

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)1239/07-08
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/PS/1

Panel on Public Service

**Minutes of meeting held on
Tuesday, 11 March 2008, at 10:45 am
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building**

Members present : Hon LI Fung-ying, BBS, JP (meeting chaired by Deputy
Chairman)

Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH
Hon KWONG Chi-kin, MH

Member attending : Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP

Members absent : Hon Howard YOUNG, SBS, JP (Chairman)
Hon Margaret NG
Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun, GBS, JP
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP

**Public officers
attending** : **Agenda item IV**

Miss Denise YUE, GBS, JP
Secretary for the Civil Service

Mr Andrew H Y WONG, JP
Permanent Secretary for the Civil Service

Mrs Sarah KWOK, JP
Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service 1

Agenda item V

Miss Denise YUE, GBS, JP
Secretary for the Civil Service

Mr Andrew H Y WONG, JP
Permanent Secretary for the Civil Service

Mr Patrick CHAN Nim-tak, JP
Director of General Grades

Clerk in attendance : Mr Andy LAU
Chief Council Secretary (1)2

Staff in attendance : Mr Noel SUNG
Senior Council Secretary (1)4

Miss Winnie CHENG
Legislative Assistant (1)5

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I Confirmation of minutes of meeting
(LC Paper No. CB(1)966/07-08 — Minutes of meeting on
18 February 2008)

(As the Chairman was out of town, the meeting was chaired by the Deputy
Chairman.)

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 February 2008 were confirmed.

II Information papers issued since last meeting

2. Members noted that no information papers had been issued since last meeting.

III Items for discussion at the next meeting scheduled for 21 April 2008
(LC Paper No. CB(1)964/07-08(01) — List of outstanding items for
discussion

LC Paper No. CB(1)964/07-08(02) — List of follow-up actions)

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Meeting on 21 April 2008

3. Members agreed that the following items proposed by the Administration should be discussed at the next meeting scheduled for 21 April 2008 –

- (a) Incorporation of Basic Law assessment into civil service recruitment; and
- (b) Updated overview of civil service conduct and discipline.

Meeting on 19 May 2008

4. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan was concerned that under the "no double benefits rule", a civil servant whose spouse received housing benefits from his/her employer would not be granted any civil service housing allowances. He opined that if a civil servant's spouse worked in the private sector and received housing benefits, the civil servant concerned should still be eligible for civil service housing allowances. Mr LEE suggested and the meeting agreed that a discussion item on the relevant issues should be included in the agenda for the Panel meeting in May 2008.

5. Mr WONG Kwok-hing was concerned that existing and retired civil servants were required to pay for certain medical treatments and drugs, and they might not be able to afford the payments. Mr WONG suggested and the meeting agreed that the Administration should brief the Panel on the provision of medical benefits for serving and retired civil servants.

6. Members agreed that the following items should be discussed at the Panel meeting scheduled for 19 May 2008 –

- (a) Application of the no double benefits rule to civil service housing allowances; and
- (b) Medical benefits for existing and retired civil servants.

IV Civil service recruitment policy

(LC Paper No. CB(1)964/07-08(03) — Administration's paper on civil service recruitment policy

LC Paper No. CB(1)1000/07-08(01) — Submission on recruitment of Director of Broadcasting from RTHK Programme Staff Union

LC Paper No. CB(1)974/07-08 — Paper on civil service recruitment policy prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (Background brief)

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Briefing by the Administration

7. The Secretary for the Civil Service (SCS) apprised the meeting on the civil service recruitment policy by highlighting the salient points in the paper.

