

## **THE HONG KONG HOUSING AUTHORITY**

### **Memorandum for the Human Resources Committee**

#### **Strategic Review of Staff Communication**

#### **PURPOSE**

To inform members of the findings of a strategic review of staff communication in Housing Department (HD) and to seek Members' views on the proposed strategies and action plan.

#### **BACKGROUND**

2. This paper, on staff communication, is one of the four review papers on staff relations in HD. Members have been briefed of the background in HRC Paper No. 51/97, issued together with this paper.

3. Communication is one of the four pillars of the Management Enhancement Programme (MEP). It has two components, viz. external and internal communications which support the Department in achieving its organisational goal and enhanced profile. The present paper focuses on internal communication which basically is communication with staff but excludes staff consultation which is dealt with in another paper (HRC Paper No. 52/97).

#### **REVIEW FINDINGS**

4. Staff Communication is a two-way process for enhancing understanding and trust between the management and staff. It is also a channel for releasing staff's ideas, energy and ambitions. Through communication, management helps staff understand the mission, vision and core values of the Department, and staff can let management know their views and aspirations for giving their best. To achieve effective communication, managers normally consider the following -

- a) the message they intend to send
- b) who they need to communicate with
- c) the most effective form of communicating this particular message, and
- d) when the message should be delivered.

### **Existing Staff Communication Channels in HD**

5. With about 15,000 staff from 91 grades working in six branches in HD, the effectiveness of the day-to-day operation and in particular, the achievement of the Department's common goals would rely heavily on an effective communication network. The following are common ways of communication within the Department -

#### **Formal Channels**

- a) circulars, memos, bulletins, newsletters, personal letters, committee papers, posters, leaflets
- b) publications e.g. Annual Report, Handbook, Manual
- c) the complaints system
- d) staff suggestion box
- e) Staff Incentive Scheme
- f) MEP Ambassador Scheme
- g) cascading workshops
- h) directorate seminars
- i) goodwill visits by senior officers and grade management staff
- j) meetings/seminars/briefings/open forums

- k) PA system (HAHQ Building)
- l) broadcasting of HA Committees' meetings
- m) Information Centre (Library)
- n) notice boards, display panels, videos
- o) training courses

### **Informal Channels**

- a) give-away items (e.g. tent card, small calendar)
- b) recreational and sports activities
- c) day-to-day contact
- d) social occasions/gatherings

On the whole, the existing communication within the Department tends to be top-down.

### **Proposed Strategies for Staff Communication**

6. The MEP Master Action Plan points out that the Department does not have consistent methodologies for disseminating information or receiving feedback, and that there is an urgent need to establish a good communication network to facilitate top-down, bottom-up and lateral communication. The following strategies are proposed -

- a) secure top/senior management's full commitment in recognising the importance of staff communication;
- b) promote cross branches/disciplines communication on work, learning and mutual support issues;
- c) encourage staff to speak up and air their views, (i.e. bottom-up communication);

- d) use appropriate language (Chinese/English) for different target groups of staff in staff communication;
- e) promote line managers' role in encouraging bottom-up communication and obtaining feedback;
- f) set up mechanisms to ensure effective communication and monitor progress; and
- g) encourage the use of electronic media for staff communication.

### **Proposed Action Plan**

7. In order to pursue the strategies mentioned in paragraph 6 above, the following actions are proposed -

	<b>Time-table</b>
a) promote staff communication and cultivate 'open-door' culture in the Department through workshops and publicity materials	October 97 (start)
b) arrange and publicise goodwill visits by senior directorate to outstation offices	August 97 (start)
c) conduct regular branch / region / district / section / office meetings and team briefings on subjects like the progress on MEP, HRM etc.	Immediate
d) advocate inter-branch meetings on cross branch issues	Immediate
e) better use of office noticeboards to strengthen communication, e.g. exclusive use for consultation/communication purpose	October 97
f) enhance staff feedback systems, including setting up of staff suggestion boxes in outstation offices, staff suggestion forms and staff suggestion	September 97 - December 97

faxline & hotline

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| g) appoint a co-ordinator in each outstation office to serve as a focal point for staff relations, recreation/welfare and communication matters | November 97                                    |
| h) include staff's contribution, MEP and complaints column in the House Talk, our staff magazine  | August 97                                      |
| i) issue more frequently the staff magazine   | August 97                                      |
| j) collect feedback through questionnaires, seminars, workshops, open forums  | Immediate                                      |
| k) conduct a review of the Receipt and Despatch System  | Review in progress, Implementation December 97 |
| l) use videos as a staff communication tool   | Immediate                                      |
| m) provide more fax machines and voice mail service to facilitate communication   | July 97 (start)                                |
| n) provide periodic reports to branch heads on staff suggestions received and follow up actions taken   | January 98 (start)                             |
| o) provide incentives to encourage staff participation/involvement/suggestion   | August 97 (start)                              |
| p) develop the role of line managers in staff communication through management & supervisory training programmes                                | October 97 (start)                             |

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| q) expand the E-mail network to more staff<br>in HAHQ and all outstation offices               | Early 98         |
| r) collect staff feedback on the<br>effectiveness of HD's communication<br>channels with staff | To be determined |

## **PRESENTATION**

8. This paper is presented for Members' views on paragraphs 6 and 7 on 9 October 1997.

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