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**Panel on Public Service**

**Meeting on 19 December 2016**

**Updated background brief on the Civil Service Outstanding Service Award  
and other commendation schemes for civil servants**

**Purpose**

This paper provides background information on the Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme ("CSOSAS") and other commendation schemes for civil servants, and summarizes the major views and concerns on the subject expressed by members of the Panel on Public Service ("the Panel") during previous discussions.

**Background**

2. According to the Administration, there are several commendation schemes applicable to civil servants, including:

- (a) CSOSAS;
- (b) Honours and Awards System of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region ("HKSAR");
- (c) Commendation Letter Scheme;
- (d) Secretary for the Civil Service ("SCS")'s Commendation Award Scheme; and
- (e) Long and Meritorious Service Travel Award Scheme.

### Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme

3. The Civil Service Bureau ("CSB") has been organizing CSOSAS on a biennial basis since 1999<sup>1</sup>. The objectives of CSOSAS are to recognize the efforts of bureaux/departments ("B/Ds") and teams which provide excellent service, to promote a customer-focused culture in the civil service, and to inspire B/Ds and teams for continuous improvement and innovation in the delivery of public services. Awards under CSOSAS are presented at three levels, namely:

- the inter-departmental Partnership Award for B/Ds that have succeeded in achieving notable service enhancement through collaboration;
- the departmental awards, comprising the Departmental Service Enhancement Award (further divided into Large Department and Small Department categories) and the Best Public Image Award; and
- the team awards, comprising the Specialized Service Award, the Internal Service Award, the General Public Service Award, the Regulatory/Enforcement Service Award and the Crisis/Incident Support Service Award.

4. There were Gold, Silver and Bronze prizes, and Meritorious Awards for each award category (except the Best Public Image Award which only had Gold, Silver and Bronze prizes).

5. In addition, each team award had a Special Citation for Innovation and Special Citation for Responsiveness to Customer Needs (the latter was newly introduced for the 2015 Scheme). A Special Citation for Integrity Management was also given out under the General Public Service Award and the Regulatory/Enforcement Service Award to recognize the best integrity management practices in the two team awards.

6. According to CSB, a two-stage adjudication process was adopted in the awarding of the inter-departmental Partnership Award, the Departmental Service Enhancement Award and the team awards. The boards of examiners in the first stage comprised experienced practitioners and experts from various service industries. Legislative Council ("LegCo") Members and District Councils ("DCs") members, representatives from professional organizations, staff side members of the Central Consultative Councils and directorate officers

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<sup>1</sup> CSB has invited the Hong Kong Management Association to co-organize CSOSAS since 2007 to enhance the interaction between the public and private sectors.

from CSB served on the final adjudication panels. For the Best Public Image Award, a sample of randomly selected members of the public and all members of LegCo and DCs were invited to vote in an anonymous survey<sup>2</sup> to select three departments with the best public image.

7. To give recognition to the winning B/Ds and teams and to inform the public of these achievements, prize presentation ceremony was held, a TV documentary programme was produced and broadcasted in local TV stations, and the event as well as the award winning services were publicized in the media. A video series capturing the lesser-known, behind-the-scene efforts and commitment of civil servants in serving the public was also produced for broadcasting in government venues, non-government organizations of community groups, government web portals and social media channels such as Youtube. A School Promotion Programme covering school talks or visits to government facilities for students to understand more about the services provided by the Government had also been launched by CSB.

8. To inspire other B/Ds and civil servants to emulate good practices of award-winners, seminars were held for the winners to share with colleagues their experience in providing quality services to the public. In addition, the factors contributing to the success of the winners were developed into training and self-learning materials for further dissemination in the civil service.

9. The Administration conducted reviews on CSOSAS regularly to enhance the scheme. As awards given out under CSOSAS were inter-departmental, departmental and team awards, the Administration was urged in 2009 that it should explore the possibility of recording the awards in the personal files of the awardees as an encouragement. The suggestion was implemented in 2011 after review. A survey by questionnaire to all participating B/Ds was conducted in CSOSAS 2015 review. According to CSB, the respondents generally considered that CSOSAS had helped raise staff morale, enhanced team spirit, gained public recognition for their achievements and encouraged improvements in the delivery of public services, and they expressed great support for the continuation of CSOSAS.

