

Doc Type	HA
Paper No	59/95
Title	Wider Use of Chinese in the Housing Department
CONTENTS	<p>HA 59/95</p> <p>THE HONG KONG HOUSING AUTHORITY</p> <p>Memorandum for the Housing Authority</p> <p>Wider Use of Chinese in the Housing Department</p> <p>PURPOSE</p> <p>To inform Members of the Department's plans to promote the wider use of Chinese in official communication.</p> <p>BACKGROUND</p> <p>2. Members noted vide Paper No. HA 40/95 that a Steering Committee on the Wider Use of Chinese has been set up in the Department. As a first step, a department-wide survey was being carried out to take stock of the current state of the use of Chinese and to identify comprehensively areas which would provide scope for greater use of Chinese in the Department's official communication both internally and externally. The survey has now been completed. Its findings are summarized in the following paragraphs.</p> <p>FINDINGS</p> <p>3. It is observed that while Chinese is used extensively in the Department's communication with its housing clients, at the estate level in particular, English has remained predominantly the Department's medium of communication internally as well as with large businesses, law firms, professional bodies, other Government departments and public bodies.</p> <p>4. Broadly speaking, officers in the Estate Management Branch (EMB) and Housing Administration Branch (HAB), by nature of their duties, are in frequent contact with housing clients and concern groups. Hence, they have been using Chinese extensively in their external communication, while most officers with the Maintenance and Construction Services Branch (MCSB) and the New Development Branch (NDB) are not required to use Chinese as frequently as their counterparts in the two other branches. In the Administration Branch (AB), Chinese is found to be widely in use in offices responsible for promoting community relations and handling public complaints and enquiries.</p> <p>5. An analysis of over 4,000 samples of writing collected during the survey reveals that the surveyed officers with the AB, EMB and HAB are generally competent in their Chinese proficiency. With some training in practical Chinese writing and more practice, there should be no great problem for these officers to use Chinese more extensively in their daily work.</p> <p>IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY</p> <p>6. On the basis of the recommendations of the survey report, the Department decided to adopt a two-pronged strategy. On the one hand, a pilot scheme would be carried out in a number of selected offices (see Annex A) in the Department for a period of six months to test the recommendations of the survey report and to identify and tackle any unforeseen difficulties through first hand experience before we embark on a more extensive programme. On the other hand, all officers in the Department are encouraged to use Chinese in official business as far as possible, particularly in the following areas -</p> <p>(a) Correspondence with the public now prepared in English with Chinese translation should be prepared in Chinese direct if practicable;</p> <p>(b) Notes of in-house meetings with no expatriate officers' participation;</p> <p>(c) Correspondence with staff associations;</p> <p>(d) Training notes for non-technical staff;</p> <p>(e) Some standard forms for internal use;</p> <p>(f) Casual notes; and</p> <p>(g) Communication with other Government departments when the recipient department is ready to communicate in Chinese.</p> <p>7. The pilot scheme will be launched in early November. After the trial period, the Department should be in a better position to review the overall situation and formulate a more comprehensive programme.</p> <p>USE OF CHINESE IN HA AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS</p>

8. A separate study has been carried out regarding departmental staff's readiness to draft committee papers in Chinese. We have in mind the MOC, Complaints Committee and Appeal Panel but we note that a nursing period is required for staff to get accustomed to the use of Chinese. Training and technical support would also be provided to these staff.

TRAINING AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT

9. The Department will step up its training and technical support, particularly in Chinese word processing and language training, with priority being accorded to officers under the pilot scheme. We have also secured full support of the Civil Service Training Centre in running practical Chinese writing courses for our staff.

10. In anticipation of growing demand for Chinese typing services, a simplified arrangement for the acquisition of Chinese computing software has been put in place.

FINANCIAL AND STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

11. The initial costs in the provision of training courses and Chinese word processing equipment will be absorbed within the existing provisions.

12. On the staffing side, we envisage that the Translation Section may need to be strengthened to provide language support to the offices in the pilot scheme. Posts to be created will be justified in the normal way in accordance with established procedures.

PRESENTATION

13. This paper is presented for Members' information. It is copied to all policy committee members because of its general interest.

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Annex A

Formations included in the Pilot Scheme

(a) AB : Welfare Unit, Staff Relations Section, Training and Development Centre, Translation Section, Complaints and Enquiries Section, Community Relations Section;

(b) EMB :Wang Tau Hom Estate, So Uk Estate, Lower Wong Tai Sin Estate (1);

(c) HAB :Rehousing Unit, Waiting List Unit, Grade Management Section (Housing Class); and

(d) Works Group : Regional Maintenance Office/South 1 and Regional Maintenance Office/South 3.