

**立法會**  
**Legislative Council**

LC Paper No. CB(4)1193/18-19  
(These minutes have been seen  
by the Administration)

Ref : CB4/PL/PS

**Panel on Public Service**

**Minutes of meeting held on  
Monday, 20 May 2019, at 10:45 am  
in Conference Room 3 of the Legislative Council Complex**

**Members present** : Hon Gary FAN Kwok-wai (Chairman)  
Hon Martin LIAO Cheung-kong, SBS, JP (Deputy Chairman)  
Hon WONG Ting-kwong, GBS, JP  
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBS, JP  
Hon Charles Peter MOK, JP  
Hon KWOK Wai-keung, JP  
Hon IP Kin-yuen  
Dr Hon Elizabeth QUAT, BBS, JP  
Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH  
Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, SBS, JP  
Hon CHU Hoi-dick  
Hon HO Kai-ming  
Hon LAM Cheuk-ting  
Hon SHIU Ka-fai  
Dr Hon Pierre CHAN  
Hon Jeremy TAM Man-ho  
Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen, BBS  
Hon CHAN Hoi-yan

**Public Officers attending** : **Agenda item III**

Mr Joshua LAW, GBS, JP  
Secretary for the Civil Service

Mr Thomas CHOW, JP  
Permanent Secretary for the Civil Service

Mr Brian LO, JP  
Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service 1

**Agenda item IV**

Mr Joshua LAW, GBS, JP  
Secretary for the Civil Service

Mr Thomas CHOW, JP  
Permanent Secretary for the Civil Service

Mr Eric CHAN, JP  
Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service 3

**Clerk in attendance :** Mr Anthony CHU  
Chief Council Secretary (4)1

**Staff in attendance :** Miss Shirley HAU  
Senior Council Secretary (4)1

Ms Maggie CHUNG  
Council Secretary (4)1

Mr Griffin FUNG  
Legislative Assistant (4)7

Mr Terry HON  
Clerical Assistant (4)1

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**I. Information papers issued since the last regular meeting on 15 April 2019**

Members noted that no information paper had been issued since the last regular meeting on 15 April 2019.

**II. Date of next meeting and items for discussion**

(LC Paper No. CB(4)858/18-19(01) -- List of outstanding items for discussion

LC Paper No. CB(4)858/18-19(02) -- List of follow-up actions)

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2. The Chairman informed the meeting that despite suggestions by some members to arrange where possible three discussion items at each meeting of the Panel on Public Service ("the Panel"), the Administration had only proposed two items for the next regular Panel meeting. Members agreed that the next regular Panel meeting would be held on 21 June 2019 at 8:45 am to discuss the following items proposed by the Administration:

- (a) 2019-2020 civil service pay adjustment; and
- (b) Employment of persons with disabilities in the civil service.

3. The Chairman further said that in the last regular Panel meeting, members had agreed to hold a special meeting to receive views from relevant staff unions/associations on the grade structure review of disciplined services. To facilitate members to have a better understanding of the views of the relevant staff unions/associations before the meeting, the Secretariat had invited written submissions from them and received a total of 18 submissions which had been circulated to members. The Secretariat was exploring with the Administration the feasibility of holding the special meeting in early July 2019.

*(Post-meeting note: After discussion with the Administration, the Panel had agreed to receive views from the relevant staff unions/associations at the regular Panel meeting of 15 July 2019, notice of meeting of which was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)1073/18-19 on 27 June 2019. The meeting of 15 July 2019 was subsequently cancelled as the Legislative Council Complex could not be opened for meetings due to safety reasons. Notice on the cancellation of meeting was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)1095/18-19 on 8 July 2019.)*

### **III. An overview of the civil service establishment, strength, retirement, resignation, age profile and gender profile**

(LC Paper No. CB(4)858/18-19(03) -- Administration's paper on an overview of the civil service: establishment, strength, retirement, resignation, age profile and gender profile

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LC Paper No. CB(4)858/18-19(04) -- Paper on the overall establishment, strength, retirement, resignation, age profile and gender profile of the civil service prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (updated background brief)

4. At the invitation of the Chairman, Secretary for the Civil Service ("SCS") briefed members on the overall civil service establishment, strength, retirement, resignation, age profile and gender profile, as set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(4)858/18-19(03)).

