

立法會
Legislative Council

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Finance Committee of the Legislative Council

**Minutes of the 16th meeting
held at the Legislative Council Chamber
on Friday, 22 June 2001, at 2:30 pm**

Members present:

Hon NG Leung-sing (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Kenneth TING Woo-shou, JP
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon Martin LEE Chu-ming, SC, JP
Hon Eric LI Ka-cheung, JP
Dr Hon David LI Kwok-po, JP
Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, JP
Dr Hon LUI Ming-wah, JP
Prof Hon NG Ching-fai
Hon Margaret NG
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, JP
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon CHAN Kwok-keung
Hon CHAN Yuen-han
Hon Bernard CHAN
Hon CHAN Kam-lam
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon SIN Chung-kai
Hon WONG Yung-kan
Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing, JP
Dr Hon YEUNG Sum
Hon LAU Wong-fat, GBS, JP

Hon Mrs Miriam LAU Kin-yee, JP
Hon Ambrose LAU Hon-chuen, JP
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon CHOY So-yuk
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
Hon SZETO Wah
Hon Timothy FOK Tsun-ting, SBS, JP
Hon LAW Chi-kwong, JP
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Dr Hon TANG Siu-tong, JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP
Hon LI Fung-ying, JP
Hon Henry WU King-cheong, BBS
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP
Hon Michael MAK Kwok-fung
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon LEUNG Fu-wah, MH, JP
Dr Hon LO Wing-lok
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee
Hon IP Kwok-him, JP
Hon LAU Ping-cheung
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP

Members absent:

Dr Hon Philip WONG Yu-hong (Chairman)
Hon James TIEN Pei-chun, JP
Hon David CHU Yu-lin
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, JP
Hon HUI Cheung-ching
Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun, SBS, JP
Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP
Hon Howard YOUNG, JP
Hon YEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon LAU Chin-shek, JP
Hon LAU Kong-wah
Hon WONG Sing-chi

Public officers attending:

Mr Stanley YING, JP
Mr K K LAM

Mr M L WAN

Deputy Secretary for the Treasury
Principal Executive Officer (General),
Finance Bureau
Principal Assistant Secretary for Housing

Mr S H PAU, JP	Director of Architectural Services
Mr K S SHUM	Chief Technical Adviser of Architectural Services Department
Mr P Y LEUNG	Assistant Director of Education (Special Duties)
Miss Joanna CHOI	Principal Assistant Secretary for Health and Welfare
Dr FUNG Hong	Deputy Director (Hospital Planning and Development), Hospital Authority
Mr Donald Y P LI	Executive Manager (Hospital Planning), Hospital Authority
Mr Eddy YAU	Principal Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs
Mr Stephen PANG	Commissioner for Rehabilitation
Mrs Carrie LAM, JP	Director of Social Welfare
Miss Ophelia CHAN	Assistant Director of Social Welfare
Miss Janet WONG	Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower
Mr Patrick LI	Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower
Mr H F LEE	Senior Assistant Director of Education
Mr K S LEE	Assistant Director of Education (Planning and Research)
Mrs Betty IP	Assistant Director of Education (Education Services)2
Mr Raymond H C WONG, JP	Deputy Secretary for Security
Miss Eliza YAU	Principal Assistant Secretary for Security
Mr NG Wai-kit	Senior Assistant Commissioner of Police
Mr P E HALLIDAY	Assistant Commissioner of Police
Mrs LEE Chan Yuk-wah, Eliza	Chief Systems Manager of Hong Kong Police Force
Mr CHIU Yat-sing	Chief Telecommunications Engineer of Hong Kong Police Force

Clerk in attendance:

Ms Pauline NG	Assistant Secretary General 1
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Staff in attendance:

Miss Polly YEUNG	Chief Assistant Secretary (1)3
Mrs Eleanor CHOW	Senior Assistant Secretary (1)4

As Dr Philip WONG, Chairman of the Finance Committee, was out of town, Mr NG Leung-sing, Deputy Chairman, took the chair for the meeting.