Discussion

8. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan remarked that similar to the revision of the relevant civil service regulations and guidelines to facilitate Mrs Fanny LAW's participation in the election as a Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Deputy to the National People's Congress, the recent arrangement to lower the entry requirements for the post of Director of Broadcasting (DoB) had again raised public suspicion that the Administration had tailor-made its policy to suit a particular officer or candidate. Mr LEE opined that the incident did not involve discrimination against candidates without a degree. Instead, the incident gave the public an impression that the Government had identified a certain individual to fill the post of DoB, and had tailor-made the entry requirements to suit the candidate. Therefore, even if there were candidates in the first round of the recruitment exercise who held a degree and the required qualifications, the Government would still maintain that no suitable candidate could be identified so that the entry requirements could be lowered in the second recruitment exercise to suit a specific candidate. Mr LEE asked when the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) sought the Public Service Commission (PSC)'s endorsement to lower the entry requirements for the DoB post, the justifications for the proposal and PSC's comments on the proposal. Mr LEE commented that the public and many civil servants were concerned that if the entry requirements for the DoB post could be relaxed, the same arrangement should apply to other civil service posts requiring degree academic qualification, in order to be fair to non-degree holding candidates.

9. SCS responded that given the wide public concern over the recruitment of DoB, it was understandable that members of this Panel would like to discuss the issues involved, although she was of the view that matters concerning the recruitment of DoB should more appropriately be discussed at the Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting. That said, she would respond to members' questions on this recruitment exercise. She pointed out that there was a well established system for recruitment of civil servants. Continuing, SCS said that the Administration proposed to PSC in August 2007 that DoB should be recruited through both in-service and open recruitment on the basis of the recommended qualification and experience requirements. PSC endorsed the proposal later in the same month. In October 2007, the concerned policy Bureau advertised in local newspapers and issued a circular to the civil service on the recruitment of DoB. The deadline for applications was 26 October 2007. In November 2007, the concerned Bureau submitted a list of selection criteria for the post of DoB and an assessment form for interviews of the candidates. The selection criteria were endorsed by PSC in early December 2007. The Selection Board interviewed the candidates in December 2007. A representative from PSC sat through all the interviews as an observer. Later in the same month, the Permanent Secretary of the concerned

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policy Bureau informed CSB that no suitable candidate could be identified to serve as DoB in the just conducted recruitment exercise; and recommended that a second in-service cum open recruitment exercise be conducted with relaxed academic requirements. PSC's advice was sought in mid January 2008 to conduct a second recruitment exercise for DoB and to lower the academic requirements for the post, in view of the failure to identify a suitable candidate in the first recruitment exercise, PSC endorsed the proposals in early February 2008.

10. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong remarked that since the Administration had lowered the academic requirement for the DoB post in the midway of a recruitment exercise, it raised strong public suspicion that the Government had tailor-made the entry requirements to suit a particular candidate. Based on press reports, a certain employment agency had been involved in the recruitment for DoB. If the Government had lowered the academic requirements for the post in order to suit certain candidates recommended by the employment agency, it would arouse grave skepticism among the public that the arrangement was tailor-made for certain candidates; and engender serious doubt about the fairness of the recruitment exercise, especially to the candidates who failed in the first recruitment exercise, and to the RTHK staff who had not been promoted because of their lack of a university qualification. Mr CHEUNG opined that if no suitable candidate could be identified in the first recruitment exercise, the Government might consider lowering the entry requirements for the DoB post to post-secondary academic qualification, as many post-secondary education institutes, like the former Baptist, Chu Hai and Shu Yan Colleges, provided courses on journalism and communications and many students had graduated from these colleges in the past 30 to 40 years. The arrangement to lower the entry requirement to Form Five level raised strong suspicion that it was tailor-made for a particular candidate.

