NCSC staff should normally not exceed three years. Referring members to paragraph 7 of the paper provided by CSB, SCS pointed out that she had undertaken in March 2006 to conduct a special review of the NCSC staff situation on a department-by-department basis. Where it was established that civil servants instead of NCSC staff should be employed to meet specific service needs, CSB would devise appropriate measures with the bureaux and departments concerned while keeping the size of the overall civil service establishment under control. CSB would report the outcome to the Panel after completing the special review in December 2006. Regarding the frontline staff in FEHD mentioned by Mr WONG Kwok-hing, SCS undertook to clarify with FEHD on the employment terms and conditions of the staff concerned.

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9. Ms LI Fung-ying pointed out that apart from FEHD, Hongkong Post and LCSD also offered consecutive short-term contracts to NCSC staff. She considered such arrangement unfair to the staff concerned and that the NCSC Staff Scheme had been abused by government departments. SCS said that as the special review was still in progress, she could not agree at this stage that the NCSC Staff Scheme had been abused by government departments. She reiterated that CSB would report the outcome to the Panel after completing the special review.

*Training and development for civil servants*

10. Ms Margaret NG noted from paragraph 9 of the paper provided by CSB that continuous endeavours were made to broaden civil servants' exposure to the latest developments in the Mainland through training courses and exchange programmes, etc. In this connection, she requested CSB to provide details of the Civil Service Exchange Programme with the Mainland after the meeting, including the following information:

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- (a) Details of the arrangements for the attachment of 43 Hong Kong civil servants to Mainland government offices/departments, including the criteria for selection of civil servants for attachment, the grades and ranks of the civil servants involved, the Mainland government offices/departments to which the civil servants were attached, and the duration of attachment; and
- (b) Details of the arrangements for the secondment of 73 Mainland civil servants to the HKSAR Government, including the ranks of Mainland civil servants involved, the bureaux/departments to which the Mainland civil servants were seconded and the positions held by them, and the duration of the attachment.

11. SCS agreed to provide the information requested by Ms Margaret NG. Responding to Mr James TO's enquiry, SCS advised that disciplined services

departments, such as the Police Force, were involved in the Civil Service Exchange Programme with the Mainland. Mr TO was concerned that Mainland civil servants seconded to the Police Force in the HKSAR Government might have access to sensitive information. SCS assured members that departments participating in the Exchange Programme were fully aware of the need to safeguard the confidentiality of sensitive information and prevent leakage of such information. She undertook to provide, in the paper responding to Ms Margaret NG's request for information, the divisions or units of disciplined services departments involved in the Exchange Programme.

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12. Ms Margaret NG also requested CSB to provide the following information after the meeting:

- (a) Details of the thematic seminars, customized programmes meeting specific needs of departments, and induction seminars for new appointees to enhance civil servants' understanding of the Basic Law, including the types of seminars/programmes, and the grades and ranks of the participants (paragraph 9 of the paper provided by CSB); and
- (b) Details of the various management-related training programmes (paragraph 10 of the paper provided by CSB).

13. Mrs Sophie LEUNG was of the view that with the development of new trends and technologies, CSB should consider providing appropriate training to facilitate civil servants to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and respond to changes. SCS pointed out that CSB regularly reviewed and updated the training programmes for civil servants with a view to equipping them with, among other things, the ability to respond to challenges and changes. Experts and scholars in the relevant fields were invited to conduct seminars or workshops for civil servants. Latest information of the new studies and technologies was posted on the civil service e-learning website for study by civil servants.

#### *Support provided to civil servants*

14. Ms LI Fung-ying pointed out that given the downsizing of the civil service and the growing public demand for better government services in recent years, civil servants had been facing heavy work pressure and some of them had committed suicide. Ms LI was concerned whether there were any support services provided to civil servants to assist them in coping with work pressure and stress.

15. SCS appreciated that civil servants, like employees of private companies, had been facing considerable work pressure. To assist civil servants to cope with this problem, CSB had engaged a non-government organization to provide professional counselling services on stress management. Civil servants who were in need of such services might discuss their problems with the counsellors through a hotline or an interview. Moreover, counselling and welfare units were set up in some departments like the Police Force to provide counselling services on stress or debt management to

their staff. New technologies were also introduced to help relieve the manpower requirements in some departments, e.g. introduction of the e-channels at the immigration control points, and efforts were made to streamline the procedures and restructure some departments for more effective deployment of staff.

*Commendation schemes for civil servants*

16. Referring to page 10 of the 2006-2007 Policy Agenda, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong supported the Government's initiative to encourage fuller use of various commendation schemes to recognize and motivate exemplary performance. In this connection, he pointed out that some professional bodies and trade associations, such as teachers and social workers associations, organized large scale presentation ceremonies and publicity exercise to commend their members, and depict the stories and achievements of individual members. In the case of the Mass Transit Railway Corporation, members of the public were involved in voting for the most outstanding staff members in the company. Mr CHEUNG suggested that CSB should consider organizing a large scale annual exercise to allow the public to participate in the selection of civil servants with outstanding performance for award of commendations, and enhance the publicity of the outstanding work of individual civil servants who had been awarded commendations. He also considered that the commended civil servants should be given not only a certificate but also a prize. He emphasized that due recognition should be given to the outstanding work of individual civil servants.

