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Panel on Public Service

Meeting on 16 November 2015

**Updated background brief on the Civil Service Outstanding Service Award
and other commendation schemes for civil servants**

Purpose

This paper provides background information on the Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme ("CSOSAS") and other commendation schemes for civil servants, and summarizes the major views and concerns on the subject expressed by members of the Panel on Public Service ("the Panel") during previous discussions.

Background

2. According to the Administration, there are four major commendation schemes applicable to civil servants as follows -

- (a) CSOSAS;
- (b) Honours and Awards System of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region ("HKSAR");
- (c) Commendation Letter Scheme; and
- (d) Secretary for the Civil Service ("SCS")'s Commendation Award Scheme.

CSOSAS

3. The Civil Service Bureau ("CSB") has been organizing the

CSOSAS on a biennial basis since 1999¹. The objectives of the CSOSAS are to recognize the efforts of bureaux/departments ("B/Ds") and teams which provide excellent service, to promote a customer-focused culture in the civil service, and to inspire B/Ds and teams for continuous improvement in the delivery of public services. Awards under CSOSAS are presented at three levels, namely –

- the inter-departmental Partnership Award for B/Ds that have succeeded in achieving notable service enhancement through collaboration;
- the departmental awards, comprising the Departmental Service Enhancement Award (further divided into Large Department and Small Department categories) and the Best Public Image Award; and
- the team awards, comprising the Specialized Service Award, the Internal Service Award, the General Public Service Award, the Regulatory/Enforcement Service Award and the Crisis/Incident Support Service Award.

4. There were Gold, Silver and Bronze prizes, and Meritorious Awards for each award category (except the Best Public Image Award which only had Gold, Silver and Bronze prizes).

5. In addition, each team award had a Special Citation for Innovation and Special Citation for Responsiveness to Customer Needs (the last citation was newly introduced for the 2015 Scheme). A Special Citation for Integrity Management was also given out under the General Public Service Award and the Regulatory/Enforcement Service Award to recognize the best integrity management practices in the two team awards.

6. According to the CSB, a two-stage adjudication process was adopted in the awarding of the inter-departmental Partnership Award, the Departmental Service Enhancement Award and the team awards. The boards of examiners in the first stage comprised experienced practitioners from various service industries in the private sector. Legislative Council ("LegCo") Members and District Councils ("DCs") members, representatives from professional organizations, staff side members of the Central Consultative Councils and senior officials from the CSB served on the final adjudication panels. For the Best Public Image Award, a sample of randomly selected members of the public and all members of LegCo and DCs were invited to vote in a survey to select three departments with the best public image.

¹ The CSB has invited the Hong Kong Management Association to co-organize the CSOSAS since 2007 to enhance the interaction between the public and private sectors.

7. To give recognition to the winning B/Ds and teams and to inform the public of these achievements, prize presentation ceremony was held, TV documentary programmes were produced and broadcast in local TV stations, and supplements were published in newspapers. A video series capturing the lesser-known, behind-the-scene efforts and commitment of civil servants in serving the public was also produced for broadcasting in over government venues, government web portals and other social media channels such as Youtube. A School Promotion Programme covering school talks or visits to government facilities for students to understand more about the services provided by the Government had also been launched by the CSB.

8. To inspire other B/Ds and civil servants to emulate good practices of award-winners, seminars were held for the winners to share with colleagues their experience in providing quality services to the public. In addition, the factors contributing to the success of the winners were developed into training and self-learning materials for further dissemination in the civil service.

9. The gold prize winners of the awards under the CSOSAS 2015 are set out in **Appendix I**.

Honours and Awards System of the HKSAR

10. The Honours and Awards System of the HKSAR is a community-wide honours recognition system and is not limited to civil servants only. Each year, members of the public and public officers (including civil servants) are nominated for various honours or awards having regard to their contribution to Hong Kong and their public and community service. The recipients of the different types of awards (e.g. Bauhinia Awards, Bravery Awards, Disciplined Services and Independent Commission Against Corruption Awards, Medal of Honour, Chief Executive's Commendation) are decided by the Chief Executive on the recommendation of an Honours Committee comprising government officials and eminent community leaders. An average of around 120 civil servants received awards under this system annually for the past five years from 2010 to 2014, including around 40 who received the Chief Executive's Commendation for Government/Public Service and around 50 who received various Disciplined Services Awards.