## Resignation

5. Mr SHIU Ka-fai and Ms CHAN Hoi-yan expressed concern about the increase in the number of resignees by more than fourfold from 2003-2004 to 2017-2018. They sought explanation on this increase and the Administration's plan to address the issue. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan opined that long working hours, huge work pressure and uncompetitive fringe benefits were some of the major reasons behind the increasing resignation rate, and urged the Administration to seriously review the underlying reasons. In this connection, Dr CHIANG also suggested that the Administration should enhance the productivity of the civil service by promoting digital workplace.

6. Mr KWOK Wai-keung and Mr HO Kai-ming expressed grave concern that the civil service posts might have lost their competitive edge against the private sector, as evidenced by the findings of the 2013 Pay Level Survey that the pay for civil servants in four out of five job levels was found to be lower than their private sector pay indicators, coupled with the fact that civil servants appointed on or after 1 June 2000 were no longer entitled to pension benefits and medical and dental benefits after retirement. Mr KWOK also expressed grave dissatisfaction with the Administration's failure in conducting any in-depth reviews of the reasons behind the increasing resignation rate and taking proactive measures to improve the situation over the years. He requested the Administration to look into the problem for suitable improvement measures and provide the relevant information in future papers to be submitted to the Panel.

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7. SCS replied that although the Administration was unable to provide a comprehensive account of the underlying reasons for resignation for all resignees as many of them were unwilling to disclose their reasons for leaving the civil service, the Administration took the matter seriously. As an employer, the Government had strived to provide a good working environment and provide relevant training and measures to help staff handle work stress.

8. SCS further pointed out that despite an increase in the number of resignees, the resignation rate had remained at a low level of under 1% of the strength of the civil service over the years. The Administration did not anticipate recruitment problems in the civil service. In fact, recruitment exercises in these few years had shown that the number of applicants usually far exceeded the number of vacancies available, where on average around 50 applications were received for one vacancy. For grades in individual bureaux/departments ("B/Ds") with recruitment difficulties, the Administration had issued relevant guidelines to facilitate them to expedite the recruitment process and attract talents. The Administration had been monitoring the situation to ensure that there were sufficient talents joining the civil service. Taking note of members' views, SCS agreed that it was important for civil service jobs to be attractive for retaining civil servants to provide quality service to members of the public.

9. In response to the concerns of Ms CHAN Hoi-yan and Dr CHIANG Lai-wan that over 60% of the resignees left the service during their probationary period, SCS said that unlike the older generation, youngsters nowadays might have a greater tendency towards job hopping in search for better offers. These young probationers might still be exploring their career path and eventually found a long-term career in the Government unsuitable for them. The Administration considered it understandable that the resignation rate among probationers was comparatively higher than the rest of the civil service.

10. At members' requests, SCS undertook to provide a breakdown on the number of resignees in 2017-2018 by age, B/Ds, grades and ranks.

*(Post-meeting note: The Administration's response was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)1153/18-19(01) on 2 August 2019.)*

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Retirement and succession planning

11. Noting that about four to five experienced Permanent Secretaries were going to retire in one or two years while a number of Bureau Secretaries and Under Secretaries were new to the Government, Mrs Regina IP was worried that their retirement might pose adverse impacts on the operations of the bureaux concerned. She therefore enquired whether the Administration would consider extending the services of these Permanent Secretaries. Given the severe wastage of the top-level civil servants in recent years, Mrs IP further asked about the Administration's plan in addressing this issue and whether the Administration would consider extending the retirement age of certain grades of civil servants appointed before 1 June 2000.

12. Expressing concern on the retirement wave in the Government in recent years, Dr CHIANG Lai-wan enquired whether the Administration would retain those experienced retiring staff. Sharing a similar concern, Mr POON Siu-ping asked whether the Administration would introduce any special mitigation measures (such as improving the medical benefits and relaxing the retirement age) if natural wastage of civil servants had reached a certain threshold level.

13. SCS replied that a well-established mechanism was currently in place to facilitate the Administration in making early planning for smooth succession. For natural wastage arising from retirement which could be anticipated well in advance, the Administration would bring up the cases for regular review to identify potential successors for early grooming and training. Generally speaking, officers would retire upon reaching their normal retirement age unless no suitable candidates could be identified.

