

SOCIAL WORKERS REGISTRATION BOARD
Notes of the 132nd Meeting of the Committee on Administration

Date: 23 January 2017
Time: 7:15 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. HUI Chung-shing, Herman
Mr. KWAN Wing-shing, Vincent
Mr. LO Wa-kei, Roy
Mr. SHIU Ka-chun
Mr. WONG Ka-ming
Apology: Mr. TAN Tick-yee
Secretary: Mr. LEE Wing-po, Eric, Registrar and
Ms. FAN Lai-yee, Veronica, Assistant Registrar

Dr. LEUNG, Convenor of the Committee, presided the meeting.

Confirmation of the notes of the 131st meeting

1. The notes of the last meeting were confirmed without amendment.

Matters arising from the 131st meeting

Annual Meeting with RSWs in 2017

2. The Annual Meeting with RSWs was held on 11 November 2016 with around 20 RSWs attending the event. Two speakers namely Mr. SHIU Ka-chun and Professor Ho Sik-ying delivered their talks while another speaker Mr. KWOK Wai Keung was sick on the day and excused himself from the event.
3. The attention of the meeting was drawn to the low participation rate and a review of the purpose of the event was suggested as if it should be continued. The Committee agreed to discuss the issue in details at subsequent meeting.

Finance

Proposal of appointment of auditors for the financial accounts for the year ended 31 March 2017

4. The financial year of the Board ended at 31 March of each year. The Board was required to keep proper records of its accounts according to Section 7(1)(h) of the SWRO, and it appointed auditors annually to audit its accounts.

5. Three quotations were submitted to the Committee for consideration, with the fee ranging from (business information deleted). Among the three quotations, the quote from Clement C W Chan & Co was the lowest and it has been appointed as the auditor in the past 5 years from 2012 to 2016.
6. The Honorary Treasurer advised that it remained prudent to appoint the same auditor for a consecutive period of not longer than 7 years. Taken the advice of the Honorary Treasurer, the Committee recommended to re-appoint Clement C W Chan & Co as the auditor and the same would be put forward to the Board for endorsement.

Review of depreciation policy

7. The Committee reviewed the depreciation policy and recommended to adopt the current depreciation method. Based on the advice of the Honorary Treasurer, the Committee agreed that it was not necessary to review the policy annually unless when necessary or when there were substantial changes in the non-current asset portfolio. The recommendation would be put forward to the Board for endorsement.

Proposal of formulating guidelines for cash flow management

8. The Registrar briefed the meeting on the proposal of formulating guidelines for cash flow management, which had been cleared by the Honorary Treasurer before the meeting.
9. In the proposal, it was suggested that the total amount of cash and liquid assets should be kept at the level of 12 to 15 months' average operating expenses. The minimum cash for daily operations should be at HK\$1.2 million at HSBC current account. For other inactive bank accounts namely BOC, DBS and SCB, it was suggested to keep a nominal balance at HK\$1,000. Excess cash should be placed at different banks in time deposits with different maturity dates for providing necessary liquidity.
10. The Committee endorsed the proposal and recommended the same to put forward to the Board for approval.
11. Besides the time deposits, the Committee also directed the Board office to work out an investment policy and explore the possibility of investing the liquid assets into alternative low-risk and interest-earning financial instruments, e.g. i-bonds.

Proposal of refund part of renewal fee to RSWs

12. It was noted that the Committee had a lengthy discussion on the proposal of fee rebate to RSWs for encouraging their use of e-communication with the Board. The proposal had to be shelved in view of the uncertainty in the position of the Labour & Welfare Bureau to it. The Registrar therefore put forward a new proposal for the Committee's consideration and comments.
13. The purpose of the new proposal was to provide incentive to RSWs by refunding part of the

renewal fee, so as to improve the renewal rate during the renewal window i.e. renewal not earlier than 3 months and not later than 28 days prior to the expiry of the current registration, hence to save our cost and the environment.

