

SOCIAL WORKERS REGISTRATION BOARD

Notes of the One Hundred and Twenty-seventh Meeting of the Committee on Administration

Date: 25 February 2016
Time: 7:00 p.m.
Venue: Conference Room, 26/F Eastern Commercial Centre, 83 Nam On Street,
Shau Kei Wan, Hong Kong

Present: Dr. LEUNG Chuen-suen (Convenor)
Mr. CHUNG Wai-lung, Rivalino
Mr. KWAN Wing-shing, Vincent
Mr. HUI Chung-shing, Herman
Mr. SHIU Ka-chun
Mr. TAN Tick-yee
Mr. WONG Ka-ming

Absent with apology: Mr. LO Wa-kei, Roy

In-attendance: Mr. LEUNG Sui-keung, Registrar
Ms. FAN Lai-yee, Veronica, Assistant Registrar (Secretary)

Notes

- 1 Consideration of the terms of reference of the Committee on Administration

The Committee accepted the terms of reference, which was the same as the previous term.
- 2 Confirmation of the notes of last meeting

Members took note of the notes of last meeting.
- 3 Matters Arising
 - 3.1 After the completion of the annual audit report by the appointed auditor, the Committee would review the annual budget and fee schedule for the next financial year.
 - 3.2 Windows maintenance work of the Board office on 26/F and 27/F was arranged to commence on 29 February 2016.

- 3.3 At the Board meeting on 13 January 2016, the Board approved the upgrading of the Data Management System of the Board office due to the reasons that the hardware was old and the software operating systems were not supported by the Microsoft. Eighty percent of the server's storage capacity was used and it was necessary to upgrade the DMS before the server was full. The previous term of Committee had explored different solutions and finally agreed to keep the current DMS software and replace the hardware. The hardware was delivered to the Board office and the arrangement of data migration was in progress.
 - 3.4 The previous term of Committee and the Board had approved the proposal of improvement to the Board's website to enhance web accessibility by persons with disabilities. After enhancement, the new website would meet the standard of World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 Level AA. Two layout designs were tabled for members' discussion. Members agreed to adopt Design B for further development.
 - 3.5 The previous term of Committee and the Board had approved to recruit Professional Consultants for conducting the social work qualification recognition assessment/review exercises. The Board office had received 14 applications. Due to busy working schedule at the end of last year, the selection panel was formed but interview was yet to start. Members agreed to form the selection panel and start the interview. The panel would comprise of the Board's Chairman, Vice-chairman and the Convener of the Committee on Qualification Assessment and Registration.
- 4 Consideration of the arrangements for a briefing talk given by the legal adviser to new Board members
 - 4.1 Further to the Board meeting on 23 January 2016, the Committee on Administration was advised to examine whether it was desirable to organize a briefing by the legal adviser to Board Members on law and procedures regarding the duties and functions of the Board. The purpose of the briefing was to facilitate new Board members to understand the Ordinance as well as the law and procedures pertaining the discharge of statutory functions of the Board.
 - 4.3 Briefings by the legal adviser were organized during the last two terms of the Board. The briefing was conducted by Mr. Christopher Chan at the previous two terms. The duration was about one and a half hour. The Committee agreed to invite Mr. Christopher Chan to deliver the briefing to

the Board members.

- 4.4 The Committee considered that the briefing would be of assistance to the Board member in making decision. The briefing should be arranged soonest possible. In view of the complications of the meeting agenda at the 136th Board meeting, the Committee recommended a separate session for briefing by the legal adviser. Two time-slots were proposed i.e. 14 March 2016 at 7:30pm and 11 April 2016 at 7:30pm. The Committee would propose these two dates to the Board for other members' consideration.

(Post-meeting note: At the 136th Board meeting, Board Members agreed to organize the briefing by the legal adviser on 11 April 2016, but the starting time would be advanced to 7:15 pm)

- 5 Consideration on the appointment of auditors for the financial accounts for the year ended 31 March 2016

5.1 Under Section 7(1)(h) of the Social Workers Registration Ordinance, the Board was under statutory requirement to keep the accounts. To ensure that the Board had complied with the above statutory requirement, the Board had appointed an auditor to audit the accounts in the past years.

5.2 The Board office had invited eight audit firms to provide quotations for the task of auditing the Board's accounts for the financial year 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016. Only three audit firms responded to the Board's invitation. The information was circulated to the Committee before the meeting. The Committee agreed to engage Clement C.W.Chan & Co in consideration of the following reasons:

- (a) The proposed fee was reasonable and it was the lowest.
- (b) The firm was the Board's auditor for the last four financial years and it had rendered good and reliable service with due diligence to the Board.
- (c) The firm had acted as the auditor for only 4 financial years, not exceeding 7 years. No independence issue would be concerned.

