

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(4)681/20-21
(These meeting notes have been
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB4/PL/PS

Panel on Public Service

**Notes of informal meeting for policy briefing by videoconferencing
held on Monday, 28 December 2020, at 11:15 am**

- Members Participating** : Hon KWOK Wai-keung, JP (Chairman)
Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, GBS, JP
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon Steven HO Chun-yin, BBS
Hon Elizabeth QUAT, BBS, JP
Hon Martin LIAO Cheung-kong, GBS, JP
Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, SBS, JP
Hon SHIU Ka-fai, JP
Dr Hon Pierre CHAN
Hon CHAN Chun-ying, JP
Hon LUK Chung-hung, JP
Hon Vincent CHENG Wing-shun, MH, JP
Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen, BBS, JP
- Members absent** : Hon CHAN Hak-kan, BBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, SBS, MH, JP
- Public officers Attending** : Mr Patrick NIP, JP
Secretary for the Civil Service
Civil Service Bureau
- Mrs Ingrid YEUNG, JP
Permanent Secretary for the Civil Service
Civil Service Bureau

Mrs Angelina CHEUNG, JP
Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service 1
Civil Service Bureau

Miss Ann CHAN
Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service 2
Civil Service Bureau

Mr Gary POON, JP
Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service 3
Civil Service Bureau

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

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

Ms Denise LAU
Clerical Assistant (4)3

**Briefing by the Secretary for the Civil Service on the Chief Executive's
2020 Policy Address**

[LC Paper No. CB(4)319/20-21(01)]

(Index of proceedings of the meeting is attached at the **Appendix**.)

The Chairman reminded members that as this meeting was an informal meeting, the Rules of Procedure of the Legislative Council would not apply and the privileges and immunities provided by the Legislative Council (Powers and Privileges) Ordinance (Cap. 382) would not be available to the participants.

2. At the invitation of the Chairman, Secretary for the Civil Service briefed members on the policy measures relating to the Civil Service Bureau featured in the Chief Executive's 2020 Policy Address and Policy Address Supplement as set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(4)319/20-21(01)).

Civil service establishment and the deployment of manpower resources

3. Members in general welcomed the Administration's proposal to have zero growth in the civil service in 2021-2022 to contain the establishment expenditure under the current economic situation. Some members enquired about the measures to sustain the civil service morale and the effectiveness and efficiency of public services while a freeze was imposed on the growth in the civil service. There was suggestion that the Administration should re-engineer the structure and operations of bureaux and departments ("B/Ds") and redeploy staff to B/Ds with manpower shortage.

4. The Administration advised that B/Ds were encouraged to enhance effectiveness through re-prioritization, internal redeployment and streamlining of work processes. Innovation and technology would also be used to advance the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of public services.

5. Some members raised concern about the high wastage rate of Administrative Officers in recent years and the huge difference (about 10 000 posts) between the establishment and strength of the civil service. They enquired about the measures to be taken by the Administration to address the situation.

6. The Administration explained that according to the exit survey, retirement was the primary reason for departure of civil servants, while some officers resigned from the civil service due to health issues, family reasons or taking up jobs in the private sector etc. As regards the gap between the establishment and strength of the civil service, it was mainly due to the lead time required for conducting recruitment exercises. The Administration assured members that it would keep in view the recruitment and wastage situation in B/Ds.

7. Some members were worried that the frontline personnel to help counter the Coronavirus Disease 2019 ("COVID-19") epidemic, in particular those who were involved in taking enforcement actions under anti-epidemic regulations, was insufficient. There were suggestions that the Administration should engage disciplined services staff or solicit assistance from the Hong Kong Garrison of the Chinese People's Liberation Army to perform the

anti-epidemic work.

8. The Administration pointed out that B/Ds had been joining hands to fight against COVID-19. For example, the Hong Kong Police Force, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the Labour Department had conducted joint operations to remind the public to comply with anti-epidemic regulations and measures. Volunteers comprising off-duty and retired civil servants had also assisted in carrying out non-medical and non-professional anti-epidemic tasks. The Administration would review the manpower requirements for the anti-epidemic measures, and make redeployment arrangements or seek additional resources as and when necessary.

