

立法會

Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2) 1373/01-02

Ref: CB2/H/1

Paper for House Committee Meeting on 22 March 2002

Arrangements for House Committee Meetings

Purpose

This paper seeks Members' views on whether the present arrangement of holding a House Committee (HC) meeting immediately after a Finance Committee (FC) meeting, if both meetings are scheduled for the same Friday afternoon, should be changed.

Background

2. At the HC meeting on 8 March 2002, in response to a suggestion of Hon James TIEN, the Chairman of HC instructed the Legislative Council (LegCo) Secretariat to review the present arrangements for holding FC and HC meetings.

3. According to Hon James TIEN, the present arrangement of holding HC meetings immediately after meetings of FC was not satisfactory, as FC meetings often ran beyond 4:30 pm, thereby delaying the HC meetings. The present arrangement of holding FC meetings before HC meetings could not save the waiting time of Government officials attending FC meetings, as they still had to wait for their turn to present their papers and respond to Members' questions. Moreover, owing to the pressure to finish meetings before 4:30 pm, Members sometimes did not have sufficient time to raise questions on the last one or two items on the agenda of the FC meeting. Mr TIEN suggested that the present arrangement should be reviewed and consideration be given to holding FC meetings after HC meetings.

Previous discussion in 1994-95 session

4. Concern about HC meetings being delayed because the preceding FC meetings lasted too long was previously raised at the HC meeting on 25 November 1994. A paper ((FCR95-96)6) was subsequently presented to the FC meeting on 28 April 1995 proposing the holding of FC meetings between 2:15 pm and 4:30 pm. A copy of the paper is in Appendix I for Members' easy reference.

5. According to the FC paper, several options had been explored, including the swapping of the two meetings, i.e. with FC meetings starting at 3:45 pm

preceded by HC meetings which would start at 2:15 pm. The assessment in 1995 of the implications of this arrangement was that public officers invited to provide information on FC items would have to stand by starting from 3:30 pm, until, probably, around 5:30 pm or 6:00 pm. The Administration also pointed out that such an arrangement, particularly if it were to take effect in the middle of a session, might cause difficulties in public officers' attendance as they had planned their meetings and engagements on the basis of FC meetings being held in the earlier part of Friday afternoons.

6. Another option which had been considered was to hold FC and HC meetings on separate sessions, e.g. one in the morning and the other in the afternoon, or holding one of the meetings on Thursday afternoons. The then Secretary for the Treasury did not raise objection to changing FC meetings to Thursdays provided that the change would be effected from a new LegCo session. This option was, however, not recommended because according to a survey conducted among Members in 1993, the majority of Members favoured holding the two meetings on the same Friday afternoon.

7. At its meeting on 28 April 1995, FC decided that future FC meetings should start at 2:30 pm and end at 4:30 pm **sharp**. A new rule 18(b) was added to the House Rules in October 1995 to the effect that if an FC meeting was scheduled to be held earlier in the same afternoon, the HC meeting would start at 4:30 pm. This schedule is now contained in rule 20(e) (Appendix II) of the current House Rules.

Statistics on duration of FC and HC meetings held since 2000-01 session

8. To assist Members in considering whether the present arrangement of holding HC meetings should be changed, statistics on the duration of FC and HC meetings held since October 2000 are provided in Appendices III and IV respectively. The following table gives a summary of the key figures for Members' easy reference -

		2000-01 session	2001-02 session (up to 8 March 2002)
FC	Number of meetings	18	7
	Number of meetings exceeding 2 hours	10(2)	2
	Average duration	1 hour 55 minutes	1 hour 30 minutes
HC	Number of meetings	36	17
	Number of meetings which lasted for 1 hour or less	18	11
	Average duration	1 hour 15 minutes	50 minutes

