

Legislative Council Panel on Public Service

Corporatisation of the Survey and Mapping Office

of the Lands Department

Introduction

At the meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Public Service on 21 February 2000, we briefed Members on our proposal to corporatise the Survey and Mapping Office (SMO). In response to the points raised by Members and the five staff unions at the above meeting, we issued an information note to Members on 13 March 2000.

2. This paper updates Members of the progress of the above corporatisation proposal, in particular the proposed staffing arrangements.

Progress to date

3. We have carefully considered the views of staff and staff unions on the corporatisation proposal. We remain of the view that it is financially viable to corporatise the SMO, and this will enhance the cost-effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery of survey and mapping services to the public. The Executive Council has recently noted the progress to date and agreed that we should now proceed with the drawing up of detailed proposals for corporatising the SMO for their further consideration.

Staff Consultation

4. We fully understand the staff's concern on job security and the uncertainty in facing the proposed institutional reform. We have previously explained to them, and to Members, that the corporatisation

proposal will not result in any of them losing their job or having their existing terms and conditions of service changed involuntarily.

5. We have been working to dispel any lingering misunderstandings of staff concerning the corporatisation proposal. We have arranged meetings with all staff unions to explain to them the corporatisation proposal, address their concerns and clarify their doubts on the merits of corporatisation and viability of the business case. We have also arranged a meeting between the consultants and the staff unions to explain and clarify any points in the Consultancy Report on the Feasibility of Corporatisation of the SMO about which the staff may still be in doubt.

6. The senior management of the SMO have also reached out to all SMO staff through various channels to address their concerns, such as visiting staff at their workplace, attending regular office meetings, and issuing newsletters to staff to keep them informed of the latest development.

7. We have taken on board the views of staff and staff unions, and have put in place necessary measures to address their concerns. We will continue our efforts to maintain formal and informal dialogues with them through special and regular liaison meetings.

Proposed staffing arrangements

8. As a basis for further staff consultation, we have worked out some proposals on the staffing arrangements. Our proposals are to give departmental grades staff of SMO two options. They can either retain their civil servant status and be seconded to work in the corporation, or choose to retire voluntarily.

9. Staff who choose to remain as civil servants will remain on exactly the same terms as now, but they will be working for the corporation instead of in a vote-funded department. They will remain on the civil service establishment. For staff who choose to retire voluntarily, we propose the grant of a compensation package to them.

The package would include a commuted pension gratuity, a monthly pension and a lump sum payment subject to the provisions of Civil Service Regulations governing employment after retirement. They may at the same time apply to join the corporation. As regards general grades staff, they will be subject to usual deployment by their respective Heads of Grades.

10. We propose to give a period of two years for staff to exercise their option. This will allow time for staff to consider seeking employment with the corporation before opting for retirement from the civil service. The option, once made, is irrevocable.

11. In the next few weeks, we will meet with staff and staff unions to seek their views on the above proposals before we draw up the details. We will brief Members of the detailed proposals in due course.

Other Preparatory Work

12. To take forward the corporatisation proposal, we are also lining up other preparatory arrangements. These include the preparation of the draft legislation for the establishment of the corporation, formulation of a medium-term corporate cum business plan for the corporation which entails the conducting of a detailed market research for the various new opportunities identified, and the drawing up of a bulk service level agreement between the Government and the corporation setting out the scope of services to be provided by the corporation to various Government departments and the financial arrangements.

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