- 6 Review of depreciation policy

6.1 Under Clause 61 of the Hong Kong Accounting Standard 16, the Board should review its annual depreciation method applied to its asset at each financial year-end. The Board's financial year ended on 31 March each year. The current depreciation policy adopted by the Board was

circulated to the Committee. The Committee agreed to adopt the same depreciation policy which would be put forth to the Board for endorsement.

7 Perusal of progress report on promotion of the Board

7.1 To promote the Board's roles and functions, the Board office would arrange talks to year-one and final-year social work students at different tertiary institutions regularly. The talks would cover functions of the Board, registration procedures, code of practices, voluntary CPD. The talks were mainly given by the staff of Board office and sometimes by the Board members depending on the nature of attendees. The Board would also accept invitations of delivery of talks to local or Mainland's organizations.

7.2 The Committee noted the progress report on promotion of the Board.

8 Review of the Election of Board Members 2016-2019 exercise

8.1 Election of Board Members of the term from 16 January 2016 to 15 January 2019 was conducted in December 2015. Vote counting was conducted on 12 December 2015. With a view to improving the election process, a review was conducted by the Committee. A list of items was worked out for the purpose of facilitating the planning of the next election exercise. The area of improvement was identified as follows:

- (a) The election publicity materials were printed in black and white only. It would be better to print the election publicity materials in colour.
- (b) The Board did not organize any forum for the election. The Board should consider organizing forum for the election so that candidates for the election could meet RSWs at the forum.
- (c) There was no signage or banner at the venue for the vote counting exercise. Signage or banner should be placed at the venue on the vote counting date.
- (d) The design of the bar-coded envelop should be improved so that when the voter used glue to seal the bar-coded envelope, the envelope and the ballot paper would not be glued together.
- (e) The candidates could not communicate with the RSWs directly. The communication channels between RSWs and voters should be enhanced.
- (f) There was no expenditure ceiling for the candidates for the election exercise.
- (g) The feasibility and viability of electronic voting was also

brainstormed.

- (h) The next election exercise would be conducted in December 2018. Planning work should begin before early 2018. The Committee suggested that the above stock list should be used as a reference in the planning of the next election exercise.

8.2 The Committee further exchanged views as follows:

- (a) A member suggested the Board to analyse the profiles of voters, for example gender distribution of voters. The information would be useful for promoting the election exercise. However, there was alternative view on this proposal. If the Board published information on profiles of voters, it might lead RSWs to cast doubt on the information on individual voters that was kept by the Board. The reason was that without information on individual voters, the Board could not work out aggregate information on profiles of voters. It was then decided that this proposal should not be pursued.
- (b) Members expressed that a small number of RSWs had received two ballot forms. The Board office explained that some RSWs notified the Board office that they had changed their registered address after the computer service provider had sent out the ballot forms. The Board office arranged dispatch of new ballot forms to those RSWs and reminded them to use the new ballot form and the old ballot form was voided.

9 Discussion on dissemination of SWRB information to RSWs

- 9.1 The Committee exchanged views on information to be disseminated to RSWs. The Committee further explored the viability of dissemination of information to the public and also the feasibility and desirability of adopting a more wide scope of bilingual policy of the Board in disseminating information to RSWs and the public.
- 9.2 Members came up with an initial proposal on information to be disseminated to RSWs and the public.

The principle on more transparency

- (a) At the start of the discussion, the Committee shared views on whether more information should be disseminated to RSWs. The Committee first agreed that the Board should be more transparent to RSWs.

- (b) After that, the Committee then examined the issue from a wider perspective. The Committee noted that the Social Workers Registration Board was a statutory regulatory body and its main aim was for the protection of interest of service users and the public. As such, it should also look after the interest the public at large. Therefore, transparency of the Board should not only be confined to RSWs but should also be made available to the public. The Committee shared the view that the Board should not only aim at earning the respect of RSWs but should also make its best endeavour to earn the respect of the general public to the Board as well as to the social work profession. Before the Board could earn the respect of RSWs and the public, it had to let the RSWs and the general public to know more about the Board.

The scope of information to be disseminated

- (c) Having reached the principle that the Board should be more transparent, the Committee then discussed on the scope of information to be disseminated to RSWs and the public. The present approach of the Board was to decide what information should be disclosed. After discussion, the Committee recommended that the present approach should be revised. The approach should be that all information should be disclosed except the information which should not and could not be disclosed.
- (d) The initial scope of information that should not be disclosed was set out below:
- (i) All information involving and/or pertaining to personal particular, for example, applications for registration, should not be disclosed.
 - (ii) All information pertaining to recognition of social work qualifications should not be disclosed.
 - (iii) Other information including sensitive information such as commercially confidential information, for example, quotations, should not be disclosed.

(Post meeting note: after the Board meeting on 7 March 2016, the Board members decided that privileged information such as legal advice should be included in the list of information that should not be disclosed.)

