

Legislative Council Panel on Public Service

Civil Service Establishment and Related Matters

PURPOSE

This paper briefs Members on the progress of reducing the civil service establishment and related matters.

REDUCTION OF CIVIL SERVICE ESTABLISHMENT

2. In 2003, the Government set a target to reduce the civil service establishment to around 160 000 by the end of 2006-07. The Chief Executive reiterated this goal in his 2005-06 Policy Address. Through the implementation of the Second Voluntary Retirement (VR II) Scheme in 2003, the imposition of a general civil service open recruitment freeze since 1 April 2003, natural wastage and continuous efforts by bureaux and departments (B/Ds) to streamline and re-engineer their operations and mode of service delivery, the civil service establishment will be reduced to around 161 800¹ by 31 March 2007, thus broadly meeting the target set in 2003. Compared with early 2000 when the civil service establishment stood at around 198 000, some 36 200 posts (about 18%) will have been deleted over a period of seven years, and without causing any forced redundancy.

VR II Scheme

3. We launched the VR II Scheme in March 2003 under which staff of 229 designated grades with identified or anticipated surplus staff could apply to leave the civil service voluntarily with pension benefits and compensation. About 5 300 civil servants were approved to retire under the Scheme. All of them have retired, and a corresponding number of posts have been deleted.

¹ Including about 1 640 judicial officers, ICAC officers and locally engaged staff in the various Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices.

Targeted VR Schemes

4. Besides the service-wide VR II Scheme, a number of B/Ds have launched VR Schemes targeted at specific grades or ranks with existing or anticipated surplus staff since 2004. Housing Department launched a Voluntary Exit Scheme in July 2004 for surplus staff arising from the divestment of its retail and car-parking facilities. Education and Manpower Bureau has launched an Early Retirement Scheme for various teaching grades since 2005. The Office of Government Chief Information Officer also launched a Targeted VR Scheme in 2006 for the Computer Operator Grade. So far, a total of about 280 applications have been approved in these targeted VR schemes. As a general principle, the compensation package under each of these targeted VR schemes would not be more generous than that under the VR II Scheme.

General civil service open recruitment freeze

5. We have imposed a general open recruitment freeze of civil servants from 1 April 2003. Heads of Department/Grade (HoDs/HoGs) can apply for exemption from a Panel co-chaired by the Chief Secretary and the Financial Secretary with the Secretary for the Civil Service (SCS) as member (the CS/FS Panel). Each application is considered on its own merits. As at end-February 2007, the CS/FS Panel has granted exceptional approval for 28 B/Ds to conduct open recruitment to fill about 5 660 vacancies, of which about 90% (about 4 950 posts) are in the disciplined services departments. Details are provided at **Annex A**.

Open recruitment freeze of VR II grades

6. We have imposed a separate five-year open recruitment freeze for VR II grades, from March 2003 (when the VR II Scheme was launched) to March 2008. To meet new service needs that were not foreseen when the VR II Scheme was launched and to alleviate the manpower shortage problem in certain VR grades arising from unexpected wastage, we have allowed, since April 2006, a very limited number of VR grades to resume open recruitment before the expiry of the five-year recruitment freeze if approved by the CS/FS Panel. We informed Members in December 2006 that the CS/FS Panel had given approval for 13 VR grades to conduct open recruitment to fill a total of 628 vacancies in 2006-07 and 2007-08. Since then, the CS/FS Panel has further approved the open recruitment of a total of 60 vacancies

in the Labour Officer and Labour Inspector grades. Details of these 15 VR grades are given at **Annex B**.

PROJECTED CIVIL SERVICE ESTABLISHMENT BY END 2007-08

7. We see a continued need to maintain strict control on the size of the civil service. B/Ds will consider filling existing vacancies or creating and filling new posts only after critically reviewing their manpower situation and exploring the feasibility of other options for service delivery. However, in view of the increasing demand on public service, we consider it justified to allow a moderate increase of about 0.7% (about 1 100 posts) in the civil service establishment in 2007-08, i.e. from about 161 800 in end-March 2007 to about 162 900 in end-March 2008. Besides providing new and improved services, some of these posts will be created for replacing Non-Civil Service Contract (NCSC) positions the duties of which have been identified as more appropriate to be taken up by civil servants (see paragraph 9 below).

LIFTING OF GENERAL CIVIL SERVICE OPEN RECRUITMENT FREEZE

8. To complement the filling of vacancies and new posts to be created and to pre-empt possible succession problems arising in the civil service, we will resume open recruitment of civil servants from 1 April 2007. However, the recruitment freeze will continue to apply to the VR II grades, unless otherwise approved. We will shortly be issuing a circular to all B/Ds on the resumption of open recruitment.