() figure in brackets denotes that no House Committee meeting was scheduled

Possible options

9. There are a number of possible options regarding the arrangements for FC and HC meetings. These include -

- (a) *no change to the present arrangement* -- if both meetings are scheduled for the same Friday afternoon, the HC meeting will be held immediately after the FC meeting, but the finishing time of 4:30 pm for the FC meeting must be strictly observed;
- (b) *swapping of the two meetings* -- if both meetings are scheduled for the same Friday afternoon, the HC meeting will be held at 2:30 pm, but a finishing time of, say, 3:30 pm for the HC meeting is recommended, and the finishing time must also be strictly observed;
- (c) *holding the two meetings separately in the morning and afternoon respectively of the same Friday* -- the FC meeting to be held in the morning and HC meeting to be held in the afternoon, or vice versa; or
- (d) *holding the two meetings on separate days* -- FC meetings to be held, say, on Thursdays while House Committee meetings continue to be held on Friday afternoons.

Members' views and consultation with the Administration

10. Members' views are invited on the options set out in paragraph 9 above.

11. Members are invited to note that the Administration will need to be consulted if Members decide to make any changes to the existing arrangements for holding FC and HC meetings.

**For discussion
on 28 April 1995**

FCR(95-96)6

ITEM FOR FINANCE COMMITTEE

RE-SCHEDULING OF MEETINGS

Members are invited to note the Chairman's intention to adjourn Finance Committee's Friday afternoon meetings at 4:30 pm sharp and to advance the starting time to 2:15 pm with effect from 12 May 1995.

PROBLEM

The Chairmen of the House Committee (HC) and the Finance Committee (FC) have recently discussed the current meeting arrangements for the two committees and noticed that FC is always under the pressure to end its meetings in order not to delay the HC meetings, which are held after the FC meetings. On a number of occasions, FC items were deferred due to insufficient time for discussion. If FC meetings are allowed to run beyond 4:30 pm, the HC will have the constant worry of a disappearing quorum. Alternative arrangements should therefore be explored.

PROPOSAL

2. The Chairman, after consulting the Chairman of HC, the Secretariat staff and the Administration, considers it best to advance the starting time of FC meetings to 2:15 pm and to adjourn at 4:30 pm sharp, i.e. to contain all future meetings within 2 hours 15 minutes. Any unfinished business will be deferred to the following meeting. Efforts will be made to ensure that all items can be considered before 4:30 pm through better planning of the agenda items and more stringent control of the conduct of meetings.

/3.

3. Subject to Members' further views, the new arrangement will take effect on 12 May 1995. The Chairman of HC and the Administration will be notified accordingly.

JUSTIFICATION

Encls.

4. It has been a long-standing practice for FC meetings to be held at 2:30 pm on Fridays, followed by meetings of the HC (formerly the LegCo In-house). According to the statistics on the duration of FC and HC meetings held since October 1994 in Enclosures, the average meeting time for FC is 2 hours 12 minutes. Out of the 13 meetings held during the current session, 7 meetings ended within 2 hours 15 minutes, i.e. before 4:45 p.m. On 3 occasions, FC items were deferred to later meetings in order not to delay the HC meetings.

5. To resolve the problem, several options have been explored, including holding FC and HC meetings on separate sessions, e.g. one in the morning and the other in the afternoon, or advancing one of the meetings to Thursday afternoon. According to a survey conducted among Members in 1993, the majority of Members favoured holding the two meetings on the same Friday afternoon. Having considered the preferences of Members and the effective utilisation of conference facilities, the best arrangement is therefore to keep the two meetings to the same afternoon.

6. Another option which has been explored is the swapping of the two meetings, i.e. with FC meetings starting at 3:45 pm preceded by the HC meetings which will then start at 2:15 pm. The implication of this arrangement is that the public officers invited to provide information on FC items would have to stand by starting from 3:30 pm until, probably, around 5:30 pm or 6:00 pm. The feedback from the Administration pointed to the fact that such an arrangement, particularly if it were to take effect for the remainder of the current LegCo session, might cause difficulties in public officers' attendance as they have planned their meetings and engagements on the basis of FC meetings being held in the earlier part of Friday afternoons.