10. CSOSAS 2017 is now open for submission of entries by B/Ds until 30 December 2016.

### Honours and Awards System of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

11. The Honours and Awards System of HKSAR is a community-wide honours recognition system and is not limited to civil servants only. Each year, members of the public and public officers (including civil servants) are

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<sup>2</sup> The survey was administered by Consumer Search Hong Kong Limited.

nominated for various honours or awards having regard to their contribution to Hong Kong and their public and community service. Nominations for the selection of awardees of honours and awards for civil servants were usually made by B/Ds. The recipients of the different types of awards are decided by the Chief Executive on the recommendation of an Honours Committee comprising government officials and eminent community leaders. There was no ceiling on the number of awards to be given out under this system, but the nominees' performance must reach a high standard in order to be qualified for the awards. In 2015, 97 civil servants received awards under this system while 14 of them received the Chief Executive's Commendation for Government/Public Service and 53 of them received various Disciplined Services Awards.

### Commendation Letter Scheme

12. The Commendation Letter Scheme is civil service-specific recognition scheme and is administered at the bureau/departmental level. Under the Commendation Letter 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. An average of around 2 400 commendation letters were issued by B/Ds annually in the past five years from 2011-2012 to 2015-2016.

### Secretary for the Civil Service's Commendation Award Scheme

13. In 2004, the SCS's Commendation Award Scheme was introduced as a separate tier of award between the Honours and Awards System of HKSAR and the bureau/departmental Commendation Letter Scheme. Through this scheme, SCS, on behalf of the Administration, gives recognition to selected civil servants for consistently outstanding performance. An award recipient should be an exceptionally meritorious officer who has a track record of outstanding performance for at least five consecutive years. Each recipient is awarded a certificate and a gold pin, and granted a travel award if he/she satisfies the length of service required (i.e. a continuous service of 20 or more years) and has not received any Government travel award before. Nominations are made by Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Departments/Grades. The recipients of awards are selected by SCS on the recommendation of an Award Committee, comprising representatives of CSB and other bureaux/grades. In 2015, a total of 84 civil servants from 33 B/Ds received the awards under the SCS's Commendation Award Scheme. The Administration will increase the

target number of awards from 80 to 100 annually from 2016-2017 to enhance the scheme.

### Long and Meritorious Service Travel Award Scheme

14. The objective of the Long and Meritorious Service Travel Award Scheme is to recognize long and meritorious service of civil servants. Local non-directorate officers with a continuous service of 20 years or more, who have track records of consistently excellent performance and have not received any Government travel award before, are eligible for consideration for the grant of an award. Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Department/Grade will appoint selection committees to recommend officers for the awards. The awards are 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 number of awards is determined on the basis of one award for every 27 officers meeting the length of service requirement. The estimated number of awards is 2 500 in 2016-2017.

15. Key features of the Honours and Awards System of HKSAR, the SCS's Commendation Award Scheme, the Commendation Letter Scheme and the Long and Meritorious Service Travel Award Scheme are set out in **Appendix I**.

### **Past discussions by the Panel**

16. The Panel had discussed CSOSAS and other commendation schemes for civil servants since 2008. The major views and concerns expressed by Panel members and the Administration's responses are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

### Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme

17. Members noted at the Panel meeting on 18 November 2013 the decrease in the number of entries and participating B/Ds for CSOSAS from 2009 to 2013 and were concerned that it was attributable to a decline in the morale of civil servants and dwindling attractiveness of CSOSAS. The Administration was urged to consider ways to encourage more B/Ds to participate in CSOSAS.

18. The Administration explained that the number of participating B/Ds for a particular year depended on, among others, the number of departmental initiatives being rolled out in the respective year. For instance, there were more entries for the Inter-departmental Partnership Award in 2011

that involved collaboration among a number of departments, and hence a higher number of participating B/Ds in the Award for the respective year. The Administration further advised that different categories of awards had been introduced over the years to recognize commendable achievements of B/Ds in different aspects taking account of the comments made by civil servants in the post-event reviews and members of the Panel. For example, the Regulatory/Enforcement Service Award was introduced in 2009 to recognize exemplary performance of B/Ds involved in law enforcement work. The Administration would continue to make improvements to CSOSAS as appropriate, encourage more B/Ds to participate in the scheme and publicize the outstanding performance of awardees so as to inspire other B/Ds and civil servants to emulate good practices of award winners.

