

**For information on
19 January 2009**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL ON PUBLIC SERVICE

IMPLEMENTATION OF A FIVE-DAY WEEK IN THE GOVERNMENT

PURPOSE

This paper updates Members on the latest position of the implementation of the five-day week initiative in the Government.

BACKGROUND

2. In January 2006, the Chief Executive announced the setting up of a working group, comprising representatives of the Civil Service Bureau, the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau and the Efficiency Unit, to examine the proposal and implementation details of a five-day week in the Government with effect from 1 July 2006. Under the primary consideration of maintaining the overall level and efficiency of government services and the four basic principles of: no additional staffing resources, no reduction in the conditioned hours of service of individual staff, no reduction in emergency services, and continued provision of some essential counter services on Saturdays, the five-day week initiative was implemented in the Government in three phases starting 1 July 2006, 1 January 2007 and 1 July 2007 respectively.

3. We briefed Members on the selected government units that had moved to a five-day week and the review outcome of the implementation of each of the three phases at the Panel meetings held on 15 May 2006 (vide LC Paper No. CB(1)1440/05-06(03)), 20 November 2006 (vide LC Paper No. CB(1)248/06-07(03)), 21 May 2007 (vide LC Paper No. CB(1)1600/06-07(03)) and 19 November 2007 (vide LC Paper No. CB(1)206/07-08(04)). With the implementation of the final phase of the five-day week initiative in July 2007, a total of some 94 300 civil servants were working on a five-day week work pattern.

LATEST POSITION

4. Subsequent to the update as reported in LC Paper No. CB(1)206/07-08(04), departments that have not been able to fully migrate to a five-day week work pattern have continued to explore possible ways to move more staff to that work pattern without affecting the service to the public. These include -

- (a) migrating in tandem with corresponding services provided by 'partner' organisations;
- (b) adjusting roster arrangements; and
- (c) launching new pilot schemes.

As at 31 October 2008, the number of civil servants who are working on a five-day week work pattern stood at 100 500 (or around 68% of the civil service strength¹), as compared with 94 300 (or around 65%) in July 2007.

5. A breakdown by work pattern of civil servants on a five-day week work pattern is as follows -

	Number of staff (as at 31 October 2008)
Staff working on 'Monday-to-Friday' basis	71 200
Staff rostered to work on a 'five-day-work, two-day-off' duty pattern ²	27 300
Staff who are on a five-day week pilot scheme	2 000
<i>Sub-total</i>	100 500 (68%)
Staff not on a five-day week work pattern	47 000 (32%)
<i>Total</i>	147 500¹ (100%)

¹ Excluding those civil servants working in government schools who follow the school calendar, those working in the Judiciary, Hospital Authority, Vocational Training Council, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, etc.

² Including staff rostered to work less than five days/shifts a week but without affecting their conditioned hours of work.

6. There are still some 47 000 civil servants who will have to continue with their current work patterns. These staff are mainly engaged in the provision of services that continue to operate on Saturdays/Sundays, including social welfare services, immigration counter services, cultural services, postal services, environmental hygiene services, law enforcement, passenger/cargo clearance, and penal operations, etc. The concerned departments will monitor the situation and allow these staff to rotate to five-day week posts within the same department where operational circumstances permit.

IMPACT ON WORKING HOURS AND WORKLOAD

7. The objective of implementing the five-day week initiative is to improve the quality of civil servants' family life, while maintaining the overall level and efficiency of government services and not incurring additional costs for the taxpayer. In compliance with this objective, five-day week is implemented with no additional staffing resources and no reduction in the conditioned hours of service of individual staff.

8. Accordingly, the conditioned hours of work of staff before and after the implementation of the five-day week are the same. However, staff who have moved to a five-day week work longer hours during weekdays (or during the five working days in a 7-day roster cycle) to make up for not working on Saturdays (or the 6th day of a 7-day roster cycle), thereby fulfilling their conditioned hours of work. In drawing up the implementation plans for a five-day week operational mode, individual bureaux/departments have already taken into account the possible implications of the lengthened working hours on weekdays (or the five working days in a 7-day roster cycle) on the concerned staff's occupational safety and health.

9. As the number of conditioned hours of work in a work cycle (i.e. in a calendar week or in a 7-day roster cycle) has remained the same under a five-day week mode of operation, the workload of staff concerned has not been affected because of the implementation of the five-day week.

