

**Information Note for
Legislative Council Members' Meeting with The Ombudsman
on 5 December 2001**

**Delinking of the Office of The Ombudsman from the Administration:
pay and conditions of service of staff, and recruitment position**

In financial management terms, the Office of The Ombudsman formally delinked from the Administration on 1 April 2001. For the current financial year, provisions for the Office are allocated in the form of a lump sum subvention grant. To empower the Ombudsman to undertake basic administrative functions such as entering into contracts, operating bank accounts, the Administration has proposed amendments to The Ombudsman Ordinance.

2. Since late 2000, the Office has been working closely with the Administration to establish a remuneration package for staff appointed by The Ombudsman and to work out the detailed arrangements to enable the Office to set up its own administrative systems.

3. Following protracted discussions, the Administration eventually approved a new remuneration package for the Office in May. This new package is governed by two basic principles. Firstly, it is simple and easy to administer so as to reduce administrative costs. Secondly, the terms are "no-better-than" that available to civil servants of comparable ranks. The package consists of a basic salary, cash allowance and end of contract gratuity.

4. To ensure operational efficiency and prevent a sudden depletion of experience, civil servants currently seconded to the Office will be transferred back to the civil service under a phased release plan. The Office is working closely with heads of grades to ensure the smooth return of serving civil servants. Between 1 January 2001 and 30 November 2001, 27 civil servants have been released. During this period, 25 new appointments were made, including 1 Deputy Ombudsman, 2 Chief Complaints Officers, 4 Senior Complaints Officers, 1 Accountant and other support staff. Within the next few months, more contract staff are expected to report for duty. They include 2 Chief Complaints Officers, 6 Senior Complaints Officers, 7 Complaints Officers and 13 support staff. By the end of this financial year, the Office's own contract officers will constitute more than 50% of the establishment.

5. The delinking exercise will not result in any staff redundancy.