

Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting

Extract from minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2013

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III. Proposed extension of a supernumerary post of Administrative Officer Staff Grade B in Radio Television Hong Kong

(LC Paper CB(4)196/13-14(03)	No. -- Administration's paper on proposed extension of a supernumerary post of Administrative Officer Staff Grade B in Radio Television Hong Kong
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LC Paper No. CB(4)196/13-14(04) -- Paper on the supernumerary post of Administrative Officer Staff Grade B in Radio Television Hong Kong prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (background brief))

Presentation by the Administration

At the invitation of the Chairman, Permanent Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development (Communications and Technology) ("PSCED(CT)") briefed members on the proposal of the Administration to extend a supernumerary post of Administrative Officer Staff Grade B ("AOSGB") (D3) in Radio Television Hong Kong ("RTHK") for five years from 27 May 2014 to 26 May 2019. Details of the briefing were set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(4)196/13-14(03)).

Discussion

Long-term service needs of the post of Deputy Director of Broadcasting (Developments)

2. Mr SIN Chung-kai expressed concern about the expansion of the civil service structure by way of extending supernumerary posts and the increased involvement of Administrative Officers ("AOs") in the management of RTHK. PSCED(CT) advised that following the Government's decision in September 2009 for RTHK to expand its scope of services to fulfill its mission as the public service broadcaster ("PSB") of Hong Kong, the Government announced a package of arrangements concerning the provision of resources, manpower and facilities to fully support RTHK in taking forward its new initiatives. Staffing arrangements of RTHK had since then been smoothed out. The Administration had no intention to regularize the appointment of AOs as RTHK management and the current post of Deputy Director of Broadcasting (Developments) ("DD of B/D") was the only supernumerary AO post in RTHK. PSCED(CT) affirmed in response to Mr CHAN Chi-chuen's enquiry that the staff who first took up the post of DD of B/D in 2011 was an AO.

3. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen noted that the supernumerary post of DD of B/D was necessary for RTHK to maintain strong governance at senior directorate level to tackle tasks arising from the planning and implementation of the new services and projects from the macro perspective, coordinate the efforts across different sections within RTHK, work with bureaux and departments within the Government as well as make use of strong negotiation skills to work with stakeholders such as the free TV operators. He enquired about the details of the work involving negotiation with the free TV operators which he considered was apparently the work of Deputy Director of Broadcasting (Programmes) ("DD of B/P"). PSCED(CT) advised that DD of B/D was responsible for negotiating with free TV operators on the terms and conditions for the sharing of common infrastructure facilities for broadcasting, while DD of B/P was responsible for the day-to-day arrangements for TV programmes.

4. DD of B/D supplemented that the post would also be responsible for providing support to ensure timely commencement of installation of broadcasting and other technical equipment upon the completion of construction works in each phase of the new Broadcasting House ("BH"). In addition, the post would provide the necessary steer to the developments/further developments of digital terrestrial television ("DTT"), digital audio broadcasting ("DAB"), media asset management ("MAM")

and other RTHK's new services.

5. Mr YIU Si-wing questioned why the Administration proposed to extend the supernumerary post of DD of B/D for five years from 27 May 2014 to 26 May 2019, having regard to the fact that the last term of the supernumerary post was only created for a period of three years. He also enquired about the details of the work to be performed by DD of B/D in the coming five years. PSCED(CT) advised that with the extension of the DD of B/D post, RTHK would have dedicated support at senior directorate level to oversee and follow through the completion of the new BH, and to lead and coordinate the migration of RTHK from its existing premises to the new building.

6. Ms Cyd HO noted that the installation of the broadcasting facilities, if not planned or implemented properly to ensure correct and timely interfacing of construction, cabling and equipment installation works, would not only delay the installation of equipment but also affect the commissioning date of the new BH. However, she expressed grave concern whether an AO, not being a technical expert, was suitable to lead and coordinate the new BH project. She was of the view that negotiation and co-ordination work of the new BH should be undertaken by D of B. Ms Emily LAU shared a similar view.

7. PSCED(CT) advised that technical support and engineering staff within RTHK would provide the necessary expertise for the relevant installation work. RTHK would need to have careful planning and close monitoring to ensure the timely procurement and delivery of the required equipment. It also had to coordinate closely with Government departments, the contractor of the new BH and RTHK's own contractors of broadcasting facilities in order to establish in advance the necessary broadcasting and information technology infrastructure. The Administration considered that an AO was suitable for the post having regard to the work being undertaken in the past three years. Ms Cyd HO said that she would consider supporting the staffing proposal if RTHK would appoint a technical expert to fill the supernumerary post of DD of B/D.

