

## **LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL ON PUBLIC SERVICE**

### **Review of Performance Pledges**

#### **Purpose**

This paper reports on the review of performance pledges in the Government and highlights the on-going and planned improvement measures.

#### **Background**

2. Performance pledges were first introduced in 1992 as an initiative to engender a customer service culture within the civil service and to improve the standards across the full range of government services. To date, all departments that provide direct services to the public have promulgated their performance pledges. Many bureaux/ departments (“B/Ds”) which provide services to internal customers (i.e. other entities within the government) have also formulated their pledges with focus on continuous improvement in the quality of service provided. In the 2008/09 Policy Address, the Chief Executive directed B/Ds to review the implementation of their performance pledges with a view to further improving the quality of public services, and to ensuring that such services move with times and respond quickly to citizens’ needs.

#### **The Review**

3. The review conducted by all 75 B/Ds has just been completed. It focuses on the four key components that underpin performance pledges, namely, “targets”, “achievements”, “monitoring” and “communication”.

4. Performance “targets” set performance levels in meaningful terms for customers, and in realistic terms for B/Ds to fulfill. In the review, B/Ds have focused on whether their existing targets cover all core services with a public interface, whether the targets are appropriate in today’s circumstances, and whether they are articulated in meaningful and, comprehensible terms. B/Ds have also reviewed the basis used for formulating their targets, e.g. through benchmarking with international

standards or with similar services in the private sector, and whether such basis is still appropriate.

5. “Achievements” reports on targets achieved and planned improvements. In the review, B/Ds have focused on the actual achievements made, on a comparison of the achievements made against the pledged targets, and on the extent to which achievements were improved as a result of customers’ feedback.

6. “Monitoring” refers to the arrangements instituted to oversee performance, including internal guidelines on implementation and monitoring of performance pledges, designation of dedicated personnel to monitor and review pledges, the use of customer surveys to gauge users’ opinions, etc. B/Ds have also addressed the extent to which their monitoring systems led to improvements in performance, and what measures are being planned to better monitor their pledges.

7. “Communication” sets out the arrangements for obtaining feedback from customers on the level of services provided, and the arrangements for complaints and appeals on individual transactions. B/Ds have reviewed how performance pledges promulgated and updated were disseminated to customers. They have assessed whether their systems to communicate with customers on performance pledges and handle related complaints are adequate, and whether clear internal guidelines and structure are in place to deal with such matters.

8. The main findings of the review are summarised below.

### *Overview*

9. Presently, of the 75 B/Ds in the Government, 70% provide services to external customers, while 30% focus on policy formulation and internal customers. These B/Ds have promulgated a total of about 1,200 performance pledges, 91% of which are related to services for external customers (e.g. processing applications and registrations, answering enquiries) and the remaining are related to services for internal customers (e.g. providing professional advice to B/Ds).

10. The 1,200 performance pledges can also be broadly categorised as those related to “efficiency of service” (92%) and “quality of service” (8%). Examples of efficiency-related pledges are “turn-around time for individual transactions” and “arrival time in case of emergency”, etc. Examples of quality-related pledges are “accuracy of information provided” and “satisfaction levels of customers”, etc. Further examples of

services for external and internal customers, and efficiency-related and quality-related pledges are at **Annex**.

11. In the past three years, over 30% of the performance pledges in the Government have been changed. Of these, 20% were changes to better reflect enhanced performance, 3% were deletions due to obsolescence of services provided, and 8% were additions due to introduction of new services. As an on-going process, B/Ds are constantly reviewing their performance pledges and seeking to improve their services. There is also a clear trend amongst B/Ds in improving communication with their customers and transparency of the service delivery process.

### *Targets*

12. In formulating and reviewing performance targets, all B/Ds are found to have involved their staff and/or customers. Most of them resort to staff consultation either on an ad hoc basis or through mechanisms such as Service Standards Committees (which are standing committees chaired by senior management with members comprising staff of different operating units). About 50% of B/Ds consult their customers and obtain their feedback through Customer Liaison Groups or Users' Committees (which are chaired by management with members comprising staff from different operating units and customers/members of the public).

