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**Panel on Public Service
Meeting on 16 May 2016**

**Updated background brief on
implementation of five-day week in the government**

Purpose

This paper provides background information on the implementation of the five-day week initiative in the Government and summarizes the major concerns expressed by members at previous meetings of the Panel on Public Service ("the Panel").

Background

2. The Administration decided to implement the five-day week initiative in the Government in three phases starting from 2006¹, with the objective of improving the quality of civil servants' family life but without affecting the overall level and efficiency of public services or incurring additional costs to taxpayers. Under these parameters, bureaux and departments ("B/Ds") have to abide by the following four basic principles in their implementation of the five-day week initiative –

- (a) no additional staffing resources;
- (b) no reduction in the conditioned hours of service of individual staff;
- (c) no reduction in emergency services; and
- (d) continued provision of some essential counter services on Saturdays/Sundays.

¹ The initiative was implemented in three phases, namely 1 July 2006, 1 January 2007 and 1 July 2007. Upon implementation of the final phase on 1 July 2007, a total of some 94 300 staff were working on a five-day week work pattern.

3. Five-day week work pattern includes working on a “Monday-to-Friday basis”, a “five-day-on, two-day-off roster in every seven days”, or “fewer than five days/shifts in every seven days”. Upon the final phase of implementation in July 2007, all government units suitable for five-day operation at that time had migrated to a five-day week work pattern.

4. Biennial surveys were conducted by the Civil Service Bureau ("CSB") on the implementation of five-day week in B/Ds. As revealed by the last survey conducted in 2014, around 72.4% of the then civil service strength were working on a five-day week work pattern. There were around 27.6% of the then civil service strength were unable to work on a five-day week work pattern, mainly because of the need to maintain the overall level and efficiency of public services, e.g. services provided by the Police Force; or other services that were provided on Saturdays/Sundays such as social welfare services, some immigration counter services, cultural services, postal services, environmental hygiene services, law enforcement, passenger/cargo clearance, and management of penal institutions, etc.

Views expressed by the Panel at previous meetings

5. Members in general expressed support for the five-day week initiative. When the Panel last discussed the subject at its meeting on 19 January 2009, members noted that about 47 000 civil servants still could not join the five-day week arrangement. In this regard, a member enquired about the Administration's plan to address the 47 000 civil servants' aspiration for working on a five-day week, so as to alleviate any discontent that might arise from differences in working hours among civil servants. The member was also concerned that differences in working hours among civil servants might give rise to complaints about different pay for the same job, and affect civil servants' morale and quality of government service.

6. The Administration clarified that the conditioned hours of work of civil servants would not be affected by the implementation of the five-day week in the Government. As regards the 47 000 civil servants, the Government had all along been encouraging B/Ds to explore possible ways to migrate more staff to five-day week, such as through adjusting roster arrangements. However, given the need to comply with the four basic principles set out in paragraph 2, some civil servants inevitably could not work on a five-day week pattern. The Administration further

advised that actually some civil servants preferred a six-day week work pattern because they did not want to work longer hours on weekdays to make up for not working on Saturdays.

7. On the suggestion that the Administration should review the aforesaid four basic principles in order not to hinder the implementation of the five-day week initiative to promote family friendliness and to create more jobs, the Administration advised that there was no need to review the four basic principles at the present stage. Creation of additional jobs was never the objective of implementing the five-day week initiative. The Administration pointed out that the simplest way to create jobs would be by shortening the conditioned hours of work of civil servants, which would, however, entail the need for review of and changes to the pay and conditions of service of staff concerned.

8. Some members considered that the majority of the 47 000 civil servants could not migrate to five-day week probably because of their long conditioned working hours and, if they performed duties on a five-day week basis, they would work very long hours daily. These members suggested that the Administration should review the conditioned hours of service for those grades of staff who had to perform 51 hours of work per week, with a view to reducing the working hours to 44 hours per week. These members were also concerned about the inconvenience caused to the family life of those working on a "five-day work, two-day off" pattern.

9. The Administration pointed out that as the pay and conditions of service of civil servants were set based on, amongst other things, their conditioned hours of service, any change in the number of working hours would also affect pay. The terms and conditions of service as well as the conditioned hours of service for different grades in the civil service had been reviewed in the 2006 Pay Level Survey. The CSB had no intention to conduct another review. The Administration also pointed out that Heads department/grade ("HoDs/HoGs") had been in close consultation with the staff sides in their respective departments prior to and throughout the implementation of five-day week to ensure smooth operation.

10. The Administration reported that most staff welcomed the five-day week work pattern. Where practicable, HoDs/HoGs would consider entertaining requests from individual staff for transferring to non-five-day week jobs.

Recent development

11. The Administration will update the Panel on the implementation of five-day week in the Government at the Panel meeting on 16 May 2016.

Relevant papers

12. A list of relevant papers is in **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 4
Legislative Council Secretariat
12 May 2016

Implementation of five-day week in the government

List of relevant papers

Date of meeting	Committee	Minutes/ Paper	LC Paper No.
15.5.2006	Panel on Public Service (PS Panel)	Administration's paper on "Implementation of five-day week in the Government"	CB(1)1440/05-06(03) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr05-06/english/panels/ps/papers/ps0515cb1-1440-3e.pdf
		Minutes of meeting	CB(1)2146/05-06 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr05-06/english/panels/ps/minutes/ps060515.pdf
20.11.2006	PS Panel	Administration's paper on "Implementation of five-day week in the Government"	CB(1)248/06-07(03) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr06-07/english/panels/ps/papers/ps1120cb1-248-3-e.pdf
		Minutes of meeting	CB(1)481/06-07 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr06-07/english/panels/ps/minutes/ps061120.pdf
21.5.2007	PS Panel	Administration's paper on "Implementation of five-day week in the Government (final phase)"	CB(1)1600/06-07(03) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr06-07/english/panels/ps/papers/ps0521cb1-1600-3-e.pdf
		Minutes of meeting	CB(1)1916/06-07 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr06-07/english/panels/ps/minutes/ps070521.pdf

Date of meeting	Committee	Minutes/ Paper	LC Paper No.
19.11.2007	PS Panel	Administration's paper on "Implementation of five-day week in the Government"	CB(1)206/07-08(04) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/panels/ps/papers/ps1119cb1-206-4-e.pdf
		Minutes of meeting	CB(1)375/07-08 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr07-08/english/panels/ps/minutes/ps071119.pdf
19.1.2009	PS Panel	Administration's paper on "Implementation of five-day week in the Government"	CB(1)542/08-09(10) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/ps/papers/ps0119cb1-542-10-e.pdf
		Minutes of meeting	CB(1)1140/08-09 http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/ps/minutes/ps20090119.pdf
11.9.2012*	PS Panel	Administration's paper on "Implementation of five-day week in the Government"	CB(1)2572/11-12(01) http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr11-12/english/panels/ps/papers/pscb1-2572-1-e.pdf

*Issue date