

立法會
Legislative Council

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seen by the Administration)

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Legislative Council
Panel on Public Service

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 11 October 1999 at 2:30 pm
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building

Briefing on the Chief Executive's Policy Address 1999

- Members present** : Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP (Chairman)
Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Michael HO Mun-ka
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon CHAN Kwok-keung
Hon CHAN Wing-chan
Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP
Hon Howard YOUNG, JP
Hon Ambrose LAU Hon-chuen, JP
- Members attending** : Hon Ronald ARCULLI, JP
Hon CHAN Yuen-han
Dr Hon Philip WONG Yu-hong
- Members absent** : Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon LEE Kai-ming, SBS, JP
- Public officers attending** : Mr LAM Woon-kwong
Secretary for the Civil Service

Ms Anissa WONG
Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service (1)

Mr D W PESCOD
Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service (2)

Mrs Susan MAK
Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service (3)

Mr Cletus LAU
Director of General Grades

Mr L S LEE
Commissioner for Official Languages

Mr William NG
Director, Civil Service Training and Development Institute

Clerk in attendance : Miss Salumi CHAN
Chief Assistant Secretary (1)5

Staff in attendance : Ms Pauline NG
Assistant Secretary General 1

Mr Matthew LOO
Senior Assistant Secretary (1)7

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I. Briefing by the Secretary for the Civil Service on the Chief Executive's Policy Address 1999

Secretary for Civil Service (SCS) advised that the policy objective of the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) was to ensure that the civil service was trustworthy, efficient and served the needs of the community. In the past year, CSB had set 31 targets in accordance with the 17 initiatives committed. Among the 31 targets, 11 had been completed and 20 were on schedule. In the coming year, CSB would undertake 14 new initiatives to:

- (a) modernize the policy and practice applicable to the management of the civil service;

- (b) equip staff with the skill, knowledge and ability to deliver an efficient service to the community;
- (c) promote a culture focused on achieving results;
- (d) uphold the integrity of the civil service; and
- (e) promote staff well-being.

(Post-meeting note : The speaking note of SCS was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)95/99-00 on 12 October 1999.)

Privatization of government departments

2. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong noted that the Chief Executive (CE) had highlighted in his Policy Address that at present, the Administration would concentrate on the scheme for private sector involvement in the estate management work of the Housing Department (HD). However, he also noted that the Director of Business and Services Promotion Unit (BSPU) had stated that two potential candidates would be identified within 2000 for corporatization. Mr CHEUNG sought clarification on the Administration's plans for privatization/corporatization of government departments and the need to retain the supernumerary directorate post in BSPU established in April 1999 for three years to handle the policy and legislative issues on corporatization. In response, SCS advised that privatization/corporatization of individual departments was one of the types of reform to improve the Government's efficiency. As a matter of priority, the Administration would concentrate on the proposal relating to HD and at the same time, continue to identify potential candidates for privatization/corporatization. It was therefore still necessary to retain the supernumerary post in BSPU for working out all the relevant legal and administrative arrangements.

3. In reply to Mr CHAN Kwok-keung, SCS advised that the number of departments to be involved in the privatization programme was a subject for further study.

4. Miss CHAN Yuen-han noted that CE had also mentioned in his Policy Address that the Administration would ensure the protection of the legitimate rights of serving civil servants in the process of reform. Responding to Miss CHAN, SCS advised that "legitimate rights of serving civil servants" referred to the terms and conditions of appointment stipulated in their employment letters or contracts. It was an established policy of the Administration to protect the legitimate rights of civil servants and this had been demonstrated in the previous privatization exercises.

5. Quoting the recent privatization of Cheung Sha Wan Abattoir as an example, Miss CHAN Yuen-han expressed concerns that the surplus staff arising from the private sector involvement scheme of HD would also be advised to opt for early retirement. Miss CHAN asked whether the staff concerned had the right to opt staying in the civil

service and whether the Administration would arrange redeployment for them. In response, SCS advised that all along, the Administration had conducted thorough discussions with the staff affected by privatization on the proposed options. On HD's case, the departmental management had just started the discussion with the Staff Side. SCS considered it inappropriate for the Administration to make any comments at this preliminary stage. However, he assured members that the staff concerned would be duly consulted before the Administration made its decision on the way forward.

Enhanced Productivity Programme

6. Mr CHAN Wing-chan noted that through enhanced productivity, some 250 secretarial and clerical posts had been deleted and 220 posts of Office Assistants downgraded to Workman II. He was concerned whether this arrangement had contravened the principle that the Administration would, in meeting the targets of the Enhanced Productivity Programme (EPP), avoid staff redundancies as far as possible. SCS clarified that following the deletion of the 250 posts, the staff concerned had been redeployed and not made redundant. He also advised that the Secretary for the Treasury (S for Tsy) had issued a circular on 7 October 1999 to Bureau Secretaries and Controlling Officers providing them with guidelines on dealing with surplus staff arising from the implementation of their EPP initiatives and seeking their co-operation in the implementation of the Human Resources Redeployment Strategy (HRRS). The objectives of HRRS included facilitating enhanced efficiency and productivity whilst minimizing staff redundancy, and reassuring staff that all options would be pursued before redundancy was contemplated. Under HRRS, CSB and the Finance Bureau (FB) would jointly administer a clearing house mechanism to perform central matching for surplus staff to existing or new service requirements. Moreover, staff redeployed would be provided with suitable training to equip them with the necessary skills for the job, if necessary. SCS further pointed out that so far, all departments had achieved the EPP targets for the first phase and none of them had done so by making staff redundant.