14. Regarding Members' concern on the retirement wave, SCS advised that based on the existing normal retirement age of civil servants, it was projected that the number of retirees would remain at the annual average of 3.7% of the civil service strength for the coming five-year period ending 2022-2023, and then would gradually decline in the subsequent years to about 2.4% in the five-year period ending 2037-2038. The Administration would keep in view the trend in formulating its manpower strategies including recruitment and succession planning. The Administration had also introduced flexible measures for extension of service, including the employment of retired/retiring civil servants on contract terms under the Post-retirement Service Contract Scheme and adjustments to the further employment mechanism, to address the different operational and succession needs of individual grades or B/Ds in the interim if necessary.

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Female participation and family-friendly measures

15. Given that females outnumbered males in Hong Kong but the overall proportion of female civil servants was only 37.7% in 2017-2018, Mr HO Kai-ming queried whether the Administration had done enough to apply gender mainstreaming in recruitment of civil servants, and how the Administration would come up with better measures to foster a higher female participation rate in the civil service.

16. SCS replied that appointment to the civil service was based on the principle of open and fair competition. All applicants would be assessed on the basis of their ability, performance, character, potential as well as any qualifications and experience prescribed for the recruiting rank. The gender of a candidate was not a relevant consideration in the selection process. Currently, the female participation rate for clerical grades in the civil service was over 75%, and were around 55.6% and 71% for the Administrative Officer Grade and the Executive Officer Grade respectively.

17. At the request of Mr HO Kai-ming, SCS undertook to provide information on the five grades in the civil service with the lowest female participation rate in 2017-2018, excluding those serving in the disciplined services and remunerated by the Police Pay Scale and General Disciplined Services Pay Scale.

*(Post-meeting note: The Administration's response was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)1153/18-19(01) on 2 August 2019.)*

18. Noting from the exit survey in 2017-2018 that 24% of the respondents resigned from the civil service due to marriage or family reasons, Ms CHAN Hoi-yan asked if the Administration would play a leading role in introducing more family-friendly measures in retaining staff. Given a relatively high female participation rate in the civil service, she suggested that the Administration should consider initiatives such as workplace childcare services and part-time work with a view to helping female employees to strike a balance between their work and family commitments.

19. Echoing similar views, Mr HO Kai-ming enquired whether the Administration had made reference to the practice of some private sector companies of allowing female employees in need to work from home.

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20. SCS replied that the Government had endeavoured to provide a family-friendly working environment to its employees. For example, the Government had taken the lead to extend maternity leave for its female employees from 10 weeks to 14 weeks in October 2018. Although there was currently no home-office policy for civil servants, the Administration had an open mind to the idea and was willing to make reference to family-friendly practices adopted by the private sector and other organizations with a view to attracting and retaining talent. Meanwhile, he believed that Heads of Departments would allow individual staff to work from home under special circumstances.

Disparity between the establishment and strength of the civil service

21. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan, Mr HO Kai-ming and Mr KWOK Wai-keung expressed concern about the disparity of 6 570 between the civil service establishment of 178 028 and strength of 171 458 as at 31 March 2018. Dr CHIANG was worried that if the vacancies concentrated in a few B/Ds, the quality of public service provided by these B/Ds might be adversely affected. Mr HO opined that any unfilled vacancies would also affect the welfare of staff in the B/Ds concerned, for example, the implementation of five-day week for artisans in certain venues under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department ("LCSD").

22. SCS explained that vacancies existed in the civil service mainly because of the lead time required for conducting recruitment exercises. The vacancy rate of the civil service had remained stable between 3.5% and 4.3% in the past decade, and was 3.7% as at 31 March 2018. He understood that some departments did encounter difficulties in recruitment, and the Civil Service Bureau ("CSB") would review the situation with the departments concerned in this regard to work out improvement measures. Meanwhile, management of B/Ds concerned could meet their short-term manpower needs by engaging contract staff/agency workers, or flexibly retaining serving civil servants beyond retirement age under the flexible measures stated in paragraph 14 above. At the request of Dr CHIANG Lai-wan and Mr HO Kai-ming, SCS undertook to provide a breakdown on the 6 570 vacant civil service posts as at 31 March 2018 by B/Ds and grades.

