

CHAPTER V

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Adequate and qualified manpower is essential for the empowerment of ULBs. This Chapter deals with staff patterns, vacancies and recruitment of staff in ULBs. Audit observed significant gaps in the professional assessment of staff requirements, large numbers of vacancies and poor *per capita* staff, in the ULBs, which affected the smooth functioning of ULBs and their service delivery.

5.1 Staff pattern of ULBs in the State

Section 53 of the WBM Act lays down details of posts for the municipal establishment, allows the Municipality and NAA to determine the municipal establishment and number of officers for itself, out of the posts referred in that Section, and, if necessary, to create posts of such officers and fix the salaries and allowances to be paid and granted to such officers, by the BoC, with the prior approval of the State Government.

In pursuance of the above provision, staff norms for each of the Municipalities were fixed by the erstwhile Municipal Affairs Department in 1995, and were approved by the Finance Department, Government of West Bengal.

Rule 23 of the West Bengal Municipalities (Procedure and Conduct of Business) Rules, 1995, details the departments of the Municipalities, which are required to discharge the obligatory, discretionary and transferred functions, as delineated in Sections 63 to 65 of the WBM Act, devolved to them in line with the 74th CAA. The West Bengal Municipal (Recruitment) Rules, 2005, provide the category of staff under each department, with their eligibility criteria and procedure for selection. The framework of the departments is given in *Appendix-11*.

Apart from the above, each Municipality has posts of one Executive Officer and one Finance Officer, who are appointed by the State Government and are not under the administrative control of the Board of Councillors of the Municipality. The Executive Officer is the chief executive officer of the Municipality.

Section 14 of the KMC Act and Section 30 of the WBMC Act, contain the list of officers for the municipal establishment, as shown in **Table 5.1**.

Table 5.1: List of officers of Kolkata MC and other Municipal Corporations, as per the respective Acts

	Kolkata MC	Other Municipal Corporations
Name of the post	1. Municipal Commissioner 2. Joint Municipal Commissioners 3. Deputy Municipal Commissioners 4. Controller of Municipal Finances and Accounts (CMFA) 5. Chief Municipal Auditor (CMA) 6. Municipal Engineer-in-Chief 7. Chief Municipal Engineers	1. Commissioner 2. Chief Engineer 3. Deputy Commissioner, Revenue 4. Health Officer 5. Finance Officer 6. Chief Auditor 7. Secretary

	Kolkata MC	Other Municipal Corporations
	8. Chief Municipal Architect and Town Planner	
	9. Chief Municipal Health Officer	
	10. Chief Municipal Law Officer	
	11. Municipal Secretary	

(Source: respective Acts)

In case of *Kolkata* MC, the Municipal Commissioner, Joint Municipal Commissioners, the Controller of Municipal Finances and Accounts (CMFA) and the Chief Municipal Auditor (CMA), and, in case of other Municipal Corporations, all the officials mentioned in **Table 5.1**, are appointed by: (i) the State Government, in consultation with the MIC, from amongst the persons who are, or have been, in the service of the State Government or (ii) if directed by the State Government, by the MIC, in consultation with the State Public Service Commission or (iii) by the MIC, with the prior approval of the State Government, from amongst officers who are or have been in the service of the Corporation. In case of *Kolkata* MC, the other officers mentioned in **Table 5.1** are appointed by the MIC, in consultation with the State Public Service Commission, or by the State Government, in consultation with the MIC, from amongst persons who are or have been in the service of Government.

Section 17 of the KMC Act and Section 33 of the WBMC Act define the officers and staff, other than those mentioned in **Table 5.1**, as the ‘municipal establishment’. In *Kolkata* MC, the officer and staff constituting the municipal establishment are maintained through a Schedule of Posts and any revision in the schedule of posts requires approval of the State Government. In case of other Municipal Corporations, the State Government fixes the norms for regulating the size of the establishment and prior approval of the State Government is required for creation of posts. *Kolkata* MC engaged an agency to carry out a study on its organisational development strategy, which submitted its report in 2005, while, in the *Siliguri* MC, staff pattern had not been assessed since its formation in 1994.

