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Replies to initial written questions raised by Finance Committee Members in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2016-17

Director of Bureau : Director of Administration
Session No. : 3

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

CSO022

(Question Serial No. 1588)

Head: (142) Government Secretariat: Offices of the Chief Secretary for Administration and the Financial Secretary

Subhead (No. & title): (000) Operational expenses

Programme: (2) Government Records Service

Controlling Officer: Director of Administration (Ms Kitty CHOI)

Director of Bureau: Director of Administration

Question:

1. What are the expenditure and contents of the publicity programmes to promote the services of the Government Records Service (GRS) among the public in 2016-17?
2. A provision of \$150,000 was earmarked for the procurement of archival records relating to Hong Kong from other places in 2015-16. What is the progress of procurement? What are the contents of the records?
3. Does the GRS have any plans to procure archival records relating to Hong Kong from different places in 2016-17? Please provide information on the expenditure involved and the relevant details.

Asked by: Hon MA Fung-kwok (Member Question No. 4)

Reply:

1. The expenditure and details of the publicity and educational programmes to be implemented by the Government Records Service (GRS) in 2016-17 are set out below -

Year	Publicity and educational programmes	Expenditure (\$ million)
2016-17	GRS plans to – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - organise at least 25 group visits to GRS; - conduct a series of educational workshops to help teachers and students to use the archival holdings kept in GRS; - organise a series of thematic film shows; - launch a thematic exhibition together with an on-line Reference Resources Pages; - organise roving exhibitions in Tamar Central Government Offices, Hong Kong Central Library, Sha Tin Public Library and Ping Shan Tin Shui Wai Public Library; 	1.90 (estimated)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - participate in a cultural and historical project with another institution; - enrich the contents of the Educational Resources Portal to attract more people to view the digitised holdings and information; - digitise popular and frequently-accessed items; and - continue to broadcast an Announcement for Public Interest to promote the services provided by GRS and public appreciation of Hong Kong's documentary heritage. 	
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2. In 2015-16, 46 digitised records relating to Hong Kong were acquired from The National Archives of the UK (TNA). They are mainly from four record series. Details are as follows –

	Series title	Covering years
(a)	Cabinet Office: Defence and Overseas Policy Committee and Sub-committees	1963-1984
(b)	Cabinet Office: Paymaster General's Office and Minister Without Portfolio's Office – Government Information Coordination Files (MB & BN Series)	1968
(c)	Cabinet Office: Committees (C Series)	1967-1970
(d)	Colonial Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Original correspondence	1936-1939

Among the 46 records, 43 records were made available for public inspection in August 2015. The remaining records will be received from TNA in the second quarter of 2016. An amount of \$18,908 was spent for acquiring these records. Besides, GRS has also identified some photographs, maps and plans relating to Hong Kong from TNA and the estimated cost is about \$100,000. GRS will make these items available for public inspection as soon as the acquisition process is completed.

3. In 2016-17, GRS will continue to identify archival records relating to Hong Kong from other archives and acquire copies of such records in order to enrich its holdings. An amount of \$290,000 has been earmarked in the estimates for the purpose.

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

CSO041

(Question Serial No. 5497)

Head: (142) Government Secretariat: Offices of the Chief Secretary for Administration and the Financial Secretary

Subhead (No. & title): (000) Operational expenses

Programme: (2) Government Records Service

Controlling Officer: Director of Administration (Ms Kitty CHOI)

Director of Bureau: Director of Administration

Question:

According to the Programme, it is the responsibility of the Government Records Service (GRS) to identify and preserve records of archival value, valuable government publications and printed materials and provide storage and disposal services for inactive records. In this regard, please:

- (1) list the total number (and linear metres) of records, publications and printed materials transferred or pending transfer by Government departments that were appraised by the GRS in the past year;
- (2) list the total number (and linear metres) of records, publications and printed materials transferred by Government departments that were retained and preserved by the GRS in the past year; and
- (3) list the total number (and linear metres) of records, publications and printed materials appraised by Government departments that were approved for destruction by the GRS in the past year.

