

For discussion on
19 December 2016

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL ON PUBLIC SERVICE

The Civil Service Outstanding Service Award and other commendation schemes for civil servants

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme and other commendation schemes for civil servants.

Background

2. The Government is committed to upholding high standards of performance and conduct in the civil service. Maintaining a clean, effective and dedicated civil service is essential to ensuring the continued stability and prosperity of Hong Kong. To maintain an environment in which civil servants are motivated to deliver quality service to meet the rising expectations of the general public, we need a fair commendation system that would help motivate and sustain exemplary performance of civil servants.

3. There are various commendation schemes for civil servants, including the Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme which aims to provide recognition on a departmental/team basis, and several other schemes which recognise meritorious performance of individual civil servants. These schemes are briefly described in the paragraphs below.

(I) The Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme

4. Since 1999, Civil Service Bureau (“CSB”) has been operating the Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme on a biennial basis. It aims to recognise the efforts of departments and teams which provide exemplary service, to promote a customer-focused culture in the civil service and to share experience in pioneering public service improvement.

5. The 2017 Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme (the “2017 Award Scheme”) is now underway. We have announced the Scheme to all

Bureaux/Departments (“B/Ds”) in November to invite their participation. Awards under the Scheme are presented at three levels, namely –

- the Inter-departmental Partnership Award for quality services provided to the public through collaboration among departments;
- the Departmental Awards, comprising the Service Enhancement Award for departments’ achievements and continuous efforts in service enhancement, and the Best Public Image Award; and
- the Team Awards, comprising the General Public Service Award, the Specialized Service Award, the Regulatory/Enforcement Service Award, the Crisis/Incident Support Service Award, and the Internal Service Award.

Public Engagement

6. For 2017, the Award Scheme continues to emphasise participation of the private sector as well as public and community leaders in the adjudication process.

7. The Inter-departmental Partnership Award, the Departmental Service Enhancement Award and the Team Awards adopt a rigorous two-stage adjudication process. We will invite experienced practitioners from different service industries, such as retail, banking, transportation and hospitality, to serve on the boards of examiners to conduct the first stage assessment comprising screening of written submissions and interviews with participating departments and teams. The involvement of private sector practitioners will enhance the objectivity of the assessment process and facilitate benchmarking with the private sector. It will also help to promote exchange between the public and private sectors on quality customer service and related standards. The boards of examiners will shortlist entries for the final adjudication to be held in June 2017 and to select winners of Meritorious Awards and Special Citations for “Innovation”, “Integrity Management” and “Responsiveness to Customer Needs”.

8. We will invite members of the Legislative Council to serve as Chairpersons of the final Adjudication Panels. The Panels will also comprise District Council members, representatives from professional organisations, staff side members of the Central Consultative Councils and senior officials from CSB. The short-listed departments and teams will be required to give a presentation and to answer questions from the Panels. Based on the merits of the entries, the Panels will decide on the winners for the Gold, Silver and

Bronze prizes.

9. For the Best Public Image Award, a random sample of members of the public and all Members of the Legislative Council and District Councils will be invited to vote in an anonymous survey administered by an independent professional research company to select the department with the best public image. The top three departments will be awarded with the Gold, Silver and Bronze prizes respectively.

Publicity and Learning

10. In order to underline the importance of quality public service, to give recognition to outstanding achievements by the winning departments and teams, and to inform the public of such achievements, we will organize a large scale prize presentation ceremony in September 2017. In addition, the awards will be recorded in the personal files of the civil servants concerned to register their contributions towards winning the awards.

11. To let the public know more about the exemplary performance of the winning departments and teams, a TV programme will be produced by the Radio Television Hong Kong for broadcast on television, and supplements will be published in different newspapers. In addition, a video series capturing the lesser-known, behind-the-scene efforts and commitment of civil servants in serving the public will also be produced. These videos will be publicised through different channels, including waiting areas of government venues, web portals such as the thematic website on Service Excellence, Youth Portal, Hong Kong Education City website and the YouTube channel on social media, namely “Public Service Excellence@Gov”, in order to reach a wide spectrum of audiences. Moreover, we will collaborate with Education Bureau in organising a School Promotion Programme to introduce exemplary government services to the young generation.

12. To inspire other departments and civil servants to emulate good practices of award winners, we will also organise seminars for the winners to share with colleagues their experience and insights in providing quality public services. In addition, the factors contributing to the success of the winners will be developed into training and self-learning materials for further dissemination in the civil service.

(II) HKSAR Honours and Awards System

13. This is a community-wide honours recognition system. Civil servants, having regard to their contribution to the civil service, can also be nominated for

awards under the system. Over the years, civil servants have been recipients of Bauhinia Awards, Bravery Awards, Medals of Honour and Chief Executive's Commendations. In 2016, a total of 131 civil servants were awarded under this system. Amongst them, 45 received the Chief Executive's Commendation for Government/Public Service and 50 received the various Disciplined Services Awards. The full list of recipients is published every year. The Chief Executive presents the award to each recipient, in the presence of guests invited by the recipients, at a ceremony held at Government House each year.

