

For discussion on  
15 April 2019

## **LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL ON PUBLIC SERVICE**

### **Implementation of Five-day Week in the Government**

#### **PURPOSE**

This paper updates Members on the latest position of the implementation of five-day week (FDW) in the Government.

#### **POLICY ON FIVE-DAY WEEK**

2. The Government has implemented the FDW initiative in three phases starting from 2006<sup>1</sup>. The policy objective is to improve the quality of civil servants' family life without compromising the level and efficiency of public services or incurring additional costs to taxpayers. To achieve this policy objective, bureaux and departments (B/Ds) are encouraged to migrate staff to FDW following the four basic principles below —

- (a) no additional staffing resources;
- (b) no reduction in the conditioned hours of work of individual staff;
- (c) no reduction in emergency services; and
- (d) continued provision of essential counter services on Saturdays/Sundays.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION OF FDW IN THE GOVERNMENT**

3. The FDW work pattern includes working on a “Monday-to-Friday” basis, a “five-day-on, two-day-off roster in every seven days”, or “fewer than five days/shifts in every seven days”. Upon the third phase of implementation in July 2007, a total of some 94 300 out of around 145 500 civil servants (i.e. around 65% of the then civil service strength) were working on a FDW work pattern.

4. The Government conducts biennial surveys to monitor the progress of implementation of FDW in B/Ds. Early this year, we completed the latest round of survey which reflected the implementation of FDW in the Government

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<sup>1</sup> The three phases started from 1 July 2006, 1 January 2007 and 1 July 2007 respectively.

as at 30 September 2018. The major findings are set out in the ensuing paragraphs.

## THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FDW IN THE GOVERNMENT AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2018

5. As at 30 September 2018, the strength of the civil service stood at around 164 800<sup>2</sup>. Among them, around 123 500 civil servants (i.e. around 75% of the then civil service strength) were working on a FDW pattern. The relevant figures, in terms of both the number and percentage of civil servants working on FDW, are the highest since the implementation of FDW in July 2006. Compared to the position as at 30 September 2016 when around 115 500 civil servants (i.e. around 73% of the then civil service strength) were working on a FDW pattern, 8 000 (or 2%) more civil servants worked on FDW. A breakdown of the number of civil servants on FDW by work pattern is set out in the table below —

	<b>Number of civil servants<sup>3</sup> (as at 30 September 2016)</b>	<b>Number of civil servants<sup>3</sup> (as at 30 September 2018)</b>
Civil servants working on a “Monday-to-Friday” basis	88 300	92 000
Civil servants working on a “five-day-on, two-day-off roster in every seven days” or “fewer than five days/shifts in every seven days”	26 700	30 800
Civil servants on FDW trial schemes	500	700
<b><i>Sub-total</i></b>	<b>115 500 (around 73%)</b>	<b>123 500 (around 75%)</b>
Civil servants on a non-FDW work pattern	42 800 (around 27%)	41 300 (around 25%)
<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b>158 300 (100%)</b>	<b>164 800 (100%)</b>

<sup>2</sup> Following the approach adopted in previous surveys, this figure included staff who were on FDW trial schemes, but excluded civil servants working in government schools, the Judiciary, the Hospital Authority, the Vocational Training Council, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, the Independent Commission Against Corruption and the Legal Aid Services Council.

<sup>3</sup> Figures rounded off to the nearest hundred.

6. To avoid compromising the level and efficiency of public services, and to ensure continued provision of essential services on Saturdays/Sundays, as at 30 September 2018, around 41 300 civil servants (i.e. around 25% of the then civil service strength) delivering social welfare services, immigration counter services, cultural and leisure services, postal services, environmental hygiene services, or engaged in law enforcement, passenger/cargo clearance, management of penal institutions, etc. were still working on a non-FDW work pattern. This represents a reduction of about 1 500 (or 2%) civil servants when compared to the position as at 30 September 2016 when around 42 800 civil servants (i.e. about 27% of the then civil service strength) were working on a non-FDW pattern.

7. The number of civil servants who were working on a FDW pattern mentioned above includes about 700 civil servants who were at the time under FDW trial schemes in four departments, namely the Correctional Services Department (CSD), the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD), the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF), and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) —

- (a) CSD has started trial schemes involving around 120 staff in eight correctional institutions since February 2017. The trial schemes are still in progress. Taking into account the actual progress of the trial schemes and the views of the participating staff, CSD management will review the effectiveness of the trial schemes when appropriate;
- (b) FEHD has started a one-year trial scheme involving around 100 civil servants of different grades working in the Shop Front Extension Control Task Forces and the Technical Support Unit of the Transport Section since 1 August 2018. Upon completion of the trial scheme, FEHD will evaluate its effectiveness and assess whether there is room for migrating the staff concerned to a FDW pattern permanently;
- (c) HKPF has started a trial scheme involving around 450 police officers in selected Task Force Sub-units since September 2018. Upon completion of the trial scheme which is expected to last for one year, HKPF will evaluate its effectiveness and assess whether there is room for migrating all 1 300 police officers in the concerned Task Force Sub-units to a FDW pattern; and
- (d) LCSD's trial schemes involved 25 civil servants working in parks and sports grounds. Amongst them, 20 have formally migrated to FDW since February 2019 and April 2019. LCSD will evaluate the effectiveness of the remaining trial scheme to assess whether it is possible to migrate the staff concerned to a FDW pattern permanently.

