

For discussion
on 19 October 2009

Legislative Council Panel on Public Service
Policy Initiatives of the Civil Service Bureau

Purpose

The 2009/10 Policy Address and Agenda set out the Government's new and on-going initiatives. This paper elaborates on the initiatives relating to the Civil Service Bureau ("CSB").

On-going Initiatives under the 2009/10 Policy Agenda

2. The 2009/10 Policy Agenda contains on-going initiatives relating to the management of the civil service in the chapter on "Developing Democracy and Enhancing Governance". The implementation of these on-going initiatives is set out in the following paragraphs.

(a) Continuing to control the size of the civil service by providing the necessary management tools to assist bureaux and departments to make more effective use of manpower resources and enhance efficiency, while at the same time giving due consideration to the need for additional manpower resources for delivering new and improved services

3. We will continue to control the size of the civil service in keeping with the "big market – small government" principle as well as the prudent management of public resources. We estimate the civil service establishment at end-March 2010 will stand at around 165 700, compared with around 163 200 at end-March 2009. Through measures such as internal deployment, streamlining, re-engineering, etc, we will continue to work with individual bureaux and departments to control the size of their establishment and to enhance efficiency. At the same time, we will ensure that they have the necessary manpower to implement new policy initiatives and deliver services to the public.

4. We are also mindful of the need to inject new talents into the civil service and to forestall succession problem in the longer term. Open recruitment has been undertaken or are being undertaken by Heads of Departments/Heads of Grades to fill vacancies in most civil service grades. For selected grades with existing/anticipated surplus staff or are in a state of obsolescence, or where new intakes generally come from in-service recruitment, the concerned Heads of Departments may conduct open recruitment with prior approval from the CSB.

(b) Continuing to provide civil servants with training and development opportunities. We shall also continue to enhance the variety and content of the training materials on our e-learning portal, and promote wider use of e-learning, as part of our endeavours to fortify a culture of continuous learning in the civil service

5. In order to ensure the civil service keeps pace with the changing environment and demands of the community, we are committed to providing civil servants at different ranks with a variety of training and development opportunities, thereby equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge.

6. Various management-related training programmes, such as on leadership development and public engagement, are provided to middle managers and senior staff. We also provide training on job skills and personal effectiveness to junior staff to enhance their capability to take on new job assignments with competence and confidence. We will continue with these efforts in the coming year.

7. Over the years, we have made continuous endeavours to deepen civil servants' knowledge in the latest developments in the Mainland through training courses, theme-based visits, civil service exchange programme and a dedicated website. We now offer national studies programmes at Tsinghua University, Peking University, China Foreign Affairs University, National School of Administration, Sun Yat-sen University and Peking University Shenzhen Graduate School. We also conduct national studies seminars and talks in Hong Kong to enhance civil servants' understanding of the latest political, social and economic developments in the Mainland. The civil service exchange programme with the Mainland now covers Guangdong, Shanghai, Beijing and Hangzhou. We will continue to enrich our dedicated website on national studies to provide more learning resources.

8. We will continue to enhance the quality and variety of the e-learning resources available at the Cyber Learning Centre Plus ("CLC Plus") website in order to facilitate the pursuit of continuous learning among civil servants. There

are now nearly 300 web courses and job aids on language, information technology, management, and a whole array of e-learning resources on national studies, health and stress management, etc.

(c) Continuing to implement an action plan which will ensure that the Basic Law forms an integral part of training for civil servants, and that the training is provided in a systematic and planned manner which takes into account the needs of civil servants of different levels and work nature

9. To enhance knowledge of the Basic Law among civil servants, we have launched an action plan since 2008/09 which includes introductory courses for new appointees, intermediate and advanced courses for middle and senior civil servants and a web course for civil servants of all levels. We have also organised different activities to sustain the interests of civil servants, in particular junior and frontline civil servants, in the learning of Basic Law. In the coming year, we will continue to implement the action plan and closely monitor it to ensure that the various courses meet the needs of different levels of civil servants.

