

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
PANEL ON DEVELOPMENT**

**Enforcement against unauthorised building works  
in New Territories Exempted Houses:  
Staff consultation on the proposed creation of a supernumerary  
Chief Building Surveyor/Chief Structural Engineer post (D1)**

**BACKGROUND**

At the meeting of the Subcommittee on Building Safety and Related Issues held on 8 December 2011, Members considered LC Paper No. CB(1)524/11-12(01) and supported in principle the proposed creation of a supernumerary Chief Building Surveyor (CBS)/Chief Structural Engineer (CSE) post (D1) in the Buildings Department (BD) to coordinate the implementation of the enhanced enforcement strategy against unauthorised building works (UBWs) in New Territories exempted houses, generally referred to as “NT village houses”. In that connection, Members also noted the concerns raised by the Buildings Department Survey Officer Working Group (BDSOWG) and the Buildings Department Technical Officer Working Group (BDTOWG) regarding the proposed creation of post. They therefore requested the Administration to conduct further consultation with the staff concerned and to report the outcome in a paper to the Panel on Development before submitting the proposal to the Establishment Subcommittee.

2. This paper provides the information requested.

**STAFF CONSULTATION**

3. The relevant staff associations in BD, namely the Buildings Department Local Building Surveyors’ Association (BDLBSA), the Buildings Department Structural Engineers’ Association (BDSEA), BDSOWG, BDTOWG and the Buildings Department Non-Civil Service Contract Staff Association (BDNCSCA), were first consulted on the proposed creation of the supernumerary CBS/CSE post on 1 December 2011.

In light of the concerns raised by some staff, the Deputy Director of Buildings met with representatives of the five staff associations again on 16 December 2011 to further explain the proposal and to address their concerns.

4. Of the five staff associations, the BDLBSA and BDSEA were in general supportive of the proposal. Both associations considered that their members should be fully capable of discharging the duties of the proposed CBS/CSE post. They were also of the view that, given the scale and large volume of work involved, the proposed CBS/CSE post should be created on a permanent basis.

5. On the other hand, the BDNCSCA emphasized the time-limited nature of the exercise and considered that the work should be discharged by temporary staff such as those employed on non-civil service contract terms, rather than by civil servants on permanent establishment.

6. The BDSOWG and BDTOWG held more divergent views. They did not see benefits from the creation of a CBS/CSE post, provided that there were sufficient technical supporting staff and effective management of the outsourced consultants. They considered that rather than engaging consultants, the work involved should be carried out by BD staff, with the creation of more technical staff posts, including those at senior ranks, for investigation of UBWs, checking the work of the consultants and operating the reporting scheme for UBWs in NT village houses, etc. They also criticised the quality of the outsourced consultants, which allegedly led to unnecessary detailed checking, correction and inspection by BD technical staff. Details of their concerns are stated in their submissions which had been circulated to Members by the Legislative Council Secretariat.

7. At the meeting on 16 December 2011, BD management explained at length to the staff representatives the background and the need for setting up a dedicated Village Houses (VH) Section which would be headed by a supernumerary CBS/CSE post and supported by some 40 non-directorate staff for implementation of the enhanced enforcement strategy against UBWs in NT village houses.

8. The BD management assured the staff representatives that their views and concerns had been carefully noted. Staff members were informed that the new VH Section would comprise all the four departmental grades

(viz Building Surveyor, Structural Engineer, Survey Officer and Technical Officer) and that the ratio between the two professional grades and the two technical grades in the new section would broadly be 1:1. Detailed arrangements of the new section would be worked out by an internal working group and all the stakeholders, including the staff associations, would be involved in the process. BD management would continue to maintain dialogue with the staff with a view to enhancing communication and addressing the concerns of the staff. It may be noted, in regard to the number of technical posts on permanent establishment in the BD, that this has already been increased from 308 in April 2011 to 370 at the end of November 2011, an increase of 62 posts, or 20% of the original establishment.

9. The issue of consultancy management was also discussed at the meeting. BD management explained that the outsourced consultancies were needed partly for project based tasks which were time-limited in nature. Another category of outsourced consultancies was to provide a rapid response to reports on UBWs under construction (works-in-progress cases). The Administration has to ensure the best use of resources when deciding on the right mix of civil servants and outsourced consultants in discharging the tasks. Nevertheless, BD management fully recognised the need to ensure effective management of the consultants and would listen to the views of all staff including those from the two Working Groups on ways to improve the performance of the outsourced consultants.

## **WAY FORWARD**

10. Having regard to operational needs and after taking into account the views of staff on consultation, we are satisfied that the proposal to create a supernumerary CBS/CSE post, which had the support of Members at the meeting on 8 December 2011, should go forward. We therefore will submit the proposal to the Establishment Subcommittee for recommendation in February 2012 and, afterwards, to the Finance Committee for approval in April 2012.