

ITEM FOR ESTABLISHMENT SUBCOMMITTEE OF FINANCE COMMITTEE

HEAD 154 - GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT : ENVIRONMENT AND FOOD BUREAU

Subhead 001 Salaries

Members are invited to recommend to Finance Committee the creation of the following supernumerary post in the Environment and Food Bureau for a period of three years -

1 Administrative Officer Staff Grade B
(D3) (\$127,900 - \$135,550)

PROBLEM

Air pollution is a serious threat to the health of our citizens and the development of Hong Kong. The Environment and Food Bureau (EFB) needs an additional directorate staff at the deputy secretary level to co-ordinate the implementation of the Administration's comprehensive programme of measures to improve air quality.

PROPOSAL

2. The Secretary for the Environment and Food (SEF) proposes to create one supernumerary post of Administrative Officer Staff Grade B (AOSGB) (D3) for a period of three years to head a new Division to handle air quality and cross-boundary issues.

/JUSTIFICATION

JUSTIFICATION

3. EFB was set up on 1 January 2000. There are currently two divisions -

- (a) Division A, headed by an Administrative Officer Staff Grade B1 (AOSGB1) (D4), designated as Deputy Secretary (A) (DS(A)). This Division is responsible for food safety, food standards and labeling, food supply and control, agricultural and fisheries policy, policy on hawkers and markets and other environmental hygiene matters, resource management and bureau administration. The Division also serves the Advisory Council on Food and Environmental Hygiene, Licensing Appeals Board and the Healthy Living Campaign Steering Group.
- (b) Division B, headed by an AOSGB (D3), designated as DS(B). This Division has responsibility for environmental protection and conservation. It looks after the policies on reducing air, noise and water pollution, protection of the ozone layer and Greenhouse gas emissions, waste reduction management and increasing energy efficiency. It is responsible for ensuring that the environmental impacts of Government projects and policies are fully assessed. In formulating the policies, it is advised by an Advisory Council on the Environment to which it serves as secretary. Close liaison and co-ordination with the Mainland on cross-boundary pollution matters are also required.

Need for an additional AOSGB post

4. To improve the environment and to safeguard the health of the public, the Chief Executive in his 1999 Policy Address outlined a comprehensive programme of immediate measures to improve our air quality. These measures include -

- (a) replacing diesel taxis with liquefied petroleum gas taxis;
- (b) replacing diesel light buses with cleaner alternatives;
- (c) retrofitting pre-Euro diesel vehicles with particulate traps or diesel catalytic converters;
- (d) making the installation of particulate traps and catalytic converters a mandatory requirement for renewal of registration for these pre-Euro vehicles;
- (e) reducing the number of smoky vehicles by adopting advanced smoke tests, improving vehicle maintenance and enhancing the deterrent by raising fixed penalty for smoky vehicles;

/(f)

- (f) controlling idling engines;
- (g) pedestrianisation;
- (h) phasing in age limits for different categories of vehicles; and
- (i) stepping up co-ordination with Guangdong to tackle regional air pollution issues.

5. Preparations for these measures are well under way, but much work remains to be done on their full implementation.

6. In May 2000, the Administration announced further initiatives to improve our air quality. These include -

- (a) introducing ultra-low sulphur diesel to Hong Kong;
- (b) controlling the amount of fuel carried by traffic through the land crossings;
- (c) offering incentives for switching to cleaner vehicles;
- (d) phasing out light diesel goods vehicles;
- (e) enhancing hydrocarbon recovery system at petrol filling stations; and
- (f) introducing chassis dynamometer tests for annual roadworthiness inspections.

7. At the same time, the Administration is also examining the costs and benefits of the adoption of temporary abatement measures in more polluted areas when the Air Pollution Index (API) is very high. These include restricting entry of certain classes of vehicles to the more polluted areas, restricting goods loading and unloading activities in high API days and increasing street washing in these areas and where pedestrian flow is busy.

