

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL ON PUBLIC SERVICE

Integrity Enhancement Initiatives for Civil Servants

Purpose

This paper updates Members on the work of the Civil Service Bureau (“CSB”) in integrity promotion in the civil service.

Overview of Integrity Management Efforts

2. The Administration is firmly committed to upholding high standards of integrity and probity in the civil service. Throughout the years, CSB and the Independent Commission Against Corruption (“ICAC”) have been working closely with bureaux and departments (“B/Ds”) to promote integrity in the civil service through a three-pronged approach, namely -

- (a) *Prevention*: Clear policies, guidelines and procedures are available to provide guidance to individual civil servants. Proper checks and balances have been built into B/Ds’ operational and service systems.
- (b) *Education*: Sustained efforts are made to promote good standards of conduct at all levels in the civil service. These include induction, training, seminars, and the promulgation of rules and guidebooks to enhance understanding and awareness of the high standards of probity required of civil servants.
- (c) *Sanction*: The Administration takes a serious view of criminal offences and acts of misconduct which involve a breach of trust in the office held by civil servants or misuse of power. Allegations of such misconduct would be promptly investigated, and disciplinary sanction would be strictly administered upon finding a civil servant guilty of misconduct after fair proceedings. During the five-year period from April 2004 to March 2009, 140 civil servants had been subject to disciplinary action for offences or misconduct related to

abuse of official position^(Note). Of them, 39 or about 28% were awarded removal punishments (i.e. compulsory retirement or dismissal).

3. As illustrated by the key indicators set out at **Annex**, the overall corruption scene in the civil service has remained stable in the past five years. In addition, according to the annual report of the Transparency International released in 2008, Hong Kong was ranked the 12th least corrupt place among 180 countries and cities in the Corruption Perception Index, two places up as compared with 2007.

Prevention and Education

4. On the prevention and education front, the efforts that we have made on integrity management in the past few years are summarised below.

Service-wide guidelines

5. CSB keeps under constant review service-wide guidelines on conduct matters to ensure that they remain clear and adequate in present-day circumstances. These include the issue, and regular updating, of circulars on various subjects, including conflict of interest; declaration of private investments; and acceptance of advantages, entertainment and sponsored visits offered to civil servants in their official and private capacities.

Integrity management and promotion programmes

6. Throughout the years, CSB and ICAC have been working in close partnership towards deepening integrity education and entrenching the value of integrity at all levels in the civil service. Among others, we jointly launched the Civil Service Integrity Entrenchment Programme in 2004. Under this Programme, outreach teams comprising directorate officers from CSB and ICAC visited 34 B/Ds with a combined workforce of 124 000 to exchange views on integrity-related management issues. In 2005, we jointly held a leadership forum on the theme of “Successes through ethical governance”. The forum provided an

(Note) Acts of misconduct classified as cases of abuse of official position include –

- (a) conviction under the Prevention of Bribery Ordinance (Cap. 201);
- (b) unauthorised acceptance of advantages or entertainment from persons with official dealings;
- (c) unauthorised outside work for persons with official dealings;
- (d) unauthorised disclosure of government information;
- (e) abuse of government properties; and
- (f) use of official information or authority for personal gains.

opportunity for leaders in the public and business sectors to examine ethical challenges and share experience in ethical leadership. In 2006, the Works Branch of the then Environment, Transport and Works Bureau, in collaboration with CSB and ICAC, launched an Enhanced Integrity Management Programme for its works departments. Under the Programme, an integrity management manual was produced for reference by the works departments, six presentations for directorate staff and 150 integrity training workshops for 7 700 professional staff and site supervisors were held, and training seminars for contractors and their employees were organised.

7. In December 2006, CSB and ICAC jointly launched the Ethical Leadership Programme (“ELP”) as our flagship initiative which will continue for the years to come. The objective is to further consolidate the value of integrity in the civil service through the leadership and commitment of the senior management in B/Ds, so that a sustaining ethical culture can flourish in the service.

8. Under the ELP, an Ethics Officer (“EO”), a senior directorate officer, has been appointed as the focal point for all integrity-related activities in each B/D. EOs are responsible for mapping out the strategy and work plan that suit the individual needs and priorities of their organisations, and preparing regular reports on their integrity management efforts. They are assisted by Assistant Ethics Officers (“AEOs”), who are mostly departmental secretaries, in the day-to-day implementation of integrity management programmes within their B/Ds. We have at present a network of about 150 EOs and AEOs. The network serves as a platform through which we communicate with stakeholders in B/Ds by way of workshops, outreach visits, and other means of information sharing.

9. To support the work of EOs, we organise regular workshops under the ELP covering a wide range of issues on integrity, conduct and discipline matters to provide them with training and suggestions when planning integrity management initiatives for their organisations. We have so far organised five such workshops. In addition, B/Ds are invited to attend anti-corruption seminars organised by ICAC’s Centre of Anti-Corruption Studies. So far, about 800 EOs, AEOs and their managers have attended these workshops and seminars.

10. To drive home the importance of promoting integrity management within the civil service, CSB and ICAC continue with their efforts to reach out to individual B/Ds under the ELP. We visited the senior management of the Lands Department and Housing Department in 2007-2008. This was followed by four rounds of presentations on the subjects of conflict of interest, corruption, misconduct in public office, supervisory accountability, etc. for the directorate staff of the two departments. We are planning more such visits and presentations

in the years to come.