Commendation Letter Scheme

11. The Commendation Letter Scheme is civil service-specific recognition scheme and is administered at the bureau/departmental level. Under the Commendation Letter Scheme, Heads of B/Ds may issue commendation letters to civil servants who have provided consistently outstanding service for at least three consecutive years; or have made significant contribution towards

enhancing the efficiency or the image of their B/Ds; or have performed a meritorious or brave act warranting special recognition. Nominations may be made all year round and they are considered by a commendation committee set up by individual B/Ds under the chairmanship of a directorate officer. An average of around 1 900 civil servants received commendation letters annually for the past five years from 2010 to 2014.

SCS's Commendation Award Scheme

12. In 2004, the SCS's Commendation Award Scheme was introduced as a separate tier of award between the Honours and Awards System of the HKSAR and the bureau/departmental Commendation Letter Scheme. Through this Scheme, SCS, on behalf of the Administration, gives recognition to selected civil servants for consistently outstanding performance. An award recipient should be an exceptionally meritorious officer who has a track record of outstanding performance for at least five consecutive years. Each recipient is awarded a certificate and a gold pin, and granted a travel award if he/she satisfies the length of service required (i.e. a continuous service of 20 or more years) and has not received any Government travel award before. About 80 commendations are awarded under this scheme annually. Nominations are made by Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Departments/Grades. The recipients of awards are selected by SCS on the recommendation of an Award Committee, comprising representatives of the CSB, relevant bureau and Heads of Grades. In 2014, a total of 81 civil servants from 33 B/Ds received the awards under the SCS's Commendation Award Scheme.

13. Key features of the Honours and Awards System of the HKSAR, the SCS's Commendation Award Scheme and the Commendation Letter Scheme are set out in **Appendix II**.

Past discussions by the Panel

14. The Panel discussed the CSOSAS and the other commendation schemes for civil servants on 21 January 2008, 21 December 2009, 16 May 2011, 19 March 2012, 18 November 2013 and 17 November 2014. The major views and concerns expressed by Panel members and the Administration's responses are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

CSOSAS

15. Members noted that the CSOSAS attracted 141 entries from 51 B/Ds, 110 entries from 42 B/Ds, and 93 entries from 30 B/Ds in 2009, 2011 and 2013 respectively. Concern was raised that the decrease in the number of entries and participating B/Ds for the CSOSAS was attributable to a decline in

the morale of civil servants and dwindling attractiveness of the CSOSAS. The Administration was urged to consider ways to encourage more B/Ds to participate in the CSOSAS.

16. The Administration advised that the number of participating B/Ds for a particular year depended on, among others, the number of departmental initiatives being rolled out in the respective year. For instance, there were more entries for the Inter-departmental Partnership Award in 2011 that involved collaboration among a number of departments, and hence a higher number of participating B/Ds in the Award for the respective year. The Administration further advised that different categories of awards had over the years been introduced to recognize commendable achievements of B/Ds in different aspects taking account of the comments made by civil servants in the post-event reviews and members of the Panel. For example, to address members' concern about enforcement staff's comparatively greater difficulty in winning the awards, the Regulatory/Enforcement Service Award was introduced in 2009 to recognize exemplary performance of B/Ds involved in law enforcement work. The Administration would continue to make improvements to the Scheme as appropriate.

17. Some members were concerned that participation in the CSOSAS would become a matter of formality for participating B/Ds. They suggested that new elements should be introduced to the Scheme to stimulate interest and encourage participation.

18. The Administration advised that awards such as the Crisis/Incident Support Service Award was introduced in 2011 to recognize the efforts and achievements of teams in support services for crisis, special incidents or emergency situations, and a Special Citation for Integrity Management was introduced to the General Public Service Award and the Regulatory/Enforcement Service Award in 2013 to recognize the best integrity management practices in the two team awards. The Administration further advised that due consideration would continue to be given to introducing new elements to the Scheme having regard to the latest developments in the community.