17. In response, the Permanent Secretary for the Civil Service (PSCS) advised that currently there were several commendation schemes for civil servants, including the CE's Honors and Awards System, SCS's Commendation Award Scheme (CAS), and the Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme, to cite a few. Through CAS, SCS would give recognition to selected civil servants for consistently outstanding performance. Apart from CAS, commendation letters were issued by the Head of Bureau/Department on the recommendation of a bureau/departmental Commendation Committee. PSCS pointed out that presentation ceremonies were organized and publicity was made for these commendation schemes. CSB was exploring the possibility of obtaining sponsorships from private organizations for the Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme, and would report to the Panel on further developments, if any. SCS also pointed out that the existing publicity arrangements were more focused on the commendation schemes than the individual officers commended. She agreed that public recognition of the outstanding work of civil servants would help boost civil service morale. She undertook to consider, in consultation with the staff side, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong's suggestions mentioned in paragraph 16 above.

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18. Mr TAM Yiu-chung considered that it might not be easy to attract media interest in the publicity for individual civil servants' outstanding work. SCS agreed that the publicity work had to be carefully mapped out to enhance its effectiveness. She pointed out that CSB had previously broadcast on the commercial television stations a series of twelve half-hour documentaries concerning the work of the civil service. The impact of the series on the public soon dissipated after the broadcast. In

order to strengthen the impact of the publicity programme, CSB would consider utilizing various means to publicise the good performance of civil servants or government departments in a cost-effective manner, such as using the free air time for government publicity on the commercial television stations.

*Civil service disciplinary mechanism and procedures*

19. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong noted from paragraph 15 of the paper provided by CSB that more bureaux and departments had made better use of the streamlined disciplinary procedures to deal with under-performance. He enquired whether the streamlined disciplinary procedures applied to all government bureaux and departments. SCS replied in the affirmative but pointed out that there was room for improvement in the implementation of the streamlined procedures by some departments. As such, workshops, seminars and experience sharing sessions were organized for departmental human resource management officers to facilitate the better use of the streamlined procedures.

20. Ms Margaret NG stressed the importance for civil servants to maintain their neutrality. In this connection, she expressed concern that the disciplinary mechanism might be exploited to exert political pressure on civil servants. SCS advised that when taking formal disciplinary action against a civil servant, the Administration would follow the procedures laid down in the Public Service (Disciplinary) Regulation made under the Public Service (Administration) Order. For rank-and-file staff and officers up to certain ranks in the disciplined services, provisions prescribed in the relevant disciplined services legislation would apply. Where applicable, the advice of the Public Service Commission, which was an independent statutory body, would be sought on the recommended level of punishment before it was awarded. If an officer felt aggrieved, he had a right to appeal to or petition the CE. He might also apply for judicial review.

21. Responding to Ms Margaret NG's enquiry, SCS advised that as far as she knew, there had not been any complaint from civil servants that they had been disciplined on political grounds. To address Ms NG's concern, SCS undertook to provide details of the disciplinary mechanism, including the measures and procedures in place to ensure the transparency and fairness of the civil service disciplinary mechanism and to ensure that the disciplinary mechanism would not be exploited to dismiss civil servants on political considerations.

22. Ms Margaret NG enquired about the number of officers dismissed from the civil service in recent years, and the circumstances under which a civil servant's pension would be forfeited. SCS advised that a dismissed civil servant would have his pension forfeited. The number of dismissal cases in the recent six years was summarized as follows:

Year	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Number of dismissal	64	63	66	51	50	25

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cases						
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Admin 23. At the request of Ms Margaret NG, SCS agreed to provide details of the dismissal cases since 2000-2001, including reasons for dismissal, and number and ranks of the officers involved.

24. Responding to Ms Margaret NG's further enquiry, SCS advised that civil servants were not allowed to have legal representation in attending disciplinary proceedings. However, the civil servants concerned might be accompanied by a friend who was not a practicing lawyer.

*Implementation of five-day week in the Government*

25. Mr TAM Yiu-chung stated that some civil servants had conveyed to him their concern that the implementation of five-day week in the Government had given rise to heavier workload as they were required to work longer hours in each working day and no additional manpower was provided. He requested that CSB should take into consideration staff feedback in its review of the five-day week arrangement.

Admin 26. SCS pointed out that the implementation of five-day week did not involve any change to the conditioned hours of service of individual staff. CSB would report to the Panel at the meeting to be held on 20 November 2006 on the progress of the implementation of the first phase of five-day week and the plan in taking forward the scheme.

**II. Any other business**

27. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:20 pm.