*(Post-meeting note: The Administration's response was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)1153/18-19(01) on 2 August 2019.)*



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Ratio of non-directorate to directorate staff

23. In response to Mr Tony TSE's enquiry about whether the ratio of non-directorate staff to directorate staff had widened, SCS advised that the number of directorate staff had all along remained below 1% of the total civil service strength. Proposals of creating new directorate posts were subject to critical vetting, including scrutiny by the Establishment Sub-committee and the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council.

Secondment and in-service transfer

24. In replying to Mr Tony TSE's enquiry about the secondment arrangements for professional grade staff, SCS advised that there were individual secondment cases to publicly funded organizations. For instance, some civil servants were seconded to the then newly established Insurance Authority in 2015 before it employed its own staff. For training purpose, selected civil servants were also seconded to different local or overseas organizations whereby they could gain more exposure and relevant work experience.

25. Mr Tony TSE further asked about the transfer arrangements of professional grade officers through in-service recruitment exercises. SCS explained that according to the existing mechanism, civil servant confirmed to the permanent establishment normally would be offered appointment on trial terms for a fixed period of service (normally for one year) in another established office on observation. The appointment might be terminated at any time during the trial period by either side. The officer's original office thus would not be substantively filled within the trial period in order to accommodate the officer in case of his/her reversion to the original grade. Mr TSE suggested that the Administration might consider shortening the trial period from one year to six months, with a view to relieving the adverse impact of the vacant post on the operation of the B/D concerned.

26. Concluding the discussion, the Chairman called on the Administration to address the concerns raised by members and provide the information as requested with a view to identifying the mega trends in the areas of concern and facilitating a more conducive discussion on the relevant topics with members in future meetings.

*(At 11:57 am, the Chairman ordered that the meeting be suspended. The meeting resumed at 12:00 noon.)*

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**IV. An overview of training and development for civil servants**

(LC Paper No. CB(4)858/18-19(05) -- Administration's paper on an overview of training and development for civil servants

LC Paper No. CB(4)858/18-19(06) -- Paper on training and development for civil servants prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (updated background brief)

27. At the invitation of the Chairman, SCS briefed members on the overview of the provision of training and development for civil servants by CSB, details of which were set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(4)858/18-19(05)).

Leadership Development Programmes

28. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan noted that the Administration had been providing all-round training for middle and senior-level civil servants to nurture their diverse abilities; yet she was worried that the training contents were inadequate, and could not equip public officers with an innovative mindset or sufficient knowledge to tackle challenges. She enquired whether any measures would be taken to help enhance civil servants' efficacy and efficiency in the discharge of their duties.

29. SCS advised that the Government was committed to providing civil servants with learning opportunities that would help them develop a forward-looking perspective and an innovative mindset in pursuit of service excellence. Training was organized for different levels of civil servants in accordance with their operational needs and job requirements. With a view to getting prepared for various challenges, civil servants were also encouraged to exchange experience among themselves for knowledge transfer.

30. Mr Tony TSE declared that he was a member of the Standing Commission on Civil Service Salaries and Conditions of Service and an honorary adviser to the Hong Kong Senior Government Officers Association. Considering that leadership development training played a significant role in enhancing civil servants' management capabilities, he

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asked whether the Administration could increase the training quota for civil servants in professional grades having regard to the fact that public administration might be outside their specialties.

31. SCS advised that the Government had always attached great importance to leadership training in the civil service. CSB would help B/Ds draw up leadership development strategies where necessary, and he would meet with individual Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Departments regularly to keep in view the manpower and succession situation and training needs of B/Ds.

### Training on innovation and technology application

32. Mr HO Kai-ming criticized the Administration for not optimizing the use of innovation and technology ("IT") to enhance the quality and efficiency of public services, and that the Administration was lagging behind the international trend in opening up government data and developing big data applications. Noting that the Civil Service Training and Development Institute ("CSTDI") would organize IT training for about 3 400 civil servants in 2019, Mr HO enquired whether the Administration would further increase the training places and accord priority to frontline civil servants with operational needs. Mr Charles Peter MOK shared Mr HO's views and pointed out that according to his understanding, the Singapore government targeted to provide in-depth training on data science for 20 000 civil servants by 2023 in collaboration with tertiary institutions. Mr POON Siu-ping sought information on the criteria for selecting participants to attend IT training courses.

