

For Information

Legislative Council Panel on Public Service

The Administration's Response to the Issues Raised at the Meeting held on 21 June 2010

At the Public Service Panel meeting held on 21 June 2010, the Administration was requested to explain, with examples, how the criterion of fundamental changes in the job nature, level of responsibilities and job complexity of a grade had been applied in assessing requests for grade structure review (GSR) of non-directorate civilian grades in the past ten years.

Criteria for Assessing GSR Requests

2. As stated in the Panel paper, LC Paper No. CB(1)1911/09-10(05), an Improved Civil Service Pay Adjustment Mechanism has been implemented since 2007. Under the Mechanism, three sets of market surveys, namely the six-yearly Pay Level Surveys, the three-yearly Starting Salaries Surveys and the annual Pay Trend Surveys, are conducted to regularly assess how the prevailing civil service pay compares with the pay in the private sector and, having regard to the findings of the surveys, whether and how the civil service pay should be adjusted. The Mechanism ensures that the pay of non-directorate civilian grades is broadly comparable with that of their private sector counterparts. This will enable non-directorate civilian grades to recruit people of suitable calibre, and to retain and motivate them. Accordingly, the need to resort to GSRs for non-directorate civilian grades should only arise in exceptional circumstances.

3. Having regard to the exceptional nature of GSRs, the Administration has adopted the following criteria to guide the assessment of requests for conduct of GSRs from non-directorate civilian grades -

- (a) whether there are proven and persistent (as opposed to temporary or transitory) recruitment and retention difficulties encountered by the grade seeking the conduct of a GSR, and such grade-specific difficulties cannot be resolved through the Improved Civil Service Pay Adjustment Mechanism; and

- (b) whether there are fundamental changes in the job nature, level of responsibilities and job complexity of a grade, to the extent that a root-and-branch revamping of its purpose, positioning and structure is called for in order to enable it to function properly and effectively on a sustainable basis.

4. We wish to note that incremental changes to the job nature and job complexity of individual grades over time are natural and inevitable, and should not be viewed as fundamental changes. Such incremental changes may be induced by rising aspiration of the community; or new functions necessitated by changes in the political, economic and social landscape; or advances in technology and technological application; etc. They should be managed through appropriate work reprioritisation, process re-engineering, targeted staff training and development, etc. within the individual grades concerned to enable them to continue to function properly and effectively.

GSRs of Non-directorate Civilian Grades in the Past Ten Years

5. Since the implementation of the Improved Civil Service Pay Adjustment Mechanism in 2007, the Administration has invited the Standing Commission on Civil Service Salaries and Conditions of Service (Standing Commission) to conduct two separate GSRs, one for the Veterinary Officer grade and one for the Government Counsel grade and the related Legal Aid Counsel and Solicitor grades. In both cases, the concerned grades faced proven and persistent recruitment and retention difficulties; and such problems could not be addressed through the service-wide Pay Level Survey, the review of starting salaries or the annual Pay Trend Survey.

6. Prior to the introduction of the Improved Civil Service Pay Adjustment Mechanism and since 2000, the only comprehensive review of non-directorate civilian grades was conducted in 2001 covering the Amenities Officer (AO) and Recreation and Sport Officer (RSO) grades. This review was conducted to rationalise the distinct but closely related responsibilities of the grades concerned. It resulted in the creation of a new grade, namely the Leisure Services Manager (LSM) grade, in place of the AO and RSO grades. A short note on this review is appended at **Annex**.

**Background Information on the Review of the
Amenities Officer and Recreation and Sport Officer Grades in 2001**

Until 2001, the AO grade and the RSO grade were two separate grades in the Leisure and Cultural Services Department. The AO grade was responsible for the management of recreation venues and facilities, as well as the planning and development of recreational and amenities projects (e.g. Hong Kong Flower Show, Green Hong Kong Campaign). The RSO grade was responsible for the promotion and organisation of recreational activities and public sports programmes (e.g. training courses and sports competitions under Community Recreation and Sports Campaign). At the risk of over-simplification, the AO grade was responsible for the “hardware” while the RSO grade was responsible for the “software”.

2. In view of the close operational inter-action between the “hardware” and the “software”, the strive for greater efficiency and productivity, and the public’s demand for one-stop service with respect to the delivery of leisure services, the Administration considered a new mode of operation was required.

3. Following a fundamental review of the two grades in 2001 and with the support of the Standing Commission, the two grades were merged into one. The merger involved the abolition of the AO and RSO grades and the creation of a new LSM grade. The structure and the pay scales of the new LSM grade were determined, having regard to its job nature, level of responsibilities and job complexity, and were different from the structures and pay scales of the replaced grades. The merger amounted to a root-and-branch revamping of the purposes, positioning and structures of the AO and RSO grades so as to enable them to function properly and serve the public more effectively and on a sustainable basis.