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Panel on Public Service

Meeting on 25 January 2017

**Background brief on
the proposal of re-grading the post of Director of Protocol
to a post of Senior Principal Executive Officer
in the Protocol Division of the Administration Wing
of the Chief Secretary for Administration's Office**

Purpose

This paper provides background information on the Administration's staffing proposal on re-grading the post of Director of Protocol ("D of P") to a post of Senior Principal Executive Officer ("SPEO") in the Protocol Division ("PD") of the Chief Secretary for Administration's Office. It also summarizes the views and concerns expressed by members on the proposal at the meeting of the Panel on Public Service ("the Panel") during the 2015-2016 legislative session.

Background

2. Prior to Hong Kong's return to China in 1997, the D of P post was filled by retired officers from the British Forces, and PD was staffed by a small number of civil servants at the Protocol Officer ("PO") grade. In late 1997, the Administration Wing of the Chief Secretary for Administration's Office conducted a review of the organization of PD, and proposed to strengthen the directorate structure for PD.

3. In February 1998, the Finance Committee ("FC") of the Legislative Council ("LegCo") approved, amongst others, the upgrading of the D of P post from D1 to D2 level to make the ranking of the post commensurate with the level of responsibility required of the post holder. The post was also

designated as an open directorate post¹ within the civil service. On 1 March 1998, a supernumerary SPEO post held against the D of P post was created under delegated authority to accommodate the SPEO deployed to fill the D of P post. The arrangement of filling the D of P post by an SPEO had been maintained with the re-creation of the supernumerary SPEO post annually since then.

4. In May 2014, the last PO post was re-graded to a Senior Executive Officer post following the retirement of the last member of the PO grade. All core duties of PD are now performed by the Executive Officer ("EO") grade staff.

5. The Administration considers that the suitability of deploying an SPEO to fill the D of P post has been well demonstrated and fully tested over time. PD's roles and responsibilities are also delivered smoothly by EO grade officers to the satisfaction of the Director of Administration and other bureaux/departments ("B/Ds") that have regular contact with PD over the years. The Chief Secretary for Administration's Office therefore considers it appropriate to re-grade the D of P post in PD to an SPEO post, by the creation of a permanent SPEO post in PD to be offset by the deletion of the one-rank D of P grade. The re-grading is cost neutral and would improve manpower and succession planning as there was a sizable pool of staff at EO grade to source the most suitable to fill the post.

Deliberations of the Panel

6. The Panel was briefed on the Administration's proposal at its meeting on 20 July 2015. Members generally supported the re-grading proposal. The deliberations are summarized in the following paragraphs.

7. In response to members' concern on the staff establishment and workload of PD, the Administration remarked that PD had a complement of 17 staff (10 EO grade staff and seven secretarial and clerical grades staff) and they were divided into three sections, i.e. the Visits Section, the Honours Section and the Consular & Ceremonial Affairs Section. The above staff establishment had remained unchanged for many years. As the workload of each section varied at different times of the year, D of P would flexibly deploy staff within PD to help out a section with an upsurge of workload. PD had also enlisted the assistance of EO grade staff from other B/Ds in organizing

¹ Such a post is open to suitable officers within the civil service.

major functions. According to the Administration, such outside engagement could widen the pool of suitable candidates for PD posts and enable EOs from other B/Ds to obtain experience of the work of PD.

8. Some members enquired whether the need for PD to provide advice on the use of National and Regional flags and emblems had lessened over the years as PD had established certain practices. The Administration advised that PD had from time to time reviewed practices, examined cases that contravened the proper use of National and Regional flags and emblems, and given advice to B/Ds and members of the public over the years. On average, over 100 relevant enquiries/applications were received and handled by PD each year.

Submission of the re-grading proposal to the Establishment Subcommittee of the Finance Committee

9. After consultation with the Panel, the Administration submitted the re-grading proposal to the Establishment Subcommittee ("ESC") of FC in June 2016. The proposal was listed in the agenda of the last ESC meeting of the Fifth LegCo on 4 July 2016. Due to time constraint, ESC was unable to deal with the proposal at the above-mentioned meeting.

Latest development

10. The Administration will brief the Panel on the staffing proposal on re-grading the post of D of P to a post of SPEO in PD again at the meeting on 25 January 2017.

Relevant papers

11. A list of relevant papers is set out in **Appendix I**.

Appendix I

Proposal of re-grading the post of Director of Protocol to a post of Senior Principal Executive Officer in the Protocol Division of the Administration Wing of the Chief Secretary for Administration's Office

List of relevant papers

Council/Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Public Service	20 July 2015	Administration's paper [LC Paper No. CB(4)1312/14-15(01)] Minutes [LC Paper No. CB(4)1452/14-15]
Establishment Subcommittee	4 July 2016	Administration's paper [LC Paper No. EC(2016-17)18]

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