

**立法會**  
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**Panel on Public Service**  
**Meeting on 22 December 2017**

**Updated background brief on grade structure reviews**  
**for non-directorate civilian grades**

**Purpose**

This paper provides background information on grade structure reviews ("GSRs") for non-directorate civilian grades and summarizes the views and concerns expressed by the Panel on Public Service ("the Panel") at previous discussions on GSRs.

**Background**

Criteria for assessing GSR requests

2. Notwithstanding the conduct of regular service-wide surveys under the Improved Civil Service Pay Adjustment Mechanism ("Improved Mechanism"), there had been requests for the Administration to conduct GSRs from non-directorate civilian grades. According to the Administration, the criteria in assessing requests for conduct of GSRs from non-directorate civilian grades are as follows:

- (a) to address proven and persistent recruitment and retention difficulties of a specific non-directorate civilian grade, which cannot be resolved through the regular pay surveys under the Improved Mechanism; or
- (b) to enable a specific non-directorate civilian grade to function effectively on a sustainable basis in the face of fundamental changes to its job nature, job complexity and level of responsibilities.

### GSR for non-directorate civilian grades in the past 10 years

3. The Standing Commission on Civil Service Salaries and Conditions of Service ("the Commission"), a body appointed by the Chief Executive to advise on the structure, salaries and conditions of service of the non-directorate civilian grades in the civil service, conducted a GSR for the Veterinary Officer grade as well as the Government Counsel grade and the related grades in 2008. In December 2016, the Government invited the Commission to conduct a GSR for the Marine Officer and Surveyor of Ship ("SoS") grades<sup>1</sup> which are apparently facing serious recruitment difficulties. The Commission commenced the GSR in February 2017, and submitted its report to the Government in October 2017.<sup>2</sup>

### Shortage of Marine Officer and SoS grades

4. Subsequent to the vessel collision incident near Lamma Island on 1 October 2012, the Government appointed an independent Commission of Inquiry ("CoI") to look into the incident and make recommendations to prevent recurrence. To follow up on the observations and recommendations arising from CoI, the Secretary for Transport and Housing appointed a Steering Committee on Systemic Reform of the Marine Department ("the Steering Committee") in May 2013.

5. On manpower and training matters, the Steering Committee noted that there were persistent manpower shortage and succession problems in the Marine Officer and SoS grades. Officers in the Marine Officer grade are mainly responsible for the management and supervision of the port in Hong Kong while officers in the SoS grade responsible for undertaking statutory and other related duties under a number of merchant shipping ordinances that pertain to maritime safety, pollution prevention, security, seafarers' welfare and management including casualty investigations and audit on Hong Kong registered ships and their companies. Despite that the Marine Department ("MD") had implemented a series of stop-gap measures, such as relaxation of requirements on language proficiency and granting of incremental credit for working experience, to address the acute recruitment difficulties and manpower shortage of the two professional grades over the past few years, these measures were inadequate to resolve the manpower and succession problems of the two grades.

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<sup>1</sup> The two core professional grades in MD are responsible for discharging the statutory functions relating to all navigational matters in the waters of Hong Kong and the safety standards of all classes and types of vessels.

<sup>2</sup> The Standing Committee on Directorate Salaries and Conditions of Service and the Standing Committee on Disciplined Services Salaries and Conditions of Service commenced their last GSR for the directorate grades and disciplined service grades in 2007 respectively. Reports for these two GSRs were submitted to the Chief Executive in November 2008.

6. On the advice of the Steering Committee, MD had been exploring ways to resolve the manpower problem of the two professional grades. In 2014, MD commissioned a consultant<sup>3</sup> to study, among other, how overseas maritime authorities tackled their recruitment and succession problems. In the light of the findings of the consultant, the Steering Committee strongly supported the creation of a new training or assistant rank through the conduct of a GSR for the two professional grades to offer long-term solutions to its manpower and succession problems.

