

Legislative Council Panel on Housing

Supplementary Information -

**Proposed creation of one supernumerary post of
Administrative Officer Staff Grade C in the Housing Department
for the implementation of the initiatives under
the Long Term Housing Strategy Review**

This paper provides the additional information required by Members at the Legislative Council (LegCo) Panel on Housing meeting held on 2 December 2013.

DETAILS

Comparison of staff establishment

2. Prior to July 2002, policy formulation for both public and private housing, as well as co-ordination of government actions in the execution of housing policies and programmes were undertaken by the then Housing Branch¹ (HB). HB conducted the last Long Term Housing Strategy (LTHS) review at the beginning of 1996 and published a consultation document in January 1997 for public consultation up to end May 1997.

3. To prepare for that consultation exercise, one supernumerary AOSGC (D2) post and one supernumerary Chief Planning Officer (CPO) (D1) post were created under the delegated power of the then Secretary for Housing from October 1996 for six months. Subsequently, upon the approval of the Finance Committee of LegCo in March 1997, the two supernumerary posts were converted to permanent posts and headed the newly established Housing Strategy Division of HB with effect from 1 April 1997 to cope with the work arising from the LTHS review. The White Paper on LTHS, entitled “Home for Hong Kong People into the 21st Century”, was subsequently issued in February 1998. It outlined a number of strategies to help achieve the targets that the Government announced in housing.

¹ The Housing Branch was renamed as Housing Bureau in July 1997.

4. With the creation of these two directorate posts, the total number of directorate posts in the then HB was eight as at 1 April 1997. This included the Secretary for Housing; one Deputy Secretary for Housing (D3); two Principal Assistant Secretaries (D2) who headed the Private Housing Division and the Public Housing Division respectively; one Government Engineer (D2) and one Chief Engineer (D1) who headed the Project Management Division; and the two newly created posts referred to in paragraph 3 above (i.e. one D2 and one D1 post) who headed the Housing Strategy Division.

Re-organisation of the then HB and HD

5. In order to enhance the efficient delivery of the public housing programmes, a Committee on the Review of the Institutional Framework for Public Housing was set up in June 2000. In its report published in June 2002, it recommended that the then HB be amalgamated with the HD to form a single housing organization. In parallel with this amalgamation, the Housing, Planning and Lands Bureau (HPLB) was set up in July 2002 with the Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (SHPL) tasked to oversee all policies related to housing, planning and lands.

6. Under this new set up, the newly amalgamated housing organisation was headed by the Permanent Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (Housing), who was also the Director of Housing. He was responsible to SHPL on all housing policy and administration matters, including public housing and private housing.

7. Arising from the amalgamation of the then HB and the HD, there was a net **deletion** of **four** directorate posts with effect from January 2003, including the Director of Housing (D7) post and one Administrative Officer Staff Grade B (D3) post. Thereafter, there was re-organisation of HD from 2003 to 2007 to streamline the organisational structure and the directorate establishment was further downsized by a net **deletion** of **24** directorate posts, including the AOSGC(D2) post and the CPO(D1) post created in April 1997 for the last LTHS review (referred to in paragraph 3 above). Hence, since the amalgamation of the then HB and the HD, there has been a **total net deletion of 28 directorate posts**.

Existing establishment under THB

8. Upon the re-organisation of the Government Secretariat with effect on 1 July 2007, the Transport and Housing Bureau (THB) was established and took over the housing portion (including HD) previously under the purview of the HPLB without any change in establishment and duties. From July 2007 to end December 2013, there has been a net increase of 13 directorate posts. Among them, two are general grades posts (one AOSGB (D3) post and one Principal Executive Officer (D1) post) which were created for the setting up of the Sales of First-hand Residential Properties Authority. The remaining posts are all professional grades posts created primarily to cope with the increase in workload for increasing housing production and better estate management and maintenance.

9. In short, the change in staff establishment (including both civil service and Housing Authority contract staff) following the amalgamation of the then HB and the HD since January 2003 is summarized in the table below –

	Establishment as at 1 January 2003	Establishment as at 1 July 2007[#]	Establishment as at 1 December 2013
Directorate	73 [*]	49	62
Non-directorate	12 266	8 716	9 145
Total	12 339	8 765	9 207

* After the net deletion of four directorate posts arising from the amalgamation of the then HB and the HD with effect from 1 January 2003.

There was a reduction of both directorate and non-directorate establishment of HD arising from downsizing of HD from 2003 to 2007 (due to cession of production of HOS flats, reduction in public housing production, the divestment of the HA's retail and car-parking facilities and changes in service requirements and modes of delivery over time).

Duties and responsibilities of the proposed supernumerary AOSGC post

10. As stated in Panel paper CB(1)411/13-14(07), there is a need to set up a dedicated Special Duties Unit, to be headed by an officer with appropriate experience and seniority, to co-ordinate efforts of all relevant bureaux and departments to evaluate the views received and to help formulate the Government's strategy on the LTHS taking into account public views.

11. During the public consultation period, we have attended over 50 meetings with interested parties, including six open fora organized by the Steering Committee on LTHS for the general public and stakeholders; meetings of the 18 District Councils; meeting of the LegCo Subcommittee on LTHS and its public hearing; meeting of the Hong Kong Housing Authority; and other meetings/discussion fora upon invitation from stakeholders and concern groups. In addition, some 800 written submissions have been received. They cover a wide range of housing issues involving both policy and operational matters; and covering issues relating to both public and private housing, many of which are highly controversial. Considerable effort will be required to work out practical ways forward on many of these issues.

12. The proposed supernumerary AOSGC post-holder is expected to play a key role in co-ordinating efforts both among different divisions in HD; as well as with other relevant policy bureaux/departments in kick starting appropriate policy reviews on these housing issues with a view to formulating revisions to existing policies or measures in a timely manner. Furthermore, he/she will be responsible for setting up the framework for future reviews on the LTHS, such as how the annual housing demand projections should be updated to reflect any changes in policies or circumstances for deriving an appropriate housing supply target, and to monitor the progress of all follow-up actions.

13. It should also be noted that the proposed supernumerary AOSGC post will be responsible for issues on the policy side. The post-holder and his/her team will not be directly involved in the production of public rental housing or Home Ownership Scheme flats.