7. Members may wish to note that the Finance Branch did not raise objection to considering other alternatives, such as changing FC meetings to Thursdays, provided that the change would only take place in the new LegCo session. Government Branches have already been issued with clear deadlines for the submission of papers according to the schedule of FC meetings already published. Any changes at this stage will upset all the existing arrangements.

/8.

8. The present proposal of holding FC's Friday meetings between 2:15 pm to 4:30 pm will enable the HC meeting to start immediately after 4:30 p.m. and to end at around 5:45 pm (the average meeting time for HC being 1 hour 10 minutes). Subject to Members' agreement, the proposed re-scheduling of meeting time will be tried out and be reviewed before the end of the current LegCo session. Consideration will be given to further modifying the arrangements if necessary.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9. This proposal does not involve additional financial implications.

Legislative Council Secretariat
April 1995

**Duration of Finance Committee Meetings During the 1994/95 LegCo Session
(As at 31 March 1995)**

Date	Time started	Time finished	Time taken	Items on the
				[() denotes items deferred]
14.10.94	2:30 pm	5:00 pm	2 hrs 30 mins	5
11.11.94	2:30 pm	4:25 pm	1 hr 55 mins	5
18.11.94	2:30 pm	3:50 pm	1 hr 20 mins	2
25.11.94	2:30 pm	5:08 pm	2 hrs 38 mins	5
2.12.94	2:30 pm	4:40 pm	2 hrs 10 mins	7
9.12.94	2:30 pm	4:34 pm	2 hrs 4 mins	6
16.12.94	2:30 pm	5:00 pm	2 hrs 30 mins	11 (4)
6.1.95	2:30 pm	3:50 pm	1 hr 20 mins	6
20.1.95	2:30 pm	4:40 pm	2 hrs 10 mins	7
27.1.95	2:30 pm	4:18 pm	1 hr 48 mins	7
17.2.95	2:30 pm	5:00 pm	2 hrs 30 mins	7 (1)
3.3.95	2:30 pm	5:35 pm	3 hrs 5 mins	9
31.3.95	2:30 pm	5:05 pm	2 hrs 35 mins	7 (3)

(Average : 2 hours 12 minutes)

Total Number of meetings : 13

Number of Meetings completed within 2 hrs 15 mins : 7

**Duration of House Committee Meetings During the 1994-95 LegCo Session
(As at 31 March 1995)**

Date	Time started	Time finished	Time taken
7.10.94	2:30 pm	3:35 pm	1 hr 5 mins
14.10.94	5:05 pm	5:45 pm	45 mins
21.10.94	2:30 pm	3:45 pm	1 hr 15 mins
28.10.94	2:30 pm	4:15 pm	1 hr 45 mins
4.11.94	2:30 pm	3:40 pm	1 hr 10 mins
11.11.94	4:30 pm	5:05 pm	35 mins
18.11.94	3:55 pm	5:20 pm	1 hr 25 mins
25.11.94	5:10 pm	6:00 pm	50 mins
2.12.94	4:48 pm	5:48 pm	1 hr
16.12.94	5:00 pm	5:43 pm	43 mins
6.1.95	4:00 pm	4:45 pm	45 mins
13.1.95	2:30 pm	3:23 pm	53 mins
27.1.95	4:20 pm	5:20 pm	1 hr
10.2.95	2:30 pm	4:20 pm	1 hr 50 mins

17.2.95	5:05 pm	6:30 pm	1 hr 25 mins
24.2.95	2:30 pm	3:42 pm	1 hr 12 mins
10.3.95	2:30 pm	3:30 pm	1 hr
31.3.95	5:10 pm	6:20 pm	1 hr 10 mins

(Average : 1 hour 10 minutes)

Total Number of Meetings : 18

Number of Meetings completed within 1 hr 15 mins : 14

Extract from the House Rules

X X X X X X X X X

20. House Committee

- (e) When the Council is in session, the House Committee normally meets every Friday afternoon at 2:30 pm. When a Finance Committee meeting is scheduled to be held earlier in the same afternoon, the House Committee meeting will start at 4:30 pm. Any other committees which need to meet on a Friday afternoon should schedule their meetings after the House Committee meeting. The Secretariat shall issue written notice to members stating the date, time and place at which the meeting is to be held.

