

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(4)983/20-21
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by the Administration)

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Panel on Public Service

**Minutes of meeting by videoconferencing
held on Wednesday, 17 February 2021, at 11:00 am
in Conference Room 2A of the Legislative Council Complex**

- Members present** : Hon KWOK Wai-keung, JP (Chairman)
Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon Steven HO Chun-yin, BBS
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, SBS, MH, JP
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 Tony TSE Wai-chuen, BBS, JP
- Member absent** : Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, GBS, JP
- Member attending** : Hon Holden CHOW Ho-ding
- Public officers attending** : **Agenda item III**
Mr Patrick NIP, JP
Secretary for the Civil Service

Mrs Angelina CHEUNG, JP
Acting Permanent Secretary for the Civil Service

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

Agenda item IV

Mr Patrick NIP, JP
Secretary for the Civil Service

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

Ms Betsy LAI
Principal Assistant Secretary for the Civil
Service (Training and Development)

Ms Janice TAM
Assistant Principal Training Officer
Civil Service Bureau

Clerk in attendance : Ms Wendy JAN
Chief Council Secretary (4)1

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

Ms Carol WONG
Council Secretary (4)1

Mr Griffin FUNG
Legislative Assistant (4)9

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I. Information paper issued since the last regular meeting on 18 January 2021

[LC Paper No. CB(4)429/20-21(01)]

Members noted that an information paper on the use of agency workers had been issued since the last regular meeting of the Panel on Public Service ("the Panel").

(The Chairman suspended the meeting at 11:07 am for emergency repair of the webcast system. The meeting subsequently resumed at 11:13 am.)

II. Date of next meeting and items for discussion

[LC Paper Nos. CB(4)499/20-21(01) and (02)]

Items for next regular meeting

2. Members agreed that the next regular meeting would be held on 15 March 2021 to discuss the following items proposed by the Administration:

- (a) Civil service-related matters featured in the 2021-2022 Budget; and
- (b) Participation of civil servants in the fight against the Coronavirus Disease 2019 ("COVID-19") pandemic.

Items for future meetings

3. Taking into account that the item "Enactment of legislation to prohibit acts of insulting public officers" had been put on the Panel's List of outstanding items for discussion since the 2016-2017 session, Ms Elizabeth QUAT urged the Administration to provide a concrete timetable for discussing this item. Secretary for the Civil Service ("SCS") advised that he could not provide a timetable at the present stage as the study on the subject matter was being handled by the Security Bureau.

4. The Chairman and Mrs Regina IP called on the Civil Service Bureau ("CSB") to proactively and closely work with the Security Bureau to take forward the proposal of enacting legislation to prohibit acts of insulting public officers. Mrs IP added that CSB should take the lead in this matter in due course. The Administration should also consider updating relevant legislation, say the Police Force Ordinance (Cap. 232) and the Summary Offences

Ordinance (Cap. 228), to facilitate enforcement actions against acts of insulting public officers. Mr Steven HO suggested that a joint meeting with the Panel on Security should be held when the Security Bureau had completed its study on the subject matter.

5. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan reiterated her request to discuss the introduction of a performance-based merit and demerit system under the item "the Commendation schemes for civil servants and performance management of the civil service". Mr Steven HO echoed and opined that the Administration should explain to members and the public the performance management system and appraisal systems of the civil service.

6. Mr Steven HO requested the Administration to provide an update on the implementation of the requirement for civil servants to take oath or sign declaration, including the number of resignees in the civil service upon the Administration's promulgation of the oath-taking/declaration arrangements. SCS replied that the Administration would report the progress of the matter to the Panel in due course.

7. Referring to the final report of the Expert Adviser Team on the Shatin to Central Link Project, Mrs Regina IP expressed grave dissatisfaction with the Administration's failure in monitoring the implementation of the Shatin to Central Link Project by the MTR Corporation Limited in an effective manner. In this connection, the Administration was requested to provide information on the mechanism under the current civil service system for monitoring the implementation of major public works projects by public organizations, including when public officers should be made accountable and what actions would be taken against such public officers should they fail to monitor the implementation of such projects.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration's response was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)629/20-21(01) on 12 March 2021.)

III. Efforts in attracting young people to join the Government [LC Paper No. CB(4)499/20-21(03)]

8. At the invitation of the Chairman, SCS briefed members on the series of initiatives taken by the Administration in promoting job opportunities for the youth and efforts in attracting young people to join the Government, details of which were set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(4) 499/20-21(03)).

