

## **Driving Innovation and Promoting Co-ordination**

Following the announcement in my Policy Address on 11 October of a new initiative to revamp the Central Policy Unit (“the CPU”) as the Policy Innovation and Co-ordination Office (“the new Office”), the Government placed advertisements on 27 October to invite individuals aspiring to pursue a career in public policy to apply for the positions of Policy and Project Co-ordination Officer and Senior Policy and Project Co-ordination Officer in the new Office. This initiative originated from a proposal in my Election Manifesto to provide more opportunities for young people from different backgrounds who are interested in policy research and project co-ordination to participate in politics. While recent public discussions seemed to focus on the participation of young people in politics, I would like to elaborate on the idea of revamping the CPU and the underlying considerations.

The CPU was formally set up in April 1989 to provide the then Government with a broader and longer-term perspective on major policy issues, including alternative thinking within the Government. The aim was to ensure that the most senior echelon in the Government would have the most comprehensive advice at hand when they made important policy decisions.

During the past 30 years or so, the focus and priorities of the CPU's work have been evolving and adjusting from time to time to take account of the changing social and economic needs and the preference of the senior leadership in the Government (i.e. basically the Governor before Hong Kong's return to the Motherland, and the Chief Executive thereafter). As for the position of the Head of the CPU which was ranked at Directorate Pay Scale Point 8, it was filled by a civil servant or a non-civil servant at different junctures. The personal work styles of different CPU heads might perhaps also have a bearing on the characteristics of the CPU.

My current proposal of re-organising the CPU is an integral part of this term of Government's commitment to innovation and actions. As the Chief Executive with the determination to lead Hong Kong to scale new heights, I am keenly aware of the immense responsibilities upon my shoulders. I also appreciate that we must be forward-looking and maintain a strategic perspective in our governance. With 37 years of experience in public service, I fully recognise the difficulties that may be encountered in introducing new ways of thinking into the Government system and the importance of having the right support in our search for breakthroughs and in co-ordinating effort to achieve necessary changes.

The CPU does not come under any policy bureau and reports direct to the Chief Executive. With appropriate re-organisation, it is best placed to take up this new role. Moreover, with an annual funding of close to \$120 million (including \$30 million for public policy research), the CPU should be able to make a more visible impact. I will take the opportunity to bring in younger members to the team so that the views and suggestions of young people could be taken into consideration at an early stage of policy formulation. This would also allow an opportunity for young people to gain a deeper understanding of public policies as well as practical experience in their formulation.

The CPU will be re-organised as the Policy Innovation and Co-ordination Office to provide support to the senior leadership in the Government with regard to the following new or adjusted key functions:

- Providing secretariat support to the Chief Executive's Council of Advisers on Innovation and Strategic Development – I will personally chair this new high-level strategic forum which comprises leaders from different sectors. The Council will focus on the strategic positioning of Hong Kong in the global economy and guide Hong Kong's future innovation and changes so as to maintain our competitiveness in the global arena and enhance our

alignment with the development of our country. Apart from providing secretarial support to the Council, the new Office will carry out evidence-based policy research under the steer of the Council.

- Co-ordinating major cross-bureaux policies selected by the Chief Executive and the Secretaries of Departments – The new Office will help achieve policy objectives through co-ordinating cross-bureaux efforts in identifying and implementing solutions. Examples of such policy co-ordination work of the new Office include reviews of existing legislation and opening up of government data to support innovative developments in Hong Kong.
- Providing “first-stop” and “one-stop” services for innovative development projects – The new Office will co-ordinate examination of the potential benefits of individual project proposals to the community and provide consultation and co-ordination services so that Hong Kong may seize opportunities in a timely manner.

- Administering two public policy research funding schemes – We will continue to provide funding support, on the advice of the Assessment Panel led by Professor Joseph Lee and Professor Daniel Shek, to universities and research institutes for carrying out public policy research. We will also continue to explore ways to further enhance the effectiveness and impact of the research funding schemes.
- Promoting evidence-based policy research – Apart from promoting evidence-based policy research conducted by its research staff, the new Office will foster a closer network to encourage policy discussions with local and external academia and think-tanks so as to raise the standard of policy research in Hong Kong.
- Providing more opportunities for direct participation of young people in public policy formulation – We aim to recruit 20 to 30 young people aspiring to pursue a career in policy research and policy and project co-ordination to join the new Office on a non-civil service contract basis. Apart from direct participation in policy research and public engagement work in the new Office, they will also have opportunities to interact and exchange views with the Chief Executive and politically appointed officials.

I have high hopes that the new Policy Innovation and Co-ordination Office will be an action-oriented team which is energetic, inclusive of different opinions and capable of thinking out of the box. My politically appointed team and I look forward to working closely with the new Office in shaping the future of Hong Kong.

Mrs Carrie Lam  
Chief Executive of the HKSAR