7. In reply to Mr Michael HO, SCS advised that departments had achieved the EPP targets through various means. In this connection, Controlling Officers had been advised to ensure that the standard of services provided for the public would not be affected and to communicate efficiently with their staff on the matter. Responding to Mr HO's further enquiry, Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service (1) (DSCS1) advised that FB had issued newsletter regularly on the progress of EPP. She undertook to provide the Panel with the relevant newsletter.

(Post-meeting note : The EPP Newsletter (Third Issue) and Supplementary Information on EPP issued by FB were circulated to Members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)97/99-00 on 12 October 1999.)

8. Responding to the Chairman, Director of General Grades advised that through the streamlining of office practices and procedures, the Administration aimed to delete a total of 400 clerical posts from various departments in 1999-2000.

New entry system

9. Mr CHAN Wing-chan was concerned about the progress of the second round consultation conducted by the Administration on the new entry system proposed under the Civil Service Reform. In response, DSCS1 advised that an ad hoc working group comprising representatives from the Administration, Staff Sides of the four Central Staff Consultative Councils and major staff associations had been set up to follow up the issue. A paper on the proposed new entry system had also been issued to Heads of Department and Heads of Grade for comments. The Administration would continue to consult the Staff Sides and departmental management in the coming two months.

Civil Service Provident Fund Scheme

10. Responding to Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong, DSCS1 advised that the Administration aimed to complete the design of the Civil Service Provident Fund Scheme (the Scheme) by the end of 2000 as a new retirement benefits system for the new recruits. Mr CHEUNG stressed that it was important for the Administration to consult the serving civil servants and the public before making its decision on the subject. DSCS1 assured members that departmental management and the Staff Sides would be duly consulted.

11. Responding to Mr Michael HO, DSCS1 advised that the Administration had commissioned a consultancy study on the design of the Scheme with an aim that the Scheme would attract and retain staff of a suitable calibre. In this connection, the consultant would study the retirement benefit systems of local and overseas public and private organizations for reference.

Review of pension suspension policy

12. The Chairman noted that the Administration had completed its review of the pension suspension policy for retired civil servants taking up post-retirement jobs in public organizations and asked for the Administration's plan on the way forward. DSCS1 advised that the Administration was evaluating the proposed options with an aim to make a decision on the subject by the end of 2000. Responding to the Chairman's further enquiry, DSCS1 advised that the Administration did not have the up-to-date statistics on the number of retired civil servants who had taken up post-retirement jobs in public organizations as the figure varied from time to time.

Promotion of staff well-being

13. Miss CHAN Yuen-han noted that CSB would continue to promote awareness of occupational safety and health in the civil service and that its target for 1999/2000 was the implementation of the Safety Management Systems by 70% of government departments. Responding to Miss CHAN, Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service (3) (DSCS3) advised that the target could be achieved by the concerted efforts of

departmental management and staff concerned. In this connection, CSB had produced a Good Practice Guide on Safety Management Systems for use by departments.

14. Miss CHAN Yuen-han considered that it was the responsibility of departmental management to ensure safety at work and the well-being of staff, particularly for those who were required to be on duty during typhoons or Rainstorm Black Warnings. Miss CHAN quoted a case in August 1999 where a staff member of the Immigration Department who was seriously injured on his way home after being on duty during a typhoon, as no transportation had been arranged for him. In response, DSCS3 undertook to look into the case.

Use of Chinese in official business

15. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong noted that the Official Languages Agency (OLA) had committed to assist departments in the setting up of a mechanism to chart and review progress in using Chinese in official business and that it aimed to have 50% of the departments implemented the mechanism by September 2000. In response to Mr CHEUNG's enquiry on the progress made, Commissioner for Official Languages (COL) advised that OLA had completed a full round of visits to 69 departments and 47 of them had agreed to implement the mechanism and to report progress once every three months. The remaining 22 departments, though not adopted the mechanism at this stage for operational reasons, would promote the use of Chinese in official business through other means.

16. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong suggested the Administration to set up a timetable under which departments were required to achieve the target of using Chinese in a certain number of items by a certain date. COL advised that for the 47 departments concerned, OLA would assist each of them in setting its own targets and monitor their progress. As regards the remaining 22 departments, OLA would continue to encourage them to promote the use of Chinese within their departments.

II. Any other business

Date of next meeting and items for discussion

17. The Chairman reminded members that the next Panel meeting was scheduled for 15 November 1999. As the Administration had indicated that it would be ready to brief the Panel in mid-November on the result of staff consultation on the Civil Service Starting Salaries Review 1999 in mid-November, the Chairman proposed and members agreed that the subject be included in the agenda for the next meeting. In the circumstances, members also agreed that one of the agenda items "Consultative machinery of the civil service" be postponed to the Panel meeting on 20 December 1999.

18. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 3:35 pm.

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Legislative Council Secretariat
5 January 2000