

## **THE HONG KONG HOUSING AUTHORITY**

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

#### **Strategic Review of Staff Consultation**

#### **PURPOSE**

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

#### **BACKGROUND**

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

#### **REVIEW FINDINGS**

3. It is Government's policy that staff should be consulted on all significant changes to terms and conditions of service. Following this principle and to enable senior management to communicate effectively with staff to understand their feelings, grievances and aspirations on important issues, such as the introduction of new policies and practices, we need an efficient and appropriate consultation mechanism to disseminate information and receive feedback.

## **Staff Consultation at Central Level**

4. At central level, there are four staff consultative councils. (Note<sup>1</sup>) Representatives of respective staff associations/unions (SUs) from specific groups of civil servants form the staff side of each council. The primary objectives of the central consultative councils are to provide a forum for discussion between the Administration and representatives of civil servants on matters affecting the well-being of the latter, and to attain the greatest measure of cooperation between the Government, in its capacity as an employer, and the staff side.

## **Staff Consultation in Housing Department**

5. In HD, the formal channel for staff consultation is the four Departmental Consultative Committees (DCCs) (Note<sup>2</sup>). Ad hoc seminars and focus groups are also used to brief staff representatives and solicit their views on major issues.

6. Management also makes use of other opportunities (informal channels) to consult staff and solicit their views on the following social occasions -

- a) spring reception
- b) SUs' annual general meeting
- c) informal meeting between HRC members and SUs
- d) tea receptions after presentation ceremonies
- e) Secretary for the Civil Service's tea party
- f) visits to outstation offices by senior directorate
- g) ad-hoc gathering (e.g. dinner)

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Note <sup>1</sup> : The four central councils are the Senior Civil Service Council, Model Scale I Staff Consultative Council, Police Force Council and Disciplined Services Consultative Council.

Note <sup>2</sup> : There are four DCCs, one each for General Grades and Seconded Officers, Housing Management Professional Staff, Housing Department Junior Staff and Works Group. Each committee holds ordinary meetings at quarterly intervals.

Informal meetings are also arranged to facilitate the exchange of views and ideas between the management and staff. On the whole, the existing consultation channels tend to be formal and centralized.

### **Proposed Staff Consultation Strategies**

7. Whenever feasible, it is good management practice to consult staff/staff representatives about decisions affecting their work lives with a view to achieving organisational objectives and higher level of efficiency through staff's co-operation. Management should aim to win the acceptance of and commitment from staff to new policies and practices. The following strategies are proposed -

- a) arrange staff consultation as early as possible on matters that affect them;
- b) involve SUs as far as possible (Note<sup>3</sup>);
- c) resolve problems and disputes through discussion and consultation as far as practicable;
- d) be proactive, open and transparent in consultation;
- e) continue to use DCCs as formal staff consultation channels;
- f) use workshops, seminars, briefings, focus groups to serve as consultation tools, particularly for staff not represented by Sus;
- g) involve Director of Housing (D of H) and the two Deputy Directors (DDs) in staff consultation, if necessary; and
- h) encourage the use of more informal channels for staff consultation.

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Note <sup>3</sup> : For staff without a departmental staff union, e.g. HA employees and general and common staff, their consultation is included under sub-paragraph 7 (f).

## Proposed Action Plan

8. In order to benefit from the above strategies, the following are proposed -

	<b>Time-table</b>
a) delineate responsibilities - consultation on different issues should be handled by different parties, e.g. grade specific matters to be handled by Grade Management (GM) Section, Branch specific issues to be taken up by Branch Directors, the Merger of Estate Management and Maintenance functions by the M&M Working Group	Immediate
b) strengthen the grade manager's role in staff consultation	For housing related grades - immediate; For works related grades - December 97 when the GM Section for works related grades is set up
c) review and implement necessary changes to the composition and constitution of the DCCs to take into account the department's recent reorganisation	Review in progress; Implementation will take place in January 98
d) step up the frequency of holding DCC meetings	Starting January, 98
e) organise more seminars and focus groups as staff consultation tools, in particular, for staff not represented by staff associations	Immediate

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| f) approach individual staff by means of personal letters/questionnaires for staff views/feedback on specific issues                     | Immediate |
| g) on major department-wide issues, D of H and the DDs should be involved in staff consultation  | Immediate |
| h) take every opportunity to make use of informal channels (e.g. social occasions/gatherings) to obtain staff's immediate views/feedback | Immediate |

## **PRESENTATION**

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

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