IMPLEMENTATION OF A FIVE-DAY WEEK FOR STAFF IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES

10. At the meeting on 15 December 2008, this Panel requested the Administration to address the concerns raised in a submission made in the name of 'a group of public library front-line staff' (LC Paper No. CB(1)359/08-09(01)) on, inter alia, the implementation of a five-day week in the public libraries. We have provided a reply at **Annex** to the submission on 12 January 2009. When the five-day week initiative was put forward in 2006, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) had assessed the feasibility of implementing a five-day week for front-line staff in the public libraries under the principles mentioned in paragraph 2 above and come to the conclusion that it was not feasible. In taking forward the initiative to extend the opening hours of its 33 major and regional libraries recently, LCSD has again considered if the additional manpower and financial resources provided for that initiative would provide more flexibility for implementing a five-day week for the front-line staff of those public libraries. It has also examined the proposed new duty rosters put forward by some of the staff against the aforesaid principles mentioned in paragraph 2 above. The Department has come to the conclusion that implementing a five-day week in the public libraries remains infeasible. LCSD will continue to maintain a dialogue with front-line staff and review regularly if there are other feasible alternatives to implement a five-day week without compromising the quality of its library services to the public and without incurring additional costs for the taxpayer.

WAY FORWARD

11. We will continue to encourage departments to, in consultation with staff, explore migrating more staff to work five days a week through roster arrangements, subject to the basic principles set out in paragraph 2 above.

Civil Service Bureau
January 2009

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12 January 2009

Clerk to Panel on Public Service
(Attn: Ms Sarah Yuen)
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central
Hong Kong

Dear Ms Yuen,

Manpower Arrangements on Extension of Opening Hours of Public Libraries and Implementation of Five-day Week

Thank you for referring the e-mail from “a group of public library front-line staff” to us. Our response to the issues raised in the e-mail on the manpower arrangements on the extension of the opening hours of public libraries and the implementation of five-day week is set out below.

To address public demand to extend the opening hours of public libraries, the Chief Executive announced in the Summit on District Administration in May 2008 the Government’s decision to allocate additional resources to extend the opening hours of 33 major and regional libraries under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD). Upon implementation of the proposal, major and regional libraries in the New Territories, which are currently open six days a week, will be open seven days a week like the major and regional libraries in the urban areas. Weekly opening hours of the 33 major and regional libraries will increase from the current 61 to 62 hours to 71 hours.

To enable public libraries to handle the extra workload arising from the extension of opening hours, additional resources have been earmarked for LCSD to create 17 Assistant Librarian and 58 Assistant Clerical Officer posts, and to engage service bureau staff to assist front-line staff. LCSD will create the concerned posts and increase the engagement of service bureau staff in accordance with established resource allocation procedures to implement the proposal of extending the opening hours of the concerned libraries. In considering the allocation of additional financial and manpower resources, the Administration has taken into account the actual operations of libraries, the increase in workload at library functional points, the need for concerned urban libraries to operate in two shifts instead of one shift, the staff's duty hours, and the scope of responsibilities of staff at different levels, etc. In addition, LCSD will as far as possible streamline the workflow for front-line staff, re-engineer operations, redeploy resources and re-arrange work priorities, so as to address the additional workload arising from the extension of library opening hours.

There is no connection between the five-day week arrangement and the initiative of extending the opening hours of public libraries. In taking forward the five-day week initiative, our primary consideration is to maintain the overall level and efficiency of government services and adhere to the four basic principles of: no additional staffing resources; no reduction in the conditioned hours of service of individual staff; no reduction in emergency services; and continued provision of some essential counter services on Saturdays. In drawing up the implementation plans to introduce a five-day week, bureaux/departments have to follow these basic principles and the relevant administrative guidelines, and take into account possible implications on their statutory obligations, published performance pledges, and the concerned staff's occupational safety and health, etc., as well as staff and public reactions.

In formulating its implementation plan for a five-day week three years ago, LCSD had thoroughly examined the feasibility of implementing a five-day week in the public libraries twice and consulted the library staff. Having considered the deployment of front-line staff as well as the service and operational needs, LCSD considered it infeasible to implement a five-day week in the public libraries under the above principles.

LCSD understands the request of front-line staff in the public libraries for working on a five-day week. It has actively considered if the additional manpower resources provided for the initiative to extend the opening hours of its libraries would provide more flexibility in the roster arrangements for implementing a five-day week for the front-line staff of public libraries. It has also examined the feasibility of the proposed five-day week duty rosters put forward by some of the staff. The department has come to the conclusion that implementing a five-day week in the public libraries remains infeasible under the aforesaid four basic principles governing five-day week. LCSD will continue to maintain a dialogue with front-line staff and review regularly if there are other feasible alternatives to implement a five-day week without compromising its library services to the public and without incurring additional costs for the taxpayer.

Please contact Mr Wu Man-fong, Chief Librarian (Operations and District Council Management) of LCSD (telephone no.: 2921 0388) for further enquiries.

Yours sincerely,



(Miss Bella Mui)
for Secretary for the Civil Service

c.c.

Director of Leisure and Cultural Services
(Attn: Mr Lee Yuk-man, Mrs Angel Choi)