

# 立法會 *Legislative Council*

LC Paper No. CB(4)1133/15-16  
(These minutes have been seen  
by the Administration)

Ref : CB4/PL/PS

## **Panel on Public Service**

**Minutes of meeting held on  
Monday, 18 April 2016, at 10:45 am  
in Conference Room 3 of the Legislative Council Complex**

**Members present** : Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH (Chairman)  
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, BBS, MH (Deputy Chairman)  
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP  
Dr Hon LEUNG Ka-lau  
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-yee, GBS, JP  
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung  
Hon Claudia MO  
Hon KWOK Wai-keung  
Hon TANG Ka-piu, JP  
Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, JP  
Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen, BBS

**Members absent** : Hon LEE Cheuk-yan  
Hon IP Kin-yuen

**Public officers  
attending** : Items III and IV

Civil Service Bureau

Mr Clement CHEUNG, JP  
Secretary for the Civil Service

Mr Thomas CHOW, JP  
Permanent Secretary for the Civil Service

Mr Eddie MAK, JP  
Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service 1

**Clerk in attendance :** Miss Mary SO  
Chief Council Secretary (4)2

**Staff in attendance :** Miss Joyce CHING  
Senior Council Secretary (4)2

Ms Jacqueline LAW  
Council Secretary (4)2

Miss Vivian YUEN  
Legislative Assistant (4)2

---

Action

**I. Information paper(s) issued since the last meeting**

There was no information paper issued since the last meeting.

**II. Items for discussion at the next meeting**

LC Paper No. CB(4)844/15-16(01) -- List of outstanding items  
for discussion

LC Paper No. CB(4)844/15-16(02) -- List of follow-up actions

2. Members agreed to discuss the following items proposed by the Administration at the next regular meeting scheduled for 16 May 2016 at 10:45 am:

- (a) Starting Salaries Survey: Application to the Civil Service;  
and
- (b) Implementation of Five-day Week in the Government

3. Ms Emily LAU proposed that members be briefed on the gender profile of the civil service and the measures taken by the Government to promote gender balance in the civil service at a future meeting. Members agreed.

### **III. An overview of the civil service establishment, strength, retirement, resignation and age profile**

LC Paper No. CB(4)844/15-16(03) -- Administration's paper on "An Overview of the Civil Service: Establishment, Strength, Retirement, Resignation and Age Profile"

LC Paper No. CB(4)844/15-16(04) -- Updated background brief on the "Overall establishment, strength, retirement, resignation and age profile of the Civil Service" prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat

#### Briefing by the Administration

4. Secretary for the Civil Service ("SCS") updated members on the overall establishment, strength, wastage situation and age profile of the civil service, details of which were set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(4)844/15-16(03)).

#### Discussion

##### *Establishment and strength*

5. Mr WONG Kwok-hing said that the increase of around 8 100 new civil service posts in the five-year period from 2010-2011 to 2014-2015 to meet the demand for new or improved public services was appropriate. Noting that 2 223 additional civil service posts would be created in various Bureaux/Departments ("B/Ds") in 2016-2017, representing a year-on-year increase of about 1.3% over the 2015-2016 Revised Estimates (i.e. 176 272 posts), Mr WONG asked how many of these new

posts were meant for the purpose of replacing non-civil service contract ("NCSC") positions.

6. SCS responded that about 540 civil service posts (around 24% of the 2 223 posts) would be created in B/Ds for replacing NCSC positions in 2016-2017. As mentioned in previous meetings of the Panel, it was the Government's policy to gradually replace NCSC positions which involved work of a permanent nature that should more appropriately be carried out by civil servants. Moreover, about 70% of the 540 posts were meant to replace NCSC positions which existed for five years or longer.

7. Mr WONG Kwok-hing asked to know the estimated number of civil service posts to be created in 2017-2018 for replacing NCSC positions and for meeting new or improved services respectively.

8. SCS responded that the estimation requested by Mr WONG Kwok-hing in paragraph 7 above was not available. He said that the Civil Service Bureau ("CSB") would continue to work closely with the B/Ds concerned to identify NCSC positions which should gradually be replaced by civil service posts. As for the estimated number of posts to be created in 2017-2018, SCS said that it hinged upon the progress of implementing new or improved services and whether the B/Ds concerned could come up with the requisite justifications.