Item No. 1 - FCR(2001-02)22

**RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ESTABLISHMENT
SUBCOMMITTEE MADE ON 13 JUNE 2001**

2. The Committee approved the proposal.

Item No. 2 - FCR(2001-02)15

**RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PUBLIC WORKS SUBCOMMITTEE
MADE ON 30 MAY 2001, 31 MAY 2001 AND 6 JUNE 2001**

3. At members' request to consider and vote on PWSC(2001-02)36 and PWSC(2001-02)37 separately, the Deputy Chairman put FCR(2001-02)15, except PWSC(2001-02)36 and PWSC(2001-02)37, to the vote. The Committee approved the proposal.

PWSC(2001-02)36	New Items	Three secondary schools in Area 86, Tseung Kwan O Four primary schools in Area 86, Tseung Kwan O
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4. Mr LAU Ping-cheung declared interest as his company was bidding for a project of the Mass Transit Railway Corporation Limited (MTRCL). Mr Tommy CHEUNG also declared interest as a member of a school sponsoring body.

5. Miss Emily LAU and Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong recapped the deliberations at the meeting of the Public Works Subcommittee (PWSC) on 31 May 2001 about the possibility of including more common facilities for the seven schools in question. They pointed out that given the flexibility at this early planning stage to include common facilities, they had requested the Administration and the MTRCL to consider their suggestions and report the progress at this meeting.

6. In response to Miss Emily LAU's question about the possibility of building a swimming pool for common use, the Principal Assistant Secretary for Housing (PAS(H)PM) reported that the Administration had discussed the suggestion with the MTRCL. The MTRCL would not provide funding for the construction of a swimming pool but had indicated that ample space was available for a swimming pool should the Government or school sponsoring

bodies decide to proceed with the project. However, the Administration had reservations about the suggestion because of the following reasons -

- (a) The layout plan for the comprehensive development of Area 86 which included among others the seven schools had been approved by the Town Planning Board. The schedule of accommodation did not include the provision of a swimming pool.
- (b) Swimming pool was a non-standard item. Funding was therefore not included for the purpose.
- (c) The Administration had yet to identify school sponsoring bodies for the project. There remained the question as to whether the school sponsoring bodies would be prepared to pay for the high costs of constructing and maintaining a swimming pool. In addition, the usage and management of common facilities would require the consent of the school sponsoring bodies concerned.

7. The Assistant Director of Education (Special Duties) (AD of E(SD)) supplemented that the process of identifying school sponsoring bodies would commence in July 2001 and would be completed by the end of the year. If school sponsoring bodies were willing to fund the construction of a swimming pool, the Administration would take up the matter with the MTRCL.

8. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that having spoken with the senior management of the MTRCL, he was given to understand that the construction of the proposed seven schools would start in 2003 for completion in stages by 2012. Phase 1 would involve the construction of two schools to be completed by 2005 while Phase 2 would involve three schools to be completed by 2011. The MTRCL had indicated that the area to be developed in Phase 2 could accommodate a soccer pitch and a jogging track at no extra cost to the school sponsoring bodies and without affecting the progress of the project. While appreciating that the costs for constructing a swimming pool were very high, Mr CHEUNG urged the Administration to seriously consider providing a soccer pitch and a jogging track for common use by the seven schools.

9. In response, PAS(H)PM said that it was feasible to include the soccer pitch and jogging track on the site, but there was a need to first consult the school sponsoring bodies concerned as their co-operation was required in managing the use of shared facilities. AD of E(SD) added that the process of identifying the school sponsoring bodies was still under way.

10. Mr SZETO Wah questioned if the school sponsoring bodies could be identified in time for a decision on the common facilities. He pointed out that it had been the practice of the Government to identify the school sponsoring

bodies in phases according to the completion time-table of the schools. He added that the use and joint management of common facilities could be included as one of the conditions in the agreement to be entered into with the school sponsoring bodies concerned.

11. Mr Tommy CHUENG expressed grave reservation on the proposals of including non-standard common facilities as it might set the precedent of imposing extra burden on the school sponsoring bodies in view of the maintenance costs and management implications involved.

12. In response, AD of E(SD) explained that the Administration had adopted a new procedure for early identification of school sponsoring bodies in order that they could be involved in the design of schools at an early stage. Although it might not be possible to identify seven school sponsoring bodies all at one go, he would expect that at least a few school sponsoring bodies could be identified at the initial stage. He stressed that it was necessary to consult the school sponsoring bodies concerned in order to agree at an option on maximizing the use of the site.

13. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong was dissatisfied with the Administration's explanation. Pointing out that the layout of Phase 2 could not await the identification of all the seven school sponsoring bodies, he considered that the decision to provide for a football pitch and a jogging track had to be made now. He did not see how any of the seven school sponsoring bodies would abandon the use of these facilities if they were provided to the schools free. He added that sharing and managing the use of these facilities was an issue to be handled separately. Mr Albert CHAN and Mr SZETO Wah supported his views.

14. Having considered members' views, PAS(H)PM agreed to include a soccer pitch in the layout plan for Phase 2 for the consideration of the prospective school sponsoring bodies.

Admin 15. Mr SIN Chung-kai said that Members of the Democratic Party (DP) would support the proposal on the condition that a soccer pitch and a jogging track to be shared among the seven schools would be provided. Should there be any change in the plan in future, the Administration should report to the Finance Committee at the first instance.

Admin 16. Mr Abraham SHEK was of the view that the construction of a swimming pool and a soccer pitch should both be pursued. Miss Emily LAU further requested the Administration to report to the Finance Committee after discussing the matter with the school sponsoring bodies concerned.

17. The Committee approved the item.

**PWSC(2001-02)37 5ME Redevelopment and expansion of
Pok Oi Hospital**

18. Miss Emily LAU expressed concern about the impact on in-patients of Pok Oi Hospital and elderly persons in the nearby care and attention home as a result of the proposed redevelopment and expansion of Pok Oi Hospital.

19. The Deputy Director (Hospital Planning and Development), Hospital Authority (DD(HP&D),HA) assured members that during construction of the new hospital complex, HA would control noise, dust and site run-off nuisance within the established standards and guidelines through the implementation of mitigation measures in the relevant works contract. Measures would also be taken to ensure that visitors and out-patients would have free and safe access to the hospital. He confirmed that although an Environmental Impact Assessment was not required for the project, the method of construction and the control of the environmental impact would meet the requirements of the Environmental Protection Department.

20. DD(HP&D),HA further advised that HA had discussed the possible disturbance arising from the project with the care and attention home and HA would monitor the project closely and would render assistance if the care and attention home encountered problems as a result of the project. At this stage, he did not see the need to relocate the elderly persons of the care and attention home.

21. The Committee approved the item.

Item No. 3 - FCR(2001-02)16

HEAD 170 - SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT

• Subhead 700 General other non-recurrent

**New Items “On-the-Job Training Programme for People with Disabilities”,
“Enhancing employment of people with disabilities through small
enterprise” Project, and “The Hong Kong Paralympians Fund”**

22. Members noted that the present proposal was discussed by the Panel on Welfare Services on 11 June 2001. Miss CHAN Yuen-han, Deputy Chairman of the Panel, advised that members of the Panel were in support of the present proposal which aimed to enhance the employment of people with disabilities. Miss CHAN however drew members' attention to need to build in safeguards against possible abuse when assisting Non-government organizations (NGOs) to set up small businesses to ensure that the funding approved would benefit people with disabilities.

23. Members expressed support for the proposal, but raised questions on the effectiveness of the scheme and the technical arrangements. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan enquired how far the proposed on-the-job training programme for people with disabilities was different from and the trial placement scheme run by the Selective Placement Division of the Labour Department (LD). In response, the Director of Social Welfare (DSW) advised that a more proactive approach would be adopted in the proposed on-the-job training programme. There would be more comprehensive support services comprising individual counselling, training and job matching, job attachment in an NGO or private company, job trial in the open market and post-placement service. As funding was being sought for providing 360 places each year for the three-year period, the eight NGOs to be commissioned to operate the programme would each provide about 45 places a year on average. The Administration considered this arrangement appropriate in terms of cost-effectiveness and experience building. If the proposed programme had proved to be successful, the Administration would need to critically review whether the resources currently put into sheltered workshops could be diverted to more cost-effective use.

24. Regarding the initial results of the LD scheme which was funded on a one-off basis, the Assistant Director of Social Welfare advised that phase 1 of the scheme had a placement rate of about 70% while the result of phase 2 would be available after July.

