

# 立法會

## *Legislative Council*

LC Paper No. CB(4)862/16-17  
(These minutes have been seen  
by the Administration)

Ref : CB4/PL/PS

### **Panel on Public Service**

**Minutes of meeting held on  
Monday, 20 March 2017, at 10:45 am  
in Conference Room 3 of the Legislative Council Complex**

**Members present** : Hon KWOK Wai-keung (Chairman)  
Hon Jeremy TAM Man-ho (Deputy Chairman)  
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-yee, GBS, JP  
Hon Paul TSE Wai-chun, JP  
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung  
Hon Charles Peter MOK, JP  
Hon CHAN Chi-chuen  
Hon Alice MAK Mei-kuen, BBS, JP  
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung  
Hon IP Kin-yuen  
Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH  
Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, JP  
Hon CHUNG Kwok-pan  
Hon Jimmy NG Wing-ka, JP  
Hon LAM Cheuk-ting  
Hon SHIU Ka-fai  
Hon Wilson OR Chong-shing, MH  
Hon YUNG Hoi-yan  
Dr Hon Pierre CHAN

**Members absent** : Hon WONG Kwok-kin, SBS, JP  
Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP  
Hon CHU Hoi-dick  
Hon HO Kai-ming

**Public Officers  
attending**

**: Agenda item IV**

Mr Clement CHEUNG, JP  
Secretary for the Civil Service

Mr Thomas CHOW, JP  
Permanent Secretary for the Civil Service

Ms May CHAN, JP  
Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service 2

**Agenda item V**

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

Ms May CHAN, JP  
Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service 2

Mr Eric CHAN  
Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service 3

Mr LI Pak-hong, JP  
Director of General Grades  
Civil Service Bureau

**Clerk in attendance**

**: Mr Anthony CHU  
Chief Council Secretary (4)1**

**Staff in attendance**

**: Ms Angela CHU  
Senior Council Secretary (4)1**

Miss Maggie CHUNG  
Council Secretary (4)1

Ms Cynthia TAM  
Legislative Assistant (4)9

Mr Terry HON  
Clerical Assistant (4)1

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**I. Confirmation of minutes**

(LC Paper No. CB(4)686/16-17 -- Minutes of meeting held  
on 25 January 2017

LC Paper No. CB(4)714/16-17 -- Minutes of meeting held  
on 20 February 2017)

The minutes of the meetings held on 25 January and 20 February  
2017 were confirmed.

**II. Information papers issued since the last regular meeting on  
20 February 2017**

(LC Paper No. CB(4)587/16-17(01) -- Joint letter dated  
17 February 2017 from  
Dr Hon CHIANG  
Lai-wan and Dr Hon  
Elizabeth QUAT on how  
the Government handles  
groundless and false  
allegations against civil  
servants

LC Paper No. CB(4)670/16-17(01) -- Administration's response  
to the joint letter from  
Dr Hon CHIANG  
Lai-wan and Dr Hon  
Elizabeth QUAT on how  
the Government handles  
groundless and false  
allegations against civil  
servants)

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2. Members noted that the above papers had been issued since the last meeting.

### **III. Date of next meeting and items for discussion**

(LC Paper No. CB(4)688/16-17(01) -- List of outstanding items for discussion

LC Paper No. CB(4)716/16-17(01) -- List of follow-up actions)

3. Members noted that the next regular Panel meeting would be held on 21 April 2017 to discuss the following items proposed by the Administration:

- (a) An overview of the civil service establishment, strength, retirement, resignation, age profile and gender profile; and
- (b) Implementation of Five-day Week in the Government.

*(Post-meeting note: As the public hearing on medical and dental benefits for civil servants, pensioners and eligible dependants was subsequently scheduled to be held at the next regular meeting on 21 April 2017, the discussion of item (a) above was deferred to a later meeting due to time constraints. Notice of meeting and the agenda were issued to members on 27 March 2017 vide LC Paper No. CB(4)755/16-17.)*

### **IV. An overview of medical and dental benefits for civil servants, pensioners and eligible dependants**

(LC Paper No. CB(4)688/16-17(03) -- Administration's paper on an overview of medical and dental benefits for civil servants, pensioners and eligible dependants

LC Paper No. CB(4)688/16-17(04) -- Paper on an overview of medical and dental benefits for civil servants, pensioners and eligible dependants prepared by

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the Legislative Council  
Secretariat (updated  
background brief))

4. At the invitation of the Chairman, Secretary for the Civil Service ("SCS") briefed members on the provision of medical and dental benefits for civil servants, pensioners and eligible dependants, details of which were set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(4)688/16-17(03)).