13. All B/Ds formulate and review their performance targets having regard to their core services and past performance in delivering such services. In addition, 30% make reference to international standards and/or standards of similar services in the private sector. In general, disciplined forces and departments involved in public health, buildings, engineering and scientific work are more inclined to benchmark their performance against international standards, while those with corresponding counterparts in the private sector (e.g. departments involved in information technology, delivery services and property management) or those which have frequent business contact with the private sector (e.g. departments involved in accounting services such as payment to government creditors, and laboratory tests such as deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) profiling) are more inclined to make reference to service standards in the private sector.

14. Amongst all B/Ds, 61% have pledges that cover the delivery of all their direct services to the public. For the remaining B/Ds, their pledges cover some 80% of such services. Services not covered by pledges are either highly specialised in nature or with very limited clientele

(e.g. processing applications for permits to bring animals into a country park); services that depend highly on the cooperation of external agencies (e.g. registration of non-local courses depends on the response time and cooperation of overseas partners/independent accreditation bodies); and newly introduced services for which some operational experience needs to be accumulated before performance targets can be meaningfully set (e.g. certain subsidy schemes for particular population groups).

15. Amongst the B/Ds, about 50% use external agencies/private sector companies to deliver some of their services to the public. Of these B/Ds, 63% require their external/private sector partners to observe the relevant performance targets set. For the remaining 37%, the performance of most is indirectly assured by compliance with professional standards and/or code of practice, which are generally comparable to government standards.

### *Achievements*

16. In the past three years, B/Ds had, on average, achieved 95% of their performance targets every year. For targets that show persistent over-achievement, B/Ds are reviewing the possibility of further enhancing them with a view to attaining further service improvement.

17. For those performance targets not fully achieved in the past three years, they were mainly caused by fluctuations in public demand that were beyond prediction (which mainly affected the efficiency of services such as rating and valuation, land registration in times of sudden market boom, etc.), complexity of cases processed (including inadequate/invalid information supplied by clients which resulted in additional follow up actions by the B/Ds concerned), and change/turnover of staff, etc. To improve on areas of under-achievement, the B/Ds concerned have planned to deploy their resources more flexibly to meet fluctuating service demands, and to improve their operations, systems and training for staff. Some of them will also improve communication with customers on problems encountered in individual transactions and on enhancement measures being undertaken or planned.

### *Monitoring*

18. Almost all B/Ds have put in place mechanisms to monitor and review the implementation of their performance pledges. Amongst them, 71% have internal guidelines in the form of management instruction manuals, circulars and International Organisation for Standardisation (“ISO”) procedures. Many B/Ds also use mechanisms such as regular

management statistics and progress reports with lapses highlighted and proposals for rectification made; or regular internal meetings, etc, to review the progress of their performance pledges. About 80% of B/Ds conduct regular annual or bi-annual reviews of their performance pledges, about 20% review their pledges on an ad hoc or need basis.

19. Most B/Ds have designated personnel to ensure the effective operation of their monitoring mechanism on performance pledges; and all B/Ds' management tiers at Assistant Director level or above are involved in overseeing the performance achievements of their core services. Some B/Ds have set up Performance Monitoring or Service Standards Committees with field practitioners, academics and service professionals as members to monitor performance pledges (e.g. Advisory Committee on Quality of Water Supplies). Some B/Ds' external services and their achievements are also subject to the scrutiny of independent/public bodies (e.g. Hong Kong Quality Assurance Agency) or professional associations comprising members from related trades and industries (e.g. International Civil Aviation Organisation).

### *Communication*

20. Generally, all B/Ds have kept their performance pledges transparent to their customers. They do so by publishing their pledges on departmental websites, in annual reports, Controlling Officer's Reports, leaflets and pamphlets, and/or displays at locations accessible by customers. 86% of B/Ds have published and regularly updated their achievements alongside the pledged performance targets, while the remaining B/Ds are planning or working to do the same.

21. All B/Ds that provide services to external customers have dedicated communication channels to gauge customers' feedback on their performance. Of these B/Ds, 73% do so by annual or bi-annual customer satisfaction surveys, and some 50% by Customer Liaison Groups, Users' Committees or similar establishments. The remaining B/Ds adopt means such as interviews with customers, hotline service, customer suggestion forms and over-the-counter communication with customers on service delivery, etc.

