

立法會

Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(4)876/17-18
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB4/PL/PS

Panel on Public Service

**Minutes of meeting held on
Monday, 26 February 2018, at 10:45 am
in Conference Room 3 of the Legislative Council Complex**

Members present : Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH (Chairman)
Hon Jeremy TAM Man-ho (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-yee, GBS, JP
Hon KWOK Wai-keung, JP
Hon IP Kin-yuen
Dr Hon Elizabeth QUAT, BBS, JP
Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, JP
Hon CHUNG Kwok-pan
Hon CHU Hoi-dick
Hon Jimmy NG Wing-ka, JP
Hon HO Kai-ming
Hon LAM Cheuk-ting
Hon SHIU Ka-fai
Hon YUNG Hoi-yan
Dr Hon Pierre CHAN

Members absent : Hon Charles Peter MOK, JP
Hon Martin LIAO Cheung-kong, SBS, JP

Public Officers attending : **Agenda item IV**

Mr Joshua LAW, GBS, JP
Secretary for the Civil Service

Mr Eddie MAK, JP
Acting Permanent Secretary for the Civil
Service

Ms Vivien LI
Principal Assistant Secretary for the Civil
Service (Appointments)

Agenda item V

Mr Joshua LAW, GBS, JP
Secretary for the Civil Service

Mr Eddie MAK, JP
Acting Permanent Secretary for the Civil
Service

Ms Vivien LI
Principal Assistant Secretary for the Civil
Service (Appointments)

Clerk in attendance : Mr Anthony CHU
Chief Council Secretary (4)1

Staff in attendance : Ms Wendy JAN
Senior Council Secretary (4)7

Ms Maggie CHUNG
Council Secretary (4)1

Ms Prima LAI
Legislative Assistant (4)1

Mr Terry HON
Clerical Assistant (4)1

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I. Confirmation of minutes

(LC Paper No. CB(4)628/17-18 -- Minutes of meeting held
on 22 December 2017)

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The minutes of the meetings held on 22 December 2017 were confirmed.

II. Information papers issued since the last regular meeting on 15 January 2018

2. Members noted that no information paper had been issued since the last regular meeting on 15 January 2018.

III. Date of next meeting and items for discussion

(LC Paper No. CB(4)627/17-18(01) -- List of outstanding items for discussion

LC Paper No. CB(4)627/17-18(02) -- List of follow-up actions)

3. Members agreed that the next regular Panel meeting would be held on 19 March 2018 to discuss the following items proposed by the Administration:

- (a) Civil service-related matters featured in the 2018-19 Budget; and
- (b) An overview of medical and dental benefits for civil servants, pensioners and eligible dependants.

IV. Update on extension of the service of civil servants

(LC Paper No. CB(4)627/17-18(03) -- Administration's paper on the update on extension of the service of civil servants

LC Paper No. CB(4)627/17-18(04) -- Paper on extension of the service of civil servants prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (updated background brief))

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4. The Chairman informed the meeting that a submission dated 23 February 2018 from a member of the public expressing views on the extension of the service of civil servants was tabled at the meeting.

(Post-meeting note: The submission was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)652/17-18(01) on 26 February 2018.)

5. At the invitation of the Chairman, Secretary for the Civil Service ("SCS") briefed members on the progress on implementing the initiatives for extending the service of civil servants, as set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(4)627/17-18(03)).

6. Regarding the new initiative ("new initiative") in the Chief Executive's 2017 Policy Address that serving civil servants who joined the Government between 1 June 2000 and 31 May 2015 would be allowed to choose to retire at 65 (for civilian grades) or 60 (for disciplined services grades) ("the Option"), SCS informed members that the Civil Service Bureau ("CSB") had launched a consultation on 20 February 2018 to seek views of the staff sides and grade/departmental management on the proposed implementation framework of this new initiative ("the Consultation") and the deadline for submission of views was 30 April 2018.

New initiative

7. In view of the aging population, shrinking labour force and improved general health of the population, Mr LAM Cheuk-ting expressed support on behalf of the Democratic Party for the Administration to put forward the new initiative. Mrs Regina IP, Dr CHIANG Lai-wan, Mr SHIU Ka-fai and Mr HO Kai-ming welcomed the implementation of the new initiative by the Administration.