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Appendix III

Finance Committee Meetings held during the 2000-01 LegCo Session

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time Started</u>	<u>Time Finished</u>	<u>Time Taken</u>	<u>Items on the Agenda</u> <u>[() denotes items deferred]</u>	
17.11.00	2:30 pm	3:40 pm	1 hr 10 mins	3	
1.12.00	2:30 pm	4:30 pm	2 hrs	8	
15.12.00	2:30 pm	4:45 pm	2 hrs 15 mins	8	
5.1.01	2:30 pm	3:35 pm	1 hr 5 mins	2	
12.1.01	2:30 pm	3:30 pm	1 hr	4	
19.1.01	2:30 pm	2:50 pm	20 mins	1	<i>Shortest meeting</i>
9.2.01	2:30 pm	4:40 pm	2 hrs 10 mins	7 (1)	
23.2.01	2:30 pm	5:00 pm	2 hrs 30 mins	5	
9.3.01	2:30 pm	4:35 pm	2 hrs 5 mins	7 (1)	
30.3.01	2:30 pm	4:46 pm	2 hrs 16 mins	1	
27.4.01	2:30 pm	3:40 pm	1 hr 10 mins	3	
25.5.01	2:30 pm	4:45 pm	2 hrs 15 mins	6 (3)	
1.6.01	2:30 pm	4:35 pm	2 hrs 5 mins	3	
8.6.01	2:30 pm	3:32 pm	1 hr 2 mins	5	
22.6.01	2:30 pm	4:35 pm	2 hrs 5 mins	8 (2)	
29.6.01	2:30 pm	3:05 pm	35 mins	5	
6.7.01*	3:30 pm	8:15 pm	4 hrs 45 mins	8	<i>Longest meeting</i>
24.9.01*	2:00 pm	5:55 pm	3 hrs 55 mins	1	

Total Number of meetings : 18

Number of meetings exceeding 2 hours: 10(2)*

Average duration: 1 hr 55 mins

* No House Committee meeting scheduled

Finance Committee Meetings held during the 2001-02 LegCo Session
(up to 8 March 2002)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time Started</u>	<u>Time Finished</u>	<u>Time Taken</u>	<u>Items on the Agenda</u>	
9.11.01	2:30 pm	4:00 pm	1 hr 30 mins	4	
23.11.01	2:30 pm	2:55 pm	25 mins	1	<i>Shortest meeting</i>
7.12.01	2:30 pm	4:00 pm	1 hr 30 mins	8	
21.12.01*	2:30 pm	4:20 pm	1 hr 50 mins	5	
11.1.02	2:30 pm	4:45 pm	2 hrs 15 mins	5	
1.2.02	2:30 pm	3:05 pm	35 mins	5	
8.3.02	2:30 pm	5:15 pm	2 hrs 45 mins	7	<i>Longest meeting</i>

Total Number of meetings : **7**
Number of meetings exceeding 2 hours: **2**
Average duration: **1 hr 30 mins**

