

立法會 *Legislative Council*

LC Paper No. CB(4)738/19-20
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB4/PL/PS

Panel on Public Service

**Minutes of meeting held on
Monday, 16 March 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 Charles Peter MOK, JP
Hon Christopher CHEUNG Wah-fung, SBS, JP
Hon IP Kin-yuen
Hon Elizabeth QUAT, BBS, JP
Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, SBS, JP
Hon CHU Hoi-dick
Hon HO Kai-ming
Hon LAM Cheuk-ting
Hon SHIU Ka-fai, JP
Dr Hon Pierre CHAN
Hon CHAN Chun-ying, JP
Hon LUK Chung-hung, JP
Hon Jeremy TAM Man-ho
Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen, BBS

Members absent : Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-yee, GBS, JP
Hon Steven HO Chun-yin, BBS

Members attending : Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
Hon KWONG Chun-yu

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

Mr Joshua LAW, GBS, JP
Secretary for the Civil Service

Mr Thomas CHOW, JP
Permanent Secretary for the Civil Service

Mr Brian LO, JP
Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service 1

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

Mr Eric CHAN, JP
Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service 3

Mr Hermes CHAN
Director of General Grades
Civil Service Bureau

Agenda item IV

Mr Joshua LAW, GBS, JP
Secretary for the Civil Service

Mr Thomas CHOW, JP
Permanent Secretary for the Civil Service

Mr Hermes CHAN
Director of General Grades
Civil Service Bureau

Mr Tony WONG Chi-kwong, JP
Deputy Government Chief Information Officer
Office of the Government Chief Information Officer

Ms Fiona LI Man-wai
Chief Executive Officer (Administration)
Office of the Government Chief Information Officer

Mr Lawrence POON
Chief Manager (Nursing)/Chief Nurse Executive
Hospital Authority

Clerk in attendance: Mr Anthony CHU
Chief Council Secretary (4)1

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

Miss Carol WONG
Council Secretary (4)1

Mr Griffin FUNG
Legislative Assistant (4)7

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I. Information papers issued since the last regular meeting on 20 January 2020

(LC Paper No. CB(4)285/19-20(01) -- Submission from the Government Amenity Management Supervisors General Union (Chinese version only) (Restricted to members only)

LC Paper No. CB(4)285/19-20(02) -- Administration's response to the submission from the Government Amenity Management Supervisors General Union

LC Paper No. CB(4)352/19-20(01) -- Submission from a union representative received on 17 January 2020 regarding the manpower management in relation to the tree management work of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (Chinese version only) (Restricted to members only)

LC Paper No. CB(4)352/19-20(02) -- Administration's response to the submission dated 17 January 2020 regarding the manpower management in relation to the tree management work of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department)

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Members noted that the above papers had been issued since the last regular meeting of the Panel on Public Service ("the Panel") on 20 January 2020.

II. Date of next meeting and items for discussion

(LC Paper No. CB(4)382/19-20(01) -- List of outstanding items for discussion

LC Paper No. CB(4)382/19-20(02) -- List of follow-up actions)

Arrangements of a special meeting

2. Taking into account that the Panel meeting on 17 February 2020 was rescheduled due to the latest situation of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 ("COVID-19"), the Chairman proposed and members agreed to arrange a special meeting in between the regular meetings in April and May 2020 to catch up with the progress of work of the Panel. The Chairman instructed the Clerk to liaise with the Administration on the meeting arrangements.

(Post-meeting note: The special meeting was subsequently scheduled for 4 May 2020. Notice of meeting was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)488/19-20 on 21 April 2020.)

Items for next regular meeting

3. The Chairman informed the meeting that the next regular meeting would be held on 20 April 2020 to discuss the following items proposed by the Administration:

- (a) Update on extension of the service of civil servants; and
- (b) Implementation of five-day week ("FDW") in the Government.

4. Concerning that some civil servants might be subjected to the Administration's punishment for making political remarks on social networking platforms, Mr LAM Cheuk-ting considered that there was an urgent need for the Administration to elucidate to the Panel and civil servants on the principle of political neutrality of the civil service, the Civil Service Code and relevant guidelines and the standards of conduct of civil servants at the next regular meeting. As regards the proposed discussion items mentioned in paragraph 3 above, he suggested the Administration first updating the Panel on the progress of the subject matters with information papers.

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5. The Deputy Chairman raised no objection to the Panel adding additional agenda items to discuss urgent subject matters, yet he was of the view that the Administration should update the Panel at next regular meeting on the latest position of the implementation of FDW in the Government as around 25% of the civil service strength had yet to adopt an FDW work pattern, and the issue was of great concern to many frontline civil servants.