- (e) In terms of documents to be disclosed, the initial plan put forward the following proposal:
 - (i) Agenda and minutes of Board Meetings, excluding appendices to Board Papers.
 - (ii) Agenda and notes of Committee / Working Group meetings, excluding appendices.
- (f) Before documents could be released on the Board's web-site, procedures should be worked out on how to prepare the document to be released. The following option might each with its own pros and cons:
 - (i) The first option was to disclose the full record with identity of persons / organizations masked off. However, this may not be sufficient for protection of the interest of the Board as well as the person / organization involved. Although name was masked off, the concerned person/ organization would still know that the person / organized being masked off was referring to that person/ organization. Similarly, for protection of the interest of Board Members, names of Board Members should also be masked off so that they could not be identified from the record of discussion in the minutes.
 - (ii) The second option was to prepare summary of the issue and gist of decision from the full record. This would address the issues as identified in sub-paragraph (a) above. However, this would involve additional workload and it might lead to two sets of records on the same issue for two different purposes, one for proper recordings of the meeting and one for posting on the Board's web-site.
 - (iii) The third option was to put a note on the document that the item was confidential and would not be disclosed.
- (g) Since this was the first discussion on the matter, the Board/Committee might further examine the issue in more detail in due course.
- (h) It was also recommended that the Chairperson of the Board and the Conveners of the respective Committees/Working Group be delegated with authority to approve the documents/information to be

disseminated to RSWs and the public.

The mode of dissemination of information

- (i) The Meeting also examined whether the information should be released on the Board's website or set up an intranet for RSWs so that the information would be posted on the intranet only.
- (j) If the Board wanted to earn the respect of the public, it followed that the information should be posted on the Board's website.

Timing for dissemination of information

- (k) The current policy of the Board was to release information after the Board had made a decision on the subject matter. A suggestion was that the Board might release the information before the Board made a final decision. However, this might have the drawback of fettering the Board's subsequent discussion on the matter.

9.3 The Committee would put forth the above proposal to the Board and invite the Board to give steer on the direction to take the matter forward.

10. Discussion on use of language of meeting documents

10.1 The Committee explored the feasibility of providing bilingual documents for dissemination of information. The discussions were as follows:

- (a) Currently, the documents for use at Board Meetings, Committee / Working Group Meetings were prepared in English. To facilitate the public to have access to information of the Board, it was necessary to disseminate information to the public in both English and Chinese.
- (b) The option of shifting the language used in preparation of documents from Chinese to English was considered. However, the fact was that while all RSWs knew English, there were RSWs who did not know Chinese. Therefore, the idea to use Chinese to replace English in all documents was not viable. The only sensible solution was to move towards more extensive adoption of bilingual practice in documents used by the Board.
- (c) The Committee noted that many of the documents of the Board were now bilingual but not all documents were bilingual. While the

Board's newsletter was in Chinese only, meeting documents were in English only. For the Board's web-site, most of the contents were bilingual.

- (d) After exchanging views, a wider perspective for discussion was put forward for the Committee's consideration during the meeting. The suggestion was that the issue should be considered along the line of adopting a wider scope of using bilingual documents/ information instead of just considering on what language should be used for enhancing transparency of the Board.
- (e) The initial views along this line were set out below:
 - (i) The proposal to adopting of a wider scope of bilingual practice in the Board was a right move towards improving the operation of the Board as well as earning respect of RSWs and the public.
 - (ii) Additional resources would be required to take this matter forward. It might be employing of additional staff or contracting out the work on translation of documents.
- (f) After detailed sharing and exchanging of views on the matter, the Committee agreed that it might be conducive to take a more comprehensive engineering approach to take the matter along the line of enhancing a wider scope of adoption of bilingual practice.
- (g) Towards this approach, the Committee proposed that more information should be obtained for further consideration of the Board and the Committee. The information required would include:
 - (i) The estimate on volume of additional work involved.
 - (ii) The additional resources required.
 - (iii) Means of provision of additional resources, e.g. creations of additional post or contracting out the work.

10.2 The Committee would put forth the above proposal to the Board and invite the Board to give steer on the direction to take the matter forward.

11 Consideration of the outline of the 37th issue of the Newsletter

11.1 The Committee reviewed the outline of the 37th issue of the Newsletter

and proposed to add the following items in the outline:

- (a) message from the Chairperson
- (b) extract of Financial Report
- (c) the usage of online voluntary CPD
- (d) open invitation to RSWs to contribute editorial in which the content should be confined to the ambit of the SWRB
- (e) update on Board's position on the "Exploration on Setting up a Voluntary Enrolment Scheme for Specialization in Social Work for Registered Social Workers" (Specialization Scheme)

12 Any other business

There was no any other business.

13 Date of next meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 10:10 p.m. Members proposed two meeting dates i.e. 11 April 2016 (7:15pm) and 18 April 2016 (7:15pm) subject to availability of other member.

(Post meeting note: the meeting was scheduled on 18 April 2016 at 7:15pm)

16 March 2016