(III) The Secretary for the Civil Service's Commendation Award Scheme

14. Through this civil service-specific scheme, each year the Secretary for the Civil Service ("SCS"), on behalf of the Government, gives recognition to selected civil servants on a service-wide basis for consistently exemplary performance. To qualify for an award under the scheme, a civil servant should have had outstanding performance for at least five consecutive years. Nominations are made by Permanent Secretaries or Heads of Departments/Grades. Recipients of awards are selected by SCS on the recommendation of an Award Committee comprising representatives of CSB and other bureaux/grades. Competition for the awards has been very keen. To enhance the Scheme, the target number of recipients per annum has been increased from about 80 to 100 commencing from 2016-17.

15. The awards are presented by SCS at a ceremony held annually, in the presence of guests invited by the recipients and representatives from their B/Ds. Each award recipient receives a certificate of recognition and a gold pin. For those award recipients who have 20 or more years of service and have not enjoyed government sponsored travel outside Hong Kong before, they will also receive a travel award. The award is an accountable and one-off travel allowance¹. If the award recipient is married, his/her spouse will also be granted the same travel allowance, provided that he/she travels with the award recipient. The awards are recorded in the personal files of the recipients to show appreciation of their exemplary performance. In 2016, there are a total of 100 recipients from 38 B/Ds.

16. To publicise the exemplary services of award recipients, we invite the media to cover the ceremony and to interview some of the recipients. In addition, we publicise the achievements of the award recipients through various channels, such as the Civil Service Newsletter and departmental newsletters. We also produce videos featuring the outstanding services of some of the award

¹ The rate of the travel allowance and the mechanism for revising the rate are the same as those of the Long and Meritorious Service Travel Award mentioned in paragraph 18 of this paper.

recipients and upload them on CSB's website for public viewing.

(IV) The Commendation Letter Scheme

17. This scheme is administered at the bureau/departmental level. Under the scheme, Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Departments may issue commendation letters to civil servants who have provided consistently outstanding service for at least three consecutive years; or have made significant contribution towards enhancing the efficiency or the image of their B/Ds; or have performed a meritorious or brave act warranting special recognition. Nominations may be made all year round and they are considered by a commendation committee set up by individual B/Ds under the chairmanship of a directorate officer. Same as the practice of the SCS's Commendation Award Scheme, the awards are recorded in the personal files of the recipients. In 2015, around 3 750 commendation letters were issued.

(V) Long and Meritorious Service Travel Award Scheme

18. The Long and Meritorious Service Travel Award Scheme aims at recognising long and meritorious service of serving civil servants. All local non-directorate officers with a continuous service of 20 years or more, and who have a track record of consistently very good performance and have not received any Government travel award before, are eligible for consideration for the grant of an award. The award is granted on a one-off basis and in the form of an accountable travel allowance. The rate of the travel allowance is revised on 1 April each year with reference to the rate of change in package tour charges in the Consumer Price Index (C) in the past 12-month period ending February. The rate of the allowance in 2016-17 is \$24,490. If the selected officer is married and will be travelling with his/her spouse, the same travel allowance will be provided to the spouse.

19. The number of awards for each year is determined based on a quota ratio. Since 2014-15, the quota ratio has been improved from one award for every 30 officers meeting the service requirement (1:30) to 1:27. In 2016-17, there are a total of about 2 500 awards.

(VI) Other Supporting Measures to Boost Morale of Civil Servants

20. Due to rising public expectation, civil servants are subject to a great deal of pressure when carrying out their daily duties. We fully acknowledge our obligation to render support to colleagues to help them deliver their work and cope with stress. To this end, we will continue to make full use of the award schemes to give recognition to good performance for boosting staff

morale, and publicise the exemplary performance of civil servants with a view to driving home the message to the community that civil servants are serving the community with commitment and professionalism and they deserve respect.

21. We will also continue to provide training to civil servants on customer service, building resilience and managing emotional wellness to help enhance their skills, knowledge and mindset for serving the public. CSB has commissioned professional bodies to provide hotline counselling service on stress management to help staff cope with stress from work and other personal problems. The service, available to staff from some 60 B/Ds, includes telephone and face-to-face counselling and referral services. Separately, about 10 departments provide their own counselling services to their staff.

22. Since a progressive and motivated workforce is pivotal to effective service delivery, we attach great importance to fostering partnership between management and staff at all levels. We will continue to promote candid exchanges between the management and staff sides at both the central and departmental levels with a view to establishing closer working relationship and fostering mutual trust and respect. SCS has also increased the frequency of his visits to individual departments to keep abreast of the latest achievements and emerging challenges faced by them as well as to exchange views directly with frontline staff on issues of concern, and appropriate follow-up actions are taken to address their concerns. Departmental management has been encouraged to engage staff, particularly frontline staff, in the formulation and execution of policies so as to promote partnership between the two sides and foster a sense of belonging among staff.

23. Members are invited to note the contents of this paper.

Civil Service Bureau
December 2016