## **Members' deliberations**

### Need to review the criteria in assessing GSR requests

7. When the Administration briefed members on the criteria in assessing requests for the conduct of GSRs from non-directorate civilian grades at the Panel meeting on 21 June 2010, members opined that the two criteria in assessing GSR requests as mentioned in paragraph 2 above had been adopted by the Administration for a long time and there was a need to review and revise the criteria. The Administration responded that the criteria had been consistently applied in the consideration of requests for conduct of GSRs. The Administration had striven to ensure that the assessment of such requests was made objectively as far as practicable.

8. At the Panel meeting on 18 April 2011, members requested the Administration to provide quantifiable guidelines to facilitate objective assessment on what constituted fundamental changes to justify conduct of GSRs. The Administration responded that it was difficult to provide such guidelines as every GSR request would be assessed on its own merits. The Administration further advised that although nearly all civil service grades had undergone different degree of changes in job nature, job complexity and level of responsibilities as a result of social changes, enactment of new legislation, and rising public aspiration for better quality public services, only a few grade reviews had been conducted in the past 20 years with details as follows:

- (a) a comprehensive review of the Amenities Officer ("AO") and Recreation and Sport Officer ("RSO") grades was conducted in 2001 to rationalize the distinct but closely related responsibilities of the two grades. At the time, the AO grade was responsible for the management of recreation venues and

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<sup>3</sup> The consulting team comprised maritime experts who have profound working experience in maritime authorities in the United Kingdom and other jurisdictions.

facilities (the "hardware"), while the RSO grade was responsible for the promotion and organization of recreational activities and public sports programmes a (the "software"). In view of the close operational inter-action between the "hardware" and the "software", the need to enhance efficiency and productivity, and public demand for one-stop service with respect to the delivery of leisure services, the Administration considered a new mode of operation necessary and conducted a fundamental review of the two grades. As a result, the two grades were merged into one and replaced by a new Leisure Services Manager grade; and

- (b) two GSRs had been conducted in 2008-2009 for the Veterinary Officer grade, and the Government Counsel grade and the related Legal Aid Counsel and Solicitor grades respectively. In both cases, the concerned grades had faced proven and persistent recruitment and retention difficulties but no fundamental changes to job nature.

#### Selection of non-directorate civilian grades for review

9. At the Panel meeting on 19 November 2007, some members were concerned about the objectivity in the selection of non-directorate civilian grades for review, since Heads of Grade/Heads of Department ("HoDs") had the discretion to recommend grades for review. The Administration advised that the Commission, being an independent body, could on its own volition conduct a review on the structure of any civil service grade.

#### Communication with staff of concerned grades

10. At the Panel meeting on 21 June 2010, members enquired whether the Administration would clearly explain to staff whose request for conduct of GSRs for their grade was not acceded to. The Administration advised that as the staff would usually raise their requests with their respective HoDs first, who would submit the requests to the Civil Service Bureau for consideration, the assessment outcome would be relayed to the staff of the grades concerned through their HoDs. The Administration further advised that every request for conduct of GSRs had been carefully assessed and those turned down were due to inadequate justifications.

### **Latest position**

11. The Administration will brief members on the recommendations of the Commission on the GSR for the Marine Officer and SoS grades at the Panel meeting on 22 December 2017.

### **Relevant papers**

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

Council Business Division 4  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
18 December 2017

Grade structure reviews  
List of relevant papers

Date	Meeting/Event	References
19.11.2007	Panel on Public Service	<a href="#"><u>Administration's paper</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Minutes</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Administration's follow-up response to issues raised at the Panel meeting</u></a>
21.6.2010		<a href="#"><u>Administration's paper</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Minutes</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Administration's follow-up response to issues raised at the Panel meeting</u></a>
18.4.2011		<a href="#"><u>Administration's paper</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Minutes</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Administration's follow-up response to issues raised at the Panel meeting</u></a>
20.4.2015		<a href="#"><u>Administration's paper</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Minutes</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Administration's follow-up response to issues raised at the Panel meeting</u></a>