(d) Continuing with the development of an effective arrangement for implementing both upward and downward pay adjustments in future, as part and parcel of the improved civil service pay adjustment mechanism

10. The management of civil service pay comprises three main components: (i) the conduct of a pay level survey every six years to ascertain whether civil service pay is broadly comparable with private sector pay; (ii) the conduct of a starting salaries survey every three years to ascertain whether the starting pay specified for different entry ranks in the civil service requiring different qualifications is comparable with private sector jobs requiring similar qualifications; and (iii) the conduct of a pay trend survey every year to ascertain the average year-on-year movements in private sector pay.

11. Developing an effective arrangement for implementing both upward and downward pay adjustments arising from the application of the results of the six-yearly pay level surveys is part and parcel of the initiative to develop an improved civil service pay adjustment mechanism. We have been holding discussions with the staff sides since 2007, and will continue to engage them in the coming year.

(e) Taking follow-up action in respect of the recommendations in the reports of the grade structure reviews for the directorate grades, the disciplined services grades, and selected civilian grades facing recruitment and

retention difficulties submitted by the relevant advisory bodies on civil service salaries and conditions of service

12. In November 2008, the Standing Committee on Directorate Salaries and Conditions of Service, the Standing Committee on Disciplined Services Salaries and Conditions of Service, and the Standing Commission on Civil Service Salaries and Conditions of Service submitted GSR reports on the directorate ranks, the disciplined services, and selected civilian grades respectively. The last GSR report covers the Veterinary Officer grade and the legal grades of Government Counsel, Legal Aid Counsel and Solicitor, which have encountered recruitment and retention difficulties.

13. Upon receipt of the three GSR reports, we held consultations with the concerned departmental/grade management and staff sides of the concerned grades. We are now at the final stage of formulating the Administration's stance. We will make a submission on the way forward to the Executive Council before end October 2009.

(f) Continuing to maintain and enhance morale of the civil service, and encourage fuller use of various commendation schemes to recognise and motivate exemplary performance

14. In keeping with our policy to encourage meritorious performance through proper recognition, we introduced in 2004 the "Secretary for the Civil Service's Commendation Award Scheme". A total of 72 civil servants from 32 bureaux/departments will receive commendations at a presentation ceremony to be held in November 2009.

15. Since 1999, we have introduced the "Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme" which is organised at approximately biennial intervals. This Scheme aims to recognise departments and teams that are committed to continuous improvement and strive to provide high quality people-based services to the public. Awards are granted at team, departmental and inter-departmental levels. The Scheme in 2009 attracted 141 entries from 51 departments. A total of 50 nominations from 25 participating departments were selected for award at the prize presentation ceremony held in September 2009. The best practices distilled from these departments are being widely publicised.

(g) Continuing to maintain a vigorous, effective and efficient disciplinary system against misconduct in the civil service. Continuing to monitor closely the removal of under-performers under the established procedures while sustaining efforts to further improve efficiency and productivity in the

civil service

16. Following the enactment of the Disciplined Services Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Ordinance in June 2009 which provides a disciplinary framework for junior and middle ranking disciplined services officers whose retirement benefits are provided under the Civil Service Provident Fund (“CSPF”) Scheme, we have been taking various follow-up actions including the amendments to the Public Service (Administration) Order (“PS(A)O”)¹ to provide a similar framework for senior ranking disciplined services officers and officers in the civilian grades. We plan to put in place the entire disciplinary framework for CSPF civil servants in the first half of 2010. We will continue to address the concerns of the staff sides on the disciplinary proceedings of the disciplined services departments, and keep the civil service disciplinary system under review to ensure that it meets the principles of natural justice and needs of present day circumstances.

17. We will continue to monitor closely the implementation and effectiveness of the established procedures to remove persistent under-performers under section 12 of the PS(A)O². We will also keep up our efforts in promoting a performance-based culture in the civil service that is conducive to improving efficiency and productivity in the civil service.

Way Forward

18. We will continue to take forward the above initiatives in close consultation with departmental management and staff. We will seek Members’ views or keep Members informed as appropriate. We are committed to maintaining a civil service with high standards of integrity, efficiency and performance in order to contribute to the effective governance of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

Civil Service Bureau
October 2009

¹ The PS(A)O is an Executive Order made by the Chief Executive under Article 48 (4) of the Basic Law.

² Under section 12 of the PS(A)O, an officer may be required to retire in the public interest on grounds of persistent sub-standard performance.