19. Some members were concerned that participation in CSOSAS would become a matter of formality for participating B/Ds. They suggested that new elements should be introduced to the scheme to stimulate interest and encourage participation.

20. The Administration advised that awards such as the Crisis/Incident Support Service Award was introduced in 2011 to recognize the efforts and achievements of teams in support services for crisis, special incidents or emergency situations, and a Special Citation for Integrity Management was introduced to the General Public Service Award and the Regulatory/Enforcement Service Award in 2013 to recognize the best integrity management practices in the two team awards. The Administration further advised that due consideration would continue to be given to introducing new elements to the scheme having regard to the latest developments in the community.

21. Noting that most of the services and projects were initiated by the awardees, some members opined that consideration should be given to giving out awards to recognize service initiatives that responded to public demands.

22. The Administration advised that enhancement in public service provision was one of the major factors the adjudication panels would consider in determining awardees under the scheme. However, adjudication purely from the angle of serving public demands would render some B/Ds, particularly those not directly involved in the delivery of public service, less advantageous in competing for the awards. Nevertheless, the Administration would consider requesting participating B/Ds to provide specific information on how they had responded to public demand for quality services in the future.

23. A member suggested that consideration could be given to inviting a random sample of members of the public and all LegCo Members and DCs members to vote to select winning departments and teams for all other awards

under CSOSAS and not just the Best Public Image Award so as to promote the customer-focused culture in the civil service. The Administration agreed to give consideration to the member's suggestion.

24. On some members' suggestion that the Administration should step up publicity to let the public know more about the exemplary performance of the winning departments and teams, the Administration advised that it would continue to commission Radio Television Hong Kong to produce a one-hour TV programme for broadcast on television during prime time and continue to arrange talks and visits to schools and different community groups to introduce exemplary government services as their responses were positive.

#### Commendation Letter Scheme

25. Members noted that only some 1% of civil servants received commendation letters every year. To sustain civil servants' morale in the face of great pressure arising from heavy workload and high public expectations in recent years, a member asked whether consideration could be given to introducing more levels of commendation to enable more civil servants to be commended.

26. The Administration responded that it might not be desirable to issue commendation letters of lower grades lest civil servants who received such commendation letters might be unhappy. The Administration clarified that there was in fact no ceiling on the number of commendation letters that could be issued. As long as a civil servant's performance warranted special recognition, Heads of Departments/Grades could issue him a commendation letter. The Administration undertook to remind Heads of Departments/Grades to issue commendation letters as appropriate without regard to the number, and to encourage them to nominate more staff from the junior ranks for commendation under the SCS's Commendation Scheme.

#### Secretary for the Civil Service's Commendation Award Scheme

27. In response to members' enquiries at the Panel meeting on 16 November 2015 about the increase in the target number of awards under the SCS's Commendation Award Scheme commencing from 2016-2017, the Administration explained that as expenditure was involved in granting travel awards to eligible recipients of SCS's Commendation Award, a target on the number of awards to be given out must be set for the expenditure estimates.

Awards and commendation letters for non-civil service contract ("NCSC") staff, subvented sector staff and Government's service agency workers

28. Some members were of the view that to ensure fairness, contributions of NCSC staff, subvented sector staff and Government's service agency workers to the work of the Government should also be recognized under the commendation schemes for civil servants.

29. The Administration advised that NCSC staff with outstanding performance might qualify for awards under CSOSAS and the Honours and Awards System of HKSAR. They might also receive commendation letters under the Commendation Letter Scheme. The SCS's Commendation Award Scheme was only applicable to civil servants and the award recipients had on average more than 20 years of service. As NCSC staff were employed on a time-limited basis, the SCS's Commendation Award Scheme did not cover them. Heads of B/Ds could decide on their own the most appropriate means to give recognition to deserving NCSC staff for their exemplary performance. B/Ds might also explore the possibility of organizing joint programmes with subvented organizations to give recognition to subvented sector staff. As regards Government's service agency workers, the Government could neither commend nor discipline its agency workers because they were not staff of the Government.