25. Miss Emily LAU enquired about the basis for setting the job attachment allowance at \$1,250 for disabled participants and an allowance at \$3,000 per month for the employer providing the job opportunity. In reply, DSW advised that the allowances were only an incentive payment. NGOs and disabled persons had found the proposed level of allowance acceptable when being consulted. In determining the rate of allowance for employers, the Administration was in fact seeking to encourage employers to pay higher wages to people with disabilities, as the incentive to the employer was pitched at half of the wage offered by the employer to the disabled person capped at \$3,000. To fully benefit from the monthly payment of \$3,000, employers would have to pay the workers \$6,000 a month. According to the information available to the Administration on wages earned by people with disabilities under supported employment, \$6,000 a month would appear to be at the high end. At present, only some visually impaired persons were able to earn this rate.

26. Miss Emily LAU expressed concern about the availability of Rehab bus services to enable people with disabilities to travel to their workplace. With the information provided by Mr LAW Chi-kwong, members noted that there was a waiting list for those who required the Rehab bus services. Those who needed to travel to and from work or school had priority to use the services. In this connection, the Commissioner for Rehabilitation (C for R) assured members that the Subcommittee on Access under the Rehabilitation Advisory

Committee was actively examining ways to improve Rehab bus services. Those who needed to go to work were given priority in boarding Rehab buses running on fixed routes. Regarding the transportation needs of the 360 participants under the on-the-job training/attachment programme, C for R believed that the NGOs concerned would work out the necessary arrangements with the Social Welfare Department. DSW added that initially, the majority of the 360 participants would be persons with mental disabilities who would not need to rely heavily on Rehab bus services.

27. Regarding the long-term cost-effectiveness of the proposed programme, Miss Margaret NG enquired how far the funding of some \$72.5 million which only served to assist 1 080 persons over a three-year period would enhance the employability of people with disabilities. In reply, DSW clarified that of the \$72.5 million, only \$22.5 million would be spent on the job attachment programme aimed at assisting 360 persons a year over a three-year period. The other \$50 million would be disbursed as grants to assist NGOs to set up small businesses employing people with disabilities. The number of persons who would benefit under this project could not be quantified at this stage pending the submission of business plans by NGOs. To sustain the employability of people with disabilities, DSW said that apart from the six-month post-placement service, resources had been allocated to strengthen support at the community level by setting up mutual help groups and gateway clubs. DSW also pointed out that the only alternative to the present proposal would be to invest heavily in increasing places in sheltered workshops and other day-time training centres which might be less cost-effective and not meeting the ultimate objective of integrating people with disabilities into the community. DSW stressed that apart from the tangible benefit of earning an income, open-market employment would no doubt boost the confidence and dignity of the people with disabilities.

28. On the effectiveness or otherwise of the proposed initiatives, DSW referred to past and current measures such as the placement service offered by LD and the active employment assistance measures under the Support for Self-reliance Scheme for able-bodied Comprehensive Social Security Assistance recipients. Operational experience had shown that with more tailor-made support, the employability of people with special needs and their integration into open job market could be improved.

29. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung was of the view that instead of relying heavily on NGOs, the Government should play a more active role in promoting the employment opportunities for people with disabilities. DSW advised that at present, the Government was already recruiting people with disabilities into the civil service and procuring certain services/products from them. On whether the Government should be obliged under its outsourcing policy to award certain contracts to people with disabilities, DSW expressed reservation on the viability of such an arrangement. She nevertheless referred to small

businesses such as cleansing contracts, cafes, kiosks and fruit stalls currently run by NGOs and assured members that the Administration would make the best endeavours to promote the employment opportunities of people with disabilities.

30. Mr LAW Chi-kwong stated that Members of the Democratic Party were in support of the present proposal. He further said that policywise, the Administration should seriously consider introducing legislation to require relatively large enterprises to employ a prescribed number of disabled workers. Miss CHAN Yuen-han shared his view. In response, DSW said that the Administration would be prepared to discuss this policy issue with members at future Panel meetings.