8. In addition to local measures to abate air pollution, the Administration is also working on a more effective mechanism for regional co-operation to reduce air pollution.

9. Other programmes for improving air quality and reducing air pollution are also being considered. These include the promotion of indoor air quality, development of greenhouse emission control, management of ozone depleting substances and review of programmes to control emissions from non-vehicular sources.

10. To take forward the above initiatives, the Administration has set up a Task Force to Improve Air Quality under the chairmanship of SEF. The Task Force co-ordinates inter-departmental efforts in implementing the initiatives, monitors their effectiveness and identifies any further improvements. It includes representatives from Transport Bureau, Health and Welfare Bureau, Economic Services Bureau, Finance Bureau, Planning and Lands Bureau, Environmental Protection Department, Transport Department and the Hong Kong Police Force. It will co-opt representatives from Customs and Excise Department, Electrical and Mechanical Services Department and other Bureaux and departments as required. The Task Force reports to the Chief Executive and the Chief Secretary for Administration regularly.

11. As mentioned in paragraph 3 above, DS(B) works to SEF on all environmental issues. In addition to air pollution and cross-boundary environmental liaison, he has to oversee water and noise pollution control policy, environmental impact assessment policy; the Strategic Sewage Disposal Scheme review process; development of the conservation policy; reform of waste management policy and institutions; environmental input into the sustainable development process and the re-organisation of the advisory and public outreach arrangements for environmental programmes. He is already heavily loaded and cannot give the attention needed to accelerate the implementation of the various measures and initiatives on air quality as set out above. To ensure that urgent and priority attention is accorded to the implementation of the package of air quality improvement measures, an AOSGB post has been made available to EFB on an on-loan basis since 26 April 2000.

12. In view of the complexity of the initiatives and the considerable co-ordination efforts that will be involved, such as close liaison with the Guangdong Authorities in tackling cross-boundary air pollution, negotiations with oil companies and transport operators, it is considered necessary to set up a dedicated Division C, headed by a senior directorate officer at AOSGB level. This Division will be responsible for co-ordinating the implementation of the measures to improve air quality and supporting the Task Force. This AOSGB will be designated as DS(C). The proposed job description of DS(C) is at Enclosure 1.

Encl. 1

13. In addition to the DS post, the new Division will be supported by a team of staff comprising one AOSGC, designated as Principal Assistant Secretary (C) (PAS(C)), one Senior Administrative Officer, one Administrative Officer, one Senior Environmental Protection Officer and one Environmental Protection Officer. The AOSGC will be provided through redeployment within the bureau from the existing Division B. The job description of the post of PAS(C) is at Enclosure 2. We plan to fill the other non-directorate posts through redeployment within the service.

Encl. 2

Encls. 3
& 4

14. The existing and proposed organisation charts of EFB are at Enclosures 3 and 4 respectively.

15. The Administration plans to complete the delivery of the initiatives on improving air quality within three years. The proposed creation of the post of AOSGB will therefore be initially for a period of three years. We will review the long term need for the post in the light of changing demands in the environmental protection policy area.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

16. The additional notional annual salary cost of this proposal at mid-point is \$1,580,400. The full annual average staff cost of the proposal, including salaries and staff on-costs, is \$2,741,000.

17. No provision has been included in the 2000-01 Estimates for this purpose under the relevant Head of Expenditure. Subject to Members' approval, we shall offset supplementary provision required in 2000-01 by deleting an equivalent amount from Head 106 Miscellaneous Services Subhead 251 Additional commitments.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

18. Public concern about air pollution has been mounting following the large number of incidents of "Very High" pollution levels last year and the recent prolonged and record-breaking event this March. The deterioration in air quality has become a focus of international media attention, and business leaders have raised concerns about impacts on the economy. Given the strong concern and the urgency for improvements, staffing at EFB needs to be strengthened by setting up a dedicated division to accelerate the implementation and monitoring of the series of measures and initiatives aimed at improving our air quality.

