

立法會

Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(4)466/20-21
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB4/PL/PS

Panel on Public Service

**Minutes of meeting held on
Monday, 16 November 2020, at 10:45 am
in Conference Room 3 of the Legislative Council Complex**

Members present: Hon KWOK Wai-keung, JP (Chairman)
Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, GBS, JP
Hon WONG Ting-kwong, GBS, JP
Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, SBS, JP
Hon CHAN Hak-kan, BBS, JP
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon Steven HO Chun-yin, BBS
Hon MA Fung-kwok, GBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, SBS, MH, JP
Hon Christopher CHEUNG Wah-fung, SBS, JP
Hon Elizabeth QUAT, BBS, JP
Hon Martin LIAO Cheung-kong, GBS, JP
Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, SBS, JP
Hon Jimmy NG Wing-ka, BBS, JP
Hon Holden CHOW Ho-ding
Hon SHIU Ka-fai, JP
Dr Hon Pierre CHAN
Hon CHAN Chun-ying, JP
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-kwan, JP
Hon LUK Chung-hung, JP
Hon LAU Kwok-fan, MH
Hon Vincent CHENG Wing-shun, MH, JP

Members absent : Hon CHAN Han-pan, BBS, JP
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung

Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen, BBS, JP

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

Mr Patrick NIP, JP
Secretary for the Civil Service

Mrs Ingrid YEUNG, JP
Permanent Secretary for the Civil Service

Ms Amy WONG, JP
Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service 2

Agenda item IV

Mr Patrick NIP, JP
Secretary for the Civil Service

Mrs Ingrid YEUNG, JP
Permanent Secretary for the Civil Service

Mr Hermes CHAN, JP
Director of General Grades
Civil Service Bureau

Mr Mike CHENG
Principal Assistant Secretary (Administration)
Education Bureau

Miss Brenda KO
Chief Executive Officer (Establishment and Systems)
Education Bureau

Ms Vivien LEE
Assistant Postmaster General (Corporate
Development)
Post Office

Mr Alan YUNG
Chief Electoral Officer
Registration and Electoral Office

Clerk in attendance: Mr Colin CHUI
Chief Council Secretary (4)3

Staff in attendance : Ms Maggie CHUNG
Senior Council Secretary (4)1

Ms Peggy CHUNG
Council Secretary (4)3

Miss Ariel SHUM
Legislative Assistant (4)3

I. Information papers issued since the regular meeting on 10 July 2020

(LC Paper No. --	Letter from the Administration to the Chairman regarding the Grade Structure Review for Veterinary Laboratory Technician and Medical Laboratory Technician Grades)
CB(4)919/19-20(01)	

Members noted that the above paper had been issued since the regular meeting of the Panel on Public Service ("the Panel") on 10 July 2020. The Chairman reminded members that as agreed at the last meeting on 19 October 2020, "Grade structure review for Veterinary Laboratory Technician and Medical Laboratory Technician grades" was deleted from the "List of outstanding items for discussion" ("the List") of the Panel.

II. Date of next meeting and items for discussion

(LC Paper No. --	List of outstanding items for discussion)
CB(4)116/20-21(01)	

Items for next regular meeting

2. The Chairman informed members that the Administration proposed to discuss the following items at the next regular meeting on 21 December 2020:

- (a) Briefing by the Secretary for the Civil Service ("SCS") on the Chief Executive's 2020 Policy Address;

- (b) Creation of a Principal Executive Officer Post in the General Grades Office under the Civil Service Bureau ("CSB"); and
- (c) Progress of the study on the proposal on oath-taking by civil servants.

3. The Chairman drew members' attention that the discussion on item 2(a) above would be subject to the arrangements for the 2020 Policy Address nearer the time. The time and duration of the meeting might therefore be suitably adjusted, and members would be informed in due course. The Chairman further proposed and members agreed to invite all other Members to attend the discussion of the above items.