22. Amongst all B/Ds, 94% have established mechanisms to channel customers' feedback to the management. They mainly do so by capturing such feedback in computerised systems accessible by senior officers, through which monthly reports with analysis are generated. 6% of B/Ds (which serve mainly internal customers) either analyse and report significant customers' feedback to management as and when necessary, or

relay such feedback to the senior officers within their organisations for actions where appropriate.

### **Improvement Measures**

23. To further enhance the implementation of performance pledges in the Government, Civil Service Bureau will issue a circular setting out detailed guidelines and the best practices in performance pledges for reference by all B/Ds. It will also promote the best practices through the Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme 2009 to be held later this year, the Civil Service Newsletter which is regularly issued to all civil servants, and other internal publicity and dissemination channels.

24. To support B/Ds' continuous improvement in customer service and performance pledges, the Civil Service Training and Development Institute ("CSTDI") will introduce a dedicated corner on the Cyber Learning Centre Plus, the e-learning platform for all civil servants, as a one-stop repository on learning materials and cross-sector best practices in customer service locally and around the world. CSTDI will also continue to offer training programmes on customer service and complaint handling, and advisory service to B/Ds on customer service and performance pledges.

25. At departmental level, B/Ds will regularly review their service delivery systems and procedures, and pilot/implement new systems/procedures where appropriate to enhance efficiency. For example, B/Ds will make more use of e-solutions for more efficient and convenient access by customers for case/application processing status. Alternative counter collection channels through joint operation with designated convenience stores and MTR Customer Service Centres will be explored to facilitate more convenient payment of selected government fees, thus freeing the capacity of the respective B/Ds' service counters for more efficient delivering of other services. Some B/Ds will also take the initiative to gather applications in batches from institutions and large organisations for more efficient bulk processing. All these will make it possible for B/Ds to upgrade their performance pledges in terms of service efficiency.

26. In terms of service quality, B/Ds will enhance training for staff, especially front-line staff, on customer service and communications. To better gauge the views and changing needs of their customers, more B/Ds are considering setting up Customer Liaison Groups or similar mechanisms, conducting more customer satisfaction surveys and extending the survey coverage for more comprehensive feedback. In response to the views

collected, B/Ds will closely monitor the need to introduce new pledges to cover more services, and conduct more frequent reviews of their performance pledges to keep abreast of customers' latest needs. More B/Ds will also disclose achievements alongside performance targets. For B/Ds which serve internal customers, some will hold more regular and structured meetings with client departments to better understand their needs, while others will consider formulating and implementing more performance pledges to enhance operational transparency and service quality.

27. While these improvement measures are being followed through, B/Ds will regularly review and update their performance pledges to align them closely with the latest services they deliver and the most current performance levels expected of such services.

Civil Service Bureau  
June 2009

**Examples of Performance Pledges on Services for External Customers**

<b>Nature of Pledge</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>Performance Pledge Items</b>
Efficiency	Food and Environmental Hygiene Department	Issue approval for import of game, meat and poultry within 5 working days.
	Hong Kong Post	Deliver locally posted letters to addresses by the following working day.
	Immigration Department	Issue identity card in 10 working days.
Quality	Water Supplies Department	Fresh water quality 100% comply with World Health Organisation Guidelines for Drinking Water Quality (2006).
		Salt water supply pressure remains at 15 metres.
	Transport Department	Keep visibility inside government tunnels below an extinction coefficient of 0.005/m at all times.
	Hong Kong Observatory	Over 90% of special forecasts for international aviation and shipping rated as “accurate” or “very accurate”.

**Examples of Performance Pledges on Services for Internal Customers**

<b>Nature of Pledge</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>Performance Pledge Items</b>
Efficiency	Government Property Agency	Respond to property management complaints within 2 working days.
	Government Logistics Department	Issue a tender invitation within 12 working days upon receipt of the agreed user specifications.
	Treasury	Process invoices within 8 calendar days from receipt of payment vouchers by Treasury or date of on-line authorisation of vouchers by departments to payment effected to creditor.
	Office of the Government Chief Information Officer	Provide a work plan for an Information Systems Strategy study for agreement with the client within 30 working days after endorsement of the proposal by the Administrative Computer Project Committee.
Quality	Civil Service Training and Development Institute, Civil Service Bureau	Provide training programmes assessed by 80% of trainees as “very effective” or “outstanding” on a 5-point scale.
	Efficiency Unit	All consultancy projects initiated by internal clients rated as “good” or above.