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9. Ms Elizabeth QUAT, Mr SHIU Ka-fai, Mr CHAN Chun-ying and the Chairman expressed support for the Administration to make more efforts in attracting young people to join the Government. Mr SHIU considered that such efforts could help mitigate the current unemployment situation of the youth. Mr CHAN opined that tapping the pool of young talents could bring vitality and creativity to the civil service.

Internship schemes

10. The Chairman called on the Administration to introduce more internship schemes to help identify young people with suitable calibre to join the civil service. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan echoed the Chairman's views.

11. Mr SHIU Ka-fai enquired about the number of interns who had joined the civil service upon completion of their internship and their length of service. SCS cited an example that 25 out of some 150 Administrative Officers ("AOs") appointed in the past five years were alumni of the Administrative Service Internship Programme ("ASIP"). In response to the question raised by the Deputy Chairman about the female-to-male ratio of the participants of the Administration's internship schemes in 2020-2021, SCS advised that the Administration did not have such information.

ASIP

12. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan sought information on the number of ASIP participants who had applied to join the civil service and their success rate. SCS reiterated that 25 out of some 150 AOs appointed (about 16%) in the past five years were ASIP participants. In addressing Dr CHIANG's concern that the number of ASIP participants being employed as AOs appeared to be on the low side, SCS explained that competition for the AO posts was keen and a percentage of 16% was pretty high already. In 2020 for instance, over 14 000 applications were received in the AO recruitment exercise and only 29 candidates were eventually appointed.

13. Members noted that the number of applications received for the AO positions in 2020 was much larger than the number of applications received for ASIP in the summer of 2020 (i.e. around 260 applications). Dr CHIANG Lai-wan suggested that the Administration should incentivize more young people to participate in ASIP by, for example, giving credit to ASIP participants who had outstanding performance during the internship if they subsequently applied for AO positions.

14. SCS advised that it was the Government's policy to select the most suitable candidates to fill civil service vacancies by open and fair competition. All applicants in an open recruitment exercise were assessed on the basis of their character, ability and performance, having regard to the stipulated entry requirements of the posts. He believed that ASIP participants should enjoy a competitive edge over other applicants in civil service recruitment exercises due to their internship experience in the Government.

15. Mr CHAN Chun-ying asked about the percentage of ASIP applicants who were studying abroad and the efforts made by the Administration to attract such students to join ASIP. Acting Permanent Secretary for the Civil Service ("APSCS") replied that Economic and Trade Offices had been promoting ASIP in their respective jurisdiction and the response was encouraging. However, the number of participants in ASIP had decreased in 2020 due to the COVID-19 epidemic.

16. In reply to Mrs Regina IP's suggestion on arranging placements for ASIP participants in the Economic and Trade Offices (Mainland) to facilitate their understanding of the development in the Mainland, SCS advised that the Administration had already been making such arrangement and would consider increasing the number of internship placements in the Offices. APSCS added that this placement arrangement had been cancelled in 2020 due to the COVID-19 epidemic, and would resume when the pandemic situation became stable.

STEM Internship Scheme

17. In view of the rapid technological development in the Mainland, Mrs Regina IP asked whether the Administration had invited technology companies in the Mainland, in particular those in the fields of digital economy and big data analysis, to offer placements under the STEM Internship Scheme for students studying Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics programmes.

18. APSCS replied that the pilot STEM Internship Scheme was launched by the Innovation and Technology Commission in June 2020. Over 1 000 companies and organizations participated in the Scheme last year, while some of them had arranged interns to work in their offices in the Mainland.

Internship Scheme for Students with Disabilities

19. In reply to the Deputy Chairman's enquiry on the number of interns who had joined the civil service after participating in the Internship Scheme for

Students with Disabilities, SCS advised that at least four alumni of the Scheme were appointed as civil servants (one in the rank of AO and three in the rank of Executive Officer II) through open recruitment exercises since the Scheme was launched in 2016.

Duties and responsibilities of and assistance provided to the interns

20. Referring to paragraph 3 of the Administration's paper, the Deputy Chairman asked whether interns were allowed access to all learning resources and information that were available on the Cyber Learning Centre Plus for civil servants. SCS replied that interns concerned could gain access to a range of online training materials and resources suitable for interns during the internship period.

21. Noting that some bureaux/departments ("B/Ds") would assign officers to act as mentors for interns, Mr CHAN Chun-ying enquired whether any training was provided to these civil servants to facilitate effective communication with young people. SCS advised that officers appointed as mentors were all well-experienced staff and they would share coaching experience among each other.

