

For discussion
On 1 December 2009

Legislative Council Panel on Security
Manpower Situation in
Independent Commission Against Corruption

Purpose

This paper provides information on the manpower situation in the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC).

Establishment and Strength

2. The ICAC has an approved establishment of 1,393, comprising 14 (1.0%) directorate posts, 945 (67.8%) posts in the mainstream namely the Commission Against Corruption Officer (CACO) grade, 116 (8.3%) posts in the surveillance grade namely the Commission Against Corruption Investigator grade, and 318 (22.8%) posts in the general and support grades. Over 99% of ICAC staff are employed on renewable agreement terms of 2.5 years in duration.
3. As at 1 December 2009, the ICAC has about 100 vacancies that need to be filled by recruitment, of which over 90% are in the CACO grade.

Recruitment

4. The ICAC regularly conducts recruitment exercises to fill vacancies in order to maintain sufficient manpower. For the CACO grade, new intake enter at the ranks of Assistant Commission Against Corruption Officer (ACACO) and CACO(Middle/Lower) (CACO(M/L)). Since 2007, the ICAC has adopted an integrated approach to recruit CACO grade officers so that they can serve in any departments of the Commission. For posts requiring specific qualifications and experience, separate recruitment may be conducted.

5. New intake in the surveillance grade enter at the Commission Against Corruption Investigator rank. New intake of the general and support grades enter the basic ranks of their respective grades.

6. The Commission receives good response in recruitment exercises which enables us to appoint suitable personnel to fill the vacancies concerned. In the CACO grade recruitment exercises for ACACO and CACO(M/L) launched in the last three years, we received thousands of applications, at an average of 50 and 150 applications to one vacancy respectively. Short-listing criteria had to be applied to reduce the number of candidates to be considered to a manageable size. Since 2007, over 180 officers have been appointed to the CACO grade. With the completion of various recruitment exercises currently underway, we expect to be able to fill most of the existing vacancies within the next six months. We also aim to maintain a waitlist of suitable candidates for filling vacancies that may arise in the near future.

Retention

7. While we do not have great difficulties in attracting people to apply for ICAC jobs, we have experienced some problems with retention. Notwithstanding a downward trend from 9.3% (111 officers) in 2007 to 7.8% (93 officers) in 2008, and further down to 4.9% (62 officers) projected up to end of 2009, our staff wastage rate has been consistently higher than the civil service as a whole which stands at around 3%. The comparatively higher wastage rate may be attributable to the fact that ICAC officers are remunerated on agreement terms and have a higher propensity to shift jobs and greater job mobility.

8. The retention problem is relatively more severe in the CACO grade than other grades. The wastage rate of the CACO grade stood at 9.9% (79 officers) in 2007, 9.7% (76 officers) in 2008, and 5.4% (45 officers) in 2009. Departures in the surveillance, general and support grades are mostly out of natural causes such as retirement and reversion to the civil service after completion of one or two agreements. A sizable number of officers in the CACO grade, however, left the Commission mainly because they have been lured by the competitive packages offered by the private sector or other public bodies. In 2009, 38% (17 out of 45 officers) left the Commission to join other sectors.

New Grade and Ranks

9. The situation in recruitment and retention as well as other challenges faced by the ICAC have been examined in the context of the Grade Structure Review (GSR) of the Disciplined Services. The GSR Report recommends the enhancement of the pay scales of non-directorate ranks of the CACO and surveillance grades with a view to increasing the competitiveness of the remuneration packages and boosting staff morale. Furthermore, it supports in principle the creation of a new rank of Chief Commission Against Corruption Officer (CCACO) (equivalent to D1 of the Directorate Pay Scale) in the CACO grade to cope with functional requirements arising from the growing complexity and responsibilities at the directorate level including, among other things, supervision of the use of covert surveillance and interception in ICAC investigations.

10. The GSR Report also supports in principle the creation of a new Forensic Accountant (FA) grade to integrate the skills of professional accounting, auditing and investigation in the field of forensic accounting. The proposed three-rank structure will be headed by a directorate FA, namely Chief FA, comparable to the new CCACO rank to be supported by a senior professional rank (Senior FA) and a professional rank (FA).

11. Pending the necessary approval by the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council on the recommendations contained in the GSR Report, the ICAC will submit detailed proposals and justifications on the creation of the CCACO rank and the new FA grade and ranks.

Way Forward

12. The implementation of recommendations of the GSR Report, when approved, will help address the retention problems and operational management. The ICAC will continue to strengthen its human resources management efforts to attract and retain talents. With the integrated approach to recruit CACO grade officers, officers will gain exposure in investigation, corruption prevention and community education work, thereby enriching their job, giving them greater satisfaction and fostering their commitment to anti-corruption work. Serving

officers will be given more extensive career counseling and cross-posting opportunities to enhance their prospects and would thus be more inclined to stay for a long-term career.

13. The ICAC will continue to provide comprehensive training to staff at all ranks to ensure they are equipped with the requisite professional knowledge and skills to enable them to realize their potentials in different jobs and gain better prospects. We have increased our staff training and development budget from \$5.1M in 2008-09 to \$7.2 M in 2009-10.

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