6. Mr Tony TSE agreed to add items to the agenda for the coming meetings if necessary, as long as there would be sufficient time for discussion and the Administration would provide updated information on the subject matters. He requested the Administration to brief the Panel on the latest progress of the implementation of measures for extending the service of civil servants. He also agreed that the Administration should provide the Panel with updates on the implementation of FDW in the Government, such as a timetable.

7. In reply to the question raised by Mr HO Kai-ming on whether the Administration had come up with any new arrangements to migrate more civil servants to FDW, Secretary for the Civil Service ("SCS") advised that at the next regular meeting, the Civil Service Bureau ("CSB") would brief members on the position of the implementation of FDW in the Government and the latest progress on the implementation of measures for extending the service of civil servants.

8. As regards issues relating to political neutrality of the civil service, SCS stressed that the Civil Service Code and relevant civil service regulations/guidelines had clearly set out the standards of conduct of civil servants. Taking into account that Mr LAM Cheuk-ting had quoted various cases in his letter dated 3 December 2019 (LC Paper No. CB(4)170/19-20(01)), SCS said that he had to exercise caution and avoid touching upon individual cases, especially those which might involve disciplinary proceedings, for discussion with members on the subject matter. In any event, CSB would provide a written response to the concern raised by Mr LAM in his letter. The Chairman urged the Administration to make prompt response to Mr LAM's letter, and he reminded the Administration that Dr CHIANG Lai-wan had previously suggested discussing the political neutrality of staff of Government-funded public bodies as well.

9. The Chairman concluded and members agreed that the next regular meeting would be held on 20 April 2020 to discuss the items mentioned in paragraph 3 above.

10. In response to the enquiries raised by the Chairman and Ms Elizabeth QUAT about the timetable to brief the Panel on the item of "Enactment of legislation to prohibit acts of insulting public officers",

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SCS advised that the Security Bureau was seeking the Department of Justice's opinion on the subject matter. The Chairman called on CSB to liaise with the Security Bureau so as to facilitate the Panel's discussion on the subject within the 2019-2020 session. SCS said that he would communicate with the Security Bureau in this regard.

III. Civil service-related matters featured in the 2020-2021 Budget

(LC Paper No. CB(4)382/19-20(03) -- Administration's paper on the civil service-related matters featured in the 2020-2021 Budget)

11. At the invitation of the Chairman, SCS briefed members on the civil service-related matters featured in the 2020-2021 Budget as set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(4)382/19-20 (03)).

Changes in the civil service establishment in 2020-2021

12. Noting from the Administration's paper that four of the five departments (i.e. the Hong Kong Police Force ("HKPF"), the Customs and Excise Department, the Fire Services Department, the Immigration Department and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department) with the largest increase in establishment in 2020-2021 were disciplined services departments, Mr CHAN Chun-ying was concerned whether this indicated that there had been a manpower shortage in disciplined forces for tackling the social incidents in the past year.

13. SCS advised that each application for increase in the civil service establishment would be considered carefully and individually having regard to the operational needs of individual Bureaux/Departments ("B/Ds") concerned. Taking into account that disciplined services staff had encountered great challenges amid the social turmoil last year, he considered the increase in the manpower of disciplined services departments reasonable.

14. Mr CHU Hoi-dick, Dr Fernando CHEUNG, Mr IP Kin-yuen, Mr LAM Cheuk-ting and Mr Jeremy TAM expressed their objections over the significant increase (2 543 posts) in the establishment of HKPF, which represented 42% of the overall growth (6 082 posts) of the civil service in 2020-2021, and queried the justifications for such increase. Dr CHEUNG, Mr IP and Mr LAM believed that the increase in HKPF's establishment would only exacerbate the conflicts between the Police and the public and would not be conducive to maintaining a harmonious relationship in the community.

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15. Dr Fernando CHEUNG informed the meeting that the generally accepted number of regular police officers per 100 000 population worldwide was approximately 225, and the existing local ratio at 506 was among the highest in the world. He questioned the underlying reasons for the further increase in HKPF's establishment.

16. SCS advised that members could seek detailed explanation from the relevant Controlling Officers at the relevant Special Meetings of the Finance Committee to examine the Estimates of Expenditure 2020-2021.