Other measures to boost morale/alleviate work pressure of civil servants

30. In view of the rising public expectation on the work quality of the civil service as well as the heavy workload and great pressure arising from that, members were concerned whether the Administration had implemented any measures to strengthen the support for and boost the morale of civil servants.

31. The Administration pointed out that it would provide support and training to civil servants to help them deliver their work. Additional manpower would be provided to B/Ds which experienced manpower shortage as appropriate. Despite the expenditure control measures, i.e. the 1% savings on their respective annual operating expenditure in 2016-2017 and 2017-2018, which aimed to encourage B/Ds to enhance productivity and effectiveness through greater efforts in re-engineering and re-prioritization in the light of their operational needs, B/Ds could still request for additional manpower via the annual Resources Allocation Exercise. For emotional counselling and support for civil servants, the Administration had engaged professionals to provide counselling and clinical psychology services to staff in need.



### **Latest development**

32. The Administration will update the Panel on CSOSAS and other commendation schemes for civil servants at the meeting on 19 December 2016.

### **Relevant papers**

33. A list of relevant papers is set out in **Appendix II**.

Council Business Division 4  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
15 December 2016

**Key features of the Honours and Awards System of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region ("HKSAR"),  
the Secretary for the Civil Service ("SCS")'s Commendation Award Scheme,  
the Commendation Letter Scheme and the Long and Meritorious Service Travel Award Scheme**

	<b>Honours and Awards System of HKSAR</b>	<b>SCS's Commendation Award Scheme</b>	<b>Commendation Letter Scheme</b>	<b>Long and Meritorious Service Travel Award Scheme</b>
<b>Target</b>	Members of the public and public officers (including civil servants)	Civil servants	Civil servants	Civil servants
<b>Purpose</b>	To recognize their contribution to Hong Kong and their public and community service	To recognize civil servants who have outstanding performance for at least <u>five</u> consecutive years	To recognize civil servants who - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ have provided consistently outstanding service for at least <u>three</u> consecutive years; or</li> <li>➤ have made significant contribution towards enhancing the efficiency or the image of their bureaux/departments; or</li> <li>➤ have performed a meritorious or brave act warranting special recognition.</li> </ul>	To recognize local non-directorate officers who have excellent performance with a continuous service of 20 years or more, and have not received any Government travel award before

	<b>Honours and Awards System of HKSAR</b>	<b>SCS's Commendation Award Scheme</b>	<b>Commendation Letter Scheme</b>	<b>Long and Meritorious Service Travel Award Scheme</b>
<b>Decided by</b>	Chief Executive	Secretary for the Civil Service	A commendation committee set up by individual bureaux/departments under the chairmanship of a directorate officer	Permanent Secretaries, Heads of Department/Grade or their Deputies
<b>Awards</b>	Bauhinia Awards, Bravery Awards, Disciplined Services and Independent Commission Against Corruption Awards, Medal of Honour, Chief Executive's Commendation	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.	Each recipient receives a commendation letter issued by the respective bureau/department.	Award is granted on a one-off basis and in the form of an accountable travel allowance subject to a standard rate.

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

**List of relevant papers**

Date	Meeting/Event	References
21 January 2008	Panel on Public Service	<u>Administration's paper</u>  <u>Minutes</u>
21 December 2009	Panel on Public Service	<u>Administration's paper</u>  <u>Minutes</u>
16 May 2011	Panel on Public Service	<u>Administration's paper</u>  <u>Minutes</u>  <u>Administration's follow-up response to issues raised at the Panel meeting</u>
19 March 2012	Panel on Public Service	<u>Administration's paper</u>  <u>Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat</u>  <u>Minutes</u>
18 November 2013	Panel on Public Service	<u>Administration's paper</u>  <u>Updated Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat</u>  <u>Minutes</u>

Date	Meeting/Event	References
17 November 2014	Panel on Public Service	<u>Administration's paper</u> <u>Updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat</u> <u>Minutes</u>
16 November 2015	Panel on Public Service	<u>Administration's paper</u> <u>Updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat</u> <u>Minutes</u>

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