Asked by: Hon CHAN Chi-chuen (Member Question No. 261)

Reply:

- (a) The numbers and linear metres (lm) of records appraised, transferred to the Government Records Service (GRS) for permanent preservation and approved for destruction in 2015 are as follows -

Year	Records appraised		Records transferred to GRS for permanent preservation		Records approved for destruction*	
	No. ('000)	lm	No. ('000)	lm	No. ('000)	lm
2015	159	4 037	29	782	104 900	61 418

* *All requests for destruction of records are processed in accordance with the requirements set out in the corresponding records retention and disposal schedules (disposal schedules). The decision as to whether records are of no archival value or having potential archival value were made a few years back when the relevant disposal schedules were drawn up. For time-expired records having no archival value, GRS Director's approval would be given prior to their physical destruction. For those having potential archival value, they would be appraised again by the Public Records Office of GRS and only those confirmed to be of no archival value would be approved by GRS Director for destruction.*

The routine records, mainly of programme nature, of 10 departments took up 95% of the number of the records (58% of lm) in this column. They include computer printouts of tax-related systems from the Inland Revenue Department, arrival and departure cards from the Immigration Department, public files of companies registered under Companies Ordinance from the Companies Registry, various types of trade-related documents and cargo manifests from the Census and Statistics Department and the Trade and Industry Department, revenue-related administrative records such as copies of counterfoils of receipts issued, tickets and permits from the Environment Protection Department and the Marine Department, request forms for laboratory tests from the Department of Health, records relating to Certificate of Fire Service Installations and Equipment from the Fire Services Department, and various general and departmental forms from the Hong Kong Police Force.

(b) As for publications and printed materials, GRS' Central Preservation Library for Government Publications (CPL) selects and preserves government publications and printed materials with permanent value. A copy of new publication/printed material will be forwarded by bureaux and departments (B/Ds) to CPL for selection. CPL is not responsible for granting approval for destruction of B/Ds' library items but will select suitable library items for preservation.

The numbers of publications and printed materials received for selection and preserved by CPL in 2015 are 9 672 and 1 355 respectively. We do not keep statistics in "linear metre" for selected items.

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

CSO047

(Question Serial No. 3525)

Head: (142) Government Secretariat: Offices of the Chief Secretary for Administration and the Financial Secretary

Subhead (No. & title): (000) Operational expenses

Programme: (2) Government Records Service

Controlling Officer: Director of Administration (Ms Kitty CHOI)

Director of Bureau: Director of Administration

Question:

What is the latest progress of the Government Records Service (GRS) in clearing the backlog of records management work of the past few years? In 2016-17, will the GRS strengthen its manpower support to speed up the clearing of government records? If yes, what are the ranks and number of the additional staff? If no, what are the reasons?

Asked by: Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN Ka-lok (Member Question No. 228)

Reply:

The Government Records Service (GRS) had cleared the backlog for records appraisal of the past few years in 2015 as planned. In 2016-17, GRS will create one Senior Assistant Archivist post to strengthen its manpower support for records management work.

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

CSO048

(Question Serial No. 3534)

Head: (142) Government Secretariat: Offices of the Chief Secretary for Administration and the Financial Secretary

Subhead (No. & title): (000) Operational expenses

Programme: (2) Government Records Service

Controlling Officer: Director of Administration (Ms Kitty CHOI)

Director of Bureau: Director of Administration

Question:

Regarding the enactment of the archives law and the freedom of information law, would the Government advise this Committee the followings:

- a) What is the latest progress of the study, consultation or drafting of the 2 pieces of legislation above? If the Government has not yet commenced the relevant work, what are the reasons?
- b) Has the Government drawn up any work plan and timetable for the enactment of the 2 pieces of legislation above in 2016-17? If yes, what are the details? If no, what are the reasons?

Asked by: Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN Ka-lok (Member Question No. 264)

Reply:

1. The Law Reform Commission (LRC) has set up 2 Sub-Committees to study respectively the subjects of archives law and access to information. As we understand it, the 2 Sub-Committees are studying the existing systems and laws of other jurisdictions, and will conduct public consultation at a later stage, with a view to making appropriate recommendations on possible options for reform if need be. The Government will examine carefully the recommendations to be made by LRC, before mapping out the way forward.

2. The Administration Wing is responsible for the management of Government records and the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau is responsible for access to information. In the year 2016-17, they will continue to proactively participate in the LRC studies, and review and improve their respective systems as appropriate.

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