Department-wise data for the ULBs had not been maintained at the level of the Directorate of Local Bodies (DLB) which is entrusted with the matters relating to appointments and promotions (in case of already sanctioned posts). Thus, the details of departments relating to the test-checked ULBs were not available. From the information furnished by the *Kolkata* MC, it was noticed that it has 57 departments⁵⁵, for discharging its municipal functions; *Siliguri* MC has only 13 departments; while no such information was available for *Asansol* MC.

Audit observed that, after fixing of staff norms in 1995, further staff requirements had not been assessed by the State Government, although the service delivery functions had increased manifold, over the years, since 1995. ULBs had, from time to time, been requesting the UD&MAD, for filling up of vacancies or creation of posts, due to vacancies or increased workload, but the department had not taken up staff assessment for all the ULBs, in a comprehensive manner.

⁵⁵ As per the Schedule of Establishment of KMC: 2022-23.

5.2 Recruitment of human resources in the ULBs

In the Municipalities, as well as Corporations (including the *Kolkata MC*), posts of officers/employees are classified as Group A, B, C or D. The appointing authorities for Municipalities and Municipal Corporations are given in the **Table 5.2**.

Table 5.2: Appointing authorities

ULB	Appointing authority
Kolkata MC	In case of category-A posts, the Municipal Commissioner; in case of category-B posts, a Joint Municipal Commissioner; in case of category-C posts and category D posts, such officer or officers of the Corporation as the Municipal Commissioner may, with the prior approval of the Mayor-in-Council, designate in this behalf.
Municipal Corporations other than Kolkata MC	All the posts of officers and other employees, by the Commissioner, with the approval of the Corporation and the State Government.
Municipalities/NAA	Appointments of all officers and employees, other than the Executive Officer, Finance Officer and Health Officer, are made by the Municipality, with the prior approval of the State Government.

(Source: respective Acts)

The West Bengal Municipal Service Commission was constituted under the UD&MAD, *vide* the West Bengal Municipal Service Commission Act 2018 (WBMSC), with effect from January 2019, for direct recruitment of personnel, for prescribed categories of posts and services, in the establishment of the Urban Local Bodies (Municipal Corporations, Municipalities, Notified Area Authorities, Industrial Township Authorities), Development Authorities and establishment of different organisations under the UD&MAD, such as the WBVB. Prior to that, recruitment in Municipalities was being done by the Municipalities, under supervision of the Director of Local Bodies and, in case of Municipal Corporations, through the erstwhile Municipal Service Commission, constituted under Section 26 of the KMC Act.