31. The Committee approved the proposal.

Item No. 4 - FCR(2001-02)17

HEAD 40 - EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

- **Subhead 317 Mortgage Interest Subsidy Scheme**
- **Subhead 325 Direct Subsidy Scheme**

32. Members noted that the present proposal had been discussed by the Panel on Education at its meeting on 20 November 2000.

33. Mr TSANG Yok-sing declared interest as his school was a Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) school. Mr TAM Yiu-chung declared interest as the Chairman of a DSS school board.

34. Mr TSANG Yok-sing pointed out the present anomaly of reducing government subsidy for DDS schools operating which charged school fees above $1/3 X$ (X being the average unit cost of an aided school place). He welcomed the present proposal which enabled those schools which had come under DDS to receive full subsidy as if they were aided schools. Mr TSANG referred to some earlier concerns about DSS schools charging high school fees which might have the effect of denying children from families with limited financial means the chance to have quality education. He considered that this should not be a problem as admission to such schools was normally based on academic achievement of the children. It would not be in the interest of the DDS schools to reject good students who had financial difficulty.

35. The Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (DS(EM)) responded that the problem with the existing income banding system was that some DSS schools were reluctant to charge school fees beyond the $1/3 X$ as they did not wish to see a reduction in the government subsidy. This was against the objective of allowing DSS schools more flexibility in the charging

of fees so as to increase income for the purpose of improving the quality of education. Under the proposed arrangement, if a school charged fees between the range of $2/3 X$ and $2\ 1/3 X$, for every additional dollar charged over and above $2/3 X$, the school must set aside at least fifty cents for scholarship or financial assistance schemes for needy students. This would in effect ensure that the schools, while continuing to receive full subsidy from the Government, would devote more resources for scholarship or financial assistance schemes, thereby making DSS schools more accessible to students from less well-off families. Under the proposed arrangement, for every 100 students paying at $2\ 1/3 X$ school fees, the amount of funds set aside would be able to support about 35% of the students to study at DSS schools free. If the percentage of financial assistance rendered to each student was lowered, then the total number of students benefiting from the scheme would be even higher.

36. Dr YEUNG Sum said that Members of the DP did not object to the proposal. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong considered the proposal an improvement over the existing scheme. However, he was concerned about the proposed income banding system which allowed a DSS school to charge an annual fee (\$68,864) which was beyond the affordability of many students.

37. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that Members of the Liberal Party had no objection to the proposal. Pointing out that some families could afford to pay a portion of the school fees but not the full amount, especially if the amount could be as high as \$68,864, he urged the Administration to look after the needs of these students coming from families which might not be regarded as poor.

38. In reply, DS(EM) stressed that \$68,864 was only the upper limit and none of the DSS schools at present charged school fees at this level. She said that the Education Department (ED) would ensure that the resources set aside for scholarship and financial assistance schemes would be used for such purposes to support needy and deserving students.

39. Mr TSANG Yok-sing asked whether the funds set aside for scholarship or financial assistance schemes would be subject to any restriction or timeframe in disbursement. He considered that the funds should be fully used to assist needy and deserving students. His concern was shared by Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong.

40. In response, the Senior Assistant Director of Education (SAD of E) advised that although there was no specific time limit by which the funds should be disbursed, the Administration considered that it should be disbursed within a reasonable period of time to help needy students. DS(EM) supplemented that if there was evidence showing that eligible students had been denied entry to a DSS school because of a lack of means while the school was withholding resources which should otherwise be used for financial

assistance/scholarships, the ED would carry out investigation. She further informed members that ex-aided schools were required to sign a 10-year service agreement with the Government. ED would periodically review the performance of these schools during the 10-year period and if the policy of helping needy students was not implemented, the school concerned would be required to rectify the situation.

41. Mr Tommy CHEUNG urged the Administration to establish a mechanism to monitor the use of the funds set aside for scholarship and financial assistance schemes. Mr SZETO Wah made the following suggestions for the consideration of the Administration -

- (a) the funds should be used for the sole purpose of providing scholarships or financial assistance. It must not be used to defray administrative expenses, teachers' salaries, etc;
- (b) the funds could not be accumulated beyond a specified level, e.g., a specified percentage of the total subsidy; and
- (c) a threshold should be set for the maximum amount to be accumulated beyond which school fees should be lowered.

