

立法會
Legislative Council

Extract

LC Paper No. CB(1)201/10-11
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/ PS/1

Panel on Public Service

**Minutes of meeting held on
Monday, 21 June 2010, at 10:30 am
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building**

Members present : Hon LEE Cheuk-yan (Chairman)
Dr Hon PAN Pey-chyou (Deputy Chairman)
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon LI Fung-ying, BBS, JP
Dr Hon LEUNG Ka-lau
Hon WONG Sing-chi
Hon IP Wai-ming, MH
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung

Members attending : Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH

Members absent : Dr Hon Margaret NG
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBS, JP

**Public officers
attending**

: Agenda item III

Miss Denise YUE, GBS, JP
Secretary for the Civil Service
Mr Brian LO
Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service 2

Agenda item IV

Miss Denise YUE, GBS, JP
Secretary for the Civil Service

Mr Brian LO
Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service 2

Agenda item V

Miss Denise YUE, GBS, JP
Secretary for the Civil Service

Mrs Agnes ALLCOCK, JP
Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service 3

**Attendance by
invitation**

: Agenda item V

Government Disciplined Services General Union

Mr MOK Wai-sang
Deputy Secretary General

Mr POON Chi-ming
Consultant

Police Force Council Staff Side

Mr LIU Kit-ming
Representative

Mr CHAN Wai-ming
Representative

Clerk in attendance : Ms Joanne MAK
Chief Council Secretary (1)2

Staff in attendance : Mr YICK Wing-kin
Assistant Legal Adviser 8

Ms Sarah YUEN
Senior Council Secretary (1)6

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Action

III Requests for the conduct of grade structure reviews for specific non-directorate civilian grades: assessment criteria

(LC Paper No. CB(1)1911/09-10(05) — Administration's paper on assessment criteria for conduct of grade structure reviews for non-directorate civilian grades

LC Paper No. CB(1)1912/09-10 — Background brief on grade structure reviews prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat

LC Paper No. CB(1)1911/09-10(06) — Letter dated 16 October 2009 from Hon Mrs Regina IP to the Panel Chairman

LC Paper No. CB(1)2225/09-10(02) — Submission from the Hong Kong Government Lifeguards General Union)

5. SCS briefed members on the Administration's paper setting out the criteria adopted by the Administration in assessing requests for the conduct of grade structure reviews (GSRs) from non-directorate civilian grades.

Need to review the assessment criteria

6. Referring to the two criteria for assessing GSR requests from non-directorate civilian grades as elaborated in paragraphs 8 to 11 of the Administration's paper for this item, Ms LI Fung-ying considered that these criteria had long been adopted by the Administration and there might be a need to review and revise them as appropriate. SCS responded that the two criteria had been explained in detail in the Administration's paper under

discussion. These criteria had been consistently applied in the consideration of requests for conduct of GSRs. The Administration had striven to ensure that the assessment of such requests was made objectively as far as practicable. For example, in considering a request put forward by a grade for the conduct of a GSR, information and data on the recruitment situation and the unnatural wastage rates of this grade would be collected to provide an objective basis for assessment of whether there were any recruitment and/or retention difficulties. With regard to the other criterion of whether there were fundamental changes in the job nature/complexity and level of responsibilities (the fundamental change criterion) of the grade being proposed for a GSR, SCS explained that to some extent the application of this criterion might involve subjective consideration. She pointed out that incremental changes to the job nature/complexity and level of responsibilities of individual grades over time were natural and inevitable, and did not necessarily constitute valid reasons for the conduct of GSRs for the concerned grades.

7. Ms LI Fung-ying opined that notwithstanding the above explanation, it remained unclear as to what changes to the job nature/complexity and level of responsibilities of individual grades would be regarded as fundamental, and what would be regarded as changes that were inevitable and did not constitute valid reasons for conduct of GSRs. SCS responded that using Clerical Officer (CO) grade as an example, changes such as the increasing use of information technology, though significantly affecting the CO grade, should not be considered as fundamental because such changes only affected the way COs performed their duties but not their job nature. Moreover, such generic changes did not warrant the conduct of GSRs as the broad comparability between civil service and private sector pay could be maintained through the conduct of the pay level survey (PLS) once every six years and the starting salaries survey (SSS) at three-yearly intervals.

8. Referring to paragraph 11 of the Administration's paper, Mr IP Wai-ming considered the explanation of the fundamental change criterion unclear, particularly with regard to what "incremental changes to the job nature, level of responsibilities and job complexity of individual grades over time" could be regarded as just "natural and inevitable" and therefore "do not necessarily constitute valid reasons for the conduct of GSRs for the concerned grades". He requested the Administration to provide a paper to explain how the fundamental change criterion had been applied in assessing requests for the conduct of GSRs in the past 10 years and provide precedents. SCS agreed to provide the requisite information.

