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Panel on Public Service

Meeting on 17 December 2018

**Background brief on the issues relating to the lifeguards
of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department**

Purpose

This paper provides background information on the manpower situation, grade structure and training of the lifeguards of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department ("LCSD"). It also gives a brief account of past discussions of the Panel on Public Service ("the Panel") since the Fourth Legislative Council on the matter.

Background

Manpower situation and grade structure of LCSD's lifeguards

2. LCSD currently provides lifeguard services at 44 public swimming pools, 38 gazetted beaches and five water sports centres. As at 1 August 2018, there were 1 959 lifeguards comprising 174 senior lifeguards and 1 785 lifeguards in LCSD. Of those 1 785 lifeguards, 687 were non-civil service contract ("NCSC") seasonal lifeguards employed on a seasonal basis to augment the lifeguard manpower during the swimming season. The duties of lifeguards are set out at **Appendix I**. The numbers of civil service lifeguards in 2011-2018 and numbers of lifeguards (civil service and NCSC seasonal) at public swimming pools and gazetted beaches by districts in 2017 are at **Appendices II and III** respectively.

3. Lifeguards and senior lifeguards in the civil service belong to the Artisan grade and Senior Artisan grade respectively, and they are further deployed to two streams, namely the beach/swimming pool and water sports centre. Lifeguards in the Artisan grade are remunerated at Master Pay Scale ("MPS") points 5 to 8 (\$16,790 to \$20,270) whereas senior lifeguards in the Senior Artisan grade are remunerated at MPS points 8 to 10 (\$20,270 to \$22,865). Their pay scales are the same as other grades requiring similar

qualifications under Qualification Group 6 (*Technician, Supervisory and Related Grades*) - *Group II (Craft and Skill Plus Experience, or Apprenticeship Plus Experience)*).

Qualifications and training of LCSD's lifeguards

4. LCSD required all serving lifeguards and lifeguards to be recruited to possess the Pool Lifeguard Award/Beach Lifeguard Award issued by the Hong Kong Life Saving Society ("HKLSS").¹ The entry requirements for civil service lifeguards in LCSD include the possession of the Beach Lifeguard Award and Pool Lifeguard Award issued or reassessed by HKLSS within the three years and a valid first aid certificate from the St. John Ambulance Association, Hong Kong Red Cross or Auxiliary Medical Service. As regards NCSC seasonal lifeguards, they are required to have the Beach Lifeguard Award or Pool Lifeguard Award issued or reassessed by HKLSS within the three years. Before being considered by LCSD for appointment, applicants for the posts of civil service lifeguard and NCSC seasonal lifeguard have to pass the selection interview, trade test² and other recruitment procedures (e.g. integrity checking), while applicants for civil service lifeguards have to undergo medical examination including eye-sight test and colour blindness test.

5. LCSD's Training Section provides a wide array of training to civil service lifeguards to help improve their lifesaving skills and professionalism to meet the department's operational needs. At present, vocational training courses provided for lifeguards by LCSD and relevant accreditation are normally assessed and issued by authorized institutions which are well recognized both locally and internationally. LCSD also works in co-operation with professional departments and institutions, such as the Department of Health, the Hospital Authority, the Auxiliary Medical Service and HKLSS, in designing and providing lifeguard training. Details of the training programmes organized for LCSD's lifeguards from 2015-2016 to 2017-2018 are shown in **Appendix IV**.

Discussions at the Panel

6. The Panel discussed about the assessment criteria for conduct of grade structure reviews ("GSRs") for specific non-directorate civilian grades at its meeting on 21 June 2010 and met with deputations at the meeting on 18 April 2011 which was attended by lifeguards' unions. The Administration further briefed the Panel on its views on the request for a GSR of civil service

¹ HKLSS is the only organization responsible for assessing and issuing lifeguard qualifications in Hong Kong, and the lifeguard awards issued by HKLSS are internationally recognized lifesaving qualifications by the International Life Saving Federation.