42. SAD of E noted Mr SZETO's suggestions for consideration and said that restrictions on the use of funds would be set out in the service agreement to be entered into with DSS schools. As regards reducing school fees, since all revision of fees by DSS schools would have to be approved by the Director of Education, the Administration could thus see to it that fees for DSS schools would be at a reasonable level. In view of members' concerns on the implementation of the scholarship and financial assistance schemes, DS(EM) said that the Administration would discuss further details with the Panel on Education in due course.

Admin

43. Mr TSANG Yok-sing enquired about the basis for adopting the ratio of $\frac{1}{3} X$ and $\frac{2}{3} X$ respectively in the existing and proposed incoming banding system for DSS schools. The Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower (PAS(EM)) explained that although there was no scientific formula as such in deriving the ratio, the underlying concept was the higher the tuition fee, the more would be the funding set aside to help needy students. DS(EM) added that having reviewed the implementation of the existing formula, the proposed ratio was considered appropriate.

44. In reply to Mr TAM Yiu-chung's enquiry on the number of aided schools which would join DSS as a result of the present proposal, DS(EM) said that the Administration was not in a position to make a forecast but it was the Administration's policy to encourage the development of more DSS schools so as to provide more choice and diversity to the education system. On concerns

about the complexity of the present proposal, DS(EM) advised that schools had been consulted on the principles and concepts, and the Administration would organize debriefing sessions for potential DSS schools to help them understand the operation of the scheme.

45. Miss Emily LAU noted that the Administration had frequently referred to quality education as one of the objectives for introducing the DSS. Moreover, DSS schools were given greater freedom in curriculum design, charging of school fees, use of resources, admission of students and terms of employment for staff. That being the case, Miss LAU questioned whether all aided schools should be converted into DSS schools in order that students could enjoy quality education across the board.

46. In response, DS(EM) explained that the introduction of the DSS was to encourage the growth of a strong private school sector in the provision of education with a view to injecting diversity and choice in the education system. There was no policy intention to create a group of elite schools. Under DSS, student choice was the driving force for continuous improvement. DSS schools had to attract students on the basis of their characteristics and the quality of education they provided.

47. SAD of E further pointed out that there were many successful public sector schools. Although they had less discretion vis-à-vis DSS schools in the charging of school fees, terms of employment for staff, etc, steps were being taken to provide these schools with greater flexibility in the deployment of resources. SAD of E advised that in deciding whether or not to join DSS, a school must take into consideration the characteristics and development of the school, the impact on the terms and conditions of service of its teaching staff, etc. Hence, not all aided schools would opt to become DSS schools.

48. Mrs Selina CHOW expressed support for the present proposal. Referring to the subsidy for schools with a longer history of establishment, she enquired about the basis for using 16 years as the demarcation for the two-tier recurrent subsidy. SAD of E explained that schools with a longer history might incur higher operating cost largely due to higher salary expenditure for experienced teachers and higher maintenance cost. According to a study conducted by the Administration, these two factors had a much lower impact on the operating cost of schools with a history of less than 16 years. Hence, 16 years was used for the purpose of demarcation.

49. Professor NG Ching-fai expressed support for the proposal. In reply to his question, PAS(EM) confirmed that government subsidies to DSS schools would not be reduced as a result of public donations to these schools. The Administration welcomed community participation as it would help improve the quality of education.

50. On the medium of instruction (MOI), SAD of E advised that according to the MOI guidance issued to all local public sector secondary schools, schools should examine their own conditions, such as students' ability and the availability of sound support strategy, to determine the appropriate MOI to ensure that their students would learn effectively. Starting with Secondary 1 intake of the 1998/99 school year, Chinese had been the principal MOI for all public sector secondary schools. If a school should, after careful consideration, intend to adopt English as the MOI, the school must provide sufficient information and justification to ED for consideration. The factors for consideration were detailed in the MOI guidance. At senior secondary levels, the MOI policy might be applied more flexibly. In reply to Miss Emily LAU's question, SAD of E confirmed that DSS schools could choose the MOI which they considered the most appropriate for different subjects in their curriculum.