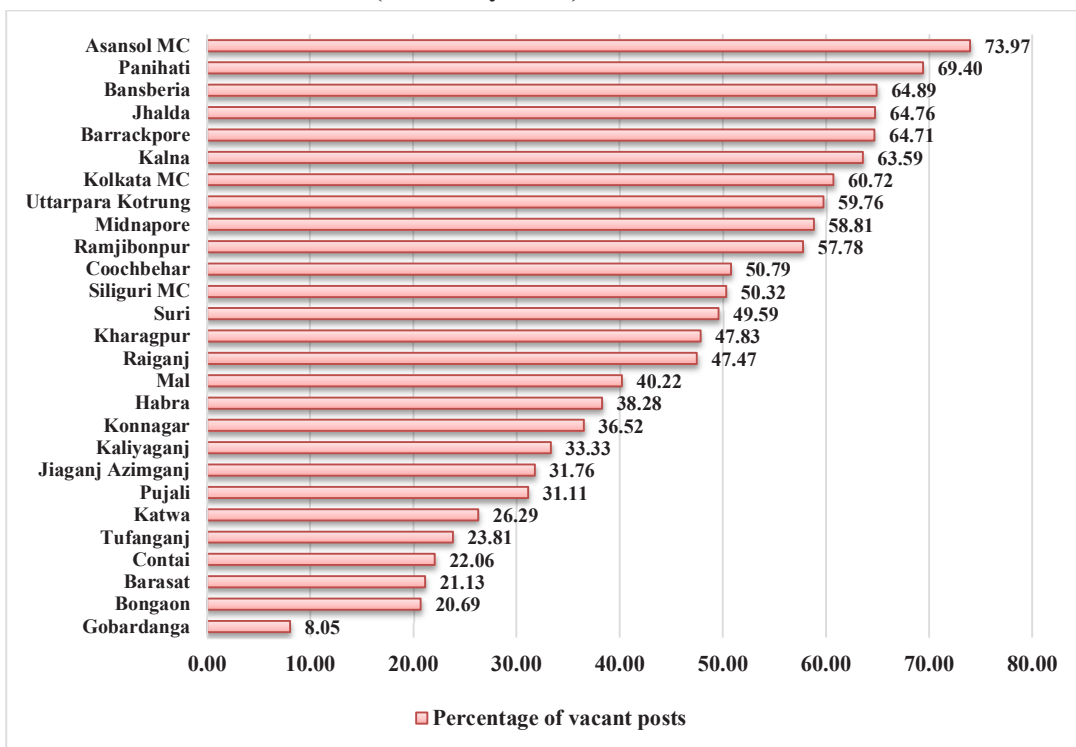
Audit observed that the WBMSC, after its constitution in January 2019, had conducted recruitment of personnel for the *Kolkata MC*, *Durgapur MC* and *Siliguri MC*. Insofar as Municipalities are concerned, as on September 2021, WBMSC had carried out recruitment of personnel for only one Municipality (*Kalyani*), although significant numbers of vacancies exist across the ULBs in the State.

5.3 Vacancies in the ULBs and *per capita* staff

In terms of the order of erstwhile Municipal Affairs Department (September 2009), Director of Local Bodies was entrusted with matters relating to appointment and promotion of already sanctioned posts existing in Municipalities. Further, in terms of the memo of the Finance Department (June 2018), a State Level Committee, on rationalisation and optimal utilisation of human resources in the State, was constituted, for scrutiny/assessment to be carried out for the creation of posts/restructuring of the service cadre in Government establishments, including local bodies, before being processed/concurred with, by the Finance Department, for being placed before the State Cabinet, for its consideration.

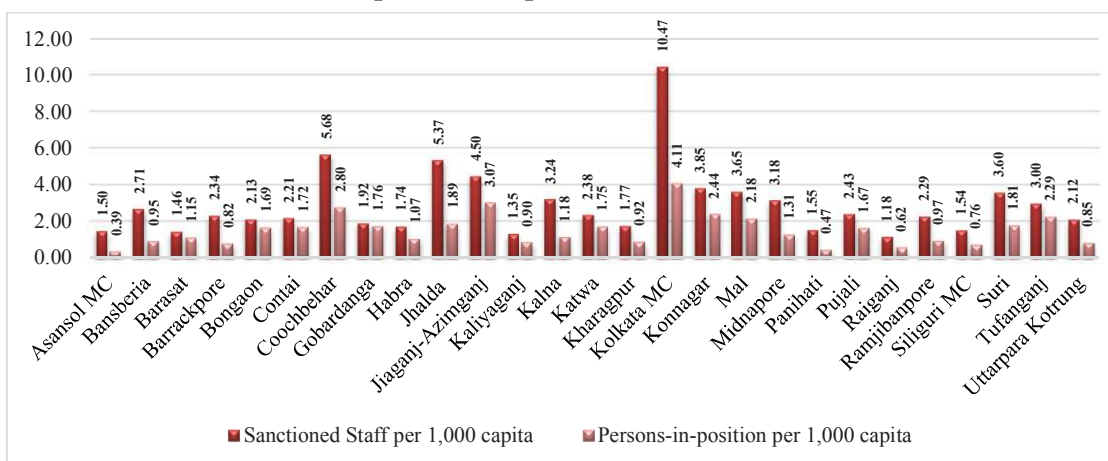
Audit noticed that in spite of the formation of committees and constitution of the WBMSC, significant vacancies existed in the ULBs. As of July 2021, against the sanctioned posts (85,247 in 123 ULBs⁵⁶ in West Bengal), the actual staff position was 40,195, *i.e.* there were 52.85 *per cent* vacancies. The vacancy position of the 27 test-checked ULBs is given in **Chart 5.1**.