Inclusion of Chinese medicine in the scope of civil service medical benefits

5. Mr POON Siu-ping welcomed the Administration's improvement measures to enhance the provision of medical and dental services for civil service eligible persons ("CSEPs"). Taking note of the repeated requests from the civil service staff unions/associations for including Chinese medicine service as part of civil service medical benefits, Mr POON expressed concern and disappointment about the little progress made by the Civil Service Bureau ("CSB") in taking forward the suggestion. He queried if the Administration had fulfilled its obligation of providing the best available medical attendance and treatment to civil servants under the Civil Service Regulation 902. He suggested that CSB should explore the feasibility of allocating resources to conducting pilot programmes with local universities in providing Chinese medicine service to CSEPs as suggested by some civil service staff unions.

6. SCS replied that CSB had been in close communication with civil service staff unions/associations, and was fully aware of their demand and suggestions on the provision of Chinese medicine service. At present, Chinese medicine service was not provided by the Department of Health ("DH") or Hospital Authority ("HA") as a standard service, nor did they operate any Chinese medicine clinics ("CMCs"). Existing public CMCs were operated on a tripartite collaboration model involving HA, a non-governmental organization ("NGO") and a local university. They provided a limited scope of service and could not be regarded as part of HA's standard services. Having regard to service quality and service coverage vis-a-vis service demand, the Administration considered that if Chinese medicine service was to be provided to CSEPs in future, it would be more cost-effective and appropriate to provide it within the public healthcare system. In this regard, CSB would closely monitor the development of Chinese medicine in the public healthcare

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system and explore the possibility of including Chinese medicine service in the civil service medical benefits when situation so allowed.

7. The Chairman commented that the main reason of not including Chinese medicine service as part of civil service medical benefits was DH's reluctance to include Chinese medicine service as part of the public healthcare system. He opined that nowadays Chinese medicine was widely practiced worldwide and the service standard of Chinese medicine practitioners was highly recognized; there was no reason for the Administration not providing Chinese medicine service to civil servants. Mrs Regina IP also commented that the crux of the issue was that Chinese medicine was not included in the mainstream medical service in the existing public healthcare system. To solve the problem at root cause, she opined that the Food and Health Bureau should conduct a policy review of including Chinese medicine as a mainstream public medical service in Hong Kong.

8. Miss YUNG Hoi-yan said that as evidenced by the Chief Executive's announcement in the 2017 Policy Address on the construction of a Chinese medicine hospital in Tseung Kwan O, it clearly showed the Administration's plan to provide Chinese medicine service to the public. As such, she enquired whether CSB would consider a more flexible approach by undertaking a pilot scheme with local Chinese medicine service providers to provide Chinese medicine service for CSEPs in the Families Clinics operated under DH initially, and exploring the feasibility of providing a full range of Chinese medicine service for CSEPs upon the commissioning of Tseung Kwan O Chinese medicine hospital.

9. In reply, SCS said that DH's role was more of a regulatory body over the Chinese medicine industry rather than a service provider and that DH was reinforcing its regulatory regime in the past two years. Citing dental services for CSEPs as an example, SCS explained that CSB could still explore the provision of Chinese medicine service to CSEPs even though the service was not provided to the general public. He nevertheless reiterated that it would be more appropriate to review the possibility of providing Chinese medicine service to CSEPs within the public healthcare sector. The construction of Tseung Kwan O Chinese medicine hospital provided an opportunity to do so, and CSB would maintain active dialogue with HA/DH in this regard.

10. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan said that many private companies were providing Chinese medicine service for their employees through insurance coverage. Dr CHIANG opined that the Administration, as the largest employer in Hong Kong, should consider possible ways of

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providing Chinese medicine service for civil servants, such as taking out medical insurance or procuring such service in the private market. To ensure service quality, CSB could compile a list of qualified Chinese medicine practitioners and CSEPs might claim reimbursements for using the services of these practitioners.

11. SCS replied that any reimbursement scheme would entail difficulty in quality assurance, and taking out medical insurance or procurement of service involved additional funds which must be carefully considered. The Administration was more inclined to providing civil service medical benefits through the public healthcare sector to ensure cost-effectiveness, standard of service and prudent use of public resources.