Oath-taking/declaration arrangements for civil servants

9. Although the Administration had required all civil servants to take an oath/make a declaration to uphold the Basic Law ("BL"), bear allegiance to Hong Kong Special Administrative Region ("HKSAR") and be responsible to the HKSAR Government, members cast doubt on how the Administration could verify the allegiance of those civil servants who held foreign passports. In this connection, members urged the Administration to critically examine whether civil servants should be allowed to hold foreign passports.

10. The Administration clarified that BL did not stipulate any requirement on the nationality of civil servants or the passports they held. Permanent residents of HKSAR who were not of Chinese nationality or who hold foreign passports could be public servants serving in B/Ds. In fact, according to BL, all public servants of the HKSAR Government must be dedicated to their duties and be responsible to the HKSAR Government, regardless of their nationalities or the passports they hold, it was therefore justifiable to require all civil servants to take an oath/make a declaration to swear to uphold BL and bear allegiance to HKSAR. As regards whether civil servants should be allowed to hold foreign passports, the Administration was open to public's views.

11. In response to members' concerns about the mechanism and procedures for dealing with civil servants who neglected or refused to take the oath/sign the declaration, the Administration said that negligence or refusal to take the oath or to duly sign and return the declaration by a civil servant would cast serious doubts on his or her willingness to take up the basic duties of civil servants and the officer's commitment to adhere to the core values of the civil service. The Government would, with regard to the specific circumstances of each case, decide whether to initiate action in accordance with the mechanisms under the Public Service (Administration) Order or the relevant disciplined

services legislation as appropriate to terminate the service of the officer. The officer concerned would be given an opportunity to make representations in the process. The Administration would consider the representations and make a decision on the continuous employment or otherwise of the officer concerned. For cases involving grades and ranks falling under the purview of the Public Service Commission, advice of the Commission would be sought before a decision was made.

12. Members sought examples of the improper conduct which constituted a breach of the oath/declaration. Citing the instances of civil servants organizing anti-government activities, a member expressed dissatisfaction towards the Administration's handling on these cases and questioned whether the Administration would strictly impose sanctions against these civil servants and strengthen the civil service disciplinary mechanism in this regard.

13. The Administration advised that improper conduct which constituted a breach of the oath/declaration might take many different forms and could not be set out exhaustively. That said, a person who advocated or supported "Hong Kong independence", refused to recognize the People's Republic of China's sovereignty over Hong Kong and the exercise of the sovereignty, solicited intervention by foreign or external forces in HKSAR's affairs, or carried out other activities endangering national security would not be genuinely upholding BL or bearing allegiance to HKSAR. The Administration also advised, if a civil servant committed a misconduct which also involved a breach of the oath/declaration, the case would, like all misconduct cases, be dealt with according to the disciplinary mechanism, civil service rules and regulations. The Administration would elaborate the content of the oath/declaration and what constituted a breach of the oath/declaration upon introduction of the oath-taking/declaration requirement for serving civil servants, and planned to produce a short video to introduce the content of the oath/declaration to civil servants in a clear and lucid manner.

The provision of training and development for civil servants

National studies training for civil servants

14. Members enquired about the measures to enhance the national studies training for civil servants at different levels. They suggested that the Administration should:

- (a) extend the relevant training organized by Mainland institutions to officers at the level equivalent to Executive Officer or above;

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- (b) reserve more training places for civil servants in junior ranks;
- (c) make use of information technology to provide training on national studies for civil servants;
- (d) regard civil servants' participation in national studies training as one of the considerations in the assessment for promotion; and
- (e) in addition to in-house trainers, engage other institutions/organizations to organize relevant training programmes for civil servants.

15. The Administration replied that the Civil Service Training and Development Institute organized national studies programmes for civil servants at various levels every year. Apart from local seminars, the Civil Service Training and Development Institute had been working with various institutions and universities in the Mainland to run relevant training programmes and thematic visits. Various types of learning resources were also provided to civil servants through e-learning platform. In addition, B/Ds would arrange for their staff to attend national studies programmes or join thematic visits to the Mainland to cater for their job-specific requirements. The Administration would further increase the number of training places in national studies programmes and extend the civil service staff exchange programme between Hong Kong and the Mainland.