8. In response to Mr Christopher CHEUNG's enquiry about the term of the DD of B/D post, PSCED(CT) advised that when creating the supernumerary post of DD of B/D in May 2011, the Administration had advised that RTHK considered it appropriate to keep the term of this post at three years. It would keep in view the development and assess whether the post should be extended or converted to a permanent one, having regard to the progress of implementing various new services and projects.

According to the new BH project programme, it would be completed and handed over to RTHK by phases, tentatively from late 2016 to end 2017, with a view to commissioning in 2018. RTHK therefore considered it appropriate to extend the term of the DD of B/D post for a period of five years to 2019. The Administration would further review whether the post should be converted to a permanent post nearer the expiry of its term.

Staff cost for the proposed extension of the post of Deputy Director of Broadcasting (Developments)

9. Mr Christopher CHUNG enquired whether the staff cost for the proposed extension of the supernumerary directorate post was included in the estimated cost for the proposed construction of the new BH. PSCED(CT) advised that the duties and responsibilities of DD of B/D were related to the construction of the new BH and the implementation of other new services provided by RTHK. The cost for a staffing proposal was separate and different from the estimated cost for a public works proposal. It was therefore not included in the estimated construction cost of the new BH. Mr CHUNG opined that such staff cost should be included in the estimated cost for construction of the new BH. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan shared a similar view.

10. Ms Emily LAU and Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung were of the view that the proposed extension of the post of DD of B/D should be considered after the proposal for the construction of the new BH had been approved by the Public Works Subcommittee ("PWSC") and the Finance Committee ("FC"). PSCED(CT) responded that the Administration's plan was to submit the proposed extension of DD of B/D to the Establishment Subcommittee ("ESC") for consideration after the approval of the construction of the new BH by PWSC.

Division of work among RTHK management staff

11. Mr YIU Si-wing expressed concern about the division of work between DD of B/P and Controller (Production Services) under DD of B/D who was responsible for overseeing departmental administration and production resources as shown in the organization chart of RTHK (Annex A to LC Paper No. CB(4)196/13-14(03)). Dr CHIANG Lai-wan also expressed concern about the apparent duplication of work of the RTHK management as shown in the organization chart of RTHK.

12. DD of B/D advised that Controller (Production Services) was responsible for the supporting work for production services such as engineering and information technology while DD of B/P was responsible

for the programme services of RTHK. PSCED(CT) added that part of the RTHK staff was responsible for programmes production and arrangement while the rest was responsible for the infrastructure work of RTHK, including construction of the new BH.

13. Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok sought explanation for the division of responsibilities between DD of B/D and Controller (Production Services) under DD of B/D regarding departmental administration and production resources of RTHK. DD of B/D advised that DD of B/D was responsible for overseeing departmental administration and resources management for ensuring the optimal, efficient and effective use and deployment of the financial, human and production resources of RTHK, while Controller (Production Services) was responsible for supporting work for programme production services. DD of B/P also advised that with the launching of new services such as DTT, DAB and MAM, strengthening of the development of production support services was required at the management level to lead and co-ordinate such developments. PSCED(CT) supplemented that the staff working under DD of B/D would be redeployed to work under the supervision of DD of B/P upon expiry of the former post in accordance with the arrangement prior to the creation of the post.

Summing up

14. The Chairman noted that while Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung, Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok, Mr Charles Peter MOK, Mr CHAN Chi-chuen, Ms Claudia MO, Mrs Regina IP, Mr SIN Chung-kai, Ms Emily LAU and Mr James TO supported the proposed extension of the supernumerary post of AOSGB in RTHK for five years from 27 May 2014 to 26 May 2019, Mr Christopher CHUNG, Mr YIU Si-wing, Dr CHIANG Lai-wan, Mr WONG Ting-kwong and Mr Steven HO were against the proposal. Two members, namely, Mr MA Fung-kwok and Ms Cyd HO did not state whether they were in favour of or against the proposal. The Chairman concluded that the majority of Panel members present supported in principle the submission of the Administration's proposal for consideration by ESC.

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