11. SCS explained that twenty candidates had applied for the DoB post in response to the advertisement in local newspapers last October, out of which only a small number met the basic entry requirements for the post. SCS stressed that the Administration had not changed the rules of the game in the middle of a recruitment exercise. She pointed out that it was only after the conclusion of the first recruitment exercise which had failed to identify any suitable candidate that CSB, based on the proposal of the concerned policy Bureau, sought PSC's agreement to lower the entry requirements and conduct another recruitment exercise for the DoB opening. Throughout the first recruitment exercise, the Government had adhered strictly to the entry requirements stipulated in the advertisement in assessing the candidates who applied for the job. And it was only with the endorsement of PSC that the Government embarked on the second recruitment exercise based on the relaxed academic requirements. SCS stressed that the lowering of academic requirements was an exceptional approach adopted only after the first recruitment exercise had failed to identify a suitable candidate for the DoB post and after careful re-assessment of the entry requirements for the post. Such an exceptional arrangement was not unprecedented. In 1999, upon the failure to identify a suitable person to serve as Commissioner for Tourism (a post ranked at D5 level, i.e. the same ranking as the DoB post) in an open recruitment exercise, CSB had obtained PSC's

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agreement to relax the Chinese language requirement in the second recruitment exercise. She further explained that in reviewing the entry requirements for a particular post, the main concern of the Government was whether a candidate who met the relaxed entry requirements could still capably perform the duties of the post involved. The Government would not relax the entry requirements of a post to the extent that the selected candidate would have difficulty in discharging the duties and responsibilities of the post. As far as the DoB post was concerned, CSB had assessed that a person without a degree but possessed fifteen years of experience in the broadcasting and/or media related field should be qualified to undertake the duties and responsibilities of DoB.

12. Ms Emily LAU remarked that the lowering of the entry requirements for the DoB post had raised concern from the public and staff of RTHK, who doubted whether the arrangement was tailor-made for a particular candidate. Ms LAU asked whether the university qualification requirement was included in the assessment criteria proposed by the relevant Bureau. She would also like to know the justifications for such a requirement, e.g. whether it was made because all previous DoBs were degree-holders. Ms LAU also asked why the 20-odd candidates in the first recruitment exercise were found unsuitable for appointment; how many of them were not degree-holders, and whether the candidates who failed in the first recruitment exercise could apply for the DoB post again. Given that the university qualification was required for recruitment of many non-directorate posts, Ms LAU enquired as to the justifications for lifting the degree requirement for the DoB post. She said that CSB had a role to play to ensure that all recruitment exercises were conducted in accordance with the laid down procedures. Ms LAU further enquired as to how many applications had been received in the second recruitment exercise.

13. SCS remarked that as a general practice, the entry requirements for open recruitment of a directorate officer included a university qualification. The newspaper advertisement for recruitment of DoB last October had stipulated that the candidates should be degree-holders. However, SCS pointed out that the DoB post was a promotion rank of the Programme Officer grade, the basic ranks of which, i.e. Programme Assistant and Assistant Programme Officer, did not require a university qualification. If a suitable serving officer from the lower ranks of the Programme Officer grade could be identified to fill the DoB post, the university qualification would not be required. SCS added that out of the twenty candidates applying for the DoB post in the first recruitment exercise, less than ten candidates could meet the entry requirements stipulated in the newspaper advertisement. Some of those could not because they did not possess a degree, while others did not have fifteen years of working experience at a senior managerial level. Candidates who failed in the first recruitment exercise would not be barred from applying for the DoB post again. SCS further pointed out that CSB had documented all steps taken throughout each stage of the recruitment exercise, and had ensured full compliance with all civil service recruitment procedures. SCS said that as the deadline for application of the DoB post in the second recruitment exercise had just expired, the information regarding the number of applications received was not available and could only be provided later.

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14. Ms LAU asked whether persons awarded with HKSAR honours would enjoy an edge over other candidates.

15. SCS responded that the selection criteria for civil service posts did not include age, sex or award of HKSAR honours.

16. Mr KWONG Chi-kin was of the view that a person with fifteen years experience in the broadcasting and/or media related field should be capable of performing the duties of DoB despite lacking a university qualification. He pointed out that in the recruitment of many posts, working experience could replace the requirement for a university qualification, e.g. some lawyers did not possess a university degree. In view of the fact that many outstanding and experienced mass media workers in Hong Kong were not university graduates, Mr KWONG asked why the Government had not, in the first instance, waived the university qualification requirement for recruitment of DoB, which could have avoided the current controversy.