22. Mr CHAN Chun-ying also enquired whether the Administration had invited interns to take part in the publicity work of the Administration's campaigns with a view to making good use of their knowledge and skills in using social media. SCS advised that some participants of the internship programme for non-ethnic Chinese students were assigned to assist in the production of website and publicity materials in foreign languages.

23. Mr SHIU Ka-fai asked whether interns were required to take an oath or make a declaration to uphold the Basic Law and pledge allegiance to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. SCS explained that the oath-taking/declaration requirement for serving civil servants was promulgated in January 2021. The Administration would study the oath-taking/declaration arrangement for government contract staff, including non-civil service contract staff and interns, in due course.

Evaluation of the internship schemes

24. The Chairman and Ms Elizabeth QUAT enquired whether any measures, such as conducting questionnaire surveys, were in place to obtain interns' feedback on the internship schemes.

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25. SCS said that the Administration valued interns' views on the internship schemes. Individual B/Ds currently collected participants' feedback through different means, such as conducting questionnaire surveys, organizing experience sharing sessions and holding tea gatherings for interns. He stressed that about 16% of AOs had participated in the Administration's internship schemes prior to joining the civil service in the past five years, which reflected that such schemes were effective in attracting young people to join the Government.

26. Mrs Regina IP suggested that the Administration should consider setting up an alumni association so as to establish a communication network with the participants of the internship schemes to exchange views on ways to refine the schemes. The Chairman echoed and said that the alumni association allowed the Administration to keep track of the career development of the participants of the internship schemes. SCS advised that different internship schemes being run by B/Ds had different target groups and arrangements. He thanked members' suggestion and undertook to relay it to B/Ds for consideration.

Time-limited jobs for young people

27. Noting that more than 9 000 jobs had been created under the Job Creation Scheme for young people, Mr Martin LIAO enquired about the split of these jobs between the public and private sectors. SCS replied that while he did not have such information on hand, he could provide some examples of jobs that had been created for young people in the two sectors under the Scheme. He further advised that the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau had launched an internship programme in collaboration with the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups to create some job opportunities for young people in the telecommunications sector. The Development Bureau and the works departments under its purview had also created some short-term jobs in the architecture, surveying and landscape architecture fields for young people to work in B/Ds.

28. Mr Martin LIAO and Mr SHIU Ka-fai enquired about the progress of the recruitment exercises of the Job Creation Scheme. Mr SHIU also raised concern about the public's response to the Scheme. SCS said that the Scheme was well received by the public. As at end January 2021, around 16 000 job positions had been filled while the recruitment of the remaining job positions had already commenced or would commence shortly. The Administration would complete the recruitment exercises as soon as practicable.

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29. Taking into account the current economic downturn, Ms Elizabeth QUAT asked whether the Administration would consider extending the service period of the jobs or creating additional jobs under the Job Creation Scheme so as to alleviate the unemployment situation of the youth. SCS advised that, depending on the economic situation of Hong Kong, the public's responses to the Scheme and the resources available, the Administration might create more jobs under the Scheme or implement similar schemes in future.

Recruitment efforts in various civil service grades

30. In reply to the Chairman's question regarding the 10 000 civil service job openings created in the financial year 2020-2021 and the measures to expedite the recruitment process, SCS explained that these job openings had included new civil service posts created to take forward new initiatives of the Government as well as vacant posts arising from natural wastage. As at December 2020, the Administration had launched over 230 recruitment exercises and would expedite the recruitment process to fill the posts as far as practicable.

31. The Chairman enquired about the measures taken by the Administration to compete for talents with the business sector. Mr Martin LIAO suggested that for trawling young people with suitable calibre to join the Government, the Administration should accord priority to employing young participants of the Job Creation Scheme who had outstanding performance as civil servants. Mr SHIU Ka-fai asked whether the Administration would consider giving priority to the alumni of the Administration's internship schemes in the recruitment of civil service posts.

32. SCS reiterated that appointments to the civil service were based on the principle of open and fair competition. That said, people with prior working experience in the Government should in general enjoy a competitive edge over other applicants in civil service recruitment exercises.

Promoting civil service jobs to young people

33. Noting that the Administration had created a webpage with information on the recruitment in the civil service and short videos explaining the nature and contents of civil service jobs, the Chairman asked whether the Administration had disseminated such information to students via the career centres of local institutions. SCS replied in the positive and said that the Administration had been maintaining close communication with local

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institutions in promoting the Administration's internship schemes and the career prospects and job opportunities in the civil service.

34. Regarding the Chairman's views on the design of the Youtube channel created by the Administration on civil service jobs, SCS advised that the Youtube channel was managed by the Efficiency Office and he would convey the Chairman's views to the Office.