Admin 16. The Administration was requested to provide information on the number of training places for national studies training of civil servants, and the timeframe for civil servants to attend the training concerned.

The establishment of the Civil Service College

17. In response to a member's question about the functions of the Civil Service College, the Administration advised that the College with upgraded training facilities would help enhance the training for civil servants. The training programmes provided by the College would focus on enhancing training for civil servants in areas such as national studies and BL, leadership development; innovation and technology applications; and awareness of international affairs etc. The Administration also advised that the Administration had identified a site in Kwun Tong for setting up the College in a composite development. Subject to funding approval by the Legislative Council, the construction of the composite development (including the College) was expected to commence in 2022.

Government short-term internship programmes

18. Regarding a member's question about the effectiveness of the Government's short-term internship programmes in attracting young people to join the Government, the Administration replied that the programmes provided students with opportunities to gain understanding and knowledge of government operations and different areas of work of the public services. Enthusiastic responses were received, and some participants of the internship programmes had subsequently joined the civil service.

Grade structure review ("GSR") for the disciplined services grades

19. Members expressed grave concern about the progress of the GSR for the disciplined services grades and requested the Administration to complete the GSR expeditiously before the prorogation of the Sixth Legislative Council.

20. The Administration advised that the Standing Committee on Disciplined Services Salaries and Conditions of Service and the Standing Committee on Directorate Salaries and Conditions of Service had consulted the management and staff side of the disciplined services to gain a better understanding of their latest work and manpower situation and listen to their views. The completion of the GSR was delayed due to the outbreak of COVID-19. The above Committees aimed at submitting the findings and recommendations to the Chief Executive by mid-2021. The Administration would keep in view the progress of the GSR and would follow-up as soon as possible upon receipt of the findings and recommendations from the two Committees.

Provision of civil service medical and dental benefits

21. Noting that the pilot scheme on Civil Service Chinese Medicine Clinics was overwhelmingly well-received by civil service eligible persons, a member asked when the Administration would expand the provision of the Chinese Medicine services. The Administration replied that feedback from service users was being collected by questionnaire and the review of the pilot scheme was planned for completion in 2021. It would map out the way forward of the pilot scheme and explore increasing the service capacity of the Chinese Medicine services to cater for the significant demand of civil service eligible persons.

22. In response to a member's enquiry on whether the Administration would review the medical benefits for civil servants employed under the civil service new entry system, the Administration replied that any changes in the

policy relating to civil service medical benefits might give rise to significant financial implications, hence the Administration had to make thorough and careful consideration. That said, the Administration would strive to enhance the medical benefits for civil servants.

Extension of service of civil servants

23. A member asked whether the Administration would further extend the option period for civil servants who joined the Government between 1 June 2000 and 31 May 2015 to choose to retire at the age of 65 (for civilian grades) or 60 (for disciplined services grades, regardless of ranks), so that more eligible civil servants could opt for the option under the existing economic downturn.

24. The Administration pointed out that the option period had ended in mid-September 2020. At the end of the two-year option period, some 47 000 civil servants (i.e. about 83% of those eligible) had opted for the new retirement age. Given that the retirement wave of civil servants was approaching, there was an imminent need to work out the succession planning in the civil service. Further extension of the option period might hinder B/Ds from making plans in accordance with their specific manpower requirement.

The Job Creation Scheme

25. Members sought information on the jobs created under the Job Creation Scheme and the timetable of the recruitment exercise. Taking into account the worsening unemployment situation caused by COVID-19, they asked whether the Administration would consider creating more jobs under the Scheme and when the recruitment exercises for the jobs created under the Scheme would be completed.

26. The Administration advised that nearly 30 000 jobs had been created for people of different skill sets and academic qualifications under the Job Creation Scheme, about half of the jobs were created in the Government and the other half in the non-governmental sector. Junior positions such as technical and non-skilled workers, cleansing and supporting staff and staff for carrying out COVID-19 related duties were created in the Government. B/Ds had also engaged public or quasi-government bodies, professional bodies and trade associations under their respective sectors to formulate the plan of job creation in the non-governmental sector. In addition, the Chief Executive announced in her 2020 Policy Address that more sector-specific job opportunities, say in information technology industry, creative industries, property management industry and legal profession, would be created particularly for young people graduating in recent years. The Administration

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aimed to fill all the 30 000 time-limited jobs within 2021.

