

Administration of the Civil Aid Service

The Audit Commission ("Audit") conducted a review to examine the administration of the Civil Aid Service ("CAS").

2. CAS is a uniformed and disciplined auxiliary emergency service financed by the Government. Its work contributes to the policy area of "Internal Security" under the Security Bureau. CAS has an auxiliary force to augment the Government's regular emergency services in emergency situations, provide civic services to government departments and outside agencies, and provide young people (aged 12 to 17) with the opportunity to develop self-confidence and civic-mindedness through participation in the CAS Cadet Corps. As at 31 December 2018, CAS had an establishment of 103 staff, and there were 3 333 CAS members and 4 262 cadets in the CAS Auxiliary Force. The total expenditure of CAS in 2017-2018 was \$109.4 million.

3. The Committee noted the following findings from the Director of Audit's Report:

- for the years 2016 to 2018, 954 to 1 059 CAS members (representing 28% to 31% of the average strength in the respective years) had not complied with the 60-hour efficiency requirements stipulated in the Civil Aid Service Regulation (Cap. 518A) (i.e. a minimum 30 hours of unit training plus a minimum 30 hours of services in a year as stated in a CAS General Order);
- from 2016 to 2018, 215, 181, and 208 CAS members (representing 6%, 5% and 6% of the average strength) respectively had not attended any unit training nor provided any service;
- from 2016 to 2018, no disciplinary actions had been taken against any CAS members under section 14(1) of the Civil Aid Service Regulation for non-compliance with the efficiency requirements. However, there were no documented justifications for not taking any disciplinary actions on these non-compliance cases;
- in 2017, each of the 61 CAS members who received less than 30 hours of unit training had provided 100 or more hours of services. Of these 61 members, only 16 (26%) had applied for exemption from the efficiency requirements according to CAS General Order No. 3.6.4 and were granted approval by Commissioner of CAS or the Chief Staff Officer of CAS;

- from 2014 to 2018, of the 1 351 new members recruited by CAS, 345 (26%) left CAS before completing the recruitment training programme;
- CAS members who have taken part in emergency or regular services, training courses conducted by CAS and voluntary duties are eligible for pay and allowances. In 2017-2018, CAS's expenditure on CAS members' pay and allowances was \$37.2 million. Audit examination of 315 approved attendance claim forms ("ACFs") submitted by CAS members for training received or services provided between April and June 2018 revealed the following irregularities:
 - (a) 52 (17%) ACFs showed that CAS members left before completion of the scheduled training/voluntary duties. However, no justifications were documented on ACFs;
 - (b) the training/voluntary duties recorded in 58 (18%) ACFs could not be found in the approved programme of activities/orders of operations; and
 - (c) seven (2%) ACFs revealed that the start times of the training/voluntary duties certified by the officers-in-charge were earlier than the arrival times reported in ACFs by the officers, while four (1%) ACFs showed that the dismissal times of the training/voluntary duties certified by the officers-in-charge were later than the departure times reported in ACFs by the officers;
- as at 30 September 2018, the total amount of arrears of revenue was \$111,900, of which \$69,200 (62%) involving 314 cases was related to unreturned uniforms and accoutrements of CAS members/cadets. As at 31 October 2018, 166 (53%) of the above 314 cases had been outstanding for over six years. Audit found that there was delay by CAS staff in issuing demand notes and taking follow-up actions (e.g. informing the Department of Justice for issuing legal notices);
- Audit examination of 50 quotation exercises with a value of over \$50,000 each and the registers for quotations with a value of not exceeding \$50,000 each from 2013-2014 to 2017-2018 revealed that:
 - (a) in a quotation exercise conducted in 2016-2017 with a value of purchases exceeding \$50,000, only three quotations were invited

instead of a minimum of five in accordance with the Stores and Procurement Regulations; and

- (b) the final contract sums for two contracts were 6% and 4% above the approved contract sums due to changes in service requirements. However, no approval had been sought for the contract variations in accordance with the Stores and Procurement Regulations; and
- CAS obtained the Fire Services Department's approval in February 2006 on the quantities of the dangerous goods kept in its Dangerous Goods Store subject to the compliance with a number of fire services requirements. However, Audit's inspection and stocktake revealed the following non-compliances:
 - (a) four dangerous goods items kept inside the Store exceeded the Fire Services Department's approved quantities;
 - (b) conspicuous warning notices (e.g. "no smoking") were not displayed on the front door of the Store;
 - (c) the fire extinguisher inside the Store was not properly maintained; and
 - (d) a self-closing device of a door was broken.

4. The Committee did not hold any public hearing on this subject. Instead, it asked for written responses regarding the impact on the service delivery by CAS arising from the non-compliance with the efficiency requirements by some CAS members and improvement measures/plans to address the issue; reasons for not taking any follow-up actions against CAS members not fulfilling efficiency requirements; the granting of pay and allowances to CAS members who failed to meet the efficiency requirements; approval of exemption from efficiency requirements; reasons for new CAS members dropping out of the recruitment training programme; review on the recruitment method and pay and allowances of CAS members; accountability for failure to enforce the CAS General Orders effectively; and concrete plans and measures to enhance the governance of CAS. The consolidated replies from **Secretary for Security** and **Commissioner of CAS** are in *Appendix 11*.

5. The Committee wishes to be kept informed of the progress made in implementing the various recommendations made by Audit.