33. SCS stressed that adding up all the places of the IT training courses organized by CSTDI and individual B/Ds, about 43 000 civil servants were expected to have received training in 2019 on subjects such as design thinking, technology trends, big data analysis, information technology project management and data security. Regarding the selection criteria of course participants, Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service 3 ("DS(CS)3") replied that CSTDI would send course information to B/Ds for dissemination to their staff and invite nominations from B/Ds. If the courses were over-subscribed, CSTDI would try to accommodate the applicants/nominees by increasing the class size or arranging re-runs of the courses.

34. Mr Charles Peter MOK noted that some middle and senior-level managers in the civil service seemed less receptive to new IT applications in their work. He emphasized the importance of enhancing IT knowledge of various levels of civil servants and urged the

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Administration to, with a view to strengthening the effectiveness of the IT training programmes for civil servants, forge partnership with different universities and training institutions in this regard. SCS advised that the Administration had been offering IT training for all levels of civil servants, and it would explore the possibility of cooperating with relevant professional organizations and tertiary institutions.

35. In response to questions raised by Mr POON Siu-ping about the training contents of the IT courses organized by B/Ds and CSTDI and the ranks/grades of eligible applicants, DS(CS)3 pointed out that B/Ds focused on providing vocational training which met job-specific needs for their staff. By way of illustration, works departments provided training for their staff to make use of IT to expedite work projects. As regards CSTDI, it was responsible for organizing training programmes that met civil servants' common training needs. For instance, training on applications of big data and new technology, visits to IT start-ups and exchanges with the trade would be organized for directorate officers and senior managers to enhance their ability to harness the potentials of new technology and to devise strategies for service innovation. Programmes to enhance the ability to implement service innovation as well as practical knowledge and techniques required for managing digital services would be provided for middle managers.

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36. At the request of Mr Charles Peter MOK, SCS undertook to provide more information about the training programmes on IT application to be provided for civil servants in 2019, including the breadth and depth of the contents of these programmes.

Civil service college

37. Mr POON Siu-ping suggested the Administration allocating more resources to fund the work in enhancing civil service training. He further sought details on the implementation timeline of the civil service college ("the College") and the future use of the existing CSTDI site at the North Point Government Offices. Mr Charles Peter MOK reminded the Administration to enhance training to civil servants before the establishment of the College.

38. SCS advised that the College was expected to be completed in 2026, and the existing office spaces of CSTDI would be used for other Government services afterwards. CSTDI would continue to provide training for civil servants before the establishment of the College.

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39. Noting that a civil service training advisory board ("the Board") would be set up to give guidance on training programmes for the civil service and their long-term development, Mr Tony TSE suggested that the Administration should, apart from appointing professionals and government officials as Board members, invite representatives of different civil service unions to join the Board so as to better understand the training needs and concerns of staff side.

40. SCS advised that the Administration was preparing to set up the Board, and any views about the Board were welcome. He noted Mr Tony TSE's views and assured members that the Board would maintain close communication with different stakeholders.

### Training requirements of bureaux/departments

41. Mr HO Kai-ming was concerned whether the Administration had laid down guidelines for staff to complete duty-related training before taking up such special duties. Taking the training programmes offered by LCSD to its lifeguards as an example, he pointed out that although scuba diving rescue formed part of the basic responsibilities of lifeguards' daily work, relevant training was not provided to LCSD's lifeguards as compulsory courses. He also noted that non-civil service contract lifeguards were not required to attend some training courses despite that their duties were similar to their civil service counterparts. Newly recruited LCSD's lifeguards were given passage over probation even they had failed to complete the induction training within a specific time period after recruitment.

42. SCS reiterated that B/Ds would offer vocational training to their staff to meet job-specific requirements. Training arrangements and requirements for individual grades were set by B/Ds. It was thus inappropriate for him to comment on LCSD's training strategies.

### Other concerns

43. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan suggested appointing more seasoned managers from different industries to provide professional advice to individual government departments on specific issues so that the relevant civil servants could grasp a complete picture of the issues. SCS replied that when there were issues for which expert advice/knowledge was required but not available within B/Ds, B/Ds could procure services from professionals/consultants where justified.

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**V. Any other business**

44. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:36 pm.

Council Business Division 4  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
29 August 2019