19. Noting that most of the services and projects were initiated by the awardees, some members opined that consideration should be given to giving out awards to recognize service initiatives that responded to public demands.

20. The Administration advised that enhancement in public service provision was one of the major factors the adjudication panels would consider in determining awardees under the Scheme. However, adjudication purely from the angle of serving public demands would render some B/Ds, particularly those not directly involved in the delivery of public service, less advantageous in

competing for the awards. Nevertheless, the Administration would consider requesting participating B/Ds to provide specific information on how they had responded to public demand for quality services in the future.

21. A member suggested that consideration could be given to inviting a random sample of members of the public and all LegCo Members and DCs members to vote to select winning departments and teams for all other awards under the CSOSAS and not just the Best Public Image Award so as to promote the customer-focused culture in the civil service. The Administration agreed to give consideration to the member's suggestion.

22. Another member suggested that the Administration should step up publicity to let the public know more about the exemplary performance of the winning departments and teams.

23. The Administration advised that it would continue to commission Radio Television Hong Kong to produce a one-hour TV programme for broadcast on television during prime time. It would also continue to arrange talks and visits to schools and different community groups to introduce exemplary government services as their responses were positive.

24. As awards given out under the CSOSAS were inter-departmental, departmental and team awards, the Administration was urged in 2009 that it should explore the possibility of recording the awards in the personal files of the awardees as an encouragement. After review, the Administration informed the Panel in 2011 that the suggestion was implemented.

Commendation Letter Scheme

25. Members noted that only some 1% of civil servants received commendation letters every year. To sustain civil servants' morale in the face of great pressure arising from heavy workload and high public expectations in recent years, a member asked whether consideration could be given to introducing more levels of commendation to enable more civil servants to be commended, say, by issuing two categories of commendation letters under the Commendation Letter Scheme instead of one, with one category of letters issued to civil servants whose performance was good though not outstanding.

26. The Administration responded that it might not be desirable to issue commendation letters of lower grades lest civil servants who received such commendation letters might be unhappy. The Administration clarified that there was in fact no ceiling on the number of commendation letters that could be issued. As long as a civil servant's performance warranted special recognition, Heads of Departments/Grades could issue him a commendation letter. The Administration undertook to remind Heads of Departments/Grades to issue

commendation letters as appropriate without regard to the number, and to encourage them to nominate more staff from the junior ranks for commendation under the SCS's Commendation Scheme.

Awards and commendation letters for non-civil service contract ("NCSC") staff and Government's service agency workers

27. Some members were of the view that to ensure fairness, contributions of NCSC staff and Government's service agency workers to the work of the Government should also be recognized under the commendation schemes for civil servants.

28. The Administration advised that NCSC staff with outstanding performance might qualify for awards under the CSOSAS and the Honours and Awards System of HKSAR. They might also receive commendation letters under the Commendation Letter Scheme. The SCS's Commendation Award Scheme was only applicable to civil servants and the award recipients had on average more than 20 years of service. As NCSC staff were employed on a time-limited basis, the Scheme did not cover them. Heads of B/Ds could decide on their own the most appropriate means to give recognition to deserving NCSC staff for their exemplary performance. As regards Government's service agency workers, the Government could neither commend nor discipline its agency workers because they were not staff of the Government.

Latest development

29. The Administration will update the Panel on the CSOSAS and other commendation schemes for civil servants at the meeting on 16 November 2015.

Relevant papers

30. A list of relevant papers is set out in **Appendix III**.

Appendix I

Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme 2015

Level of awards	Title of awards	Gold prize winning departments/teams
Inter-departmental Partnership Award	Award for bureau/departments that have succeeded in achieving notable service enhancement through collaboration	Hong Kong Fire Services Department, Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (Hawker Assistance Scheme in Fixed-pitch Hawker Areas to Enhance Fire Safety)
Departmental Awards	➤ Departmental Service Enhancement Award	<u>Large Department Category</u> Hong Kong Fire Services Department <u>Small Department Category</u> Companies Registry
	➤ Best Public Image Award	Hong Kong Fire Services Department
Team Awards	➤ Specialized Service Award	Hong Kong Police Force (Yau Tsim District – Project Gemstone)
	➤ Internal Service Award	Hong Kong Police Force (Hong Kong Police College – Emotional Fitness Training) Water Supplies Department [Tuen Mun Hydropower]
	➤ General Public Service Award	Leisure and Cultural Services Department (Legends of the Giant Dinosaurs)
	➤ Regulatory/Enforcement Service Award	Hong Kong Fire Services Department (Enforcement Elites)
	➤ Crisis/Incident Support Service Award	Hong Kong Police Force (Inshore Patrol Sub-unit, Marine North Division)