² Trade tests are conducted to assess candidates' physical fitness, life-saving skills and first-aid skills.

lifeguards and the manpower situation of civil service lifeguards on 20 April 2015. The major views and concerns expressed by Panel members and lifeguards' unions, and the Administration's responses are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

Manpower and employment situation of lifeguards in LCSD

7. Members enquired at the Panel meeting on 20 April 2015 whether there were sufficient civil service lifeguards and seasonal lifeguards to carry out duties in peak and non-peak seasons, in particular the establishment of civil service lifeguards had been reduced by some 30% from some 2 400 civil service lifeguards to around 2 100 civil service lifeguards after a review by LCSD on the manpower requirements for lifeguards at public swimming pools in 2003-2004 ("the Review"). With a view to preventing temporary closure of some public swimming pools and suspension of lifesaving services at beaches due to insufficient lifeguards on duty, a member called on LCSD to create more civil service lifeguard posts to obviate the need of employing seasonal lifeguards.

8. LCSD advised that it reviewed the lifeguard manpower arrangements for pools, beaches as well as water sports centres from time to time, taking into account the actual operational needs. The reduction in the number of lifeguards in 2004 was the result of the Review, and all deleted lifeguard positions were no longer required. Such reduction was achieved mainly through reassignment of non-lifesaving jobs carried out by lifeguards to non-lifeguards, removal of blind spots and visual obstacles at swimming pools through implementation of improvement works, and standardization of the provision and deployment of lifeguard manpower at swimming pools. In order to review the lifeguard manpower in a more comprehensive manner, LCSD set up a "Working Group on Lifeguard Manpower Review" in 2013 to serve as an effective platform to collect views from frontline staff and staff unions concerned. LCSD would keep the manpower provision and deployment of lifeguards at swimming pools, gazetted beaches and water sports centres under review with the grade members and take appropriate follow up action whenever necessary.

9. According to the Administration,³ an additional \$16.8 million has been allocated annually in the past six years to create over 200 lifeguard vacancies by phases for employment of NCSC seasonal lifeguards for existing swimming pools and beaches. The Administration would, where justified, create additional civil service lifeguard posts in accordance with the established procedures, and the total number of civil service lifeguards had increased by 35% from 893 in 2011 to 1 209 in 2018.

³ Source: [LC Paper No. CB\(4\)145/18-19\(01\)](#)

10. Regarding members' concern about the large number of NCSC lifeguards engaged by LCSD, the Administration advised that they were employed to meet service needs which were seasonal in nature. Problems might arise from recruiting civil servants to meet lifeguard service needs because the number of lifeguards required during summer far exceeded that during winter. If lifeguards were all employed on civil service terms, some of them would be left idle in winter and it would not be a prudent use of public money. It was appropriate for LCSD to employ seasonal lifeguards to augment the lifeguard provision during the peak season or at other times where warranted. Should there be any difficulty in recruiting seasonal lifeguards, appropriate measures would be taken, such as raising the monthly salary of beach seasonal lifeguards by \$700 for the 2015 swimming season.

Grade structure review of civil service lifeguards

11. At the Panel meetings on 21 June 2010 and 18 April 2011 when discussing about the assessment criteria for conduct of GSRs for specific non-directorate civilian grades, lifeguards' unions pointed out that there had been fundamental changes in their job nature and the complexity/level of responsibilities, and it was difficult to retain civil service lifeguards due to the lack of promotion prospects and proper recognition of their importance. As such, lifeguards' unions requested for a GSR for civil service lifeguards so as to make lifeguard as a professional grade and give due recognition to them.

12. Some members were dissatisfied about the Administration's refusal to introduce a separate grade for civil service lifeguards in recognition of the professional nature of their work, as repeatedly requested by civil service lifeguards and the union representatives, so as to better attract qualified candidates to become and remain as lifeguards to address the lifeguard shortage at swimming pools and beaches managed by LCSD. Given that the work of lifeguards required the use of professional equipment and exercise of professional judgement, members considered lifeguards as professionals akin to firemen and ambulancemen. The existing arrangement to place civil service lifeguards and senior civil service lifeguards under the Artisan grade and Senior Artisan grade respectively was outdated and inappropriate. In this connection, they suggested placing civil service lifeguards under the Professional grades which had better remuneration and advancement so as to attract and retain qualified lifeguards.