9. Mr KWOK Wai-keung noted from the Administration's replies to his question raised at the special meeting of the Finance Committee ("FC") of the Legislative Council ("LegCo") held on 1 April 2016 that whilst the civil service establishment and strength stood at 170 898 and 163 645 respectively as at 31 March 2015, representing an overall vacancy rate of 4.2%, some B/Ds, such as the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department and the Education Bureau, were carrying vacancy rates close to or higher than 10%. Mr KWOK asked about the resulting impact on workload borne by the staff and quality of services provided to the public.

10. Mr KWOK Wai-keung further noted from paragraph 16 of the Administration's paper that according to a survey conducted by CSB on the reasons for declining civil service job offers in 2014-2015, 42% of the 370 respondents had taken up another civil service post. As it was not uncommon for people to apply for several civil service posts concurrently, Mr KWOK asked whether, and if so, what measure(s) would be taken by CSB to avoid duplication of efforts.

11. SCS responded that B/Ds would strive to fill vacancies in a timely manner and deploy resources aptly to meet prevailing service needs, adding that vacancy rates should not be viewed in isolation from actual number of vacancies. In that regard, CSB had set up a task force to look into ways for improving the efficiency and effectiveness in the conduct of recruitment exercises. The task force provided a platform for sharing/identifying best practices for enhancing the capability of the personnel staff responsible for conducting recruitment exercises, such as joint recruitment exercises for certain grades that could be found in more than one B/D, use of electronic means for more effective communication with job applicants, etc.

### *Retirement*

12. Mr WONG Kwok-hing noted from paragraph 10 of the Administration's paper that the annual average of civil servants retiring would increase from 4% for the five-year period ending 2018-2019 to 4.2% (or around 6 800) in the five-year period ending 2023-2024. Mr WONG further noted from paragraph 20 of the Administration's paper that in order to address the higher wastage of civil servants in the coming decade, the Post-retirement Service Contract Scheme ("PRSC") was launched in November 2015 and the revised arrangement for final extension of service beyond retirement age of serving civil servants was promulgated in February 2016 by the Administration. Mr WONG asked about the impacts of these initiatives on the promotion prospects of younger civil servants.

13. SCS responded that the package of flexible initiatives for extending the service of civil servants sought to cater for different manpower needs at different times. To illustrate, for ranks that faced serious succession problems at a certain time, the B/Ds concerned might consider retaining serving civil servants at the ranks concerned beyond their retirement age under the adjusted further employment mechanism so that the officers at the lower ranks could have more time to consolidate. In some other cases, the PRSC Scheme might be more suitable for retaining experience in the B/Ds concerned while avoiding promotion blockage. The package of initiatives would provide B/Ds with flexibility for meeting their specific manpower needs.

14. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan said that to better facilitate smooth succession in the civil service, adequate training and development should be provided to younger officers to prepare them for taking up higher

responsibilities. Dr CHIANG asked about the measures that had been/would be carried out by CSB in this regard.

15. SCS responded that whilst B/Ds provided vocational training to meet job-specific needs, the Civil Service Training and Development Institute ("CSTDI") under CSB focused on training programmes that were best provided centrally, such as leadership and management, language and communication, national studies and the Basic Law. For civil servants identified to have potential for higher responsibilities, training would be provided to enhance their all-round capabilities. In addition to local training, they would be sponsored to attend overseas executive development programmes at renowned educational institutions. Arrangement would also be made for them to undergo attachments to policy bureaux, regional and international organisations to broaden their experience, perspective and network.

16. Ms Emily LAU said that CSTDI should also step up efforts to enhance the skills of senior civil servants in communicating with LegCo Members, so as to improve the relationship between the executive authorities and the legislature.

17. Mrs Regina IP said that the retirement benefits of civil servants appointed on or after 1 June 2000 and on the New Permanent Terms ("NPT") of appointment (i.e. on the Civil Service Provident Fund ("CSPF") Scheme) were less favourable than those appointed before 1 June 2000 on pensionable terms. Specifically, civil servants appointed on NPT could only withdraw their accrued benefits under the CSPF Scheme when they reached the age of 65 and would not be entitled to medical and dental benefits after their retirement. Mrs IP urged the Administration to re-consider allowing civil servants appointed on or after 1 June 2000 but before 1 June 2015 the option to extend their service up to the retirement age set for new recruits appointed on or after 1 June 2015, i.e. 65 in respect of civilian grades or 60 in respect of disciplined services grades, without going through any selection by the management. Mrs IP pointed out that to do so should not have significant financial implication on the Government having regard to the fact that the overall financial commitment of the CSPF Scheme would be kept within 18% of the salary cost, and should not have adverse impact on the promotion prospects of civil servants appointed on or after 1 June 2000 but before 1 June 2015 as the longer time that would take to get promoted to the higher ranks would be equally applied to these cohorts of civil servants.