17. Dr Fernando CHEUNG criticized the Administration for using the Police as tool to resolve the political problems arising from the bad governance of the Administration. Mr IP Kin-yuen echoed that the increase in HKPF's manpower implied that the Administration intended to govern Hong Kong with force. Mr IP remarked that the Government was responsible for the social unrest as it had turned a blind eye to the abuse of force by the Police since June 2019 and refused to establish an independent commission of inquiry to investigate into the issue. Mr LAM Cheuk-ting pointed out that according to the results of some public opinion polls, the popularity rating of HKPF was extremely low as some members of the public considered that the Police had made indiscriminate arrests and used excessive force against protesters in the past few months.

18. SCS stressed that the Police had the statutory duty to maintain public order and combat crime. In handling the massive and violent illegal activities occurred since June 2019 and when the lives of police officers were sometimes threatened, HKPF did not have sufficient manpower to carry out their daily work effectively and efficiently. It was justified for HKPF to increase its manpower so as to discharge the police duties. He trusted that the Police had taken appropriate enforcement actions to restore peace in society, and any persons who were dissatisfied with the Police's work could lodge a complaint with the Police's Complaints Against Police Office under the existing mechanism.

19. Mr Jeremy TAM enquired about the changes of HKPF's establishment in 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 and the number of additional posts HKPF originally applied for in 2020-2021. SCS advised that 1 057 and 179 additional civil service posts were created in these two years respectively. SCS further said that the number of additional posts requested by individual B/Ds was part of the Government's internal deliberation process. In this connection, Mr TAM requested for information on whether CSB had any guidelines/principles to objectively assess proposals by individual B/Ds to increase their establishment in the Budget.

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(*Post-meeting note:* The Administration's response was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)529/19-20(01) on 5 May 2020.)

20. Ms Elizabeth QUAT did not agree with the pan-democratic members' views against increasing the establishment of HKPF. She said that frontline police officers were tired out to handle the ongoing unlawful violent acts of protesters, and the existing police manpower was inadequate to maintain regular police duties in the territory. It was justified for the Police to enhance its strength to maintain law and order in the community. Mr HO Kai-ming said that the increase in the manpower of HKPF was not particularly high in comparison with other international metropolitan cities.

21. Mr CHU Hoi-dick pointed out that the Administration augmented the establishment of HKPF at a record high rate. Adding up the number of estimated annual wastage of police officers (about 1 200 per year) and the 2 543 new posts to be created in HKPF in 2020-2021, there would be around 3 700 vacancies in total. He queried how HKPF could fill up all these vacancies despite that HKPF planned to employ around 1 000 retired police officers under "Post-retirement Service Contract Scheme" and merely around 1 500 persons joined HKPF each year.

22. SCS advised that HKPF had been conducting year-round recruitment exercises to expedite the intake of new recruits, and he believed that HKPF would speed up the training of police officers to fill the vacancies. At the request of Mr CHU Hoi-dick, the Administration undertook to provide details of the planning for HKPF to recruit new staff in 2020-2021, including a timetable.

(*Post-meeting note:* The Administration's response was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)529/19-20(01) on 5 May 2020.)

The Hospital Authority and the Hong Kong Monetary Authority

23. Mr CHAN Chun-ying sought information on the total number of staff and the reduction in civil service posts in the Hospital Authority ("HA") and the Hong Kong Monetary Authority ("MA").

24. SCS explained that when HA and MA were established, some civil service posts in the two organizations remained. When these civil servants retired or resigned, HA and MA would recruit new staff on their own terms of employment to replace the civil servants. Against this background, the civil service posts in the two organizations would be phased out gradually. Given the rest of the staff in the two organizations were not civil servants, changes in that part of their establishment would not be reflected in the Budget.

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25. The Deputy Chairman was supportive of augmenting the civil service establishment and the financial provisions for work related to the management of the civil service in the 2020-2021 Budget. In response to the question raised by the Deputy Chairman about the number of civil servants serving in HA, SCS replied that the number had decreased from 1 154 as at 1 April 2018 to the estimated figure of 795 as at 1 April 2020. At the request of the Deputy Chairman, SCS undertook to provide the number of civil servants serving in HA with a breakdown by grades and ranks.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration's response was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)529/19-20(01) on 5 May 2020.)

The Government Property Agency

26. Mr Tony TSE expressed support to increase the civil service establishment to meet the manpower requirement for the delivery of new policy initiatives and for improving public services to meet heightened public expectation. He sought explanation on the notable increase in the Government Property Agency's establishment as compared to the past few years. SCS advised that the Government Property Agency enhanced its strength for the operation, repair and maintenance of the public car parks in government buildings, the property management of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Hong Kong Port and the Heung Yuen Wai Boundary Control Point, and to provide assistance to the Social Welfare Department in purchasing premises for the provision of welfare facilities.