8. Mr LAM Cheuk-ting enquired about the response of civil service staff unions/associations on the new initiative and whether the Administration had received views expressing concerns that this new initiative might cause promotion blockage to younger civil servants.

9. SCS explained that since the majority of serving civil servants who joined the Government between 1 June 2000 and 31 May 2015 would only reach their current retirement age 15 to 25 years later, and bureaux/departments ("B/Ds") would have sufficient time to make succession planning in a systematic manner. Coupled with the fact that the retirement age of civil servants who joined after 31 May 2015 had

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been raised, SCS said that he did not envisage promotion blockage to be a major concern to staff. SCS added that so far positive response had been received from civil service staff unions/associations after the Consultation on 20 February 2018 was launched.

10. Given that the conditions of employment of civil servants appointed on or after 1 June 2000 and on new permanent terms ("NPT") were less favourable than their counterparts on pensionable terms, Mrs Regina IP said that when the retirement age of civil servants appointed on or after 1 June 2015 was raised to 65 (for civilian grades) or 60 (for disciplined services grades) in 2015, civil service staff unions/associations had already requested that the Administration should likewise raise the retirement age of civil servants who joined the Government between 1 June 2000 and 31 May 2015, and the new initiative put forward by the Administration could meet their request.

11. Mr LAM Cheuk-ting noted that under the Administration's proposed implementation framework on the new initiative, the Option taken by eligible civil servants should be irrevocable. He was worried that some civil servants on NPT who chose to take the Option might not be able to work subsequently before their new retirement age due to family or health reasons, and requested the Administration to make flexible arrangement to allow these civil servants with special reasons to retire early. SCS responded that under the proposed implementation framework, eligible civil servants taking the Option could retire during their extended service after giving the requisite notice.

12. As eligible civil servants on disciplined services grades were only allowed to choose to retire at 60, Mr SHIU Ka-fai suggested that the Administration should consider allowing them to choose to retire at 65 and deploying them to clerical positions or positions with less physical fitness requirements during their extended service, but due consideration should be given to avoiding promotion blockage, say, by creating new posts to accommodate them in order to make use of their experience and expertise. SCS noted Mr SHIU's suggestion.

13. In reply to Mrs Regina IP's enquiry about the proposed changes to the retirement benefits system under the new initiative, SCS explained that Civil Service Provident Fund ("CSPF") Scheme was the retirement benefits system for civil servants appointed on new civil service terms on or after 1 June 2000 and when they subsequently progressed onto NPT. In compliance with the parameter of keeping the Government's overall financial commitment to the CSPF Scheme within 18% of the salary cost, when the retirement age of civil servants appointed on or after 1 June

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2015 was raised, a second CSPF scale ("2015 CSPF Scale") applicable to these civil servants was introduced. As the appointment terms and conditions of eligible civil servants who had taken the Option and civil servants appointed on or after 1 June 2015 would be largely the same, the Administration proposed that eligible civil servants who had taken the Option should migrate to the 2015 CSPF Scale with effect from the implementation date of the Option.

14. SCS further provided members with the schedule of Government's contribution rates under the 2015 CSPF Scale, and explained that the years of continuous service bands under the 2015 CSPF Scale had been lengthened as compared with the original CSPF scale.

15. Mrs Regina IP also enquired whether the fringe benefits, such as the annual leave earning rate, of eligible civil servants would be affected if they took the Option. SCS replied that there would be no major changes to their fringe benefits for taking the Option.

16. Noting that the deadline for submission of views under the Consultation was 30 April 2018, the Chairman sought information on the implementation timetable of the new initiative. SCS advised that taking into account the feedback received, the Administration would finalize the implementation details with a view to launching the initiative as soon as possible and, in any case, within 2018.

Retirement age of serving civil servants who joined the Government before 1 June 2000

17. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan opined that it was unfair that the Administration had proposed only allowing the serving civil servants who joined the Government between 1 June 2000 and 31 May 2015 to take the Option. In this connection, Dr CHIANG strongly urged the Administration to give serving civil servants who joined the Government before 1 June 2000 the same option to extend their service without selection. Mr SHIU Ka-fai concurred with Dr CHIANG's view and said that Dr CHIANG's proposal would retain talents and facilitate the transfer of experience of civil servants in a time when the working population of Hong Kong was in continuous decline.