(Source: [List of winners for the Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme 2015 prepared by the Civil Service Bureau](#))

**Key features of the Honours and Awards System of the HKSAR,
the SCS's Commendation Award Scheme and the Commendation
Letter Scheme**

	Honours and Awards System of the HKSAR	SCS's Commendation Award Scheme	Commendation Letter Scheme
Target	Members of the public and public officers (including civil servants)	Civil servants	Civil servants
Purpose	To recognize their contribution to Hong Kong and their public and community service	To recognize civil servants who have outstanding performance for at least <u>five</u> consecutive years	To recognize civil servants who - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ have provided consistently outstanding service for at least <u>three</u> consecutive years; or ➤ have made significant contribution towards enhancing the efficiency or the image of their bureaux/departments; or ➤ have performed a meritorious or brave act warranting special recognition.
Decided by	Chief Executive	Secretary for the Civil Service	A commendation committee set up by individual bureaux/departments under the chairmanship of a directorate officer
Awards	Bauhinia Awards, Bravery Awards, Disciplined Services and Independent Commission Against	Each award recipient receives a certificate of recognition and a gold pin.	Each recipient receives a commendation letter issued by the respective bureau/department.

	Honours and Awards System of the HKSAR	SCS's Commendation Award Scheme	Commendation Letter Scheme
	Corruption Awards, Medal of Honour, Chief Executive's Commendation	For those award recipients who have 20 or more years of service and have not enjoyed government sponsored travel outside Hong Kong before, they will also receive a travel award.	

**Civil Service Outstanding Service Award
and other commendation schemes for civil servants**

List of relevant papers

Date	Meeting/Event	References
21 January 2008	Panel on Public Service	Administration's paper on Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme 2007 LC Paper No. CB(1)567/07-08(04) Minutes of meeting LC Paper No. CB(1)792/07-08
21 December 2009	Panel on Public Service	Administration's paper on Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme 2009 LC Paper No. CB(1)597/09-10(05) Minutes of meeting LC Paper No. CB(1)1329/09-10
16 May 2011	Panel on Public Service	Administration's paper on the Civil Service Outstanding Service Award 2011 and other commendation schemes for civil servants LC paper No. CB(1)2117/10-11(05) Minutes of meeting LC paper No. CB(1)2952/10-11 Administration's follow-up paper LC Paper No. CB(1)2539/10-11(01)

Date	Meeting/Event	References
19 March 2012	Panel on Public Service	<p>Administration's paper on Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme 2011 LC paper No. CB(1)1217/11-12(03)</p> <p>Paper on the Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme 2011 prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (Background brief) LC paper No. CB(1)1217/11-12(04)</p> <p>Minutes of meeting LC paper No. CB(1)1715/11-12</p>
18 November 2013	Panel on Public Service	<p>Administration's paper on Civil Service Outstanding Service Award and other commendation schemes for civil servants LC paper No. CB(4)124/13-14(02)</p> <p>Paper on the Civil Service Outstanding Service Award and other commendation schemes for civil servants prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (Background brief) LC paper No. CB(4)124/13-14(03)</p> <p>Minutes of meeting LC paper No. CB(4)228/13-14</p>

Date	Meeting/Event	References
17 November 2014	Panel on Public Service	<p>Administration's paper on Civil Service Outstanding Service Award and other commendation schemes for civil servants LC paper No. CB(4)139/14-15(03)</p> <p>Paper on the Civil Service Outstanding Service Award and other commendation schemes for civil servants prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (Background brief) LC paper No. CB(4)139/14-15(04)</p> <p>Minutes of meeting LC paper No. CB(4)256/14-15</p>

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