The Hong Kong Housing Authority

27. In reply to the question raised by Mr Tony TSE relating to the 173 new posts created under the Hong Kong Housing Authority, SCS advised that the above civil service posts would be created in the Housing Department, the executive arm of the Hong Kong Housing Authority. As a statutory organization with financial autonomy, the Hong Kong Housing Authority would employ contract staff under its own terms.

Other concerns

28. Noting that the number of new civil service posts created under B/Ds had an increase of 74.7% from 3 481 in 2019-2020 to 6 082 in 2020-2021, while the provision for the Mandatory Provident Fund Scheme or the Civil Service Provident Fund Scheme in the 2020-2021 Draft Estimates of Expenditure only increased by 20.9% over the 2019-2020 Revised Estimate, Mr CHAN Chun-ying enquired whether the new posts to be created in 2020-2021 were mostly in lower salary band. Permanent Secretary for the

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Civil Service advised that about 5 400 of the 6 082 posts were in the lower and middle salary bands.

29. Regarding the question raised by Mr HO Kai-ming on the number of civil service posts created in 2020-2021 to replace full-time non-civil service contract ("NCSC") positions with long-term operational and service needs, SCS advised that 176 new civil service posts were created to serve this purpose. As at 30 June 2019, there were 10 444 full-time NCSC staff, representing a reduction of about 8 100 NCSC positions as compared with the historical peak as at 30 June 2006. B/Ds would review regularly the employment situation of NCSC staff to ascertain the need for replacing those NCSC positions with established long-term operational and service needs by civil service posts.

30. Concerning that the economy of Hong Kong was ravaged by the social incidents and COVID-19, and the unemployment rate of Hong Kong in the period from December 2019 to February 2020 had reached 3.7%, Ms Elizabeth QUAT and Dr CHIANG Lai-wan asked whether the Government would consider, apart from creating the proposed new civil service posts, providing temporary job opportunities to help ease the unemployed grassroots population, in particular those non-skilled workers.

31. SCS advised that the civil service-related matters featured in the 2020-2021 Budget focused on the policy area of civil service management. That said, according to the mechanism in place, individual B/Ds could engage NCSC staff or agency workers to provide short-term manpower to deliver services having regard to their operational and service needs, and the Administration had recently engaged temporary manpower resources to assist in the epidemic prevention work. He assured members that he would convey their views to individual B/Ds.

Medical and dental services for serving civil servants, pensioners and other eligible persons

32. Taking into account the commencement of the pilot scheme of providing Chinese Medicine services for civil service eligible persons ("CSEPs") on 2 March 2020 and the great demand of CSEPs for Chinese Medicine services, the Deputy Chairman enquired whether the pilot scheme had any impact on the demand for medical services at the Families Clinics. In case that a lesser demand for services at the Families Clinics resulted in a surplus in the approved provision, he asked whether the Administration would redeploy the surplus resources to enhance the provision of Chinese Medicine services.

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33. Mr HO Kai-ming asked whether the Administration would, in addition to setting up two Civil Service Chinese Medicine Clinics ("CSCMCs") at the Chinese Medicine Clinic cum Training and Research Centres located in Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital and Yan Chai Hospital, consider providing mobile clinics to facilitate civil servants' convenient access to Chinese Medicine services.

34. SCS advised that the Administration would keep in view the operation of the CSCMCs and the demand for the Chinese Medicine services and take into account members' views and suggestions when reviewing the pilot scheme in about one year's time.

Government short-term internship opportunities

35. Mr Tony TSE enquired whether the 5 000 short-term internship placements would be open to university fresh graduates for on-the-job training. SCS advised that the Administration had launched various internship schemes targeting students with different backgrounds, such as students with disabilities, and students from both University Grants Committee-funded universities and other tertiary institutions.

36. In response to the question raised by Dr CHIANG Lai-wan on whether the interns would be provided with opportunities to work in the Mainland or in other overseas countries, SCS advised that subject to the availability of internship places at the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices, interns might be assigned to work in offices in the Mainland or in other overseas countries.

