

LCQ13: Grade structure review for disciplined services

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Hak-kan and a written reply by the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mr Patrick Nip, in the Legislative Council today (June 17):

Question:

At the meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Public Service held on January 20 this year, the then Secretary for the Civil Service stated that the Standing Committee on Disciplined Services Salaries and Conditions of Service and the Standing Committee on Directorate Salaries and Conditions of Service were working independently on the grade structure review for the disciplined services in accordance with their respective terms of reference and framework of review, and had invited both the management and staff sides of the various disciplined services to submit their views. Upon completion of the review and submission of reports by the two Standing Committees to the Government, the Government would consult stakeholders on the relevant recommendations, and submit the proposed way forward to the Chief Executive-in-Council for consideration. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the work progress of the aforesaid review, as well as the expected timing (i) for the two Standing Committees to submit reports to the Government, and (ii) for the Government to submit the proposed way forward to the Chief Executive-in-Council;

(2) whether it knows the total number of submissions from members of the public received by the two Standing Committees since the commencement of the review; given that assessments of members of the public on the work performance of individual disciplined services were polarised in the past 12 months, how the two Standing Committees will come to a conclusion amid such divergent views;

(3) whether it knows if the two Standing Committees will take into account the following factors in the course of conducting the review: the immense pressure exerted on disciplined services staff by the social movement that has taken place since the latter half of last year (e.g. substantial increase in workload, increased exposure to dangerous situations, and the staff members themselves and their family members being doxxed), as well as the impacts on the recruitment exercises caused by a decline in the recognition for the disciplined services; if the two Standing Committees will not, of the reasons for that; and

(4) of the respective wastage rates of staff members in various disciplined services in each of the past three years; whether it knows if the two Standing Committees will take into account the wastage of staff members in disciplined services in the course of conducting the review?

Reply:

President,

The civil service pay policy is to offer sufficient remuneration to attract, retain and motivate staff of a suitable calibre to provide the public with an effective and efficient service; and to maintain broad comparability between civil service and private sector pay. To implement this policy, the Government devised the Improved Civil Service Pay Adjustment Mechanism in 2007, under which civil service pay is compared with private sector pay through different pay surveys. However, as it is difficult to identify comparable posts and jobs in the private sector for the disciplined services, and individual disciplined services grades are also facing recruitment or retention difficulties, the Chief Executive-in-Council decided to conduct a grade structure review (GSR) for the disciplined services in October 2018, and once every 10 years in future, to ensure that the grade structure and remuneration of the disciplined services can effectively attract and retain talents.

The Standing Committee on Disciplined Services Salaries and Conditions of Service (SCDS) has accepted the Government's invitation to conduct a GSR for the disciplined services grades. At the same time, the Standing Committee on Directorate Salaries and Conditions of Service has also agreed to advise on the salaries and conditions of service of the heads of the disciplined services. The two advisory committees are conducting the review in accordance with their terms of reference and the review framework. They will take into account all the relevant factors, including the job nature, duties and workload of the disciplined services in recent years; recruitment and retention situation; public expectation; and financial commitment, etc. The wastage rate of each of the civil service disciplined services in the past three years is at Annex.

The two advisory committees have earlier on invited submissions from the management and staff side of each of the disciplined services, and are consolidating and analysing the views and proposals received. The SCDS has also paid a number of visits to the disciplined services and held meetings with the management and staff side to better understand their latest work situation and listen to their views. As of early June this year, the SCDS has held 18 meetings with the management and staff side of the disciplined services. The SCDS will continue its work in this respect.

The entire GSR for the disciplined services was originally expected to be completed in about 18 months. However, as a result of the social events and the COVID-19 epidemic (e.g. scheduled visits to the disciplined services departments as well as meetings with the management and staff side had to be postponed and rearranged), it would be unlikely for the entire review to be completed according to the original timetable, despite the continued efforts of the two advisory committees in taking it forward. In fact, as the GSR covers all the disciplined services grades and ranks in each of the disciplined services, the two advisory committees have received a substantial number of comments on the pay and conditions of service of the disciplined

services, including over 1 380 submissions from members of the general public. The review exercise is very challenging. Before presenting their recommendations to the Government, the two advisory committees must be given sufficient time to carefully review all relevant issues (including the latest work, recruitment and wastage situation) in detail such that they may put forward their recommendations upon thorough consideration. The two advisory committees are pressing ahead with the tasks with a view to completing the review properly and in a timely manner.