18. SCS explained that out of some 87 000 serving civil servants on pensionable terms who joined the Government before 1 June 2000, 88% were aged 45 or above (for civilian grades) and aged 40 or above (for disciplined services grades). The majority of these civil servants would

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reach their current retirement age in 10 years' time before the labour force of Hong Kong was expected to become critical starting from 2030. On the other hand, since the majority of the civil servants who joined the Government between 1 June 2000 and 31 May 2015 would reach their current retirement age starting around 2030, the new initiative tied in well with the goal of expanding the labour force. Nevertheless, B/Ds could make use of the flexible measures, including the Post-retirement Service Contract ("PRSC") Scheme, the final extension of service up to 120 days and further employment for a longer duration up to five years ("FE") (measures collectively known as "flexible measures"), to extend the service of civil servants beyond retirement age in the light of operational needs.

19. In response to Dr CHIANG Lai-wan's enquiry, SCS explained that the adjusted FE mechanism was operated under a fair and transparent framework. Individual B/Ds would determine the need of FE having regard to relevant factors including objective data. If there was a need for FE, applications would be invited from all eligible civil servants. A selection board, the operation of which was similar to that of promotion and recruitment exercises, would be convened to consider FE applications. The approving authority had to seek CSB's comments and the advice of the Public Service Commission (for ranks under its purview) before approving FE.

Other measures for extending the service of civil servants

20. Noting that around two-thirds of civil servants were in the age group of 40-59, Ms YUNG Hoi-yan asked how the Administration would address the aging problem of civil servants and attract more young people to join the civil service.

21. SCS replied that the new initiative was to tie in with the goal of expanding the labour force and to respond to the aspirations of serving civil servants. In addition, the flexible measures had been introduced for B/Ds to extend the service of serving civil servants to meet their operational and succession needs.

22. SCS advised that there were around 1 200 full-time PRSC staff filling non-directorate positions as at 30 June 2017. For the final extension of service, as at 24 August 2017, the Administration had approved around 3 000 applications under the revised arrangements since their implementation in February 2016. As regards FE, as the adjusted mechanism had been implemented since June 2017, CSB would closely monitor its implementation.

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23. SCS supplemented that individual B/Ds would, having regard to their different situations, deploy the flexible measures to meet their manpower requirements and operational needs. In response to the enquiry of the Chairman, SCS provided the number of full-time PRSC staff and the number of approved applications for final extension of service in six disciplined services departments which were tabulated as follows:

Disciplined services departments	Number of full-time staff under the PRSC Scheme as at 30 June 2017	Number of approved applications for final extension of service under the revised arrangements as at 24 August 2017
Correctional Services Department	about 120	about 20
Customs and Excise Department	more than 140	7
Fire Services Department	about 40	about 230
Government Flying Service	11	7
Hong Kong Police Force	less than 20	close to 500
Immigration Department	68	more than 180

24. As regards the enquiry of Mr LAM Cheuk-ting and Mr SHIU Ka-fai whether the flexible measures were applicable to those civil servants who had taken the Option, SCS advised that these measures should continue to apply to them.

Fringe benefits of civil servants

25. Mrs Regina IP was concerned that the fringe benefits, such as medical and dental benefits, leave entitlement and housing benefits, of civil servants appointed on or after 1 June 2000 on NPT were less favourable than those on pensionable terms.

26. Echoing a similar concern, Ms YUNG Hoi-yan was worried that the less favourable employment terms might adversely affect the morale of these civil servants, and enquired whether the Administration would consider improving the leave entitlement of these civil servants with a view to boosting their morale.

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27. SCS explained that a series of civil service reforms were carried out in 1999 that involved a review of the terms and conditions of employment for new recruits who joined the Government on or after 1 June 2000. Upon the completion of the review, revisions were introduced having regard to a host of factors, including the principle of broad comparability with the private sector. SCS added that CSB would continue to keep in view the morale of civil servants and the attractiveness of the remuneration of civil servants, so that suitable people would be recruited to join the civil service and serving civil servants would be retained.

28. Referring to some complaints from disciplined services staff members on their housing benefits, including the long waiting time for disciplined services quarters ("DSQs"), the arrangement where the disciplined services staff had to vacate their DSQs before they had reached the maximum points of their ranks and the high vacancy rate of large-sized DSQ units, Mrs Regina IP called on the Administration to review the demand and supply of large-sized and small-sized DSQ units and allocate DSQs with flexibility in order to maximize their use.