IV. Use of agency workers

(LC Paper No. CB(4)382/19-20(04) -- Administration's paper on the use of agency workers by Bureaux/Departments

LC Paper No. CB(4)321/19-20(05) -- Administration's paper on T-contract services

LC Paper No. CB(4)382/19-20(05) -- Administration's paper on the engagement of agency staff by the Hospital Authority

LC Paper No. CB(4)321/19-20(07) -- Paper on the use of agency workers prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (updated background brief)

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Other relevant papers

LC Paper No. CB(4)382/19-20(06) -- Letter dated 28 February 2020 from Hon IP Kin-yuen on the use of agency workers by the Education Bureau (Chinese version only)

LC Paper No. CB(4)385/19-20(01) -- Administration's response to the letter dated 28 February 2020 from Hon IP Kin-yuen on the use of agency workers by the Education Bureau)

37. At the invitation of the Chairman, SCS briefed members on the use of agency workers by B/Ds as set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(4)382/19-20(04)). Deputy Government Chief Information Officer ("DGCIO") then briefed members on the engagement of information technology ("IT") contract staff by B/Ds under a term contract (commonly known as "T-contract") centrally administered by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer ("OGCIO") as set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(4)321/19-20(05)). Chief Manager (Nursing)/Chief Nurse Executive, Hospital Authority ("CM/HA") also briefed members on the engagement of agency staff by HA as set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(4)382/19-20(05)).

Guidelines and duration on using agency workers

38. Members noted that CSB had set out guidelines for B/Ds that they might only use agency workers in one or more of the four situations as set out in paragraph 4 of the Administration paper (LC Paper No. CB(4)382/19-20(04)). Mr HO Kai-ming was dissatisfied that HA did not comply with these guidelines as it had employed agency staff to fill a long-term manpower gap for some grades without trying to enhance the compensation and benefits of the relevant grades. Mr Tony TSE requested the Administration to regularly remind publicly funded organizations, especially the employment of body-shopped personnel of the Hong Kong Housing Authority, to follow these guidelines in procuring service of agency workers.

39. SCS explained that the set of guidelines on proper use of agency workers issued by the Administration only applied to B/Ds in the Government. Publicly funded organizations like HA could formulate its own recruitment policies in respect of the engagement of agency staff. Members' views, if any, could be relayed to the relevant publicly funded organizations for reference. In

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this regard, he undertook to seek information on body-shopped personnel used by the Hong Kong Housing Authority and provide a written reply after the meeting.

(Post-meeting note: Administration's response related to body-shopped personnel used by the Hong Kong Housing Authority was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)529/19-20(01) on 5 May 2020.)

40. Showing concern that certain agency workers had been used by various B/Ds continuously for a long time, the Deputy Chairman requested the Administration to closely monitor the duration of service periods of agency workers. SCS said that every proposal to procure the service of agency workers was required to be considered and approved personally by an officer at Directorate Pay Scale D2 or above of the concerned B/D. B/Ds were also required to seek approval from CSB if an existing contract was to be renewed or re-let and the aggregate period of contract service was expected to exceed 15 months. In the past three years, CSB had not received any applications for extending the service contract for the supply of agency workers for a service period exceeding 15 months.

Agency workers used by the Hospital Authority

41. Casting doubt on the effectiveness of recruiting agency nurses and supporting staff in alleviating work pressure of frontline staff in hospitals under HA, Mr HO Kai-ming commented that the service level of HA had not been improved with the increased number of man-hours of agency workers hired. In his view, HA should instead enhance the remuneration of frontline healthcare staff so as to attract and retain talents. He further enquired about the turnover rate of Health Care Assistants and Nurses during winter demand surge periods from 2017-2018 to 2019-2020.

42. The Deputy Chairman said that he received comments from trade unions of Nurses and Health Care Assistants in HA that some of the agency staff were not up to standard. The agency staff were supposed to have received trainings before working in hospitals. However, many of these agency staff were found incapable to perform their job duties independently. Existing staff needed to spare extra time to assist these agency staff, thus increasing their workload.

43. CM/HA replied that the annual turnover rate of Health Care Assistants remained at around 10% in 2017-2018 and 2018-2019. HA had alleviated the shortage of manpower in hospitals through various means including improving existing benefits, recruiting part-time employees and hiring agency staff.

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The Registration and Electoral Office and the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency

44. While understanding the need for short-term manpower to assist with the 2019 District Council Election, the Deputy Chairman sought the reasons for the increase in the number of agency workers used by the Registration and Electoral Office ("REO") in 2019 as compared with that in 2015.