Implementation of five-day week in the Government

27. Expressing concern that about 25% of the civil servants were working on a non-five-day week ("FDW") pattern, a member enquired whether any measures were in place to migrate more civil servants to FDW pattern. The Administration replied that B/Ds were encouraged to explore the feasibility of trial schemes in a pragmatic manner in order to facilitate the migration of more staff to FDW.

Enactment of legislation to prohibit acts of insulting public officers

28. In response to a member's question on the progress of the study on the enactment of legislation to prohibit acts of insulting public officers, the Administration advised that the Security Bureau was studying the issue.

29. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:07 pm.

Council Business Division 4
Legislative Council Secretariat
26 March 2021

**Proceedings of the informal meeting for policy briefing
by videoconferencing of the Panel on Public Service
on Monday, 28 December 2020, at 11:15 am**

Time marker	Speaker	Subject(s)	Action required
Briefing by the Secretary for the Civil Service on the Chief Executive's 2020 Policy Address			
000000– 000230	Chairman	Meeting arrangements	
000231– 000950	Administration	Briefing by the Administration	
000951– 001559	Chairman Mr Vincent CHENG Administration	Job Creation Scheme Civil service establishment and the deployment of manpower resources	
001600 – 002741	Chairman Mrs Regina IP Administration	Civil service establishment and the deployment of manpower resources Oath-taking/declaration arrangements for civil servants Grade structure review ("GSR") for the disciplined services grades	
002742 – 003635	Chairman Ms Elizabeth QUAT Administration	Oath-taking/declaration arrangements for civil servants GSR for the disciplined services grades Enactment of legislation to prohibit acts of insulting public officers Civil service establishment and the deployment of manpower resources	
003636 – 004413	Chairman Mr Tony TSE Administration	Civil service establishment and the deployment of manpower resources Performance management of the civil service Provision of training and development for civil servants	
004414 – 005515	Chairman Mr CHAN Chun-ying Administration	Civil service establishment and the deployment of manpower resources Oath-taking/declaration arrangements for civil servants Provision of training and development for civil servants	

Time marker	Speaker	Subject(s)	Action required
		Extension of service of civil servants	
005516 – 010345	Chairman Mr Steven HO Administration	Handling of disciplinary matters of civil servants Civil service establishment and the deployment of manpower resources	
010346 – 010903	Chairman Dr CHIANG Lai-wan Administration	Provision of training and development for civil servants	
010904 – 011541	Chairman Deputy Chairman Administration	GSR for the disciplined services grades Provision of civil service medical and dental benefits Job Creation Scheme Civil service establishment and the deployment of manpower resources Oath-taking/declaration arrangements for civil servants	
011542 – 012344	Chairman Mr Jeffrey LAM Administration	Job Creation Scheme Civil service establishment and the deployment of manpower resources Provision of assistance to Hong Kong citizens who were stranded overseas due to the boarder control measures in relation to the Coronavirus Disease 2019	
012345 – 012903	Chairman Mr LUK Chung-hung Administration	Implementation of five-day week in the Government Oath-taking/declaration arrangements for civil servants Provision of training and development for civil servants (The Chairman directed to extend the meeting to 1:00 pm.)	
012904 – 013751	Chairman Mr Martin LIAO Administration	Civil service establishment and the deployment of manpower resources	

Time marker	Speaker	Subject(s)	Action required
		Oath-taking/declaration arrangements for civil servants	
013752 – 014425	Chairman Mr SHIU Ka-fai Administration	Provision of training and development for civil servants	
014426 – 015201	Chairman Administration	GSR for the disciplined services grades Provision of training and development for civil servants Civil service establishment and the deployment of manpower resources (The Chairman directed that the meeting be extended until the completion of the discussion on the item.)	
015202 – 015221	Chairman	Concluding remarks	