35. With a view to helping young people map out their life planning at an early stage, Dr CHIANG Lai-wan suggested that the Administration should invite retired civil servants to give talks to senior secondary students to enhance their understanding of the roles and responsibilities of civil servants. SCS noted Dr CHIANG's suggestion and advised that the Administration had launched a mentoring scheme for secondary school students, under which students were provided with job shadowing opportunities in B/Ds.

36. Mrs Regina IP considered that the Administration should remind the young people who joined the civil service that they must be dedicated to their duties and be responsible to the People's Republic of China and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. SCS affirmed that it was essential for civil servants to acquire an accurate understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The Administration would further enhance relevant training for new recruits in this regard.

IV. Update on establishing the Civil Service College
(LC Paper Nos. CB(4)499/20-21(04) and (05))

37. SCS briefed members on the progress of CSB in establishing the Civil Service College ("the College"), including the progress in taking forward the Kwun Tong composite development project to provide long-term accommodation for the College, upgrading the existing facilities of the Civil Service Training and Development Institute in the North Point Government Offices to tie in with the plan to establish the College in 2021, and enhancing training for civil servants on the software front.

National studies training for civil servants

38. Noting that the Administration had incorporated topics relating to "The Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region" ("the National Security Law") into the current Basic Law courses for new recruits, Mr Martin LIAO enquired about the number of lesson hours spent on teaching the National Security Law

and how the Administration could enable new recruits to have an accurate understanding of the concept behind the National Security Law.

39. SCS advised that the Administration was in the course of reviewing the national studies and Basic Law training for civil servants, and would increase the lesson hours of the training courses and enrich the coverage on topics on the National Security Law. Such topics would cover, for example, the importance and rationale of the National Security Law, and the broader concept of national security which encompassed a wide range of areas such as ecological security, financial security and technology security.

40. The Deputy Chairman asked whether new recruits would be assessed to ensure their understanding of national affairs after attending the National Studies Foundation Course. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan and Mr Holden CHOW shared similar view that the Administration should take into account the assessment result of individual officers in determining their salary adjustment and promotion.

41. SCS responded that, to complement the development of the College, the Administration had been reviewing the content of the national studies training for new recruits, and would explore the feasibility of assessing their feedback and understanding of the course contents after they had attended the relevant training course. Apart from organizing training courses or seminars in Hong Kong, the Administration also planned to organize visits in the Mainland, including the Mainland municipalities in the Greater Bay Area, for these officers so as to deepen their understanding of national affairs.

42. Regarding Mr Tony TSE's enquiry about the collaboration with Mainland institutions in organizing national studies training courses for civil servants, SCS advised that the Administration had been collaborating with nine Mainland institutions to run national studies programmes in the Mainland. The number of training places and collaborating institutions would be further increased to allow more civil servants to attend such training courses in the Mainland. The Administration would also enhance the content of the visits to the Mainland and extend the staff exchange programmes with the Mainland to the municipalities in the Greater Bay Area.

43. Noting that only middle and senior-level and directorate civil servants were selected to attend training programmes in the Mainland, the Chairman suggested that the Administration should organize more local national studies programmes and invite academics from Mainland institutions as speakers of these programmes so as to enable civil servants at various levels to acquire knowledge about the developments in the Mainland. SCS responded that the

Administration had all along invited Mainland experts or scholars to give talks to civil servants at various levels in Hong Kong from time to time, and would continue to do so. Meanwhile, in view of the COVID-19 epidemic, the Administration had stepped up the efforts of arranging on-line talks or webinars by Mainland experts or scholars for civil servants.

Impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on training for civil servants

44. Mr Martin LIAO enquired whether the COVID-19 epidemic had affected the provision of national studies training for civil servants, especially those training programmes which were held in the Mainland. The Chairman asked whether the number of such training programmes had reduced due to the COVID-19 epidemic. He also asked whether the Administration had made use of online technologies to deliver training programmes to civil servants.

45. SCS advised that due to the epidemic, training programmes in the Mainland had to be held up, and some of the local training programmes had to be conducted online instead. The Administration had capitalized on this opportunity to promote e-learning, and had pro-actively made use of the web-based learning portal, i.e. Cyber Learning Centre Plus, to provide training resources and learning materials to civil servants. The number of page views of Cyber Learning Centre Plus in 2020 was about 6.6 million and had increased by 40% as compared with that in 2019. On the front of national studies, for example, the Administration had collaborated with Tsinghua University to provide online lectures on national affairs for middle and senior-level civil servants with topics relating to economic development, international affairs, innovation and technology, culture and history of our country. For the training programmes in the Mainland, he said that the Administration looked forward to their resumption as soon as possible when the epidemic situation in Hong Kong was under control and normal cross-border travel between Hong Kong and the Mainland gradually resumed.