CIVIL SERVICE BUREAU COMMENTS

19. The Administration has considered carefully alternatives including redeployment bearing in mind the Government's commitment to contain the size of the civil service and the need for greater efficiency and effectiveness under the Enhanced Productivity Programme. Civil Service Bureau considers the grading, ranking and duration of the proposed AOSGB post appropriate, having regard to the level and scope of the responsibilities involved.

**ADVICE OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON DIRECTORATE
SALARIES AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE**

20. As the AOSGB post is proposed on a supernumerary basis, its creation, if approved, will be reported to the Standing Committee on Directorate Salaries and Conditions of Service in accordance with the agreed procedure.

Environment and Food Bureau
May 2000

Job Description

Post : Deputy Secretary (C)

Rank : Administrative Officer Staff Grade B (D3)

Responsible to : Secretary for the Environment and Food

Justification :

To assist the Secretary for the Environment and Food to discharge her responsibilities in the areas of air pollution and cross-boundary environmental protection matters, the Deputy Secretary (C) is required to co-ordinate the work of a new section, namely Division C, to formulate and implement appropriate policies and programmes to improve and maintain good air quality, and to co-ordinate policy on environment co-operation between Hong Kong and the Mainland authorities. The need for clean air is an important focal point of the community. The policy-making and co-ordination aspect of this effort calls for the total commitment of an officer at the AOSG 'B' level.

Duties and Responsibilities -

1. To be responsible for the implementation of the comprehensive programme to reduce vehicle emissions;
2. to examine further measures to improve air quality;
3. to co-ordinate inter-departmental effort in implementing the programme of measures and initiatives;
4. to provide support for the Task Force to Improve Air Quality;
5. to seek approval and funding from the Legislative Council for the implementation of the programme;
6. to review/introduce policies and legislation relating to other clean air initiatives;
7. to co-ordinate the presentation of the Administration's proposals to the Legislative Council;
8. to explain and disseminate government policies and programmes to members of the public, Legislative Council and concerned bodies in the community; and
9. to be responsible for liaison with the Mainland authorities and co-ordination within the Administration on joint effort between Hong Kong and the Mainland to improve regional air quality and other cross-boundary environmental protection issues.

Job Description

Post Title : Principal Assistant Secretary (C)

Rank : Administrative Officer Staff Grade C (D2)

Responsible to : Deputy Secretary (C)

Justification :

Principal Assistant Secretary (C) is required to assist the Deputy Secretary (C) in the formulation of effective policy initiatives and programmes related to air and liaison with the Mainland authorities on cross-boundary issues relating to environmental protection. The issues involved are wide-ranging and complex, with many new emerging problems to be resolved. The incumbent of this post must therefore possess good judgement and political acumen which could only be found in a directorate officer at least at the D2 level. At this level, the officer will possess a good combination of skills and experience which would help him to go to the heart of complex problems and recommend sound solutions under pressure and against tight deadlines.