13. The Administration explained that GSRs would only be considered for individual non-directorate civilian grades if (a) the concerned grades had proven and persistent recruitment and retention difficulties which could not be resolved through the regular pay surveys under the Improved Civil Service Pay Adjustment Mechanism which had been put in place in 2007 or (b) there were fundamental changes to the job nature, job complexity and level of

responsibilities of the grades. While the change in the job nature, job complexity and level of responsibilities might give rise to additional work, they did not of themselves constitute fundamental changes to the job nature, job complexity and level of responsibilities of the grades concerned. As neither of the aforesaid circumstances had occurred in civil service lifeguards, there was no ground for the Government to conduct a GSR of civil service lifeguards. Besides, civil service lifeguards were placed under the Artisan grade should not be perceived as a derogatory treatment as the duties of other civil service posts belonging to the Artisan grade in LCSD, such as keeping animals and maintaining trees, were equally important and respectable.

Relevant questions raised at Council meetings

14. Council questions on the manpower situation, training and qualification of LCSD's lifeguards were raised on 20 November 2013, 5 November 2014, 12 July and 22 November 2017, 20 June and 7 November 2018. Hyperlinks to these questions and the Administration's responses are in **Appendix V**.

Latest position

15. The Administration will brief the Panel on the issues relating to the lifeguards of LCSD at the Panel meeting on 17 December 2018.

Relevant papers

16. A list of relevant papers is set out in **Appendix V**.

Major Duties of Lifeguards

Artisan (Beach/Swimming Pool)

- (a) Lifesaving duties;
- (b) First aid duties;
- (c) Assisting in law enforcement and maintenance of order;
- (d) Assisting in cleansing work; and
- (e) Winter work duties.

Artisan (Lifeguard at Water Sports Centre) and Artisan (Beach/ Swimming Pool) serving in water sports centres

- (a) Performing lifesaving and first aid duties;
- (b) Assisting in law enforcement and maintenance of order;
- (c) Patrolling water sports activities areas on rescue boat and watching over participants of water sports activities;
- (d) Directing participants to get in and out of crafts and towing/launching the crafts into water and taking them out of water and back to the water sports centre;
- (e) Assisting in issuing and collecting water sports equipment/gear and assuring that they are in good condition before and after use;
- (f) Cleansing and minor repairs and maintenance of water sports equipment;
- (g) Assisting in cleansing work; and
- (h) Winter work duties.

Senior Artisan (Beach/Swimming Pool)

- (a) Deputising the Amenities Assistant in-charge;
- (b) Supervising Artisans (Beach/Swimming Pool), contract lifeguards and other junior staff in carrying out daily work and district winter work programmes;
- (c) Directing and performing lifesaving operations and first aid services, inspecting lifesaving and first aid equipment and ensuring that they are adequate and serviceable at all times;
- (d) Training of Artisans (Beach/Swimming Pool) and contract lifeguards, and assisting in implementing the departmental drill programmes; and
- (e) Assisting in enforcing the relevant by-laws/regulations.

Senior Artisan (Lifeguard at Water Sports Centre) and Senior Artisan (Beach/Swimming Pool) serving in water sports centres

- (a) Supervising Artisans (Lifeguard at Water Sports Centre), contract lifeguards and other junior staff;
- (b) Directing and performing lifesaving, rescue of crafts and first aid services;

- (c) Training of Artisans (Lifeguard at Water Sports Centre) and contract lifeguards in drilling, and implementing the rescue operations;
- (d) Supervising and performing the inspection, issuing, maintenance and minor repairs of water sports equipment;
- (e) Maintaining proper records of water sports equipment, ensuring that they are safe to use and in sea-worthy condition; arranging necessary maintenance and replacement to defected crafts, gears and fittings;
- (f) Arranging necessary training in respect of water sports skills and maintenance of equipment to lifeguards and junior staff;
- (g) Arranging roster and daily duty posts for lifeguards and junior staff;
- (h) Assisting centre instructor to run training courses;
- (i) Performing janitor duty and maintenance of order and law enforcement where applicable;
- (j) Ensuring the motor rescue boats are used and kept properly;
- (k) Assisting users of water sports centres to use the crafts properly; and
- (l) Inspecting lifesaving and first aid equipment regularly and ensuring that they are adequate and serviceable at all times.