(Post-meeting note:

- (a) CSB requested after the meeting that item 2(a) above be discussed at the regular meeting on 21 December 2020 and the discussion on item 2(b) above be deferred to a later meeting;
- (b) CSB proposed after the meeting that the title of item 2(c) above be changed to "Proposal on oath-taking by civil servants"; and
- (c) as the outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 ("COVID-19") was getting more severe and to avoid clash with a meeting of the Finance Committee scheduled for the morning on 21 December 2020, the Chairman directed that instead of holding a regular meeting on 21 December 2020, an informal meeting would be conducted by videoconferencing via Zoom on 28 December 2020 for the discussion on item 2(a) above, and the discussion on items 2(b) and 2(c) above would be deferred to a later meeting. The notice of the informal meeting was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)308/20-21 on 21 December 2020.)

4. Mrs Regina IP requested that the Administration's paper for item 2(c) above should include, among others, an elucidation of the definition of "public officer" and a list of the "public officers" who would be subject to the oath-taking requirement of pledging allegiance to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region ("HKSAR") and the HKSAR Government.

Items for future meetings

5. Mr Steven HO noted that in the recent withdrawals of membership, the former members concerned had either resigned after their withdrawals or had given notice to resign with effect from 1 December 2020. He proposed deletion of the items put forward by them from the List, so that the Panel had sufficient time to discuss the other items on the List.

6. Mr LUK Chung-hung and Dr CHIANG Lai-wan expressed support to discuss the financial situation and establishment of the Hongkong Post ("HKP") operating under trading fund principles (item 23 of the List).

7. Mr LUK Chung-hung added that when the Administration briefed the Panel on an overview of training and development for civil servants (item 9 of the List), measures to strengthen civil servants' understanding of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China should be covered. He also reiterated his request to discuss the grade structure review for lifeguards of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department ("LCSD") (item 20 of the List).

8. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan requested the following:

- (a) an early discussion of an overview of training and development for civil servants (item 9 of the List) which should also cover the Administration's training plans to nurture young civil servants with potential for advancement;
- (b) when the Administration briefed the Panel on the commendation schemes for civil servants (item 10 of the List), the feasibility of introducing a performance-based merit and demerit system in the civil service should be covered; and
- (c) where possible there should be three discussion items at each Panel meeting.

9. Ms Starry LEE proposed that with a view to enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the delivery of public services, the Administration should review the performance management system of Bureaux/Departments ("B/Ds") and appraisal systems of the civil service, and brief members on the details in due course.

10. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung and Mr Holden CHOW expressed concern about the grade structure, manpower situation and remuneration packages of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department's dead removal team and requested to discuss the issue. Given that it was the Government's policy that grade structure reviews would only be considered in the light of proven and persistent recruitment and retention difficulties or significant changes in the job nature, job complexity and level of responsibilities of the grade concerned, the Chairman instructed the Secretariat to obtain relevant information from the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department to facilitate members' consideration of whether to include the subject matter in the List.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration's response was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)249/20-21(01) on 3 December 2020.)

III. An overview of medical and dental benefits for civil servants, pensioners and eligible persons

(LC Paper CB(4)116/20-21(02)	No.-- Paper provided by the Administration
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LC Paper CB(4)116/20-21(03)	No.-- Updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat)
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11. At the invitation of the Chairman, SCS briefed members on the latest overview of the provision of medical and dental benefits for civil service eligible persons ("CSEPs") as set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(4)116/20-21(02)).

Provision of dental services

12. In response to Mr SHIU Ka-fai's enquiry on the Department of Health ("DH")'s role in the provision of dental services and the waiting time of CSEPs for dental services, SCS advised that under the existing healthcare policy, DH would only provide emergency dental treatment for the public. The dental clinics under DH were mainly used for provision of dental benefits for CSEPs in accordance with the relevant terms and conditions of employment of civil servants. The Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service 2 ("DSCS") added that the waiting time of CSEPs for general dental services, such as dental scaling, was around 12 months. The waiting time for different specialized dental services varied. For

example, the waiting time for a new case requiring orthodontic service was 12 to 18 months, and that for receiving follow-up treatment was 10 to 19 months.

13. The Deputy Chairman and Dr CHIANG Lai-wan asked whether the waiting time for specialized dental services had been shortened after the new dental surgeries had commenced operation. Mr LUK Chung-hung and Ms Elizabeth QUAT also expressed concern about the long waiting time for dental services provided to civil servants.