51. The Committee approved the proposal.

Item No. 5 - FCR(2001-02)18

HEAD 40 - EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

• Subhead 700 General other non-recurrent

New Item "Supporting uniform group activities for students"

52. Members noted that the present proposal had been discussed by the Panel on Education on 23 April 2001.

53. Mrs Selina CHOW expressed support for the present proposal and considered that more should be done to encourage students to participate in uniform group (UG) activities which was a very effective ways to foster students' all-round development. As UG activities were in great demand, she opined that the proposed provision of \$3.8 million for publicity campaigns should be spent on UG activities instead. The Administration should explore other free and effective channels, such as schools, to promote UG activities. In allocating funding, she also requested the Administration to consider according priority to new schools which had no UGs and to districts with serious youth problems.

54. While expressing support for the proposal, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong was concerned about insufficient supply of qualified leaders and assistant leaders to cope with the expansion of UG units. He urged that the provision earmarked for publicity should be used to recruit potential leaders instead. Miss CHAN Yuen-han echoed his view and commented that the proposed funding for grooming teachers was insufficient.

55. In reply, PAS(EM) confirmed that it was the Administration's intention to give priority to schools which had few or no UG units, and to non-profit making organizations that proposed to establish UG units in districts with few or no district-based units. In fact, setting up UGs in new schools would help generate a greater sense of belonging among students. UG activities had also proved to be useful in helping youths at risk to regain their self-confidence.

56. On the provision earmarked for publicity campaigns, PAS(EM) explained that it was necessary to also enlist parents' support and cultivate in them a positive attitude towards UG activities as many of them considered academic performance as the only important aspect of their children's development. It was in recognition of the difficulty in recruiting leaders that publicity campaigns would be launched to attract prospective candidates. He assured members that the Steering Committee on UG Enhancement Scheme (the Steering Committee) chaired by the Director of Education would review the effectiveness of the UG activities and consider how the funding could be put to best use.

57. Referring to the training programme to groom leaders of UG units, Miss Emily LAU questioned why the pool of candidates would be extended to persons who were interested but did not have previous experience in UGs. In response, PAS(EM) advised that while teachers, parents, pre-service teacher trainees and university students were the primary targets for the training programmes, it was necessary to increase the number of potential leaders and assistant leaders by widening the pool of candidates. Publicity campaigns would therefore be launched to attract a widened pool of candidates.

58. The Assistant Director of Education (Education Services)² supplemented that apart from parents and in-service teachers, prospective teachers would also provide a pool of talents. In fact, the Hong Kong Institute of Education had conducted a pilot scheme under which some 200 students had volunteered to become leaders or assistant leaders.

59. Miss Emily LAU expressed support for the proposal and enquired whether the proposal sought to establish new or expand existing UG units. In reply, PAS(EM) said that the proposal sought to achieve both. At present, about 10% of the secondary schools and 20% of primary schools did not have UGs. It was estimated that the proposal would enable the establishment of some 500 new UG units and the expansion of about 900 existing UG units in the next three school years.

60. On the existing policy responsibility for UG activities, PAS(EM) advised that at present, three policy bureaux were involved in this area of work. The proposed new commitment was initiated by the Education and Manpower Bureau since the target beneficiary would mainly be primary and secondary students. PAS(EM) agreed to consider Professor NG Ching-fai's

Admin suggestion of supporting and promoting UG activities among students of tertiary institutions as well.

61. Miss Cyd HO expressed concern about less well-off students not being able to participate in UG activities. She suggested that the Administration should provide direct subsidy to these students through schools so that they would not be deprived of the opportunity to take part in UG activities. In reply, PAS(EM) advised that at present, 7 out of the 11 UGs were providing subsidies to students to pay for expenses in transportation and in purchasing uniform.