Source: [Annex 1 of LC Paper No. CB\(4\)145/18-19\(01\)](#)

Appendix II

Number of Civil Service Lifeguards in the Leisure and Cultural Services Department in 2011-2018

Grade	Year*								2011 vs 2018	
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	No.	%
Senior Artisan (Beach/ Swimming Pool)	126	152	163	158	163	161	170	173	+47	+37.3 %
Senior Artisan (Water Sports Centre)	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	-2 [#]	-66.7%
Artisan (Beach/ Swimming Pool)	755	847	947	942	981	979	1 011	1 013	+258	+34.2%
Artisan (Water Sports Centre)	9	8	8	9	19	19	20	22	+13	+144.4%
Total	893	1 010	1 121	1 112	1 166	1 162	1 204	1 209	+316	+35.4%

Note

* As at 1 August of each year

A new round of recruitment exercise for Senior Artisan (Water Sports Centre) has been launched. The vacancies will be filled as soon as possible after completion of the recruitment exercise.

Source: [Annex 3 of LC Paper No. CB\(4\)145/18-19\(01\)](#)

Appendix III

Lifeguards at Public Swimming Pools and Gazetted Beaches in 2017

District	No. of Civil Service Lifeguards (Senior Lifeguard and Lifeguard as at 1 August)				No. of Seasonal Lifeguards ("SLG")							
					Non-peak Months (as at 1 April)				Peak Months (as at 1 August)			
	Establishment (a)	Strength (b)	Vacancy / Surplus (c) # = (a) - (b)	Percentage of Vacancy over Establishment (c) / (a)	Basic Requirement (d)	No. of SLG Recruited (e)	Vacancy / Surplus (f) = (d) - (e)	Percentage of Vacancy over Basic Requirement (f) / (d)	Basic Requirement (g)	No. of SLG Recruited (h)	Vacancy/ Surplus (i) = (g) - (h)	Percentage of Vacancy over Basic Requirement (i) / (g)
Central and Western	53	52	1	1.9%	2	2	0	0.0%	19	12	7	36.8%
Eastern	48	45	3	6.3%	33	16	17	51.5%	38	21	17	44.7%
Southern	111	105	6	5.4%	78	65	13	16.7%	112	81	31	27.7%
Wan Chai	51	54	-3	-5.9%	12	4	8	66.7%	20	5	15	75.0%
Kowloon City	41	44	-3	-7.3%	38	25	13	34.2%	49	31	18	36.7%
Kwun Tong	58	53	5	8.6%	16	16	0	0.0%	41	39	2	4.9%
Sham Shui Po	62	64	-2	-3.2%	23	23	0	0.0%	53	49	4	7.5%
Wong Tai Sin	36	37	-1	-2.8%	21	20	1	4.8%	36	27	9	25.0%
Yau Tsim Mong	49	54	-5	-10.2%	12	10	2	16.7%	39	26	13	33.3%
Islands	93	87	6	6.5%	34	22	12	35.3%	50	35	15	30.0%
Kwai Tsing	72	70	2	2.8%	46	27	19	41.3%	56	48	8	14.3%
North	31	29	2	6.5%	15	15	0	0.0%	26	25	1	3.8%
Sai Kung	121	119	2	1.7%	30	27	3	10.0%	93	65	28	30.1%
Sha Tin	77	73	4	5.2%	28	28	0	0.0%	70	58	12	17.1%
Tai Po	24	25	-1	-4.2%	23	23	0	0.0%	23	23	0	0.0%