14. DSCS replied that notwithstanding the increasing number of eligible CSEPs, the waiting time of CSEPs for orthodontic services could be maintained at below 18 months after the new specialized dental surgeries commenced operation in 2019. She added that the waiting time for dental services had been improved, e.g. the waiting time of CSEPs for endodontic service was 11 to 25 months last year, the latest waiting time as at July 2020 had been shortened to 8 to 19 months. SCS added that there were currently 40 General Dental Clinics under DH and the number of general dental surgeries for the exclusive use by CSEPs had increased from around 170 in 2009-2010 to around 260 this year, representing an over 50% increase. The number of attendances was about 677 000 in 2019, which had slightly decreased by 1.4% compared with the number of attendances in 2018. He said that the decrease was due to shortage of manpower for provision of dental services.

15. Mr Holden CHOW asked whether the Administration would consider reallocating some of the resources in certain General Dental Clinics, which were currently for the exclusive use by CSEPs, to the general public in order to meet the needs of the community with reference to provision of priority discs for civil servants in some General Outpatient Clinics.

16. SCS responded that the Government's policy on provision of dental services for the public was to provide emergency dental services only. The General Dental Clinics were mainly responsible for providing dental benefits for CSEPs such that the Government, as an employer, could fulfil the terms of employment for civil servants. Given the above policy, the crux for consideration was whether it would be possible for DH to allocate more time slots for use by the general public at General Dental Clinics while maintaining the level of services for CSEPs. He said that under the established mechanism, whether reallocation of resources would be possible depended on the actual situation, and the arrangement of giving priority discs to serving civil servants at the

Hospital Authority ("HA")'s General Outpatient Clinics was an example of such resource allocation within limits.

Provision of Families Clinic services

17. Mr CHAN Chun-ying enquired about the provision of clinical psychological services for staff of disciplined services and their family members as well as the manpower-to-patient ratio.

18. SCS replied that the Families Clinics had been providing clinical psychological services for civil servants including staff of disciplined services. The Administration was aware of the demand for the services, especially by staff of disciplined services. The Administration had been closely monitoring the demand for the services and would consider enhancing the provision of the service as appropriate.

19. In response to the Deputy Chairman's enquiry about the progress of the Stable Drug Use pilot programme which was launched in March 2020, DSCS said that the progress of the programme was retarded because of the COVID-19 epidemic. The number of attendances was about 210 as at 30 September 2020.

20. Regarding the Deputy Chairman's enquiry about whether the Administration would consider providing free flu vaccination for CSEPs, DSCS replied that the provision of medical services for CSEPs was treatment-oriented. The Administration would provide vaccination for civil servants with operational needs, such as frontline staff of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department.

21. In reply to Mr LEUNG Che-cheung's question about the actual number of CSEPs using civil service medical benefits, SCS advised that the number of attendances of the General Outpatient Clinics was 752 000 in 2019-2020, which was about 14% of the service capacity provided by HA in the year.

Provision of Chinese medicine services

22. Noting the high demand for services provided under the pilot scheme on Civil Service Chinese Medicine ("CM") Clinics, Mr CHAN Chun-ying considered it rigid for the Administration to conduct the review of the pilot scheme in the first quarter of next year. Taking the view that the CM services should be enhanced immediately in the light of

the enthusiastic response, the Deputy Chairman asked if it was feasible to advance the conduct of the review.

23. SCS responded that the Administration was not rigid in the conduct of the review of the pilot scheme on the CM services. With a lapse of less than six months since the launch of the pilot scheme in March 2020, the Administration had been collecting feedback from the service users by questionnaire since August 2020 with a view to improving the service quality as soon as possible. The Administration would also explore increasing the service capacity of the CM services.

24. In response to the Deputy Chairman's enquiry about whether the Administration would improve the telephone system of the CM services to facilitate service users to make appointments, SCS replied that the Administration understood that the CM services were well received by civil servants and the telephone lines for making appointment were always busy. In this connection, the telephone systems of the two CM clinics would be enhanced such that callers would be informed by a pre-recorded message when appointment slots for the day had been fully booked.

25. In reply to Mr LUK Chung-hung's enquiry about whether the Administration would consider setting up more CM clinics and develop mobile applications to facilitate service users to make appointments, SCS said that the Administration had expedited the review to improve the services. Noting a significant demand for the services, the Administration would explore increasing the service capacity.