14. It was proposed to refund HK\$20 (an amount equivalent to the round up of the postage and stationery costs saved at HK\$17.8) to RSWs who renew their registration within the renewal window. The refund would be sent together with the new registration cards and receipts of renewal fee (HK\$380) and no extra postage would be incurred. If the proposal was endorsed, it would be run recurrently and it was estimated that the saving in the postage was HK\$111,713 and the reduction in income from renewal was at around HK\$285,000 if all RSWs renewed before the renewal window. The Committee instructed the Board office to work out the financial implications with different renewal rates when presenting the proposal to the Board.
15. The Registrar briefed that there would be a few modifications to related procedures for a higher efficiency. The invitation to renew would be sent out prior to the start date of renewal window i.e. 3 months prior to the expiry of registration and hence the invitation would be sent out by ordinary post two working days before that. Besides, the 28-day notice by registered post would be sent out on the next working day after the closure of the renewal window. The letter would be served both as the notice to remove the name for any failure to renew and as the notice to extend the renewal period up to the expiry of the 28-day notice to remove, for sake of synchronization. The names of the non-renewal RSWs would be removed one or two working days after the expiry of the 28-day notice.
16. Members agreed to submit the proposal to the Board for endorsement. If it was endorsed, the next action was to write to the Labour and Welfare Bureau seeking directive, if any.
17. Apart from the above, members proposed to improve the online application system to make it more user-friendly and to provide RSWs with more payment methods for example credit cards. The review would be conducted in one exercise together with the proposal of building a new database system. Members agreed that RSWs should be reminded of the renewal window and the earliest date of renewal i.e. 3 months before the expiry of their registration. It was also important to change the mindset of RSWs that it was their own responsibility to renew registration on time. To serve the purpose, letters to RSWs should be refined and an additional easy guide for registration would be provided to the RSWs when the proposal was implemented.

Administration

Renewal of D&O Liability/Professional Indemnity insurance policy and fund for premium

18. The Assistant Registrar updated that the insurance was due to expire on 31 March 2017 and insurer had been asked to submit quotation, who recently requested the Board office to provide further information about the judicial review case before a new quotation could be worked out. The Committee agreed that the quotation would be circulated to members when available.

Price information on replacement of internal file server

19. The Assistant Registrar proposed to replace the internal file server due to its unstable performance in recent months. The server has been used for more than 4 years. Two quotations i.e. (business information deleted) were submitted to the Committee for consideration. The lowest quote from R&B was selected by the Committee and the amount was already included in the budget of 2017/2018.

Human Resources

Discussion on a complaint against the Board office staff

(The registrar excused himself from the meeting.)

20. It was noted that the Board office received a complaint against the Board office staff on 2 December 2016, and it was circulated to the Board Members on the same day. The complainant alleged that in accordance with the Common Law, his application for renewal should be deemed as reaching the Board office when he posted the application. In the latter part of his complaint, he alleged that the Registrar and the staff did not possess professional knowledge and the procedures of handling his case did not follow legal proceedings.
21. It was noted that the Board having sought legal advice decided that the complainant's alleged legal principles were inapplicable and irrelevant to the registration matters. The complainant had been informed of the findings on 15 December 2016.
22. The meeting then discussed the latter part of the complaint with referencing to the Board's complaint handling policy.
23. It was found that the Registrar had sent acknowledgement to the complainant on the same date of receiving the complaint, whilst the policy specified the acknowledgment to be made within 7 days. Besides, members pointed out that it was logical for the Registrar not be able to make any pledge on the complainant's request. In fact, the Registrar had given a correct and diligent answer to the complainant and he had taken the appropriate and prompt action. After lengthy discussion, the Committee agreed that the latter part of the complaint was not established. The Board office was instructed to draft the reply for the Committee's clearance. *(Post meeting note: the reply was sent to the complainant on 27 January 2017 after clearance by the Committee and the second letter was sent on 8 February 2017 upon the complainant's request for detailed explanation on the decision.)*
24. The Convener invited the Committee to consider whether we should include the performance pledge in the policy. After review, members agreed that the current policy was good enough and it was not necessary to make further revision.

(The Registrar returned to the meeting at this juncture.)

Promotions

Perusal of progress report on promotion of the Board

25. Members noted the progress report on promotion of the Board.

Outline of Newsletter Issue 39

26. Members agreed to the outline of the newsletter and proposed to add Chairperson's Message, an introduction of the new Registrar and compassionate condolence message to Mr. Hui Yin Fat.

Discussion on the Celebration of 20th Anniversary of SWRB in 2018

27. Members were invited to consider whether to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of SWRB in 2018. It was noted that the Board had only celebrated the 15th Anniversary in 2013 but not its 5th and 10th anniversaries. Members had different views on the issue as some were supportive while some had reservations on spending the public money in celebration activities as the Board's statutory functions were registration matters and disciplinary control only. A member suggested that at the least some literature may be prepared to record the work of SWRB in the past 20 years and to set out any future plan. This would be discussed at subsequent meetings.

Any other business

28. An income statement from April 2016 to December 2016 was tabled for members' information. The Registrar reported that the Board office would circulate a quarterly income statement every three months so as to update the Board about its financial status.

29. There was a proposal of the Board Members hosting out of their own pockets a tea reception with staff members at this time of the Chinese New Year. The meeting agreed and other Board Members would be invited to consider this. (*post meeting note: the reception was held on 7 February 2017.*)

Date of next meeting

30. Members agreed that the next meeting would be scheduled on 30 March 2017 at 7:15 pm.

31. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:20 pm.

15 February 2017