

LegCo Panel on Public Service

Meeting on 20 December 1999

Consultative Machinery in the Civil Service

Purpose

This paper informs Members of the consultative machinery within the civil service at the central and departmental level. And as requested by the Panel, this paper also covers the consultative machinery of the Housing Department.

Background

2. The government believes that effective communication and better understanding between staff and management is key to achieving good staff relations.

3. There is a well-established consultative machinery within the civil service. Through this machinery, the management explains to staff the background and rationale behind the proposed initiatives on the one hand, and staff can express their views on the proposals and contribute on areas where they have valuable working knowledge or experience on the other.

Consultative Machinery at the Central Level

4. At the central level, there are four central staff consultative councils, namely the Senior Civil Service Council (SCSC), the Model Scale 1 Staff Consultative Council (MOD 1), the Police Force Council (PFC) and the Disciplined Services Consultative Council (DSCC). The objective of these central staff consultative councils is to foster better understanding and co-operation between the Government and staff, and to

enable staff views to be reflected effectively in the formulation of policies concerning their conditions of service.

5. The SCSC, MOD 1 Council and DSCC usually meet five times a year, and the PFC convenes meetings on a quarterly basis.

Senior Civil Service Council

6. The SCSC was established in 1968 on the basis of the 1968 Agreement signed between the Government and three major staff associations, namely, the Hong Kong Chinese Civil Servants' Association (HKCCSA), the Association of Expatriate Civil Servants (AECS) and the Senior Non-expatriate Officers' Association (SNEOA). The three associations together constitute the Staff Side of the SCSC. Any change to the composition of SCSC requires amendment of the 1968 Agreement and consultation with the Staff Side.

7. Under the 1968 Agreement, the Government has undertaken not to make any considerable changes in conditions of service which affects a substantial part of the civil service as a whole, or of the members of one or more of the constituent associations of the SCSC, without prior consultation with the SCSC. The SCSC deals with service-wide issues such as pay adjustment, housing benefits, medical and dental facilities, localisation policy, staff relations policies, etc. Matters relating to MOD 1 staff, members of the Police Force and directorate officers are however not under the purview of SCSC.

Model Scale 1 Staff Consultative Council

8. The MOD 1 Council was established in 1982 as a means of extending the channels of communication with Model Scale 1 staff, who were not represented on the SCSC. Their different conditions of employment and their large proportion in the civil service (about 20,000) justify the need for a separate central consultative forum to represent their interest. Staff Side Members of the Council consist of not more than two representatives from –

- (a) each of the staff associations with a membership of 1,000 or

more MOD 1 staff; and

- (b) every 1,000 or more members from staff associations with a combined membership of 1,000 or more MOD 1 staff.

At present, the seven constituent associations of the Council are Hong Kong Chinese Civil Servants' Association, Hong Kong Civil Servants General Union, Government Municipal Staff General Union, Government Staff Union, Government Employees Association, Hong Kong Government Water Supplies Department Employees Union and Government Property Attendant Association.

Police Force Council

9. The PFC was established in 1982 to promote co-operation between the Government and officers of the rank of Chief Superintendent of Police and below. The Staff Side consists of representatives from four Police staff associations, namely, the Junior Police Officers' Association, Local Inspectors' Association, Expatriate Inspectors' Association and Superintendents' Association.

Disciplined Services Consultative Council

10. The DSCC was established in 1990 to deal with matters affecting the pay and conditions of service of all disciplined services other than the Police Force. The Staff Side members are made up of representatives of 15 recognised staff associations in the five general disciplined services, namely Fire Services Department, Immigration Department, Correctional Services Department, Customs & Excise Department and Government Flying Services. At least one representative from each of the staff associations but not exceeding a total of five representatives from each service is represented on the Council. At present, there are 25 members in the Council.

Consultative Machinery at the Departmental Level

Departmental Consultative Committees

11. At departmental level, departments with more than 100 staff are encouraged to set up Departmental Consultative Committees (DCCs) which aim to achieve better understanding and co-operation between management and staff through regular discussions on matters affecting the well-being of staff in departments. The composition of a DCC includes the departmental management, the staff representatives which are elected by the staff themselves or nominated by their staff associations and a Civil Service Bureau representative who explains central government policies and practices and acts as a bridge between central government and departments.

12. There are at present 87 DCCs set up in 66 bureaux/ departments. The topics to be discussed by these DCCs usually include issues specific to the department, such as :-

- (a) The consultative arrangements within the department;
- (b) The appointment and promotion criteria for individual grades within the department;
- (c) The conditions of service of individual grades within the department;
- (d) Departmental welfare and recreational activities;
- (e) Departmental training;
- (f) Office accommodation and working conditions; and
- (g) Departmental quarters and uniforms.

Some departments also set up sub-committees to the DCC, such as the General Grades Consultative Committee, to facilitate communication between a particular group of staff and management.

Consultative Machinery in the Housing Department

13. Since June 1999, the Housing Authority (HA) Task Force on Private Sector Involvement (PSI) has been set up to study the implementation issues of PSI. Though the Task Force is a HA committee and comprises only HA members, it meets representatives of the Alliance of Housing Department Staff Unions (the Alliance), which represents 30 Housing Department staff unions, on a regular basis to listen to their views.

14. The HA Task Force is supported by the Housing Department Working Group on PSI and four sub-groups. Representatives of the Alliance have been invited to join three of the sub-groups to work out implementation details including the Management Buy-out Option, the ‘Sixth Option’ proposed by staff, and Staff Re-deployment and Training. Staff participation in the Working Group on PSI and the Sub-group on Service Transfer and Monitoring is considered not appropriate because commercially sensitive information on private property management agents are inevitably involved in the discussions.

15. In addition to the three sub-groups, representatives of the Alliance have also been invited to join a Committee on Staffing Arrangements which is tasked to jointly work out staffing arrangement proposals for all staff affected by PSI for consideration by the Administration and HA. So far, this Committee has met four times since September.

16. Other formal and informal communication channels are also available to Housing Department staff to reflect their views. They include four Departmental Consultative Committees which represent the interests of all staff, focus group meetings, goodwill visits by senior officers and grade management staff, meetings, seminars, briefings and open forums on PSI for both staff union members and staff in general. Staff are also kept informed of latest development through a weekly bulletin ‘Message from Director’, a dedicated monthly newsletter ‘PSI Update’ as well as ad hoc issues of ‘PSI Update’ on significant development of PSI.

*Civil Service Bureau
December 1999*

[D3/Index/058.doc/wt]