Reimbursement of medical expenses

26. Mr SHIU Ka-fai asked about the reasons for the substantial increase in the expenditure on reimbursement of medical expenses from \$860 million in 2019-2020 to an estimate of \$1.3544 billion in 2020-2021 and the maximum amount of the reimbursement in a single application.

27. SCS explained that CSEPs might apply to the Government for reimbursement or direct payment of expenses on drugs/equipment/services procured from HA, which was a part of the Government's contractual obligation to provide medical benefits for CSEPs. The largest proportion of such expenses was on self-financed drugs. He said that the increasing trend of the reimbursement expenditure was attributed to the rise of expenditure on drugs of HA. DSCS supplemented that to be eligible for reimbursement or direct payment of expenses on drugs/equipment/services, such expenses must

form an essential part of the medical treatment as prescribed and certified by the attending HA doctors on medical grounds but were either chargeable by or not available in HA. The targeted therapy drugs were reimbursable and the Administration did not have the breakdown of the amount for each application. She explained that the reimbursement of medical fee and hospital charges was demand-driven, the amount of which was likely to be on a rise given the increasing number of CSEPs and life expectancies.

28. Expressing concern about the public perception of the privilege of CSEPs for reimbursement of self-financed drugs/equipment, Mr SHIU Ka-fai proposed that the expenses on some expensive drugs should be borne by medical insurance. SCS replied that the public could apply for medical fee waiver through various funding schemes such as the Samaritan Fund or Community Care Fund and no one would be denied adequate medical care due to lack of means. The reimbursement of medical expenses was the established arrangement under the medical benefits for CSEPs. As for covering expenses on drugs by medical insurance, SCS said that the Administration had to carefully examine the costs and benefits of taking out medical insurance for CSEPs.

29. Ms Elizabeth QUAT asked whether CSEPs were eligible for the Special Support Scheme for chronic disease patients of HA residing in Guangdong Province with subsidized medical consultation at the University of Hong Kong-Shenzhen Hospital ("HKU-SZH") under the COVID-19 epidemic. She also enquired whether the relevant medical fee subsidy was capped at RMB 2,000.

30. SCS replied that CSEPs were eligible for the Special Support Scheme and they were not required to co-pay RMB 100 as a consultation fee for each designated outpatient service at HKU-SZH. The medical fee subsidy for CSEPs was also capped at RMB 2,000 at HKU-SZH.

Taking out medical insurance for civil servants

31. Mr CHAN Chun-ying enquired about the number of CSEPs who were covered by personal medical insurance, and whether the Administration would encourage CSEPs to take out such insurance and if so, whether the Administration would consider providing incentives, e.g. subsidizing the premium and providing tax deduction, for CSEPs to take out medical insurance.

32. SCS replied that the Administration did not have statistics about CSEPs who had been covered by personal medical insurance. The

Administration, as a facilitator, had been introducing certain medical insurance plans to civil servants for their consideration. The Administration was also encouraging civil servants, as well as the public, to take out medical insurance provided under the Voluntary Health Insurance Scheme for better retirement protection.

33. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan opined that the persistent manpower shortage in public healthcare sector made it difficult for the Administration to meet the increasing demand of CSEPs for medical services. She suggested that the Administration should take out medical insurance for CSEPs in relation to the provision of general out-patient services and maintain the provision of hospitalization services in HA hospitals for CSEPs. This would be a form of public-private-partnership in the provision of medical benefits for CSEPs. In this connection, she asked whether the Administration had studied the pros and cons of taking out medical insurance for CSEPs.

34. Sharing Dr CHIANG Lai-wan's views and suggestions, Mr LUK Chung-hung and Mr Holden CHOW considered that taking out medical insurance could provide more choices for civil servants and help reduce the burden on the local public healthcare system. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung said that the Administration should consider whether the existing provision of medical benefits for all of the some 560 000 CSEPs was cost effective, as there might be just a portion of them using the medical services.

35. SCS advised that the medical services provided by HA and DH for CSEPs were comprehensive. In considering whether the Administration would take out medical insurance for CSEPs, various factors had to be considered thoroughly and carefully such as the quality of the medical services provided through medical insurance, utilization of medical insurance for funding medical treatment and financial implications, before deciding whether or not to take out medical insurance for CSEPs. He emphasized that the Administration had to carefully assess the costs and benefits of taking out medical insurance for CSEPs. The Administration was also aware of the concern that civil servants appointed on or after 1 June 2000 would cease to enjoy civil service medical benefits upon retirement.