District	No. of Civil Service Lifeguards (Senior Lifeguard and Lifeguard as at 1 August)				No. of Seasonal Lifeguards ("SLG")							
					Non-peak Months (as at 1 April)				Peak Months (as at 1 August)			
	Establishment (a)	Strength (b)	Vacancy / Surplus (c) # = (a) - (b)	Percentage of Vacancy over Establishment (c) / (a)	Basic Requirement (d)	No. of SLG Recruited (e)	Vacancy / Surplus (f) = (d) - (e)	Percentage of Vacancy over Basic Requirement (f) / (d)	Basic Requirement (g)	No. of SLG Recruited (h)	Vacancy/ Surplus (i) = (g) - (h)	Percentage of Vacancy over Basic Requirement (i) / (g)
Tsuen Wan	89	87	2	2.2%	45	43	2	4.4%	81	59	22	27.2%
Tuen Mun	133	125	8	6.0%	52	52	0	0.0%	91	90	1	1.1%
Yuen Long	53	53	0	0.0%	19	19	0	0.0%	33	35	-2	-6.1%
Total	1 202	1 176	26	2.2%	527	437	90	17.1%	930	729	201	21.6%

Note

Vacancies/surplus in individual districts were mainly due to officers on trial in other civil service grades and temporary redeployment of manpower to meet operational needs.

Source: [Controlling Officer's Reply \(Reply serial No. HAB410\)](#)

Appendix IV

Training programmes organized for lifeguards of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department from 2015-2016 to 2017-2018

Programmes	2015-2016			2016-2017			2017-2018		
	No. of programme/ courses	No. of trainee	No. of trainees who passed the training course	No. of programme/ courses	No. of trainee	No. of trainees who passed the training course	No. of programme/ courses	No. of trainee	No. of trainees who passed the training course
Induction Training Courses for Lifeguards	30	472	---	25	395	---	42	718	---
Beach/Pool Lifeguard Award Revalidation Courses	34	777	---	31	594	---	28	530	---
First Aid Refresher Course	17	491	---	14	389	---	16	443	---
Automated External Defibrillator(AED) Training Course	4	59	---	2	25	-----	3	34	---
Skill Enhancement Training Course	37	406	---	34	384	---	40	365	---
Advanced training in skin diving (for civil service lifeguards)	3	66	63	3	59	59	6	161	155
Training in scuba diving (for civil service lifeguards)	1	20	20	1	15	15	1	19	19
Total	126	2291	83	110	1861	74	136	2270	174

Source: [Controlling Officer's Reply \(Reply serial No. HAB163\)](#) and [Table 1 of Council question raised by Hon CHAN Hak-kan on the lifeguards employed by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department](#)

**Issues relating to the lifeguards
of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department**

List of relevant papers

Meeting/Event	Date	References
Panel on Public Service	21 June 2010 (Item III)	Agenda Minutes
	18 April 2011 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes Administration's follow-up response to issues raised at the Panel meeting
	20 April 2015	Administration's paper Updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat Minutes Administration's follow-up response to issues raised at the Panel meeting
	20 November 2017	Administration's response to the letter dated 22 September 2017 from Hon HO Kai-ming (LC Paper No. CB(4)5/17-18(01)) and submissions dated 30 October 2017 from the Hong Kong Government Lifeguards General Union (LC Paper Nos. CB(4)234/17-18(01)-(04))

Meeting/Event	Date	References
	19 November 2018	<u>Administration's response to the letter dated 12 October 2018 from Hon LAM Cheuk-ting concerning the training, grade structure and manpower situation of the lifeguards of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department as set out in LC Paper No. CB(4)65/18-19(01)</u>
Council Meeting	20 November 2013	<u>Council question raised by Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki on lifeguard services in public swimming pools and beaches</u>
	5 November 2014	<u>Council question raised by Hon WONG Kwok-hing on lifeguard manpower requirement</u>
	12 July 2017	<u>Council question raised by Hon HO Kai-ming on the manpower situation of lifeguards</u>
	22 November 2017	<u>Council question raised by Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung on the facilities and operation of public swimming pools</u>
		<u>Council question raised by Dr Hon Elizabeth QUAT on training for and services of lifeguards of public swimming pools and beaches</u>
	20 June 2018	<u>Council question raised by Hon Starry LEE on the lifeguards manpower and water quality of public swimming pools</u>
	7 November 2018	<u>Council question raised by Hon CHAN Hak-kan on the lifeguards employed by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department</u>