18. SCS explained that an officer on NPT of appointment might withdraw the accrued benefits attributable to the Government's voluntary contribution under the CSPF Scheme upon reaching his/her retirement age as prescribed under the Scheme. As the Government's contribution rate under the CSPF Scheme would increase progressively with completed years of continuous service, the accrued benefits that the officer could receive upon retirement from the civil service would constitute the bulk of his/her retirement benefits. For instance, the Government's contribution, including voluntary contributions and mandatory contributions, would reach 25% of an officer's basic salary due to his/her substantive rank if he/she had completed continuous service on civil service terms of 30 years or above (for those appointed on or after 1 June 2000 but before 1 June 2015) or 35 years or above (for those appointed on or after 1 June 2015).

19. SCS further said that the policy considerations of introducing the new remuneration package for civil servants appointed on or after 1 June 2000 had been thoroughly deliberated by this Panel and the relevant financial arrangements for its implementation had been approved by FC of LegCo.

20. Regarding the proposal of allowing serving officers appointed on or after 1 June 2000 but before 1 June 2015 to opt for the new retirement age, Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service 1 said that the package of initiatives for extending the service of civil servants was formulated against the background of an ageing population and an anticipated higher wastage of civil servants in the coming years. As the manpower and succession needs would vary from grade to grade and from time to time, allowing serving civil servants to opt for a higher retirement age might give rise to management problems such as manpower mismatch, promotion blockage and lack of healthy turnover. The package of initiatives for extending the service of civil servants, including the PRSC Scheme and the adjusted further employment mechanism, would strike a balance among various considerations and provide flexibility for B/Ds to meet their different operational and/or succession needs at different times.

21. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung said that many junior civil servants wished to continue to work beyond their retirement age for better livelihood. Mr LEUNG urged the Administration to allow civil servants at junior ranks to opt for a higher retirement age.

### *Resignation*

22. In view of the growing public expectation on the services provided by civil servants, Ms Emily LAU asked about measures that had been/would be taken to retain civil servants.

23. SCS responded that the resignation rate of civil servants had remained at a stable level of 0.5% to 0.55% in recent years. To improve staff retention, more resources for training would be set aside to empower civil servants in dealing with growing public expectation on public services and increasing workload.

24. Whilst noting that the overall resignation rate among civil servants was not high, Mr KWOK Wai-keung remained concerned that dilution of experience could hamper smooth succession, particularly when the number of retiring staff was on the rise. In the light of this, Mr KWOK sought information on vintage of the resignees.

25. SCS responded that resignation should not pose adverse impact on succession in the civil service, citing that of the 893 resignees in 2014-2015, 59% left during their probationary period.

26. Mr KWOK Wai-keung queried whether the exit of probationers reflected inadequate attractiveness of civil service pay.

27. SCS responded that in order to attract suitable talents, it was the Government's policy to ensure that civil service pay was sufficient and broadly comparable to private sector pay. For this reason and other relevant considerations, although the findings of the 2015 Starting Salaries Survey indicated that the benchmark pay of one particular Qualification Group ("QG") was higher than the market upper quartile for that QG, the Standing Commission on Civil Service Salaries and Conditions of Service had recommended maintaining the entry pay level of that QG. SCS said that people left during their probationary period for various reasons. Some of them might find the jobs unsuitable to them after joining the service, for instance, the requirements to work shifts or the nature of the jobs did not suit their character. SCS added that if civil service pay was not sufficiently attractive, the resignees would not have applied for civil service posts in the first place.



*Wages of outsourced workers*

28. Ms Emily LAU said that similar to replacement of NCSC positions by civil service posts if the work involved was of permanent nature, the Government should also create new civil service posts if there was a long-term manpower need for services provided by outsourced workers. Ms LAU then asked about the wages of outsourced workers, as to her understanding, the wages provided by contractors to their employees performing low-level work, such as cleansing and security, for B/Ds were 30% or more lower than those of civil servants performing comparable duties.