62. The Committee approved the proposal.

Item No. 6 - FCR(2001-02)19

CAPITAL WORKS RESERVE FUND

**HEAD 708 - CAPITAL SUBVENTIONS AND MAJOR SYSTEMS
AND EQUIPMENT**

Hong Kong Police Force

- **New Subhead “Replacement of Command and Control Communications System for the Operations Department of the Hong Kong Police Force”**

63. Members noted that the present proposal was discussed by the Panel on Security on 7 June 2001.

64. Noting that the present proposal was a re-submission, Miss Emily LAU asked whether the Administration had found members' previous suggestion of implementing the proposal in two phases a sound approach. In response, the Deputy Security for Security said that the Administration had accepted members' suggestion and accordingly, had completed the system design with HKPF's resources. To enable the Administration to firm up the system design and project estimates, it had issued a Request-for-Information to the industry to collect the necessary information.

65. In this connection, Mr James TO commented that although the project estimates under the present proposal had been reduced, the Administration might still request additional funding where necessary. Notwithstanding, he would support the present proposal.

66. In response to Miss Emily LAU's enquiry about radio black spots in developing areas, the Senior Assistant Commissioner of Police (SACP) explained that the developing new towns of Tin Shui Wai, Ma On Shan and Tseung Kwan O had exhausted the reserve expansion capacity of the system. It was therefore necessary to acquire a new Command and Control

Communications System (CCIII) with adequate reserve expansion capacity to cater for new developments such as Penny's Bay. He said that black spots now existed in Pak Nai and Dap Shek Kok and police officers on operation in these areas would communicate on direct transmission beat radios.

67. On the transmission capability of the new system, SACP advised that generally speaking, the new system would have sufficient interference-free high-speed data channels to allow transmission of not only voice but also data and images. As far as beat officers were concerned, they would be provided with beat radios with dual voice transmission and short data messaging capability.

68. Miss Emily LAU enquired about future access to the Immigration Department's Registration of Persons System (ROPS) and how identity (ID) card checks could be facilitated under CC III. In reply, SACP advised that at present, a police officer could only conduct ID checks through the operators at the Regional Command and Control Centres. In future, such checks could be conducted directly through data transfer from mobile data terminals (MDTs) and beat radios. On average, each ID check took about 30 seconds and a reduction of some 10 to 15 seconds was a significant improvement. SACP confirmed that under the existing and the new systems, interface with ROPS would be strictly limited to checking if a Hong Kong ID card was valid or forged. Other information in the ROPS would not be accessible.

69. On the provision of new MDTs on Police vehicles, SACP clarified that MDTs would not be installed on all patrol vehicles but only on Police emergency response vehicles to enable them to function effectively at the scenes of serious incidents. For example, with the information provided by the victim, the facial identifications of suspects could be compiled on the spot for onward despatch to other units.

70. Regarding the reduction in mobile radios from 1 500 to 750, SACP explained that initially, the Administration had planned to equip each patrol vehicle with a mobile radio. However, after careful study, it had come to the view that only emergency response vehicles would be equipped with such radios as police officers on non-emergency vehicles could communicate with their handheld beat radios.

71. Mr IP Kwok-him expressed support for the present proposal. He enquired about the security of the new digitized, encrypted transmission platform in enhancing protection against eavesdropping and unauthorized access. In response, SACP said that existing technologies in Hong Kong were unable to break the TETRA encryption standard adopted under the CCIII. Such technologies might be available in Japan but at a very high cost. In this connection, the Chief Telecommunications Engineer, Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) supplemented that apart from the encryption function available under

the TETRA system, the digital format and special encryption functions of the new system should provide sufficient safeguards against intrusions.

72. As regards the serviceable lifespan of the CCIII, SACP said that the expected lifespan was over 10 years. The Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) elaborated that unlike the technology used in CCII which was proprietary to a particular vendor, the new digital radio infrastructure would be built to open standards and capable of further expansion. Equipment such as beat radios would no longer be proprietary and could be procured from open markets at lower costs.

73. Mr TAM Yiu-chung expressed support for the present proposal. In response to his question on whether the weight of equipment currently carried by police officers could be reduced, ACP advised that the weight of the existing handheld beat radio was about 2 lb whereas the new handheld beat radio would weigh no more than 400 grams.

74. The Committee approved the proposal.

75. Due to insufficient time, the Deputy Chairman advised that the remaining items on the agenda, namely FCR(2001-02)20 and FCR(2001-02)21, be carried over to the special meeting of the Committee to be held on 29 June 2001.

76. The Committee was adjourned at 4:35 pm.

Legislative Council Secretariat

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