45. SCS replied that the Administration had been striving hard to minimize the number of agency workers used. Excluding the number of agency workers for handling applications for the \$4,000 allowance under the Caring and Sharing Scheme at the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency and undertaking electoral duties due to 2019 District Council Election at REO, the number of agency workers in all B/Ds remained at around 1 000.

46. Director of General Grades further explained that comparing with 2015 District Council Election, the number of registered voters grew substantially with no constituency uncontested in 2019. As a result, REO had deployed additional manpower, including procuring service for more agency workers, for handling electoral duties in the 2019 District Council Election.

The Education Bureau

47. Mr IP Kin-yuen noticed that a significant number of agency workers were used by the Education Bureau ("EDB"). With reference to the letter provided by the Administration (LC Paper No. CB(4)385/19-20(01)), he sought clarification on the job duties of agency workers recruited in Planning, Infrastructure and School Places Allocation Branch and Professional Development and Special Education Branch as the number of agency workers used by these branches were noticeably more than the others. He added that as the duties to support admission for kindergartens and secondary schools were in a regular and predictable pattern, the related job positions should be filled by civil servants. He further enquired about the number of civil service posts to replace the positions previously filled by agency workers.

48. SCS replied that with the launch of the Free Quality Kindergarten Education Scheme since 2017-2018 school year, the Administration had increased the number of civil service posts from 24 in 2016-2017 to some 60 and over 70 in 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 respectively. As the recruitment of civil servants involved a relatively long process, EDB would use agency workers to meet short-term needs while waiting for candidates to fill these newly created vacant posts. The peak periods for both Kindergarten Education Scheme and admission of secondary schools (i.e. duties related to Pre-Secondary One

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Hong Kong Attainment Test) were from September to January next year and there was a need to deploy agency workers to address the seasonal upsurge of workload.

49. Mr IP Kin-yuen requested the Administration to provide background information on the increase in agency workers to provide library management services for Central Resources Centre and fill short-term manpower gap in Curriculum and Quality Assurance Branch in EDB.

(Post-meeting note: Administration's response to Mr IP Kin-yuen's request was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)529/19-20(01) on 5 May 2020.)

T-contract staff

50. Expressing satisfaction on the improvement of remuneration packages in T25 contract by OGCIO which commenced on 1 February 2019, Mr Charles Peter MOK was pleased to note that under T25 contract, T-contractors should adjust the wages of T-contract staff by a percentage not lower than the service rates adjustment made by the Government with reference to the latest pay adjustment percentage applicable to civil servants in the middle salary band. He urged HA to follow the Government's policy for its IT agency workers in trying to align the wage adjustment mechanism and benefits package.

51. CM/HA said that he would pass Mr Charles Peter MOK's comments to the relevant division in HA for reference.

(To allow sufficient time for discussion, the Chairman suggested and members agreed to extend the meeting to 1:00 pm.)

Special work arrangement due to Coronavirus Disease 2019

52. Mr Charles Peter MOK was dissatisfied with the special work arrangement in the Department of Health ("DH") under COVID-19 starting from February 2020. Despite that the Administration had adopted the work from home arrangement, all staff of DH, including T-contract staff, were required to return to the office regardless of their job duties and nature. He requested DH to carefully consider each staff members' job nature and make clear and early announcement about any special work arrangement.

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53. DGCIO replied that in order to reduce the risk of the spread of COVID-19 in the community, starting from late January 2020, OGCIO provided B/Ds and T-contractors with updated guidelines on the special work arrangement every week for T-contract staff. Except for those required to provide IT support to emergency services, essential public services as well as basic and limited-scale public services, all T-contract staff were allowed to work from home since 31 January 2020 without wage reduction. OGCIO also reminded T-contractors to ask their staff to observe the advice of the Centre for Health Protection of DH and refrain from travelling to places where there was an outbreak of COVID-19. If any T-contract staff were ordered to undergo compulsory quarantine by DH, they would be treated as working from home and paid as usual.

54. Mr Tony TSE was concerned about the special work arrangement in view of the current situation of COVID-19 which might hinder Government's work in handling applications and registrations. He also inquired about the Administration's plans in maintaining public services when work from home arrangement was implemented.

55. SCS replied that starting from 29 January 2020, in order to reduce the risk of the spread of COVID-19 in the community, except for staff providing emergency and essential services and limited-scale public services, other employees of the Government did not have to return to the office and could work from home. Taking into account the need for the functioning of the society and with regard to the actual situation on the ground, public services progressively resumed from 2 March 2020 subject to the implementation of targeted measures to reduce social contact and infection control measures.

V. Any other business

56. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:51 pm.