29. SCS responded that CSB did not have readily available information on the wages of outsourced workers since this subject fell under policy purview of the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau. According to the general impression gained by him from the staff side, however, the wages of some outsourced workers performing non-skilled work were indeed lower than those of civil servants performing comparable duties, but the difference might not be as high as 30%. SCS noted that the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury would reply to a related question to be raised by Ms LAU at the Council meeting on 27 April 2016.

30. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung urged the Administration not to save money at the expense of sacrificing provision of quality services to the public by engaging outsourced workers and agency workers.

Conclusion

31. In closing, the Chairman said that the Panel would continue to closely monitor the overall establishment, strength, retirement, resignation and age profile of the civil service.

**IV. Employment of ethnic minorities in the civil service**

LC Paper No. CB(4)844/15-16(05)      -- Administration's paper on "Employment of Ethnic Minorities in the Civil Service"

LC Paper No. CB(4)844/15-16(06) -- Updated background  
brief on  
"Employment of ethnic  
minorities in the Civil  
Service" prepared by  
LegCo Secretariat

### Briefing by the Administration

32. SCS updated members on the implementation of the measures to facilitate the employment of ethnic minorities in the civil service, details of which were set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(4)844/15-16(05)).

### Discussion

33. Mr WONG Kwok-hing welcomed the two-pronged approach adopted by the Government to ensure that ethnic minorities, like other applicants, had equal access to job opportunities in the Government, i.e. (i) setting a lower Chinese Language Proficiency Requirements ("LPRs") if operational requirements of the grades concerned would not be compromised and adjusting the recruitment formats, such as requiring written proficiency in either Chinese or English and replacing written test in Chinese by group interview; and (ii) implementing initiatives targeting at employing non-ethnic Chinese ("NEC") to meet specific operational needs, such as the recruitment of NECs as Police Community Liaison Assistants. Noting from the briefing by SCS earlier at the meeting that CSB would step up its efforts to facilitate the employment of ethnic minorities in the civil service, Mr WONG hoped that the Chinese LPRs of more grades could be lowered whilst not compromising operational requirements and more initiatives targeting at NECs could be implemented.

34. SCS responded that CSB would liaise with B/Ds on ways to facilitate the employment of ethnic minorities to civil service posts which required comparatively lower entry requirements, such as Workman I, Workman II, Artisan, Senior Artisan, Motor Driver, etc. SCS further said that whilst individual B/Ds would be in a better position to come up with specific initiatives on tapping the talent pool of ethnic minorities, CSB would continue to liaise with those B/Ds whose services had direct interface with ethnic minority communities with a view to identifying room for exploiting the cultural background and unique skill set of NEC. For instance, Immigration Department ("ImmD") had recently employed

NECs proficient in ethnic minority languages to support its work on control and enforcement, including handling of non-refoulement claims.

35. Ms Emily LAU said that CSB should not merely focus its efforts on facilitating the employment of NECs to low-ranking jobs in the civil service. Ms LAU further said that there were many service areas which the relevant B/Ds should urgently tap into the pool of ethnic minorities. For instance, ImmD should employ NECs to assist its work in providing services to the large number of foreign domestic helpers who were not proficient in English, such as those from Indonesia; and the Police Force should employ NECs to provide interpretation service to ethnic minorities being detained or investigated by the Police. Citing the incidents whereby ImmD staff requested Muslim women to remove their headdresses during interviews which were deeply embarrassing to these women, Ms LAU urged those B/Ds whose services had interface with ethnic minority communities to better equip their staff with the knowledge in the cultures of these communities.

36. SCS responded as follows:

- (a) efforts would continue to be made to facilitate the employment of NECs to fill openings in the civil service mentioned above bearing in mind that competition for jobs which required relatively lower academic qualifications and LPRs was relatively intense. NECs possessing higher qualifications should not encounter as many hurdles in job seeking generally; and
- (b) CSB had been providing training to enhance the knowledge and sensitivity of civil servants. At the working level, interaction with NEC colleagues was the best way for civil servants to learn about cultures of the ethnic minority.

37. Ms Emily LAU said that many NEC students had difficulty in learning the Chinese language tailored for Chinese-speaking students. To better help NEC students to learn Chinese so as to enhance their employability after they left schools, Ms LAU hoped that a Chinese language curriculum tailored for NEC students could be provided. Noting that many NEC youths were very interested in joining the disciplined services, such as the Police Force and the Correctional Services Department ("CSD"), Ms LAU also hoped that more facilitative measures could be rolled out.