(At 12:35 pm, the Chairman decided to extend the meeting for 15 minutes beyond the appointed end-time to allow sufficient time for discussion.)

Civil Service Training Advisory Board

46. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan enquired about the composition of the Civil Service Training Advisory Board ("the Advisory Board"). SCS advised that the Advisory Board comprised academics, human resource management experts, professionals with rich experience in public administration and government officials.

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47. Noting from paragraph 8 of the Administration's paper that the Advisory Board had set up four working groups to examine four key areas of training for civil servants, the Deputy Chairman enquired about the work progress of the working groups. SCS responded that the Advisory Board had set up four working groups to examine four key areas of training, namely national studies and the Basic Law, leadership development, innovation and technology applications, and international collaboration, for civil servants in a focused manner. The working groups would provide recommendations on long-term training and development strategies for the civil service upon completion of their work in mid-2021. The Administration would take into consideration the working groups' recommendations when mapping out the way forward to enhance training for civil servants.

48. In reply to Dr CHIANG Lai-wan's enquiry about training in relation to the area of international collaboration, SCS explained that the Administration would collaborate with the institutions in other jurisdictions to provide training for civil servants to enhance their global outlook and their understanding of various regional and global issues. With Hong Kong being an international city, it was important for the civil service to be equipped with the necessary international perspectives, among other important qualities, in serving the Government and the community.

The College

49. Noting from paragraph 3 of the Administration's paper that the College would become a lifelong learning hub for serving and retired civil servants, the Deputy Chairman asked whether all retired civil servants could enjoy the services and facilities of the College. SCS responded that the College would have a Learning Commons which would also serve retired civil servants for their continuous learning, and would run programmes with opportunities for them to share experience with serving civil servants.

50. In response to Mr Tony TSE's enquiry about the facilities of the College, SCS advised that the College would be equipped with better and more diversified facilities, including modern information and communication technology equipment and larger auditoria. Meanwhile, the Administration was also upgrading the existing facilities of the Civil Service Training and Development Institute in the North Point Government Offices. The upgrading works were expected to be completed in 2021 to enable the premises to be used as interim accommodation for the College.

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Enhancing training programmes for civil servants

51. Mr Tony TSE asked whether the Administration would consider increasing the number of training places, especially for new recruits, as the civil service establishment had increased by more than 30 000 in the past few years. SCS advised that the growth of the civil service establishment in the past few years was relatively fast due to the introduction of various new policy initiatives and schemes. In order to maintain the sustainability of public finance amidst the economic downturn, there would be zero growth in the civil service establishment in the coming financial year. Regarding the number of training places, SCS advised that the number of training places in courses required to be attended by new recruits would be adjusted from time to time to meet the training demand of new recruits. SCS also said that, as the Administration would further increase the number of training places for directorate officers to attend national studies training courses in the Mainland, it was the Administration's target to raise the percentage of directorate officers who had attended such programme from the current 75% to 100%.

52. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan suggested that the Administration should enhance civil servants' training on crisis management, decision-making and leadership skills. SCS responded that the Administration had already been organizing such training programmes for middle and senior-level civil servants.

53. Mr Holden CHOW opined that the Administration should set up a system of continuous learning for civil servants to ensure that they were kept abreast of updated job knowledge regularly. SCS responded that suitable training would be planned for civil servants at different stages of their career advancement to the senior levels. Continuous professional education had been practiced by some grades and ranks in the civil service, so that their officers could meet the requirements of their respective professions, and he hoped that this could be implemented by more grades and ranks in future. He welcomed Mr CHOW's suggestion and would take his suggestion into account in reviewing the training for civil servants.

54. The Chairman asked how the Administration would foster a sense of mission among civil servants. He also urged the Administration to improve the training for civil servants so as to allow them to put the knowledge learnt from training into practice. SCS responded that, based on his experience and observations, a sense of mission among civil servants could be more effectively instilled by their participation in some major mission-critical exercises, such as the planning and execution of mega events, implementation of new schemes and handling of major social or economic incidents. The Administration had invited civil servants who had participated in such exercises to share their

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experience and insights in the provision of public services with other civil servants, so as to impress upon their civil service counterparts the crucial roles which could be played by civil servants and the contributions which could be provided by civil servants through their dedicated service.

V. Any other business

55. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:12 pm.

Council Business Division 4
Legislative Council Secretariat
12 May 2021