Duties and Responsibilities -

1. To assist the Deputy Secretary (C) in -

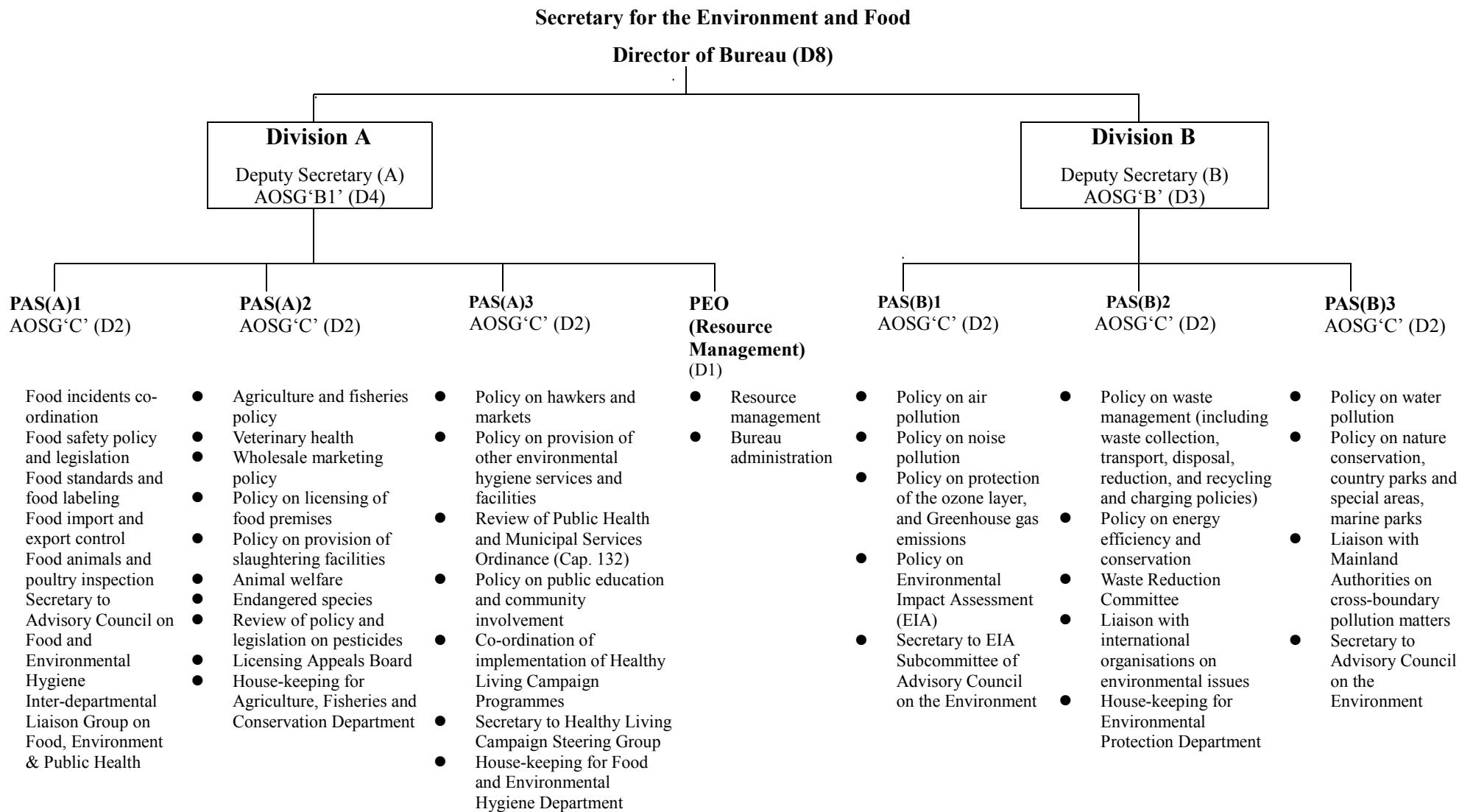
- formulating appropriate policies and programmes to improve and maintain good air quality;
- implementing the above policies and programmes;
- liaison with the Mainland authorities and co-ordination within the Administration on joint effort between Hong Kong and the Mainland to improve regional air quality and other cross-boundary environmental issues;
- monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of the above programmes; and
- explaining and disseminating government policies and programmes to members of the public, Legislative Council, and other bodies in the community.

