

CHAPTER 2 : METHOD OF OPERATION OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE

Procedures

2.1. Our terms of reference stipulate that we shall operate through sub-committees. All submissions in respect of the disciplined services to the Standing Committee are, therefore, considered in the first instance either by the General Disciplined Services Sub-Committee, the Independent Commission Against Corruption Sub-Committee or the Police Sub-Committee. These Sub-Committees are responsible for formulating their own recommendations separately. The Standing Committee oversees the work of the Sub-Committees, approves their recommendations, which may be amended if the Standing Committee sees fit, and submits them to the Governor.

2.2. Our terms of reference provide that heads of the disciplined services, or the Official Side or the Staff Side of the Police Force Council or the Disciplined Services Consultative Council may jointly or individually refer to us for advice on any matter relating to pay and conditions of service in the disciplined service. The majority of the submissions received during the period covered by this report have come either directly or through the Administration from the heads of the disciplined services, with only a few cases having been originated by the Administration.

Work Programme

2.3. At about six-month intervals, we invite the disciplined services and the Administration to identify issues which they want us to consider, and to indicate the priority which they attach to each issue. On the basis of such information, we draw up a work programme for each of the disciplined services setting the time-frame for each issue and taking into account -

- (a) the priorities sought by the disciplined services or the Administration;
- (b) the need to allow sufficient time for research and analysis to be undertaken on complex issues; and
- (c) the need to spread the workload of the Office of the Secretary General.

2.4. The work programmes are then passed to the relevant disciplined services and the Administration, which constitute the timetable to which we work. The heads of the disciplined services are requested to inform their staff concerned of the work programmes. Both management and staff associations are therefore aware of when each issue will be considered.

2.5. When a submission is received, the Office of the Secretary General sends a copy of it to Members of the relevant Sub-Committee, seeks the views of the

Administration, and carries out the necessary research and analysis. If necessary, the Office also seeks clarification or further information from the management of the disciplined service concerned concurrently.

2.6. It is our practice to invite the Administration, representatives of the departmental management and staff associations concerned to attend our Sub-Committee meetings to express their views on a submission. Our purpose is to give representatives of departmental managements and staff associations an opportunity to clarify points made in their submissions, and to provide supplementary justifications, with a view to avoiding any possible misconceptions and ensuring that they are satisfied that their views have been clearly understood by Members.

2.7. The Sub-Committee, having regard to the views of the departmental management, the staff associations and the Administration, as well as the outcome of research and analysis by the Office of the Secretary General, formulates its recommendation to the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee then considers the submission, taking into account the views expressed by all the parties concerned and the recommendation of the Sub-Committee, and advises the Governor by letter accordingly.

2.8. Once the Administration has notified us that a decision has been taken on our advice to the Governor on a submission from the disciplined service, the Secretary General writes to the head of the disciplined service concerned, informing him of our advice and the reasons which have led us to our recommendation. The heads of the other disciplined services are also notified by the Secretary General of our advice to the Governor.

2.9. We also give our advice, at the request of the Administration, on proposals relating to salaries or conditions of service, many of which carry implications for the civil service as a whole. The Administration normally consults the central consultative councils or staff associations concerned on these proposals before submitting them to us for advice.

2.10. Our terms of reference also provide that we advise on matters relating to the creation of new grades and ranks, and permanent posts remunerated at levels equivalent to or above the bottom point of the directorate in the general civil service, except for the posts of the heads of the disciplined services. In order to facilitate the processing of these submissions and maintain consistency with the procedures adopted for the rest of the civil service, we have agreed with the Administration that the Civil Service Branch will process submissions from the disciplined services for the creation of new ranks and directorate posts and submit its proposals to us for advice.

2.11. The Standing Committee is an advisory body and does not decide on proposals from the disciplined services. Hence, we do not deal with appeals against decisions taken by the Administration on the basis of our advice. However, if the Administration considers that an appeal from the disciplined service constitutes sufficient grounds for reconsideration, it may submit the case to us for advice in the normal way.

Meetings of the Standing Committee and its Sub-Committees

2.12. The Standing Committee and its Sub-Committees meet generally on a bi-monthly basis and, as a matter of convenience, meetings are arranged six months in advance. Between May 1991 and September 1993, the Standing Committee and its three Sub-Committees have had 21 meetings.

2.13. The submissions we have considered between May 1991 and September 1993 covered a wide range of issues, from pay and allowances to conditions of service. Details of these submissions and our views on them are set out in the subsequent chapters, and a list of all of the issues considered by us up to September 1993 is at *Appendix D*.

Informal meetings with staff representatives and the departmental managements

2.14. In addition to hearing representations made by staff at our formal meetings, Members of the three Sub-Committees have established a practice of meeting staff side representatives of the Disciplined Services Consultative Council, representatives of the four Police staff associations and of the ICAC Staff Consultative Committee (Staff Sub-Committee) from time to time on an informal basis. These informal meetings provide opportunities for us to exchange views freely and frankly with staff. They enable us to be aware of the sentiments of disciplined services staff on issues of concern to them and help foster mutual understanding. We also have informal meetings with the departmental managements for a similar purpose. Since the introduction of this new arrangement in December 1991, we have had six informal meetings with the senior managements of the disciplined services and nine meetings with the staff councils/ associations. We find these meetings very useful.

Visits to the Disciplined Services

2.15. We conduct regular visits to the disciplined services to provide us with an opportunity to learn about aspects of the work of the disciplined services, meet and talk to the staff and management, learn more about their problems and aspirations and understand the actual working conditions on the ground. We also obtain feedback on how our advice to the Governor has been received. We also make work-related visits in order to gather first-hand information on issues under our consideration. We find these visits useful and appreciate the opportunity to talk openly and freely to the managements and staff. Without exception, we have been impressed by the dedication and hard work displayed at all levels throughout the disciplined services.



Committee Members' visit to the San Uk Ling Immigration Clearance Centre



Committee Members' visit to Kowloon East Regional Traffic Headquarters, Royal Hong Kong Police Force

A list of the visits we have made during the period is at Appendix E.