Chart 5.1: Percentage of vacancies in the 27 test-checked ULBs (as of July 2021)



The sanctioned staff position and actual staff position *per 1,000 capita*, are depicted in **Chart 5.2**.

Chart 5.2: Sanctioned staff position and actual staff position, *per 1,000 capita*



(Source: data furnished by the DLB)

⁵⁶ Except for Buniadpur and Domkal.

The sanctioned staff position *per 1,000 capita*, ranged between 1.18 (*Raiganj*) and 10.47 (*Kolkata MC*) and the actual staff position *per 1,000 capita*, ranged between 0.39 (*Asansol MC*) and 4.11 (*Kolkata MC*). These figures indicate the deficient position of human resources in ULBs. In the absence of permanent staff, ULBs had to engage contractual/casual staff to perform their functions. This led to burden on the municipal funds, since 85 *per cent* of the salary and 100 *per cent* dearness allowances of only permanent staff, would have been borne by the State Government.

The data furnished by the 17⁵⁷ ULBs, out of the 27 test-checked ULBs, showed large vacancies, as on 31 March 2021, in Departments engaged in revenue collection and service delivery functions, as detailed in **Table 5.3**.

Table 5.3: Vacancies in accounts, revenue and service delivery departments in 17 test-checked ULBs, as on 31 March 2021

Department	Sanctioned Strength	Person-in-position	Vacancy	Percentage of vacancy
Accounts Department	47	29	18	38.30
Revenue Department	195	49	146	74.87
Public Health & Sanitation Department	225	104	121	53.78
Public Works Department	68	46	22	32.35
Water Supply Department	221	102	119	53.85

(Source: data furnished by the ULBs)

Lack of manpower in the Revenue department, as well as in the departments related to service delivery, such as Public Health and Sanitation, Public Works and Water Supply, was likely to have affected the revenue collection of the ULBs and also caused hindrances in delivery of services to citizens.

In the Exit Conference (October 2022), the Department stated that Directorate of Local Bodies (DLB), under the Department, had started assessing the staff requirements in various categories of posts in ULBs. The Directorate of Local Bodies further stated (February 2023) that the planning and programming of recruitment of staff of ULBs had been disrupted, due to the pandemic. However, with regard to the huge number of vacancies in the ULBs, despite constitution of the WBMSC, DLB also cited the austerity measures imposed upon by the State Government, restricting all new appointments, without the prior approval of Finance Department. Further, DLB also stated that most of the vacancies were in Group D posts, whose recruitment could be done by ULBs themselves. However, Audit noted that the State Government needed to take steps to fill in the vacancies, as the ULBs were heavily dependent on grants.

Recommendation:

19. A professional assessment of the staff requirements for the ULBs, to enable them to cater the growing urban population, may be taken up.
20. Government may take immediate steps for filling the existing vacancies in the ULBs, through the West Bengal Municipal Service Commission.

⁵⁷ Bansberia, Barrackpore, Bongaon, Contai, Habra, Kalna, Katwa, Kharagpur, Konnagar, Mal, Midnapore, Panihati, Pujali, Ramjibonpur, Suri, Tufanganj and Uttarpara-Kotrung.