

LCQ14: Office areas of government departments

Following is a question by the Hon Tony Tse and a written reply by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr James Lau, in the Legislative Council today (July 4):

Question:

The Government anticipates that the civil service establishment will increase by 6 700 posts to about 190 000 posts by the end of 2018-2019, representing a rate of increase of about 3.7%. However, quite a number of civil servants have relayed to me that as the offices of many government departments are already very crowded, it is difficult to make room for the offices of newly recruited civil servants. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether the authorities had, when deciding to increase civil service posts, formulated measures to ensure that the required additional office accommodation could be provided according to the approved schedules of accommodation as laid down in the Accommodation Regulations (the Regulations);
- (2) in respect of those government departments which need to handle and store a large amount of documents, such as the works departments handling a large amount of large-sized building plans, whether the authorities will, having regard to the actual needs of such government departments, plan larger office areas for them;
- (3) in respect of those government departments which need to have direct contact with members of the public and members of the industries concerned, whether the authorities have set standards for the sizes and numbers of the relevant (i) conference rooms, (ii) service counters, (iii) office desks and (iv) seats;
- (4) of the policy bureaux and government departments (including district offices) whose actual office areas at present are below the relevant standards in the Regulations; and
- (5) given that, according to my observation, most of the offices of the Buildings Department (BD) are very crowded, thereby affecting BD officers' everyday work and health as well as causing inconvenience to members of the relevant industries who need to visit BD frequently to deal with various kinds of business, whether the authorities will address such problems squarely and make improvements; if so, of the implementation timetable for the improvement measures?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the different parts of the question raised by the Hon Tony Tse is as follows:

(1) to (3) To effectively meet the operational needs of departments and to ensure the optimal use of government resources, the Government Property Agency (GPA) formulates the government office space standards (including working space for individual staff and ancillary facilities such as meeting rooms, service counters, etc.) in accordance with the principles set out in the Accommodation Regulations to facilitate departments' estimation of office space requirements.

Departments will review the existing usable office space and apply for additional office accommodation where necessary after the creation of new civil service posts is confirmed. If there is a genuine operational need for more office space, such as handling and storing large-sized layout plans, GPA or the Property Vetting Committee will duly consider the information and request from the department and approve the additional space required according to the prevailing standards.

Upon confirming the additional office space require, GPA will identify suitable premises having regard to the department's requirements on location and timing, etc. If the requirements cannot be met by government-owned premises, GPA may consider leasing premises for the purpose.

(4) GPA has no information on the actual office areas of individual departments below the relevant government office space standards. In allocating premises to departments, GPA has ensured that the provision is made according to the standard. After allocation of premises, departments will manage their own office accommodations and they can make minor adjustments to the office layout in light of the operational needs to optimise the use of office space. If needed, they may apply for additional office space according to the aforementioned mechanism.

(5) Based on the staff establishment of the Buildings Department (BD) in 2015, the whole block of the North Tower of the West Kowloon Government Offices (WKG0) under construction has been reserved for the use of BD. The total office space of BD will increase from the existing provision of about 25 000 square metres (m²) to about 29 600 m² upon the department's relocation to the WKG0 in 2019, representing an increase of about 4 600 m². It is anticipated that there will be a significant improvement in the overall office accommodation of BD. As regards BD's request for additional office requirement to cope with the increased manpower after 2015, GPA has approved office space requirement of about 2 500 m² and identified suitable premises to meet most of the requirements. GPA will continue to identify suitable premises to meet BD's accommodation needs.