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9. SCS responded that there had been cases where fundamental changes in the job nature and responsibilities of certain grades necessitated a merger and resulted in the creation of a new grade which took over the duties of the former grades. SCS further advised that requests for conduct of GSRs from non-directorate civilian grades were assessed with regard to the civil service pay policy, which was to ensure broad comparability between civil service and private sector pay. She noted that since implementation of the Improved Civil Service Pay Adjustment Mechanism in 2007, three sets of market surveys were regularly conducted to assess how the prevailing civil service pay compared with the pay in the private sector; and whether the pay for the whole civil service or for particular salary bands of the civil service, and whether the starting pay for the entry ranks of specific grades should be adjusted.

10. In response to the Chairman's enquiry, SCS said that in recent years, a GSR on the Veterinary Officer grade and one on the Government Counsel grade and the related Legal Aid Counsel and Solicitor grades were conducted between 2007 and 2008 in view of the recruitment and retention difficulties encountered by these grades.

Communication with staff of concerned grades

11. Ms LI Fung-ying enquired whether the Administration would clearly explain to staff whose request for conduct of GSRs for their grade was not acceded to, so that the staff concerned would at least be assured that their requests had been examined in detail.

12. SCS agreed with Ms LI Fung-ying on the need for proper communication with staff in handling GSR requests, and explained that staff would usually raise their requests with their respective Heads of Department (HoDs) first, who would submit the requests to the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) for consideration. The assessment outcome would also be relayed to the staff of the grades concerned through their HoDs. Speaking from her own experience, SCS said that when a request for conduct of GSR was not acceded to, the staff concerned often had the impression that their views and justifications had not been given due consideration. This impression was not supported by facts. SCS explained that every such request had indeed been carefully assessed, and those turned down were due to inadequate justifications. SCS added that it was important for the Administration to adhere to the established assessment criteria, which it considered were objective and easily comprehensible to staff.

13. The Deputy Chairman pointed out that as he understood from staff of the grades concerned, such as the Hong Kong Government Lifeguards General Union (the General Union), due recognition and professional dignity rather than salary increase were the reasons for their requests for GSRs. He urged CSB to communicate with staff of those grades whose requests had been turned down instead of through the HoDs concerned in order to prevent a decline in the morale of the affected staff.

14. SCS responded that the General Union had directly written to her many a time, and CSB's written replies to them had been seen by her before issuance. She clearly understood the reasons behind the General Union's request but she did not think the justifications they had provided were adequate. The Deputy Chairman proposed that when the Panel further discussed this item at a future meeting, consideration should be given to inviting representatives of those grades whose requests for conduct of GSRs had been turned down so that they could explain in detail their aspirations. Mr WONG Kwok-hing shared his views and considered that the Administration should be open-minded in handling such requests. Pointing out that only a few grades, such as the government lifeguards, the Liaison Officer (LO) grade of the Home Affairs Department, etc., had persistently requested the conduct of a GSR, Mr WONG considered that the Administration should re-consider their requests.

15. SCS stressed that there was a need to assess requests made by any grades according to a consistent set of guiding principles and criteria as highlighted in the Administration's paper for this item. As such, unless new justifications were put forward, she did not consider it necessary for the Administration to reconsider any requests for conduct of GSRs that had already been examined and turned down.

16. Ms LI Fung-ying and Mr TAM Yiu-chung pointed out that the LO grade had been calling for a GSR on grounds that there was a need for higher entry requirement in response to changes in the grade's job duties, which had become much more complicated than before. In reply to Mr TAM, SCS said that the present entry requirement of the LO grade was two passes at Advanced Level in the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination plus three credits in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (i.e. Qualification Group (QG) 7), which, in the LO grade's view, should be upgraded to degree qualification (i.e. QG9). After examining their justifications however, she was of the view that the problem faced by the LO grade was more related to their workload and could not be resolved through upgrading the entry requirement. SCS further pointed out that the GSR mechanism was not a panacea for all kinds of manpower-related issues.

Problems related to workload should be addressed through better human resource management. As such, apart from conveying the above views to the relevant department, CSB would examine in the context of the annual resource allocation exercise whether the problem concerned could be addressed by providing additional manpower resources.

17. Mr TAM Yiu-chung opined that although the heavy workload of the LO grade should be addressed by additional manpower resources, a higher entry requirement of the grade might help enhance the service quality in areas of building management and relevant legal issues. He further considered that GSR requests should not be turned down straight away but the Administration should at least discuss the requests with the grades concerned. SCS considered that to enhance service quality, on-the-job training might be more important than upgrading the entry requirement. She further stressed that considering the substantial resources involved in conducting GSRs and resource constraints, only requests for conduct of GSRs which were fully justified and met the assessment criteria should be granted. Summing up, the Chairman said that the Panel should follow up the matter in the next session after the Administration had provided the supplementary information.

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Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
11 April 2011