

LCQ18: Staffing issues relating to tree management and landscape work

Following is a question by the Hon Tony Tse and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (April 3):

Question:

At present, the Greening, Landscape and Tree Management Section (GLTMS) of the Development Bureau (DEVB) is responsible for formulating and coordinating the overall landscape and tree management strategy and initiatives in Hong Kong, while the Tree Management Office (TMO) under the GLTMS is responsible for coordinating the tree management work of various government departments, etc. It has been reported that the two posts of Head of GLTMS and Head of TMO were vacant on a number of occasions in the past few years, and the present incumbents of the posts lack the professional qualifications in tree management or landscape, resulting in the problem of the non-professionals leading the professionals. On the other hand, the DEVB indicated last year that it was conducting a review on tree management and the responsibilities of the TMO, and it would review at the same time the recruitment and appointment arrangements for the posts concerned. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether the scope of the aforesaid review covers the duties, organisation structure and staffing establishment of the GLTMS and the TMO; of the progress and expected completion date of the review;
- (2) whether the scope of the review on the recruitment and appointment arrangements for the two aforesaid posts covers the approach for recruitment (e.g. giving priority to internal promotion) and the entry qualification requirements (e.g. the requirement of possessing professional qualifications in tree management and landscape); and
- (3) whether it will, before the completion of the aforesaid review, expeditiously recruit or deploy personnel with professional qualifications in tree management and landscape to fill the two posts; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In 2018, the Head of the Greening, Landscape and Tree Management Section (H/GLTMS) and the Head of the Tree Management Office (H/TMO) under the Development Bureau (DEVB) left their respective posts for personal reasons. The Government will fill the two vacancies in due course in accordance with the established procedures. Currently, an officer of the Administrative

Officer grade of the same rank is doubling sideways the post of H/GLTMS, while a Chief Geotechnical Engineer with professional qualification in arboriculture holds the post of H/TMO on a supernumerary basis to take charge of the coordination of tree management work. The above arrangements ensure that the GLTMS and the TMO continue to operate effectively.

Landscape and tree management require a wide range of professional knowledge and experience. The GLTMS, therefore, comprises professionals of various disciplines with qualifications and experience in arboriculture, including landscape architects, forestry officers, geotechnical engineers and leisure services managers. Through cross-discipline collaboration, the GLTMS strives to raise the standards of landscape and tree management practice in Hong Kong.

My reply to the three-part question raised by the Hon Tony Tse is as follows:

(1) The DEVB is reviewing the duties, organisation structure and staffing establishment of the GLTMS and will propose recommendations to enhance its functions and efficiency. The review is expected to be completed within this month.

(2) The above review covers, amongst others, examination and consideration of the qualification requirements as well as the recruitment and appointment arrangements for the posts of H/GLTMS and H/TMO.

(3) Upon completion of the review, the DEVB will formulate an implementation plan and proceed with recruitment. As the recruitment exercise will commence in the next few months, the DEVB has no plan to deploy other personnel to fill the posts in question at this juncture.