17. SCS responded that the degree requirement was normally set for recruitment of heads of departments. If the Government had lowered the academic requirement in the first recruitment exercise for the DoB post, it would still be accused of customizing the requirements to suit a particular candidate. SCS pointed out that after the first recruitment exercise had failed to identify a suitable candidate for DoB post, CSB, together with the relevant policy Bureau, had considered all possible options for filling the post, including the posting of an officer from another grade in the civil service to take up the post. However, in view of the public concern about the DoB post, the fact that many experienced persons from the broadcasting and media related field did not possess a degree, and the executive search consultant's advice that suitable candidates with lower academic qualifications were available in the market, the Administration decided that another recruitment exercise, based on lower entry requirements, should be conducted for the DoB post.

18. Mr WONG Kwok-hing remarked that given the sensitivity of the DoB post, the Government should be aware of the wide public concern about the recruitment procedures for the post. He opined that if the Government could provide a detailed explanation immediately in response to the public's query about the justifications for lowering the entry requirements for the DoB post, as spelt out by SCS at the meeting on the steps taken and documented, including the participation of a PSC representative in the interview process, it would dispel many accusations and speculations about pre-empting the outcome of the recruitment exercise. Mr WONG asked whether the Government would in future give immediate detailed response to similar incidents of public concern.

19. SCS responded that following expression of the public's concern about the lowering of the academic requirements for the DoB post, the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development had immediately clarified that the recruitment of DoB had

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complied with the laid down civil service procedures, which was reported in the mass media. SCS said that there was always room for improvement in public governance.

20. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan asked, in view of the public's suspicion that the second recruitment exercise for DoB was tailor-made for a particular candidate, whether the Administration had already identified a suitable candidate in the first recruitment exercise who did not possess a degree, and hence the Government lowered the academic requirement in the second recruitment exercise to suit the candidate. He opined that the Government could insist on a university qualification requirement for the DoB post during the second recruitment exercise. Mr LEE asked what triggered off the Government's move to lower the academic requirement for the DoB post.

21. SCS responded that in order to protect the privacy of the applicants, she could not disclose the details of the applicants for the DoB post. SCS reiterated that since the first recruitment exercise for the DoB post, which included a university qualification requirement, had failed to identify a suitable candidate, the Government decided to lower the academic requirement in the second recruitment exercise to fifteen years of working experience in the broadcasting and/or media related field if a candidate did not possess a degree. For candidates holding a degree, they should have fifteen years of working experience at senior managerial level, i.e. not necessarily experience in the broadcasting and/or media related field.

22. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong remarked that the reason given by the Government for lowering the academic requirement for the DoB post was that many experienced workers in the mass media did not possess a degree. However, given that the Chinese University of Hong Kong and tertiary education institutes like the Baptist, Shu Yan and Chu Hai Colleges had operated courses in journalism and communications for decades, the Government could in fact lower the academic requirement for the DoB post to post-secondary level which would have covered a much larger pool of potential candidates. Instead, the Government had waived the university qualification requirement if a person possessed fifteen years of working experience in the broadcasting and/or media related field. Such an extent of relaxation on the entry requirements raised serious skepticism that the entry requirements for the DoB post had been tailor-made for a particular candidate.

23. SCS reiterated that the fact was that when the university qualification requirement was included in the first recruitment exercise, no suitable candidate could be identified to fill the DoB post. In view of the failure to recruit a suitable candidate in the first exercise, CSB, together with the relevant policy Bureau, had reviewed the entry requirements for the DoB post, including the academic requirement, and had concluded that a candidate without a degree but possessed fifteen years of working experience in the broadcasting and/or media related field should be able to perform the duties of DoB. She noted that the proposal was endorsed by PSC.