* No House Committee meeting scheduled

Appendix IV

House Committee Meetings held during the 2000-01 LegCo Session

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time Started</u>	<u>Time Finished</u>	<u>Time Taken</u>	
4.10.00	3:40 pm	4:15 pm	35 mins	
13.10.00	2:30 pm	5:05 pm	2 hrs 35 mins	
20.10.00	2:30 pm	5:20 pm	2 hrs 50 mins	<i>Longest meeting</i>
27.10.00	2:30 pm	4:00 pm	1 hr 30 mins	
3.11.00	2:30 pm	5:05 pm	2 hrs 35 mins	
10.11.00	2:30 pm	4:40 pm	2 hrs 10 mins	
17.11.00	3:50 pm	5:05 pm	1 hr 15 mins	
24.11.00	2:30 pm	3:45 pm	1 hr 15 mins	
1.12.00	4:30 pm	6:05 pm	1 hr 35 mins	
8.12.00	2:30 pm	3:40 pm	1 hr 10 mins	
15.12.00	4:50 pm	5:30 pm	40 mins	
5.1.01	3:50 pm	6:05 pm	2 hrs 15 mins	
12.1.01	3:50 pm	4:28 pm	38 mins	
19.1.01	2:50 pm	4:10 pm	1 hr 20 mins	
2.2.01	2:30 pm	2:42 pm	12 mins	<i>Shortest meeting</i>
9.2.01	4:45 pm	6:00 pm	1 hr 15 mins	
16.2.01	2:30 pm	3:25 pm	55 mins	
23.2.01	5:03 pm	5:30 pm	27 mins	
2.3.01	2:30 pm	3:20 pm	50 mins	
9.3.01	4:30 pm	5:15 pm	45 mins	

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time Started</u>	<u>Time Finished</u>	<u>Time Taken</u>
16.3.01	2:30 pm	3:30 pm	1 hr
23.3.01	2:30 pm	4:20 pm	1 hr 50 mins
30.3.01	4:46 pm	5:05 pm	19 mins
20.4.01	2:30 pm	3:15 pm	45 mins
27.4.01	3:45 pm	4:25 pm	40 mins
4.5.01	2:30 pm	3:15 pm	45 mins
11.5.01	2:30 pm	2:58 pm	28 mins
18.5.01	4:10 pm	4:45 pm	35 mins
25.5.01	5:00 pm	5:25 pm	25 mins
1.6.01	4:45 pm	5:40 pm	55 mins
8.6.01	3:40 pm	5:50 pm	2 hrs 10 mins
15.6.01	2:30 pm	4:10 pm	1 hr 40 mins
22.6.01	5:03 pm	6:25 pm	1 hr 22 mins
29.6.01	3:10 pm	4:35 pm	1 hr 25 mins
10.7.01	12:00 noon	12:55 pm	55 mins
5.10.01	2:30 pm	4:35 pm	2 hrs 5 mins

Total Number of meetings : **36**
Number of meetings which lasted for 1 hour or less: **18**
Average duration: **1 hr 15 mins**

House Committee Meetings held during the 2001-02 LegCo Session
(up to 8 March 2002)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time Started</u>	<u>Time Finished</u>	<u>Time Taken</u>	
12.10.01	2:30 pm	3:17 pm	47 mins	
26.10.01	2:30 pm	3:03 pm	33 mins	
2.11.01	2:30 pm	3:45 pm	1 hr 15 mins	
9.11.01	4:15 pm	5:32 pm	1 hr 17 mins	
16.11.01	2:30 pm	3:32 pm	1 hr 2 mins	
23.11.01	2:55 pm	3:45 pm	50 mins	
30.11.01	2:30 pm	2:55 pm	25 mins	
7.12.01	4:00 pm	5:15 pm	1 hr 15 mins	
14.12.01	4:10 pm	4:30 pm	20 mins	<i>Shortest meeting</i>
4.1.02	2:30 pm	2:55 pm	25 mins	
11.1.02	4:50 pm	5:25 pm	35 mins	
18.1.02	2:30 pm	2:58 pm	28 mins	
25.1.02	2:30 pm	4:05 pm	1 hr 35 mins	<i>Longest meeting</i>
1.2.02	4:35 pm	5:13 pm	38 mins	
22.2.02	2:30 pm	4:05 pm	1 hr 35 mins	<i>Longest meeting</i>
1.3.02	2:30 pm	3:04 pm	34 mins	
8.3.02	5:20 pm	5:52 pm	32 mins	

Total Number of meetings : **17**

Number of meetings which lasted for 1 hour or less: **11**

Average duration: **50 mins**