29. SCS replied that the Administration had been making efforts to build more DSQ units in the past few years to address the shortage. As the Security Bureau was responsible for the provision of DSQs, SCS undertook to convey Mrs Regina IP's views to the Bureau for consideration.

30. Regarding Mrs Regina IP's suggestion that the Administration should consider reintroducing the arrangement whereby civil servants could apply for advance salary for civil servants, say those on Master Pay Scale Point 21 or above, for home purchase, SCS replied that while he understood the financial pressure faced by some civil servants from high property prices in Hong Kong, this suggestion must be dealt with in a cautious manner and due consideration should be given to its implications on the overall property market.

31. Mrs Regina IP further asked whether the Administration would consider giving priority or setting a quota under the Home Ownership Scheme ("HOS") for civil servants who fulfilled the prevailing eligibility criteria for purchasing HOS flats. SCS explained that this suggestion involved very complicated issues that required careful study as it would reduce the limited number of HOS flats available for public application.

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V. Employment of non-ethnic Chinese in the civil service

(LC Paper No. CB(4)627/17-18(05) -- Administration's paper on employment of non-ethnic Chinese in the civil service

LC Paper No. CB(4)627/17-18(06) -- Paper on employment of non-ethnic Chinese in the civil service prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (updated background brief))

32. At the invitation of the Chairman, SCS briefed members on the employment of non-ethnic Chinese ("NEC") in the civil service, details of which were set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(4)627/17-18(05)).

Racial profile of the civil service

33. Mr HO Kai-ming recalled that at the Panel meeting last year, the former SCS had promised that CSB would consider resuming the voluntary and anonymous survey on the racial profile of the civil service which had been conducted in 2011 and 2013. He therefore asked about the updated progress.

34. SCS explained that the response rate of the surveys was low and since the surveys were conducted on a voluntary and anonymous basis, the accuracy of the information collected could not be verified. As such, the survey might not be a cost-effective means to gather statistics on the racial profile of the civil service. Given that the number of grades which had lowered/would lower Chinese language proficiency requirements ("LPRs") had been further increased to 53, the Administration would review the effectiveness of the above initiative in facilitating the employment of NEC in the civil service and then decide whether, and if so, how to conduct another survey. SCS stressed that appointment to the civil service was based on the principle of open and fair competition. Race was not a relevant consideration in the recruitment selection process and applicants were not required to declare their ethnic origins. That said, consideration might be given for Heads of Department/Grade ("HoDs/HoGs") of the 53 grades concerned to gauge the general picture

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of recruitment based on the information available through such means as face-to-face contacts with candidates during recruitment interviews. Mr HO Kai-ming remarked that if the Administration wished to evaluate the effectiveness of the Administration's various initiatives to facilitate the employment of NEC in the civil service, the survey findings could provide a basis for comparison.

Employment of non-ethnic Chinese in the civil service

35. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan said that to her understanding, agencies under the New York State Government had employed staff who could speak fluent Chinese to serve the local Chinese communities. With a view to improving the provision of public service for the NEC community in Hong Kong, she considered it necessary to increase the number of NEC civil servants, in particular in those departments which provided direct services to NEC, e.g. the Immigration Department ("ImmD") and the Home Affairs Department. Pointing out that there were voices to raise women's participation in government advisory and statutory bodies, Dr CHIANG and Dr Elizabeth QUAT asked whether the Administration would consider setting target ratios for NEC and/or NEC female civil servants.

36. SCS replied that the Administration had been upholding the principle of appointment by merit through a fair, open and competitive process. When conducting open recruitment exercise, candidates were assessed on the basis of their ability, performance, character, and the stipulated entry requirements set according to the job requirements. Race was not a relevant consideration of the Administration. Instead of setting a target ratio of NEC civil servants, the Administration considered it more appropriate to facilitate NEC's employment in the civil service by providing them with equal access to openings like other applicants. Taking into account that NEC might experience difficulties in seeking employment in the civil service because they could not meet the Chinese LPR, CSB had coordinated a comprehensive review in 2017 by inviting all HoDs/HoGs to give due regard to the job requirements of all civil service grades and analyze in detail the necessary Chinese LPRs. As a result, the number of grades that had lowered/would lower Chinese LPRs had increased by 22 to 53.