### Improvement measures on the provision of civil service medical benefits

12. Dr Pierre CHAN welcomed the improvement measures on medical and dental benefits for CSEPs. He expressed appreciation to CSB's efforts in setting up new Families Clinics and dental surgeries, and increasing the provision of reimbursement of medical expenses. He opined that medical benefits for CSEPs could act as a benchmark in uplifting the standard and scope of public healthcare service. He noted from the Administration's paper that the waiting time for medical and dental services would be shortened with the opening of more Families Clinics and dental surgeries, and enquired how the waiting time was calculated.

13. SCS responded that the reduction in waiting time was projected by DH based on average duration of a normal consultation case and the number of consultation cases each additional clinic/surgery could handle in a year. For instance, upon the full operation of the three new periodontal surgeries, it was anticipated that the waiting time would be reduced from two years to about 10 months for simple cases. However, the figure was only a rough estimation, and the actual waiting time would vary depending on the nature and complexity of individual cases.

### *Families Clinic services*

14. Mrs Regina IP noted from paragraph 5 of the Administration's paper that DH had opened the fifth Families Clinic in Fanling in 2016. She asked whether the Clinic had commenced full operation, and whether shortage of doctors would pose a problem in this respect.

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15. SCS responded that five consultation rooms in the Fanling Families Clinic had commenced operation up to now. It was expected that two more consultation rooms would be opened in April and July, followed by the remaining three consultation rooms later this year. Each consultation room would serve about 8 000 attendances a year. He advised that despite shortage of doctors, DH was working hard to expedite the recruitment of suitable healthcare professionals to tie in with the opening of Families Clinics.

### *Clinical psychology service*

16. Noting from paragraph 6 of the Administration's paper that clinical psychology and counselling services were provided to CSEPs, Mr LAM Cheuk-ting enquired whether law enforcement agencies, in particular the Police, had their own team of clinical psychologists to help their staff ease work pressure and manage stress, or they must seek such services through the Families Clinics.

17. SCS replied that 11 government departments, including the Police, had an in-house clinical psychology unit or procured related services from NGOs using internal resources. Apart from providing clinical psychology and counselling services, appropriate training on emotion and stress management and how to handle work pressure would also be provided to supervisors so that they might be more alert to the stress level of their subordinates and take early actions as appropriate. In addition, some law enforcement agencies, such as the Police, had set up volunteer teams to provide peer support. All these measures had proven to be effective in helping colleagues, particularly frontline staff, to cope with work pressure. In reply to Mr LAM Cheuk-ting's enquiry on whether records would be kept for those civil servants seeking clinical psychology or counselling services which might affect their promotional prospects, SCS said that apart from clinical psychology services provided by Families Clinics or within their own departments, civil servants could choose to use hotline services run by NGOs which offered greater privacy.

### *Dental services*

18. Mr POON Siu-ping noted from paragraph 9 of the Administration's paper that preparatory work for establishing three additional periodontal surgeries was underway. He sought information on latest progress and how it could shorten the waiting time.



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19. SCS responded that the three periodontal surgeries would come into operation by 2019. At present, preparatory work such as renovation and recruitment were in full swing. The commissioning of these surgeries ensured early intervention that would avoid complications and contain demand for specialized dental treatment.

20. Mr LAM Cheuk-ting enquired about the use of Short Message Service reminder function at dental clinics and whether time slots released due to patients not turning up for the scheduled appointment could be utilized effectively.

21. SCS responded that since the utilization rate for dental services was close to 100%, CSEPs who missed a scheduled appointment could suffer delayed treatment, and that all available time slots would be allocated to walk-in emergency cases.

*Reimbursement of medical expenses*

22. The Deputy Chairman commented that as civil servants appointed on or after 1 June 2000 would no longer be eligible to receive medical services for both themselves and their eligible dependants after retirement, he anticipated that the number of CSEPs would be in a downward trend. In this regard, he enquired:

- (a) whether there was any change in the number of CSEPs over the past five years and CSB's projected change in CSEPs in the next ten years;
- (b) whether CSB would take into account a possible reduction in the number of CSEPs when working out provisions earmarked in the Estimates of Expenditure for reimbursement of medical expenses; and
- (c) whether CSB would consider allowing CSEPs to obtain treatment from private medical practitioners and seek reimbursement for the costs incurred, drawing reference from a pilot scheme introduced in the 1980s.