36. Ms Elizabeth QUAT pointed out that representatives of the Police Force had suggested that the Administration should take out medical insurance for police officers as there was still a tension between healthcare staff of public hospitals and police officers. She asked whether the Administration would consider any alternative options of

medical benefits for police officers and their family members. Mr Holden CHOW also expressed concern over whether the police officers could receive appropriate and professional care and treatment in public hospitals.

37. In response, SCS emphasized that the Administration had been maintaining close communication with disciplined services and HA on the matter, and the management of HA had taken a very serious view on the matter. He supplemented that there were 628 police officers injured while on duty from June 2019 to October 2020. CSB would keep communicating with the Police Force and HA to ensure civil servants, including those working in all disciplined forces, to receive appropriate treatment and follow-up care when needed. He reiterated that the Administration had to consider the various factors mentioned in paragraph 35 above in deciding whether or not to take out medical insurance for CSEPs.

Post-retirement medical protection for civil servants appointed on or after 1 June 2000

38. The Chairman expressed concern that civil servants appointed on or after 1 June 2000 on the New Permanent Terms ("NPT") of Appointment would cease to enjoy civil service medical benefits upon retirement from the civil service. Noting that the number of such civil servants constituted half of the entire civil service, the Chairman enquired about the feasibility of providing post-retirement medical benefits for civil servants on NPT.

39. SCS explained that a series of civil service reforms were carried out in the civil service in late-1990s, including revision of the terms and conditions of service for civil servants, such as their medical and dental benefits, leave entitlement and retirement schemes. SCS stated that it was impossible to revert to the old terms and conditions of service to enable civil servants appointed after 1 June 2000 to enjoy the same medical and dental benefits as those appointed before that date. He pointed out that the terms of provident fund for civil servants on NPT were actually better than those of the Mandatory Provident Fund. The Administration was aware of the concerns of the civil servants on NPT, who constituted almost 60% of the entire civil service, and would explore the feasibility of enabling civil servants to be provided with some forms of medical support on NPT after their retirement, e.g. encouraging serving civil servants to take out medical insurance provided under the Voluntary Health Insurance Scheme.

IV. Non-civil service contract staff

(LC Paper No. -- Paper provided by the
CB(4)116/20-21(04) Administration

LC Paper No. -- Updated background brief
CB(4)116/20-21(05) prepared by the Legislative
Council Secretariat

Other relevant papers

LC Paper No. -- Letter dated 22 October
CB(4)46/20-21(01) 2020 from Hon IP Kin-yuen
(*Chinese version only*) and the Administration's
and LC Paper No. response dated 6 November
CB(4)116/20-21(06) 2020)

40. The Chairman drew members' attention to the letter dated 22 October 2020 (LC Paper No. CB(4)46/20-21(01)) from Mr IP Kin-yuen regarding the employment of non-civil service contract ("NCSC") staff and the Administration's response (LC Paper No. CB(4)116/20-21(06)). At the invitation of the Chairman, SCS briefed members on the latest position of the employment of NCSC staff by B/Ds, details of which were set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. 116/20-21(04)).

Recruiting non-civil service contract staff as civil servants

41. The Chairman, the Deputy Chairman, Mr LUK Chung-hung and Mr LEUNG Che-cheung expressed concern over the long tenure of NCSC staff in the Government.

42. The Chairman pointed out that the number of NCSC staff had consistently stood at around 10 000 in the past few years. Noting that as at 30 June 2020, 2015 NCSC staff had worked in the Government for more than 10 years, and 995 out of the 3 340 full-time NCSC staff with five years or more of continuous service were engaged in different NCSC positions within the same department for over five years, he criticized the Administration for engaging NCSC staff for cutting costs without protecting their interests, career prospects and job security and opined that the above situation was undesirable.