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24. Ms Emily LAU opined that it was inappropriate for the Government to relax the entry requirements for the DoB post to such an extent that no specific academic qualification was required if the candidate had fifteen years of relevant working experience. She doubted whether there would be no degree holders or graduates from post-secondary education institutes in Hong Kong qualified to take up the DoB post. Given that the future of RTHK was still unclear, and many people considered that the salary of the DoB post was not commensurate with its duties and was not attractive in comparison with similar posts in the private sector, Ms LAU asked whether the Government had reviewed the overall remuneration package, in addition to the entry requirements, for the DoB post.

25. SCS responded that the advertisement for the first recruitment exercise for the DoB post stipulated the basic requirements of a university degree and at least fifteen years of experience at a senior level, preferably with a large public or private organization, with strong leadership and management capabilities. In the second recruitment exercise, apart from the aforesaid entry requirements, it was stated in the recruitment advertisement that persons without the academic qualification, i.e. degree or post-graduate degree, but having at least fifteen years of experience in the broadcasting and/or media related field might also apply for the post. SCS also pointed out that the terms and conditions of employment for civil service posts, including the DoB post, had been set based on laid down policy, and could not be changed easily. A candidate applying for the post of DoB should be well aware of the terms and conditions of employment as spelt out in the recruitment advertisement. The successful candidate for the DoB post would be appointed on a two and half years' contract basis. SCS further pointed out that to keep abreast of the prevailing market situation, a Grade Structure Review was being conducted for all the directorate grades, which included the rank of DoB.

V Civil service-related issues featuring in the 2008 Budget Speech

(LC Paper No. CB(1)964/07-08(04) — Administration's paper on civil service-related issues featuring in the 2008 Budget Speech)

Briefing by the Administration

26. SCS apprised the meeting on the latest development on the control of the civil service establishment and the resumption of open recruitment of civil servants, by highlighting the salient points in the paper.

Discussion

Civil service pay adjustment

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27. Mr WONG Kwok-hing was concerned whether the Government had reserved sufficient money to meet the anticipated salary increase for the civil service. He asked whether the civil service pay adjustment for 2008-2009 could be effected within the current legislative session.

28. SCS responded that there was an established mechanism to deal with civil service pay adjustment, and currently a Pay Trend Survey (PTS) was being conducted the outcome of which was expected to be available in mid-May 2008. Based on the findings of the PTS and other relevant factors such as the Government's financial situation, the economy of Hong Kong, the inflation rate, staff pay claims and staff morale, the Chief Executive (CE)-in-Council's view would be sought on the pay offers to be made to the staff sides of the four central consultative councils. The staff sides of the four central consultative councils would be consulted again, and a recommendation on civil service pay adjustments in 2008-2009 would be submitted to the CE-in-Council for decision. The Administration aimed to complete the civil service pay adjustment exercise for 2008-2009 within the current legislative session.

Employment of non-civil service contract (NCSC) staff

29. Noting that another 2 500 NCSC positions would be converted into civil service posts in 2008-2009, Mr WONG Kwok-hing was concerned that the large number of NCSC staff working in public libraries might become jobless if they were not allowed to transfer to the civil service by "through train" and were not selected for appointment in the open recruitment of the converted posts.

30. SCS responded that the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) and the Efficiency Unit were jointly conducting a review of the public library operations with a view to developing the best mode of operation for the libraries, which was envisaged to be completed by the end of 2008. Based on the outcome of the review, a proposal on the future mode of operation of the public libraries would then be made to the Home Affairs Panel for consideration.

31. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan opined that NCSC staff should receive a salary increase similar to that for the civil servants, as they were performing duties similar to those of civil servants. Mr LEE was of the view that the Heads of Departments (HoDs) should not be given the discretion to adjust the salaries of NCSC staff, as they were not provided with the financial resources to do so, and they would offer different rates of salary increase to the NCSC staff, or some of them might not increase the salaries of NCSC staff at all. Mr LEE requested that SCS should co-ordinate the pay adjustment exercise for NCSC staff and issue guidelines to HoDs on the arrangements. With regard to the review of the public library operations, Mr LEE opined that the review would likely result in outsourcing the library services, which would lead to unemployment of the NCSC staff. Given that the NCSC staff in the public libraries, including Library Officers and Library Assistants, had worked for LCSD for many years, and the Mass Transit Railway Corporation Limited (MTRCL) could guarantee that the frontline staff

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of the two former railway companies would be retained after the rail merger, Mr LEE asked whether SCS could undertake that the NCSC staff would not become jobless after the review of the library operations. Mr LEE pointed out that if the Government did not contract out the library services, the employment of NCSC staff could continue.

32. SCS responded that the Administration had already explained the pay adjustment mechanism for NCSC staff in a paper provided to the Panel in December 2007. CSB would not direct HoDs to increase the salaries for NCSC staff. Instead, CSB regularly issued circulars to HoDs reminding them that they should from time to time review the employment packages, including the remuneration, for NCSC staff, and make adjustment as and when appropriate. As regards the NCSC staff in public libraries, SCS said that she did not have the capacity/authority to undertake that the NCSC staff concerned would be offered employment after the review of the library operations. SCS pointed out that the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services employed the NCSC staff based on actual operation and service needs, and if the needs no longer existed, the Director could not continue to employ the NCSC staff as HoDs had to be accountable for the public money spent for the provision of public services.

33. Mr WONG Kwok-hing opined that as many NCSC staff had worked in the Government for many years at a salary lower than that for civil servants while performing similar jobs, and as they had contributed to the provision of quality services to the public, the Government, as the largest employer in Hong Kong and in the interest of stability and harmony of the society, should review the relevant policy and allow the NCSC staff to transfer to the civil service by "through train". Mr KWONG Chi-kin shared Mr WONG's concern and opined that since many NCSC staff had worked in the civil service for many years, and had received a salary lower than that for civil servants at similar ranks during the years of Hong Kong's economic downturn, the Government should accord priority to the NCSC staff when recruiting candidates to fill the civil service posts converted from NCSC positions.

34. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan opined that NCSC staff were recruited through an open recruitment exercise, and they should be allowed to be converted as civil servants by "through train". Mr LEE said that although the departments might consider the working experience of the NCSC staff in the recruitment exercises for civil service posts, some NCSC staff might lose their edge if their academic qualifications were inferior to other candidates.

35. SCS responded that the Government had to maintain its open recruitment policy by recruiting its staff through an open, fair and competitive system. Such an arrangement was fair to the NCSC staff and members of the public who wanted to join the civil service. SCS said that the Government would continue to disseminate information about civil service vacancies to all interested parties, including NCSC staff, and encourage NCSC staff who met the entry requirements to apply for civil service posts. SCS pointed out that in the selection criteria of most civil service posts, an item on

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relevant working experience was included. Therefore, serving or former NCSC staff should enjoy an edge over other candidates.

Language requirement for civil service posts

36. Mr KWONG Chi-kin pointed out that in the open recruitment for some civil service posts which were converted from NCSC positions, the Government had upgraded the language proficiency requirement from Grade E to Grade C in the English Language (Syllabus A) in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE). He said that this change had rendered many serving NCSC staff disqualified from applying for the civil service posts. Mr KWONG was of the view that the English language proficiency requirement for the posts should not be changed to bar the NCSC staff from applying for the posts.

37. The Permanent Secretary for the Civil Service (PSCS) responded that the entry requirements, including the language proficiency requirement, for individual civil service posts were set having regard to the job requirements and actual service needs of the posts concerned. He added that the English language proficiency requirement was not only applicable for appointment to the civil service, but also for similar posts in the private sector, and entry to the universities.

