

For discussion
on 16 October 2017

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL ON PUBLIC SERVICE

Policy Initiatives of Civil Service Bureau

Introduction

A professional and efficient civil service is vital to the implementation of the new style of governance of the new-term Government. In the face of rising and diverse public aspirations, the civil service will strive to continuously improve our quality of service, whilst adhering to the “people-oriented” principle. The Government, as an employer, fully understands the work pressure on civil servants and will ensure the provision of necessary manpower support and training. This paper outlines policy initiatives relating to Civil Service Bureau (“CSB”) featured in the Policy Address and the Policy Agenda.

Details

Establishing a New Civil Service College

2. The Civil Service Training and Development Institute under CSB is currently responsible for formulating training policies and providing training programmes that fulfill the common training needs of civil servants, such as leadership and management, language and communication, national studies and the Basic Law, with a view to promoting a culture of continuous learning in the civil service. In line with the new style of governance of the current-term Government, the civil service must be forward-looking, visionary and innovative in order to tackle different challenges. In the long run, we propose to establish a new civil service college with fully upgraded training facilities so as to enhance training for civil servants in various areas. This will ensure that our civil servants keep improving with the time to provide better services to the public.

3. The new civil service college will enhance training for civil servants at various ranks in the areas of leadership development, public administration, interaction and communication with the public, innovation, use of technology, etc. This will help civil servants of different levels enhance their job skills and perform well in fulfilling the Government's roles as a "service provider", "regulator", "facilitator" and "promoter". It is envisaged that the new civil service college will provide our civil servants with a better learning environment, including classrooms allowing more diversified and flexible uses, up-to-date information and communication technology equipment, and lecture theatres with increased capacity. It is our goal to develop the new college into the leading educational institution for civil servants in the region. The new college will also place emphasis on deepening civil servants' understanding of our country's development and the relationship between the Central Authorities and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, enhancing their awareness of international affairs, as well as promoting exchanges with civil servants in other places, through which knowledge, experience and insights gained from local public service management could be shared.

Reviewing Time-limited Posts

4. In line with the Chief Executive ("CE")'s pledge in her election manifesto, the Government has conducted a review on existing time-limited posts¹ to address civil service colleagues' concerns. Starting from the 2018-19 financial year, we will convert those with long-term service needs into permanent posts, or extend the posts to meet service requirements. This will enable more effective use of such posts by various departments for promotion or substantive placement, such that civil service colleagues could feel better assured of their work.

¹ Regarding projects with specific time limits or projects with a long-term service need pending review, departments will normally be granted approval to create time-limited posts. Since such posts will be deleted after the completion of the projects, there may be implications, depending on circumstances, on the filling of civil service vacancies or the promotion prospects of civil servants.

Extending the Service of Civil Servants

5. To rise up to the challenges brought by an aging population and a shrinking labour force, the Government has fully implemented the series of initiatives promulgated in January 2015 for flexibly extending the service of civil servants. Since 1 June 2015, the retirement age for new recruits to the civilian grades has been raised to 65 and that for the disciplined services grades to 60. Since November 2015, we have also introduced the Post-retirement Service Contract Scheme, which enables bureaux/departments to engage retired/retiring officers on contract terms to undertake ad hoc, time-limited, seasonal or part-time duties requiring civil service expertise or experience. As regards serving staff, the revised arrangements for final extension of service, which include raising the maximum period from 90 days to 120 days and suitably relaxing the approval criteria, have also taken effect since February 2016. Furthermore, the adjusted mechanism for further employment beyond retirement age for a longer duration than final extension of service, under which the selection process is institutionalised and a maximum period of up to five years for further employment is allowed, has also been implemented since June 2017.

6. To tie in with the goal of expanding the labour force and to respond to the aspirations of our serving colleagues in the civil service, we have, in line with CE's pledge in her election manifesto, re-examined the issue and agreed that serving civil servants joining the Government between 1 June 2000 and 31 May 2015 will be allowed to choose to retire at 65 (for civilian grades) or 60 (for disciplined services grades) on a voluntary basis. We are working out the details and plan to consult the staff side in early 2018.

Promoting the Employment of Persons with Disabilities

7. The Government has all along been committed to eliminating disabilities and other forms of discrimination in employment. The Government, as an employer, leads by example. In addition to implementing measures to assist and facilitate persons with disabilities to apply for government jobs to ensure that they enjoy equal opportunities in this respect, we will enhance the transparency of civil service recruitment

by publishing the success rates of persons with disabilities as well as those for other candidates in the hope of encouraging the private sector to employ more persons with disabilities in the long run.

8. In addition, we will further expand the Internship Scheme for Students with Disabilities (“the Scheme”) in 2018. Our target is to double the number of internship places, increasing from an average of 50 a year in the past two years to 100, to allow more young persons with disabilities to gain hands-on work experience through placements in the Government, thereby strengthening their competitiveness before they enter the work force. The Scheme also enables civil service colleagues to appreciate the talents and potential of persons with disabilities. To enrich the Scheme, we will also arrange for interns to take up more diversified jobs.

Increasing Government Job Opportunities for Ethnic Minorities

9. To increase government job opportunities for ethnic minorities, the first thing is to address the main difficulty faced by them in applying for government jobs, namely the Chinese proficiency requirements. In this connection, CSB has started to co-ordinate a comprehensive review on the entry requirements relating to Chinese proficiency for all the grades of the civil service. The review, expected to be completed in early 2018, seeks to ensure that the language requirements of all the grades are commensurate with their job requirements, thereby avoiding unreasonable barrier to ethnic minorities in applying for government jobs.

Augmenting the Civil Service Establishment

10. To ease the work pressure on civil servants as soon as possible and to support the Government in taking forward various new policies and initiatives, we will augment the civil service establishment. We expect an establishment growth of not less than 3% in the 2018-19 financial year, which will represent the highest year-on-year increase since our return to the Motherland. Relevant details will be announced in the 2018-19 Budget.

Enhancing Medical and Dental Benefits for Civil Service Eligible Persons (“CSEPs”)

11. Civil servants, pensioners and their eligible dependants are entitled to receive medical services and dental treatment provided by the Department of Health (“DH”) and the Hospital Authority (“HA”) free of charge², as well as reimbursement of expenses for items prescribed according to medical necessity and are chargeable by HA or not available in HA and DH. To enhance medical and dental benefits for CSEPs, we will continue with the preparatory work for setting up the sixth Families Clinic in Sai Kung, which is expected to commence operation in 2018-19. Concurrently, clinical psychology and specialised dental services will also be enhanced.

Advice Sought

12. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

Civil Service Bureau
October 2017

² Save for the charges applicable to hospital maintenance, dentures and dental appliances as provided for in the Civil Service Regulations.