43. SCS advised that it was the Government's policy to provide B/Ds with a flexible means of employment to respond promptly to the

changing operational and service needs. The NCSC positions should be ones that meet one or more of the criteria set out in paragraphs 2(a) to 2(d) of the Administration's paper. That said, B/Ds would review the employment situation of their NCSC staff from time to time and, where appropriate, seek to replace the NCSC positions with sufficiently long-term operational and service needs by civil service posts. For example, LCSD had reviewed the frontline and support service of public libraries and reduced the number of NCSC staff by 75%. DH had, in the light of a gradual change in the mode of service delivery, reduced its NCSC staff for provision of health surveillance services at immigration control points by 78% when compared with the peak. The number of NCSC staff of the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency was also lowered due to the implementation of the Integrated Student Financial Assistance System in April 2020. From 2017-2018 to 2020-2021, the Administration had increased the civil service establishment by around 11%, B/Ds were therefore allowed to replace more NCSC positions by civil service posts.

44. In response to the Deputy Chairman's question about the reasons for the long tenure of the 3 340 NCSC staff mentioned in paragraph 42 above, SCS explained that out of these 3 340 NCSC staff, about 30% of them had been engaged in different NCSC positions within the same department; 23% of them were engaged to cope with operational and service needs where the mode of delivery of the service was under review or likely to be changed; some of them were engaged to meet time-limited, seasonal or ever changing operational and service needs; and some of them were engaged for tapping the latest expertise in a particular area of the labour market.

45. The Deputy Chairman enquired whether the Administration would set a timetable for offering civil service posts to the above 3 340 NCSC staff. He was also concerned that the success rate for NCSC staff in applying for civil service posts was not high and asked whether the Administration would, with a view to retaining experienced staff, provide training for NCSC staff with long years of continuous service to enhance their success rate in applying for civil service posts. Sharing the Deputy Chairman's view, Mr LUK Chung-hung opined that the Administration should arrange NCSC staff with specific professional knowledge/occupation skills to join the civil service to retain expertise.

46. SCS said that appointments to the civil service were based on the principle of open and fair competition. NCSC staff should generally enjoy a competitive edge over other applicants when applying for civil service posts because of their working experience. Permanent Secretary

for the Civil Service added that the duties of civil servants and NCSC staff were different. While NCSC staff were mainly responsible for performing specific tasks to meet certain operational and service needs, civil servants played an important role in supporting the Government's administration and hence their roles and functions were more comprehensive. NCSC staff who were interested to join the civil service must meet the academic qualifications, experience and other basic entry requirements of the civil service posts concerned.

47. Both the Chairman and Mr LUK Chung-hung urged the Administration to review the NCSC Scheme and the employment situation of NCSC staff to facilitate the replacement of NCSC positions by civil service posts. Whilst welcoming the Administration's initiative to replace the positions of NCSC staff who had worked in B/Ds for a long period of time by civil service posts, Mr LEUNG Che-cheung was worried whether such arrangement might give rise to financial implications to the Government in relation to salaries and allowances. Taking into account the current economic downturn, he asked whether the Administration would consider outsourcing the public services provided by NCSC staff for the purpose of budget control.

48. SCS replied that it was inevitable for B/Ds to engage a certain number of NCSC staff to meet operational and service needs that were time-limited or seasonal in nature or subject to market fluctuations. In view of the existing economic situation, the Administration would exercise stringent control over the growth of civil service establishment in 2021-2022 to maintain the sustainability of public finance. B/Ds might thus have less room to replace NCSC positions with civil service posts. Nevertheless, the Government would allow an increase in the civil service establishment where justified.

49. In response to the question raise by Mr LEUNG Che-cheung regarding the distribution of the monthly wages of NCSC staff, SCS advised that as at 30 June 2020, the monthly salary of around 43% and 37% of the full-time NCSC staff ranged from \$16,000 - \$29,999 and below \$16,000 respectively, only 20% of full-time NCSC staff earned \$30,000 or above per month. At Mr LEUNG's request, SCS undertook to provide a breakdown of the employment situation of the 3 340 full-time NCSC staff mentioned in paragraph 42 above by their monthly salary ranges and by B/Ds.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration's response was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)309/20-21(01) on 21 December 2020.)

Employment of non-civil service contract staff by certain Bureaux/Departments

The Hongkong Post

50. Whilst understanding that both the Census and Statistics Department and the Registration and Electoral Office ("REO") had to employ NCSC staff for preparing the 2021 Population Census and for supporting election-related work respectively, Mr LEUNG Che-cheung sought explanation for the large number of full-time NCSC staff employed by HKP.