Online resource and experience sharing

11. CSB and ICAC jointly launched the online Resource Centre on Civil Service Integrity Management (“RCIM”) for all civil servants in 2001. RCIM serves as a one-stop repository providing updated service-wide regulations on conduct matters, publications on integrity related subjects, sample guides or codes of conduct, and answers to frequently asked questions. To provide civil servants with up-to-date and handy reference materials, we have been updating and adding examples of misconduct cases which cover the subjects of conflict of interest, misconduct in public office, supervisory responsibility, unauthorised absence, falsification of attendance records, acceptance of entertainment from persons with official dealings, criminal conviction cases involving fraud, forgery, theft and assault, etc.

12. Leveraging on the internet platform, we rolled out in two phases, in October 2008 and March 2009 respectively, a dedicated intranet known as the “Online Community for Ethics Officers” (“OCEO”) for EOs, AEOs and managers responsible for integrity management matters. Apart from providing a rich collection of literatures and training materials on conduct, discipline and integrity matters, the OCEO further serves as a platform enabling online exchange of experience and views among B/Ds.

Publications

13. We also promote civil service integrity on the prevention and education front by publishing and updating booklets and manuals. The more notable examples include the updating and distribution of the Civil Servants’ Guide to Good Practices to government employees at all levels in 2005; and the compilation and publication of an Ethics Officer Manual for EOs and AEOs in 2007.

Management of staff indebtedness

14. The number of insolvency or bankruptcy cases in the civil service fell from 138 in 2007 to 95 in 2008.

15. CSB has been closely monitoring indebtedness in the civil service through regular returns from departments with a higher number of indebted cases. We have issued service-wide guidelines reminding civil servants of the importance of prudent financial management. Appropriate action would be taken against an

officer if his financial problems have given rise to misconduct (e.g. acceptance of unauthorised loans) or if his personal financial difficulties are due to a reprehensible cause (e.g. gambling). We will continue to implement proactive measures at the departmental level to ensure that personal financial problems, if any, of individual civil servants would not impair operational efficiency or the integrity of the civil service as a whole.

16. In this connection, the Police Force has in place a comprehensive set of measures, including robust investigation of all reports of financial indebtedness along with the provision of extensive welfare services for officers in financial difficulties; the launch of a family life education programme, a healthy lifestyle campaign and a work-life balance campaign to promote prudent financial management within families and physical and mental well-being among staff; the setting up of an ad-hoc group to assess and monitor the impact of the global financial crisis on staff; and the planning of another publicity campaign to reinforce the importance of prudent financial management. Efforts have also been made by other departments to provide counselling and/or promote a healthy lifestyle through induction training, workshops, departmental newsletters and webpages, etc.

Training and induction

17. Training is an important aspect in the promotion of civil service integrity. Corruption prevention courses are conducted regularly by ICAC and Civil Service Training and Development Institute to enhance awareness of the high standards of conduct required of civil servants. In the three years ended 2008, over 1 700 training courses, including talks on corruption prevention and briefings on integrity and avoidance of conflict of interest, were held for some 66 700 civil servants in various ranks.

Ongoing Efforts

18. In collaboration with ICAC and B/Ds, CSB will strive to uphold the momentum in integrity promotion through a host of initiatives to be rolled out under the ELP. We will organise further workshops in 2009 with a view to, among others, broadening B/Ds' horizon and exposure in integrity-related matters. We will continue to enlist top management support in integrity enhancement through outreach visits and presentations to senior staff in target departments.

19. To reinforce civil servants' understanding on the subject of misconduct in public office, we plan to publish a booklet to provide more

guidance on this common law offence. The booklet will set out, in layman's terms, background information relating to this offence, together with salient points to note from precedent cases and tips for avoiding falling into its trap.

20. To capitalise on a rich collection of online resources, we will continue to beef up the content of the RCIM for civil servants in general and the OCEO for the senior management of B/Ds. For example, we are working on uploading more case examples in the areas of neglect of duty, illegal gambling, breach of housing benefit rules, etc. onto the RCIM.

21. The Administration is keenly aware that there is no room for complacency in its efforts to uphold an honest and clean workforce. We will, as always, remain vigilant and maintain close partnership with ICAC and B/Ds to counter the threats of corruption and embed firmly the core value and culture of integrity in the civil service.

Civil Service Bureau
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**Key Indicators of Corruption
Reports in the Civil Service**

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Number of alleged corruption reports against civil servants received by ICAC	1 286	1 161	1 068	975	960
Number of civil servants prosecuted for corruption and related offences (Note 1)	38	25	24	25	12
Number of civil servants convicted of corruption and related offences (Note 2)	26	16	19	17	4
Number of civil servants named in cases that are referred by ICAC to bureaux/departments for consideration of disciplinary or administrative action (Note 3)	161	170	150	123	105

Note (1) : Prosecutions instituted in the year.

Note (2) : Civil servants convicted resulting from prosecutions instituted in the year.

Note (3) : For cases where no prosecution is made against individual civil servants but possible misconduct or malpractice has been revealed during the ICAC investigation, ICAC may, on the advice of its Operations Review Committee, refer them to the bureaux/departments concerned for consideration of disciplinary or administrative action.

Source : ICAC