38. Mr KWONG Chi-kin asked whether HoDs could lower the language proficiency requirements for individual posts to Grade E in the English Language (Syllabus A) in the HKCEE.

39. PSCS responded that HoDs could set the language proficiency requirement for particular posts having regard to the job requirements and service needs of the posts concerned. However, PSCS pointed out that civil service salaries at the entry level were set having regard to entry requirements for the posts. SCS supplemented that in view of the implementation of the "3+3+4" academic structure (i.e. three-year junior secondary, three-year senior secondary and four-year undergraduate education), CSB would review the academic qualifications requirements for all civil service posts in due course .

Probation period for civil servants

40. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan opined that the "3+3 entry system" (i.e. three-year probation and three-year agreement terms for new appointees to the civil service before they were considered for appointment on the prevailing permanent terms) was unfair and too harsh to the new recruits. He pointed out that the probation period in the private sector was much shorter. He requested the Government to review the relevant policy.

41. SCS responded that the Administration had previously provided a written response on the same question to the Panel. SCS pointed out that the "3+3 entry system" was introduced in 2000 when there was a general freeze on the open recruitment of civil servants. Since then about 600 new recruits had been appointed under the "3+3 entry

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system" which did not seem to have caused a retention problem. In the light of experience from more open recruitment exercises and feedback from HoDs, CSB would decide whether there was a need to review and/or revise the "3+3 entry system", and whether the system was deterring the Government from recruiting/retaining suitable persons as civil servants.

42. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan was of the view that the "3+3 entry system" was unnecessary as it put an undue burden on a civil servant who had to undergo a protracted period of probation.

43. SCS responded that the justification for introduction of the "3+3 entry system" had been provided to the Panel when it was introduced in 2000. SCS pointed out that the Government had to be extremely careful in appointing officers on permanent terms as they would work on a long term basis for the Government until retirement. Even during the most difficult years, the Government had not made redundant any civil servants. The "3+3 entry system" was considered a fair assessment system for the Administration to consider whether an officer was suitable for appointment on permanent terms.

44. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong pointed out that whilst most civil servants who had completed the "3+3" period (i.e. three year probation plus three year agreement) were offered permanent appointments, several hundreds of teachers in Government schools who had completed the "3+3" period were still engaged on agreement terms. Mr CHEUNG opined that with the implementation of the "small class system", the demand for certificate masters in primary schools should increase and the teachers who had completed the "3+3" period should be offered appointment on permanent terms. He requested that the Administration should complete a review of the situation within the current school year.

45. SCS responded that as the Education Bureau still had to work out a realistic forecast on the requirements of teachers in the coming years, the Bureau had to continue employing teachers in Government schools who had completed the "3+3" period on agreement terms, so as to avoid a surplus of manpower in the relevant grades. SCS said that the attention of the relevant Bureau would be drawn to member's concerns and views on the issue.

Motion moved by Mr WONG Kwok-hing

46. Mr WONG Kwok-hing put forward the following motion which was seconded by Mr LEE Cheuk-yan for the Panel's consideration. Mr WONG read out the motion at the meeting:

"(本委員會)促請政府在大幅盈餘下對非公務員合約僱員未能轉為公務員者，皆設法予以聘用，避免製造失業。"

(Translation)

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"That, given the huge fiscal surplus, (this Panel) urges the Government to make its best endeavour to offer appointment to those non-civil service contract staff who have not been able to be converted to civil servants, so as to prevent them from becoming jobless."

47. The Chairman considered that the motion was directly related to the agenda item under discussion and that it was appropriate for the Panel to deal with it. All members present agreed that the proposed motion should be processed. The Chairman put the motion to vote. Four members voted for the motion. The Chairman declared the motion passed.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration was requested on 11 March 2008 to provide the Panel with a written response to the motion by 14 April 2008. A copy of the motion was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)1039/07-08 on 11 March 2008.)

VI Any Other Business

48. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:45 pm.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
18 April 2008