2. to attend Legislative Council panel meetings as required;

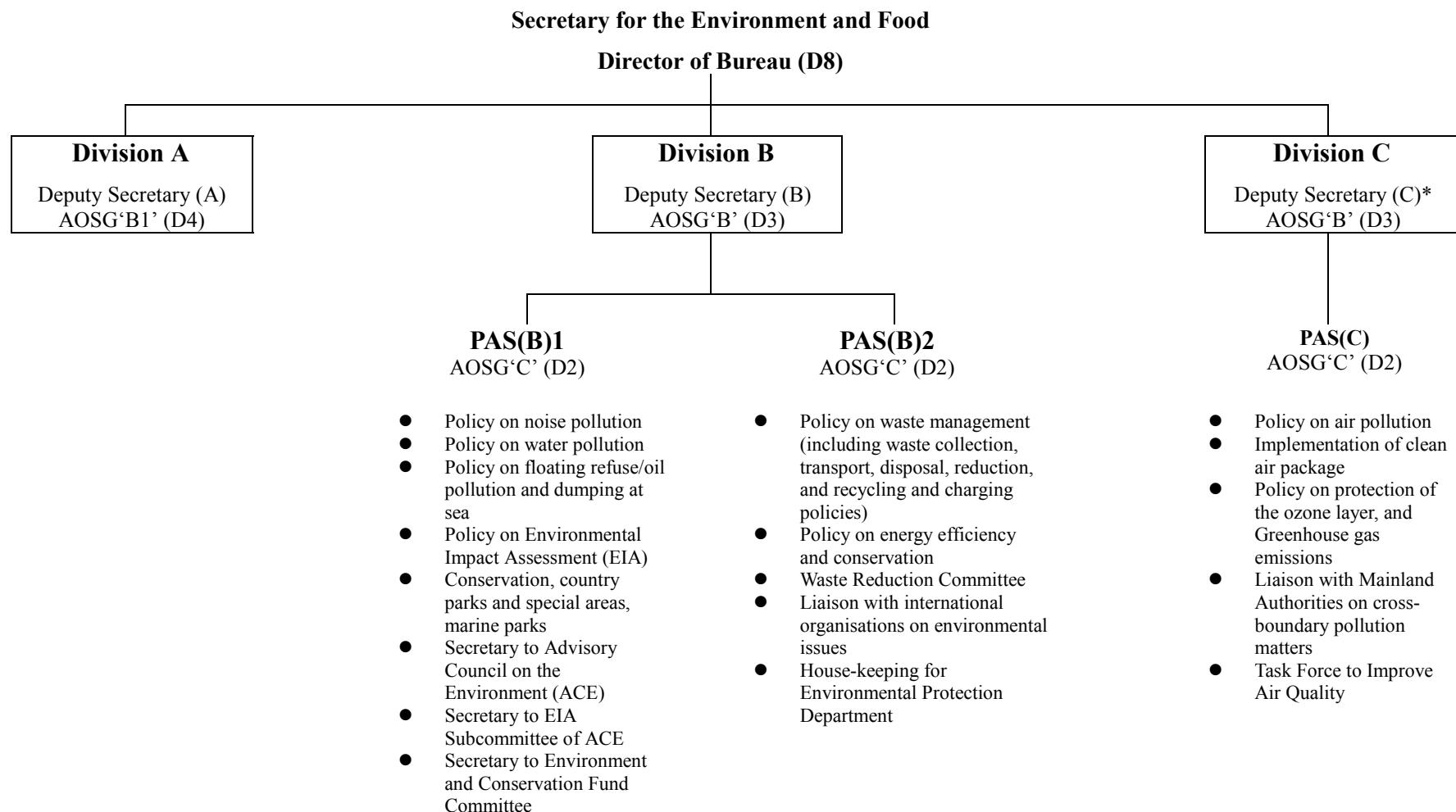
3. to undertake such other tasks as Deputy Secretary (C) directs; and

4. to serve as Co-chairman, Working Group on Vehicle Maintenance Service; Member, Co-ordination Group on Global Climate Change; Member, Working Group on the Diesel to Gas Scheme; and Member, Indoor Air Quality Management Group.

Existing Organisation Chart of The Environment and Food Bureau



Proposed Organisation Chart of The Environment and Food Bureau



* Proposed new supernumerary directorate post