38. SCS responded that the disciplined services departments were willing to trawl NECs for relevant jobs. It was noted that the Police Force had been proactive in this regard. As an illustration, the number of NEC applicants for employment as Police Constable had increased from three in 2010-11 to 62 in 2015-16, and the number of appointments surged from one to nine during the same period. Furthermore, the success rate of NECs was 15% in 2015-2016, compared with 12% for other applicants. SCS remarked that outreach efforts played an important role in achieving this outcome, some examples included career talks; visits to Police Units; sharing by NEC police officers on work experience and job interview skills; and Chinese language courses. Since 2015, the Police Force also introduced a referral programme, under which NEC applicants for Police Constable who failed in a recruitment exercise would be referred to participate in relevant projects such as those on Chinese language and job interviewing skills. As regards CSD, SCS said that 10 NECs were employed as Assistant Officer II from 2010-2011 to 2015-2016, with the success rate matching that of other applicants. Going forward, SCS considered it useful to share with other disciplined services departments the successful experience of the Police Force.

39. Ms Emily LAU enquired whether CSB had been communicating with NEC groups, such as the Hong Kong Unison Limited, on the measures/initiatives that the Administration would take under its two-pronged approach to facilitate the employment of ethnic minorities in the civil service, so that the NEC groups could help to disseminate information on such measures/initiatives to NECs.

40. SCS said that efforts would be made to liaise with NEC groups with a view to disseminating information on initiatives to facilitate the employment of ethnic minorities in the civil service.

41. Mrs Regina IP noted that the disciplined services departments had made suitable adjustments to their recruitment selection process, particularly the part concerning tests of their ability in written Chinese, in order to facilitate NECs to get employed with them. In the light of this, Mrs IP expressed concern as to whether the successful applicants could discharge their duties effectively. For instance, as the job of the Police Constable would entail taking statements, it was not desirable for a NEC Police Constable to defer the taking of statement to other Police Constable who could write in Chinese. Mrs IP further expressed concern that the lack of career advancement of a NEC Police Constable in the Police Force due to his/her inability to write in Chinese would give

rise to grievance and result in him/her making a discrimination complaint against the Police Force.

42. SCS concurred that ability to meet the job requirements and prospects for career advancement should not be compromised and it was precisely the reason why the Administration did not consider it appropriate to set an employment quota for ethnic minorities in the civil service. SCS stressed that the LPRs specified for civil service grades should be relevant to and commensurate with the satisfactory performance of the duties of the grades concerned. In the case of Police Constable, the Police Force had been organizing Chinese language courses specifically for potential NECs applicants as well as NECs who had failed in a recruitment exercise to better equip them in seeking to attain the Chinese LPRs. SCS however pointed out that a more effective way would be to introduce strengthened Chinese language courses for NEC students at the early stage of their academic development. In this connection, EDB had introduced an Applied Learning Chinese (for non-Chinese speaking students) subject starting from the 2014-2015 school year. The first batch of about 180 non-Chinese speaking Secondary Four students had enrolled to study this subject, representing 10% of the total number of these students. Meanwhile, CSB had promulgated guidelines on the acceptance arrangement for this new subject for B/Ds to follow.

43. Mrs Regina IP opined that enhancing Chinese learning for NEC students should start at kindergartens, so that NEC students could bridge over to the mainstream Chinese language classes as soon as practicable. Mrs IP urged SCS to convey her views to EDB.

44. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung suggested that the Administration should conduct a study to assess the public service needs of the ethnic minority communities in Hong Kong, instead of relying on individual B/Ds to identify employment opportunities specifically for NECs.

45. Ms Emily LAU asked whether CSB had received any complaints from applicants, other than NEC applicants, for government jobs that they were being discriminated because of the adjustments made to the LPRs and recruitment formats (particularly the part concerning tests of communication ability) set for the jobs they were applying.

46. SCS replied in the negative. He stressed that appointments to the civil service were based on the principle of open and fair competition. All candidates in an open recruitment exercise were assessed on the basis

of their ability, performance and character, and having regard to the stipulated entry requirements (including language proficiency) set according to the job requirements of the grade concerned. Race was not a relevant consideration in the selection process.

### Conclusion

47. In closing, the Chairman said that the Panel would continue to closely monitor the employment of ethnic minorities in the civil service.

### **V. Any other business**

48. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:29 pm.

Council Business Division 4  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
17 June 2016