23. SCS responded that the number of CSEPs had remained largely stable in the past five years, ranging from 523 000 to 549 000. Although civil servants employed under the New Permanent Terms would not be eligible to receive medical services for themselves and their eligible dependants after retirement, the resulting impact would unlikely be evident until after 2030. In addition, the amount of reimbursement of

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medical expenses for CSEPs might in fact see a growth due to longer life expectancy and medical advancement. As regards the suggestion of allowing CSEPs to access private medical practitioners, SCS reiterated that provision of medical and dental services for CSEPs within the public healthcare system remained a preferred option in the interest of cost-effectiveness and quality assurance.

24. In reply to the Deputy Chairman's further enquiry on the reimbursement of medical expenses to CSEPs, SCS said that the number of approved applications and reimbursement expenditure had increased by 49% and 41% respectively in the past five years.

## Other issue

25. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung expressed concern about the limited dental services provided to the elderly. As the capacity and funding for dental services catering for CSEPs had been progressively enhanced, he urged the Administration also to allocate more resources to provide the elderly with better and more comprehensive coverage.

## Public hearing

26. The Chairman said that a number of civil service staff unions/associations would like to express their views on the subject discussed. He suggested and members agreed to invite public views on the provision of medical and dental benefits for CSEPs at a coming Panel meeting.

*(Post-meeting note: On the instruction of the Chairman, the public hearing was scheduled to be held at the regular meeting on 21 April 2017.)*

## **V. Civil service-related issues featured in the 2017-2018 Budget**

(LC Paper No. CB(4)688/16-17(05) -- Administration's paper on the Civil service-related issues featured in the 2017-2018 Budget)

27. SCS briefed members on the civil service-related matters featured in the 2017-2018 Budget, details of which were set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(4)688/16-17(05)).

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Changes in civil service establishment in 2017-2018

28. Mr IP Kin-yuen enquired about the underlying reasons for the increase in new posts in the Customs and Excise Department ("C&ED"), Fire Services Department, Hong Kong Police Force and Immigration Department ("ImmD"), in particular that their aggregate increase represented about two-thirds of the 3 378 additional civil service posts approved for various bureaux/departments ("B/Ds") in 2017-2018. SCS informed the meeting that 1 158 (i.e. around one-third) out of the 3 378 additional civil service posts were meant to support two major new cross boundary points. Specifically, 753 posts would be created for the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, with 706 belonging to the Hong Kong Police Force, C&ED and ImmD; and 400 new posts would be created under C&ED and ImmD for the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link. The Administration might have to further adjust the manpower deployment upon full operation of abovementioned facilities.

29. Mr POON Siu-ping enquired about the reasons for a net reduction of 156 civil service posts in HA. SCS clarified that upon establishment of HA, civil servants working in the former Hospital Service Department could choose to retain their status of employment and be accommodated in shadow posts. When these officers retired or left the service, a corresponding adjustment on the number of shadow posts would be necessary. As for Mr POON's enquiries on the decrease of 23 and 14 civil service posts in the Home Affairs Bureau and Planning Department respectively, SCS replied that this might be due to deletion of some time-limited posts upon conclusion of some one-off events or projects.

30. Noting from CSB's website that as at late December 2016, there were 1 870 Personal Secretary posts in the civil service, Mr POON Siu-ping asked about their job duties and career prospects. SCS replied that Personal Secretaries were responsible for providing a wide range of executive support to senior management staff in B/Ds. Due to wider adoption of information technology and evolving work practices, some of the duties hitherto performed by Personal Secretaries were taken up by clerical grade staff, leading to downsizing of the establishment. At the Admin request of Mr POON, SCS also undertook to provide members a detailed breakdown on about 400 posts created to replace non-civil service contract positions.

31. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung thought that some officials, especially Permanent Secretaries, were subject to frequent posting movements which hampered effective communication with Legislative Council

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Members. SCS explained that Administrative Officers were required to fill different positions to broaden their perspective and exposure, but rotation of Permanent Secretaries would be avoided as far as practicable at the beginning of each new term of the Government.

Training and development programmes for civil servants

32. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan pointed out that last year she had called for an increase of the training budget for civil servants. She urged the Administration to sponsor civil servants, in particular middle managers, to attend overseas training courses so that they could acquire new knowledge and skills. To achieve optimal outcome, she suggested organizing more courses of relatively short duration (e.g. one to two months).