REPLACEMENT OF NCSC POSITIONS

9. We informed Members in December 2006 that a special review conducted by CSB jointly with B/Ds indicated that some 4 000 NCSC staff are carrying out duties that should more appropriately be performed by civil servants. Their positions will be replaced over a period of time by filling existing and anticipated vacant civil service posts and, as necessary, creating new posts. In 2007-08, B/Ds concerned plan to replace half of these NCSC positions, of which around 1 300 will be through filling existing and anticipated vacancies (including re-grading of existing vacant posts) and another 700 will be through creating and

filling new civil service posts. B/Ds aim to replace the remaining around 2 000 NCSC positions by existing or new civil service posts in 2008-09. In implementing the phasing-out plan, B/Ds will take into consideration the end-dates of the current contracts of the relevant NCSC staff and the lead-time for filling the civil service posts by open recruitment. B/Ds will also ensure that information relating to recruitment of civil servants into their B/Ds is drawn to the attention of their serving NCSC staff.

WAY FORWARD

10. We will continue to keep the size of the civil service under control. We will ensure that new posts will only be created when the operational need is fully justified and when alternative means of service delivery, such as outsourcing, are considered not feasible. We will also continue to improve efficiency through streamlining, re-engineering, computerization, etc.

Civil Service Bureau
March 2007

**Posts that have been or will be filled by open recruitment with the approval of
the CS/FS Panel
(Position as at 28 February 2007)**

Bureau/ Department	Rank	No. of posts
Architectural Services Department	Assistant Landscape Architect / Landscape Architect	14
	Maintenance Surveyor	
	Assistant Maintenance Surveyor	
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department	Forestry Officer	8
	Veterinary Officer	
	Fisheries Officer	
Chief Secretary's Office	Deputy Head, Efficiency Unit	1
Civil Aviation Department	Senior Operations Officer (Senior Operations Inspector)	35
	Senior Operations Officer (Airworthiness)	
	Student Air Traffic Control Officer	
Civil Service Bureau	Administrative Officer	100
Commerce, Industry and Technology Bureau	Government Chief Information Officer	1
Correctional Services Department	Assistant Officer II	320
	Officer	
	Industrial Officer	
	Instructor	
	Clinical Psychologist	
Customs & Excise Department	Inspector of Customs & Excise	886
	Customs Officer	
Department of Justice	Government Counsel	64
	Deputy Principal Government Counsel	
	Law Officer	

Bureau/ Department	Rank	No. of posts
Financial Secretary's Office	Government Economist	4
	Economist	
Fire Services Department	Station Officer	674
	Fireman	
	Ambulance Officer	
	Ambulanceman	
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department	Veterinary Officer	27
	Scientific Officer (Medical)	
	Pest Control Officer/ Assistant Pest Control Officer	
	Pest Control Assistant/ Student Pest Control Assistant	
Department of Health	Senior Medical and Health Officer	48
	Medical and Health Officer	
	Pharmacist	
Government Flying Services	Cadet Pilot	8
Highways Department	Works Supervisor II (Civil)	34
Hong Kong Observatory	Scientific Officer	1
Hong Kong Police Force	Chief Inspector of Police (Specialist)	2 458
	Inspector of Police	
	Police Constable	
	Police Communications Officer	
	Special Photographer II	
Hongkong Post	Assistant Postmaster General (Business Development)	1
Immigration Department	Immigration Officer	607
	Immigration Assistant	
Intellectual Property Department	Solicitor	9
Judiciary	Judiciary Administrator	2
	Chief Steward	
Leisure and Cultural Services Department	Assistant Librarian	168
	Assistant Leisure Services Manager II	
	Amenities Assistant III	

Bureau/ Department	Rank	No. of posts
Marine Department	Surveyor of Ships (Nautical)	2
Office of the Commissioner of Insurance	Assistant Commissioner of Insurance (Long Term Development)	1
Official Receiver's Officer	Solicitor	10
Social Welfare Department	Assistant Social Work Officer	163
	Social Security Assistant	
Transport Department	Transport Officer II	11
University Grants Committee	Secretary-General, University Grants Committee	1
	Total:	5 658

**VR II grades approved by the CS/FS Panel to conduct open recruitment
(Position as at 28 February 2007)**

VR II Grade	Number of vacancies to be filled through open recruitment		Total
	2006-07	2007-08	
Health Inspector	119	34	153
Chemist	2	9	11
Science Laboratory Technician	7	21	28
Air Crewman Officer	4	2	6
Auditor	2	-	2
Trade Officer	22	-	22
Assessor	48	-	48
Accounting Officer	13	1	14
Treasury Accountant	8	2	10
Executive Officer	190	50	240
Information Officer	32	1	33
Inspector (Graduate)	30	3	33
Education Officer (Administration)	25	3	28
Labour Officer	-	39	39
Labour Inspector	-	21	21
Total:	502	186	688