## **LATEST DEVELOPMENT**

8. All along, the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) encourages departments which have not fully implemented FDW to explore the feasibility of migrating more staff to FDW in a pragmatic manner. Apart from the trial schemes mentioned in paragraph 7 above, HKPF has started a one-year trial scheme for about 900 police officers in the Emergency Units of Hong Kong Island, New Territories South and Kowloon East Regions since January 2019. Besides, between October 2018 and February 2019, more than 180 members of the Postal Officer and the Postman grades of Hongkong Post and about 10 staff of the Clerical Officer and the Cultural Services Assistant grades working in public libraries of LCSD were migrated to FDW.

9. The examples above demonstrate that individual departments are still able to further implement FDW through various arrangements without compromising the four basic principles.

## **LEAVE DEDUCTION ARRANGEMENT FOR NON-FDW OFFICERS**

10. As regards those departments which have not fully implemented FDW, CSB has since 2013 invited them to explore the feasibility of revising the existing leave deduction arrangements (LDA)<sup>4</sup> for their non-FDW civil servants, provided that the relevant basic principles<sup>5</sup> can be complied with. As at 31 March 2019, HKPF<sup>6</sup>, the Customs & Excise Department (C&ED)<sup>7</sup> and

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<sup>4</sup> In general, leave deduction is made on a “one-to-one” basis, i.e. one day of vacation leave to be deducted for absence of one day. The number of days of vacation leave to be deducted to cover the same duration of absence for civil servants on different work patterns may be different. For instance, for leave absence of two weeks, 10.5 days of vacation leave will be deducted for officers working on alternate Saturday-off duty pattern while 10 days of vacation leave will be deducted for civil servants working on a Monday to Friday pattern.

<sup>5</sup> These basic principles include no reduction in the conditioned hours of work of individual staff; no additional manpower and maintenance of the level of service to public; and other existing leave rules applicable to individual civil servants should remain intact.

<sup>6</sup> HKPF commenced the first six-month pilot scheme on revised LDA for around 2 400 non-FDW police officers on “standard two-week shift” pattern (which involves 11 duty days per shift cycle) from December 2015 to 31 May 2016. Under the pilot scheme, the concerned police officers, when taking vacation leave for a 14-calendar day period that fits exactly into his/her shift cycle (i.e. from Day 1 to Day 14), would be deducted 10 days (instead of 11 days) of vacation leave. The second phase pilot scheme, which lasted for six months and covered another 4 700 police officers on “standard two-week shift” pattern, was carried out from 1 June to 30 November 2017. To provide further testing on the overall service implications and leave administration, the third phase pilot on revised LDA for all non-FDW police officers working on “standard two-week shift” pattern commenced on 1 January 2018 and would last for two years. At present, the pilot scheme covers about 11 500 police officers.

<sup>7</sup> C&ED’s six-month pilot scheme on revised LDA for some 210 civil servants on a 7-day or 14-day duty cycles began on 1 July 2018. Under the pilot scheme, the concerned officers would be deducted 10 days (instead of 10.5 to 12 days) of vacation leave for a continuous absence of 14 calendar days. To collect more data for a more comprehensive assessment of the scheme, the revised LDA pilot scheme has been extended for one year to run from 1 January to 31 December 2019.

CSD<sup>8</sup> were conducting their respective pilot schemes on revised LDA, covering a total of more than 13 000 non-FDW civil servants. According to the frameworks of their pilot schemes, the departments would carry out regular reviews during the course of the pilot schemes and consider in due course the possibility of implementing the revised LDA on a long-term basis. CSB has shared the information about the revised LDA pilot schemes of the aforementioned departments with other departments with non-FDW civil servants to facilitate their consideration of similar proposals.

## **WAY FORWARD**

11. In order not to compromise the level and efficiency of public services and to comply with the four basic principles, not all civil servants may work on a FDW pattern. The Government has to balance all relevant factors, including the expectation of civil servants towards FDW, the need for proper use of public resources, the maintenance of the quality of public services and the effective management of the civil service establishment, etc. when taking forward the FDW initiative. At this stage, we consider it necessary to uphold the four basic principles.

12. Nevertheless, CSB will continue to encourage those departments which have not fully implemented FDW to enable more civil servants to work under a FDW pattern in compliance with the four basic principles or to explore the feasibility of revising LDA for non-FDW civil servants, and where possible, arrange civil servants to rotate to FDW posts. CSB also welcomes continued dialogue between the staff side and their departmental management with a view to putting forth proposals to implement FDW.

## **ADVICE SOUGHT**

13. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

**Civil Service Bureau**  
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<sup>8</sup> CSD's six-month pilot scheme on revised LDA, for some 1 500 civil servants working on shift cycles of 10.5, 11 or 12 working days in every fortnight, commenced on 3 December 2018. Under the pilot scheme, these officers would be deducted 10 days (instead of 10.5 to 12 days) of vacation leave for a continuous absence of 14 calendar days.