33. SCS replied that CSB had reserved \$65 million in 2016-2017 as training budget for civil servants, rising to \$68 million in 2017-2018. He pointed out that given the heavy workload borne by civil servants, conducting local courses might be more flexible and pragmatic. In this connection, the Administration would endeavour to source reputable scholars and experts to conduct local courses and leverage on e-learning as a supporting tool. At the request of Dr CHIANG, SCS undertook to provide the estimated number of trainees that would participate in various civil service training and development programmes in 2017-2018.

34. Mr IP Kin-yuen opined that sponsoring civil servants to attend overseas training helped broaden their perspectives, which could serve to complement customized local training courses. He suggested the Admin Administration arranged overseas training for civil servants in accordance with their rank and operational needs.

35. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung commented that funding civil servants for overseas training was originally a well-meant arrangement. However, he recalled that the Panel had discussed a controversial case in which an officer of the Department of Health was granted full-time study leave to undertake barrister pupillage, but the Administration could not provide members with satisfactory justifications. He further criticized that some Bureau Secretaries frequently went on overseas duty visits, and did not set a good example for civil servants on the prudent use of public money. He stressed that Principal Officials should set a role model for civil servants in the proper use of government funds.

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36. SCS said that civil servants attending overseas training were usually those with potential for advancement that tied in with their B/Ds' operational needs, and the approval procedures were stringent.

Admin 37. The Chairman recalled that the Government used to arrange private sector attachment for Administrative Officers and asked whether this initiative was worth reviving. SCS explained that individual B/Ds were still arranging attachment programmes for their staff to relevant international organizations, yet the extent had invariably been limited by manpower constraints. The Chairman requested for information on the attachment programmes to private sector companies/non-government organizations attended by civil servants in the past.

Local and overseas education allowances for eligible civil servants

38. Noting that new recruits to the civil service after 1 August 1996 and 1 June 2000 were not eligible for overseas and local education allowances respectively, thus the provision for these allowances should decrease gradually, Mr IP Kin-yuen and Dr Pierre CHAN queried the reasons for an increase of education allowances in 2017-2018 over the 2016-2017 Revised Estimate. SCS clarified that the proposed allocation fluctuated every year as the number of children eligible to receive these allowances would vary, and the sum payable to each officer was determined by their rank. The increase in 2017-2018 was mainly due to a projected rise in the average amount of local education allowance per student. If the proposed allocation was found insufficient, the Administration would adjust the estimates and apply for additional funding. In the long run, the above allowances would be phased out.

Medical and dental services for civil service eligible persons

39. In response to Dr Pierre CHAN's question about the above-average increase in the estimated expenditure on medical and dental services (i.e. 12% over the 2016-2017 Revised Estimate), SCS explained that in accordance with the established mechanism, request for additional funding must be fully justified. With a view to shortening the waiting time for specialized dental treatment and clinical psychology service, an allocation of \$888.5 million was proposed. As regards payment/reimbursement of medical fee and hospital charges, it was demand-driven.

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### Offsetting arrangement for the Mandatory Provident Fund Scheme

40. As the Chief Executive proposed in the 2017 Policy Address to progressively abolish the "offsetting" of severance payments or long service payments with Mandatory Provident Fund ("MPF") contributions, and to share part of the expenses on severance payments or long service payments of employers in the 10 years after the implementation date of the abolition to help employers, the Chairman asked whether the Administration would set an example for other employers by implementing the abolition of the "offsetting" arrangement as soon as possible for civil servants under the MPF Scheme. He enquired if the Administration would make any provisions for this purpose.

41. SCS pointed out that the Administration had put forward the abolition proposal for public discussion, and would make a final decision after gauging feedback from stakeholders. As for the new recruits appointed on or after 1 June 2000, the issue of "offsetting" should generally not concern officers employed on New Permanent Terms which attracted retirement benefits under the Civil Service Provident Fund Scheme. While the Employment Ordinance (Cap. 57) ("EO") did not bind the Government, the terms and conditions of its employees were no less favourable than those provided for under EO in overall terms.

### Other issue

42. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung expressed concern that as civil servants were employed with different terms and conditions, it would lead to the situation of "different pay for the same job" and eventually affect their morale. He urged the Administration to address the problem.

## **VI. Any other business**

43. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:38 pm.