

**For information on
19 November 2007**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL ON PUBLIC SERVICE

IMPLEMENTATION OF FIVE-DAY WEEK IN THE GOVERNMENT

PURPOSE

This paper briefs Members on the outcome of the review on the final phase implementation of the five-day week initiative in the Government.

BACKGROUND

2. In January 2006, the Chief Executive announced the setting up of a working group, comprising representatives of the Civil Service Bureau, the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau and the Efficiency Unit, to examine the proposal and implementation details of a five-day week in the Government with effect from 1 July 2006. At the Panel meeting held on 15 May 2006, we briefed Members on the phased approach for the implementation of the five-day week initiative under the four basic principles of: no additional staffing resources, no reduction in the conditioned hours of service of individual staff, no reduction in emergency services, and continued provision of some essential counter services on Saturdays. We also briefed Members on the selected government units that moved to a five-day week in the first phase which started on 1 July 2006 (vide LC Paper No. CB(1)1440/05-06(03)). At the Panel meetings held on 20 November 2006 and 21 May 2007, we briefed Members on government units covered in phase two and the final phase respectively (vide LC Paper Nos. CB(1)248/06-07(03) and CB(1)1600/06-07(03)). We also informed Members of the outcome of the review of the phase one and phase two operation at these two meetings.

FINAL PHASE REVIEW

3. The services listed at the **Annex** migrated to a five-day week in the final phase which commenced on 1 July 2007. Working together with the departments concerned, we have reviewed the final phase implementation on the basis of the experience in the month of July 2007. As in earlier phases, our review covers the following aspects –

- (a) Public sentiment;
- (b) Monitoring and contingency measures;
- (c) Impact on service utilisation and operational efficiency;
- (d) Impact on performance pledge compliance; and
- (e) Impact on staff.

Public sentiment

4. Following phase one and phase two implementation, the general public have largely accepted the implementation of a five-day week in the Government and have become more adapted to the new service pattern. The number of enquiries, complaints, and suggestions received by the “1823 Citizen’s Easy Link” dropped from 150 in the first week of July 2007 to 38 in the week ended 1 November 2007. Most of the views received expressed a general concern over reduced convenience as a result of the Government working five days a week. There were also some views suggesting that some customer services should be provided six to seven days a week.

Monitoring and contingency measures

5. In addition to government-wide publicity and targeted communication with stakeholders, departments offering direct services to the public have provided a drop-in box or leave-a-message service as appropriate at the closed counters/offices upon the implementation of the final phase of a five-day week. Some departments with a wide client base arranged duty officers to monitor public reaction and to render suitable assistance to members of the public who showed up at their closed offices and counters on the four Saturdays in July 2007. The assistance rendered included explaining the new operating hours, distributing relevant information leaflets and forms, arranging follow-up appointments upon request, responding to general enquiries and facilitating submissions by drop-in boxes, etc.

Impact on service utilisation and operational efficiency

6. With regard to those public services that ceased operation on Saturdays from 1 July 2007, the utilisation of these services during weekdays remained largely steady. The minor fluctuation in individual service utilisation was attributed to factors such as seasonal demand, economic recovery, property market fluctuation, etc.

Impact on performance pledge compliance

7. Departments have compressed their performance pledges, where applicable, to ensure that affected services are delivered within the same calendar period prior to the move to a five-day week or have undertaken to clear outstanding applications by Friday where practicable. There is generally no adverse impact on departments' capability in meeting the performance pledges. Departments reported full compliance with performance pledges save for a few instances which were not related to the implementation of a five-day week.

Impact on staff

8. Since July 2007, some 10 500 staff have switched to a five-day week, including 3 100 staff on a Monday-to-Friday basis and 7 400 staff on a "five-day-work, two-day-off" duty pattern. Most staff welcome the new arrangement, noting that they are able to spend more time with their family, pursue further studies, sports and recreational activities, etc. during the longer weekend.

Overall summary

9. We are satisfied that the final phase migration has been smooth. The Government will continue to monitor the delivery of services to the public after migration to a five-day week and make adjustments where applicable to best suit the needs of the public. After three phases of implementation, a total of some 94 300 (around 65%) government staff are working five days/shifts per week, including some 27 500 staff on a "five-day-work, two-day-off" duty pattern. All suitable units for five-day operation are now on the new work pattern, except for a few government services that operate in tandem with services provided by other organisations (e.g. the Judiciary and the Hospital Authority). These few services will migrate to a five-day week as and when their 'partner' services are ready to do so.

MIGRATION OF STAFF TO A FIVE-DAY WEEK BEYOND JULY 2007

10. Looking ahead, we encourage departments to explore, in consultation with staff, the feasibility of drawing up new, and/or modifying existing roster arrangements to enable more staff to work according to a “five-day-work, two-day-off” duty pattern, provided that the service hours and the service quality to the public are not affected. For example, the Hong Kong Police Force has decided to implement a new deployment arrangement, on a pilot scheme basis, in November 2007 for the provision of certain services which would have no impact on the public. Depending on the results of the pilot scheme, some 2 500 frontline disciplined staff might be allowed to migrate to a five-day week. A few departments have also arranged further staff migration or are considering possible five-day week pilot schemes, subject to the same basic principles governing the five-day week initiative and the proviso of not affecting public service interface.

11. Taking into account these pilot schemes, there may still be some 47 500 civil servants who will have to continue with their current work patterns. These staff are mainly engaged in the provision of services that continue to operate on Saturdays/Sundays, including social welfare services, immigration counter services, cultural services, postal services, environmental hygiene services, law enforcement, passenger/cargo clearance, and penal operations, etc. The concerned departments will monitor the situation and allow these staff to rotate to five-day week posts within the same department where operational circumstances permit.

Civil Service Bureau
November 2007

Annex

Summary of Services that Ceased Operation on Saturdays in the Final Phase of Implementation of Five-day Week in the Government

Departments	Services/Functions
Department of Health	Dental services for civil service eligible persons, tuberculosis and chest service, social hygiene service
Hong Kong Police Force	Application service for closed area permits, Complaints Against Police Reporting Centre, Central Traffic Prosecutions Division, issue of permits by the Police Licensing Office (including security companies, massage establishments and pawnbrokers), issue of certificates of no criminal conviction, Force Armoury, headquarters shroff office
Land Registry	Land search, registration and search of owners incorporations, delivery of deeds, information counters and helpdesk services
Social Welfare Department	Social Security Field Units
Transport Department	Bus inspection at To Kwa Wan Vehicle Examination Centre