37. Ms YUNG Hoi-yan pointed out that in 2017, the Hong Kong Police Force ("HKPF") and the Correctional Services Department ("CSD") had around 30 000 and 6 000 staff respectively, while only 71 and 47 of them (i.e. less than 1% of the total number of staff in the two

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Departments) were NEC. In this connection, she enquired about the underlying reasons for the small proportion of NEC in HKPF and CSD.

38. SCS stated that in 2015-2016, 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 (as at end December 2017), HKPF received 67, 67 and 31 applications for Police Constable from NEC respectively, while 11, 18 and 9 of them had been appointed, representing success rates of 16%, 27% and 29%. The rates were higher than those of other applicants at 13%, 11% and 13% respectively. As regards the recruitment exercises of Assistant Officer II of CSD, around one to two out of dozens of applications from NECs were successful in each of the past three years. With a view to enhancing NEC's understanding of the job nature and career paths in the Government, government departments were encouraged to organize sharing sessions and career talks for NEC students. In this regard, a cross-disciplined forces training programme targeting NEC youths had been introduced to provide them with discipline, physical and team-building training.

39. Ms YUNG Hoi-yan suggested that the Chinese LPRs for staff in ImmD who were responsible for processing non-refoulement claim cases might be lowered as they would mainly communicate with the claimants in English or NEC languages. Dr Elizabeth QUAT echoed that some grades, for example those involving information technology duties, might have lesser operational needs in Chinese proficiency. She therefore sought details from the Administration on its plans/measures, if any, to further relax the Chinese LPRs of more grades.

40. SCS advised that all B/Ds, including ImmD, were invited to participate in the 2017 comprehensive review. To meet its specific operational needs of communication with NEC on immigration matters, ImmD had engaged interpreters proficient in specified NEC languages. Going forward, HoDs/HoGs would review the Chinese LPRs of all civil service grades from time to time to see if the Chinese LPRs could be adjusted having regard to the operational needs of the grades concerned. SCS said that he would also meet with HoDs/HoGs regularly to solicit their support for facilitating the access of NEC to government jobs. In response to Dr Elizabeth QUAT's enquiry, SCS confirmed that the lowering of Chinese LPRs covered Analysts/Programmers in all relevant B/Ds.

Dissemination of recruitment information to non-ethnic Chinese

41. Dr Elizabeth QUAT was supportive of the Administration's decision to lower the Chinese LPRs for 53 grades as she knew that many

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NECs were interested in joining the civil service. In this connection, she asked how the Administration would disseminate such information to NECs, in particular NEC youths, to facilitate their life planning at an early stage.

42. SCS advised that to facilitate dissemination of recruitment information on government jobs, B/Ds were encouraged to place recruitment advertisements with the Support Service Centres for Ethnic Minorities run by Home Affairs Department, and to liaise with non-government organizations that served NEC groups where appropriate.

43. Dr Elizabeth QUAT suggested that the Administration should proactively disseminate its recruitment information to NECs via various available channels such as schools. She said that the Ethnic Minorities Committee of the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong had been helping NECs in Hong Kong, and it could help distribute relevant promotional materials to NEC community.

44. In response, SCS said that he would convey Dr Elizabeth QUAT's views to B/Ds which were responsible for NEC-related policies and matters.

Motion proposed by member

45. Members noted that Dr CHIANG Lai-wan moved a motion under this agenda item. The Chairman ruled that the motion was directly related to the agenda item. Members agreed that the motion should be proceeded with at the meeting.

46. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan moved the following motion:

"為促進種族共融，並為本港不同種族市民提供更好服務，本委員會促請政府應在與少數族裔有密切相關的部門訂立一定比例，聘請符合指定語言能力的非華裔人士擔任公務員職位。"

(Translation)

"To promote racial integration and provide better services to people of different races in Hong Kong, this Panel urges the Government to set up for departments closely related to ethnic minorities some ratios in respect of employing non-ethnic

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Chinese with designated language competencies as holders of civil service posts."

47. The Chairman put the motion to vote. All members present voted for the motion. The Chairman declared that the motion was carried.

VI. Any other business

48. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:16 pm.

Council Business Division 4
Legislative Council Secretariat
6 April 2018