51. Assistant Postmaster General (Corporate Development) ("APG") explained that HKP employed NCSC staff mainly to: (a) meet service needs that required staff to work less than the conditioned hours required of civil servants; (b) meet service needs that were subject to market fluctuations; and (c) tap the expertise in the market that was not readily available in the civil service. HKP would regularly review the employment situation of its NCSC staff to ascertain the need to replace the NCSC positions with established long-term service needs by civil service posts.

52. Pointing out that about 24% of HKP's workforce (1 697 out of about 7 000 staff) were NCSC staff, the Chairman questioned the robustness of such manpower arrangement and expressed grave concern about HKP's prevailing fiscal position and long-term fiscal sustainability.

53. APG advised that HKP was operating under the trading fund mode. This arrangement allowed HKP to manage its resources in a flexible manner to better achieve cost-effectiveness, and to formulate appropriate business strategies in response to changes in the operating environment so as to provide customers with quality services. HKP would continue to explore and implement measures to contain expenditure, increase revenue and enhance productivity to improve its financial performance.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department

54. Mr LUK Chung-hung said that NCSC seasonal lifeguards accounted for a significant portion of LCSD's NCSC staff, but the salaries of these lifeguards were less than the mid-point salaries of comparable ranks in the civil service. As a result, there was shortage of NCSC seasonal lifeguards which led to closure of some public swimming

pools and gazetted beaches during swimming season. He asked how the Administration would address the problem.

55. SCS advised that to his understanding, LCSD had been increasing the number of civil service lifeguards for the past few years. The ratio between civil service lifeguards and NCSC seasonal lifeguards in LCSD had increased from 60:40 in 2016 to 80:20 in 2020.

(At 12:39 pm, the Chairman decided to extend the meeting for 15 minutes beyond the appointed end-time to allow sufficient time for discussion.)

Non-civil service contract positions created in the Government under the Anti-epidemic Fund's Job Creation Scheme

56. In response to the questions raised by the Deputy Chairman and Mr Holden CHOW regarding the NCSC positions created in the Government under the Anti-epidemic Fund's Job Creation Scheme, SCS advised that CSB was responsible for coordinating the implementation of the Scheme with other B/Ds, while individual B/Ds would be responsible for creating the time-limited jobs in the Government. As at end October 2020, around 14 700 jobs had been created in the Government under the Scheme, 4 480 of these jobs were NCSC positions and were not counted in the number of full-time NCSC staff mentioned in the Administration's paper.

Oath-taking arrangements for non-civil service contract staff

57. Mr SHIU Ka-fai asked whether the Administration would require NCSC staff to take the oath/make the declaration to confirm to uphold to the Basic Law ("BL") and pledge allegiance to the HKSAR Government.

58. SCS advised that all staff who were directly employed by the Government had the duty and responsibility to uphold BL and bear allegiance to HKSAR in principle. He added that on 12 October 2020, CSB had issued a circular to all B/Ds to promulgate the oath-taking requirement for appointment to the civil service on or after 1 July 2020. Under that requirement, all civil servants appointed on or after 1 July 2020 must take an oath/make a declaration that they would uphold BL, bear allegiance to HKSAR and be responsible to the HKSAR Government. Around 2 600 new recruits to the civil service had taken the oath/signed the declaration and there was no refusal case. Upon consulting the major civil service organizations, CSB would finalize and announce the details of the oath-taking arrangements for other serving

civil servants in due course. Whilst taking the view that in principle NCSC staff should also be subject to the oath-taking requirement, he would deal with oath-taking by civil servants first before considering how to deal with the issue of oath-taking by NCSC staff.

Other concerns

59. Mr Holden CHOW pointed out that some of the electoral staff appointed by REO for the 2019 District Council Ordinary Election were not familiar with the electoral legislation/guidelines/procedures. He asked whether the Administration had looked into the matter to avoid recurrence of the problem.

60. The Chief Electoral Officer said that electoral duties in the polling stations were performed by electoral staff who were civil servants, while NCSC staff only performed supporting duties outside the polling stations. Having considered the complaints received from the public in relation to the 2019 District Council Ordinary Election, REO would review the relevant manpower resources and enhance the training programme for electoral staff in future.

V. Any other business

61. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:59 pm.