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Public Works Subcommittee of the Finance Committee

Minutes of the 16th meeting
held in the Chamber of Legislative Council Building
on Wednesday, 2 July 2003, at 10:45 am

Members present :

Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, JP (Chairman)
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Kenneth TING Woo-shou, JP
Dr Hon David CHU Yu-lin, JP
Hon Eric LI Ka-cheung, GBS, JP
Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, JP
Hon CHAN Yuen-han, JP
Hon CHAN Kam-lam, JP
Hon SIN Chung-kai
Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP
Hon WONG Yung-kan
Hon YEUNG Yiu-chung, BBS
Hon LAU Kong-wah, JP
Hon Miriam LAU Kin-yee, JP
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon CHOY So-yuk
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
Dr Hon LAW Chi-kwong, JP
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Dr Hon TANG Siu-tong, JP
Hon WONG Sing-chi
Hon IP Kwok-him, JP

Non-Subcommittee Member attending:

Dr Hon LO Wing-lok, JP

Members absent:

Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP
Hon Henry WU King-cheong, BBS, JP
Hon LAU Ping-cheung

Public officers attending:

Miss Elizabeth TSE, JP	Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury) ³
Mr Y C LO, JP	Permanent Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (Works)
Mr Thomas TSO, JP	Permanent Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (Planning and Lands) 1
Mr Rob LAW, JP	Director of Environmental Protection
Mr Andrew TSANG	Acting Principal Assistant Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Works)
Mr Daniel CHENG	Principal Assistant Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (Planning and Lands) ²
Mr H K WONG, JP	Director of Territory Development
Mr M Y MA	Chief Engineer (Tin Shiu Wai and Pak Shek Kok) Territory Development Department
Mr Tony TANG	Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower (Infrastructure and Research Support)
Mr C M CHAN	Chief Technical Advisor/Subvented Projects Architectural Services Department
Mrs Ruth LAU	Principal Education Officer (Kowloon) Education and Manpower Bureau
Mr Thomas YIU	Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Health)
Miss Joanna CHOI	Principal Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Health) ²
Dr M Y CHENG	Deputy Director (Professional Services and Facilities Management), Hospital Authority
Dr FUNG Hong, JP	Director, Hospital Authority
Mr Donald LI	Executive Manager (Hospital Planning) Hospital Authority
Mr C H YUE, JP	Director Architectural Services
Mrs Marigold LAU	Project Director 2, Architectural Services Department

Clerk in attendance:

Ms Anita SIT

Chief Assistant Secretary (1)6

Staff in attendance:

Ms Pauline NG

Assistant Secretary General 1

Mr Matthew LOO

Senior Assistant Secretary (1)3

Ms Caris CHAN

Senior Legislative Assistant 1

Mr Frankie WOO

Legislative Assistant 2

HEAD 707 - NEW TOWNS AND URBAN AREA DEVELOPMENT**PWSC(2003-04)37****658CL****Remaining engineering infrastructure works for Pak Shek Kok development – stage 2**Tenancy situation of Science Park

Ms Emily LAU said that as some of the proposed infrastructure facilities were aimed at supporting the commissioning of Science Park Phase 2, other members might wish to take note of the information on the tenancy situation of Science Park as set out in the letter issued by the Secretary for Commerce, Industry and Technology in response to a follow-up question she raised at the Council meeting on 18 June 2003. According to the letter, as at end May 2003, the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation approved 28 tenants into the Science Park. Another 9 companies were approved for admission into the Science Park as incubates. Among these 37 companies, seven were new inward investing companies and two were local start-up companies. Ms LAU said that the fact that most of the companies approved for admission into the Science Park were already operating in Hong Kong gave rise to the concern that the Science Park was in fact competing with the private commercial property sector for tenants.

Employment of consultants

2. Ms Emily LAU sought elaboration on the statement in the discussion paper that due to insufficient in-house resources, the Director of Territory Development (DTD) proposed to employ consultants to carry out the construction supervision of the proposed engineering infrastructure works. She questioned that the statement was not entirely consistent with the present-day situation as many public works projects had been put on hold or decelerated.

3. DTD advised that the Territory Development Department (TDD) did not have in-house staff specialized in supervision of construction works. Therefore, for TDD's projects, it was necessary to employ consultants for supervision of construction works. He also confirmed that given the current staffing level, TDD did

not have spare staff to be redeployed to take up site supervision work.

4. As regards the overall situation of the workload of Government's works departments, the Permanent Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (Works) advised that there was no question of staff in the works department not having enough work. He pointed out that currently, there were over 1 300 ongoing Category A projects, some 200 Category B projects and a further 100 projects under planning. The capital works being planned for implementation in the five years up to 2006-07 amounted to \$147 billion, or about \$29 billion per annum on average. The Administration was working towards this goal and there was no plan to cut capital works expenditure for the years up to 2006-07. Hence, in general, the current workload of individual works departments was maintained at a level similar to that of the past few years.

5. Mr Andrew WONG said that he would not consider the practice of employing consultants to render services for public works projects a problem as this would help maintain the civil service establishment to the necessary minimum. If the Government's works departments were to undertake the various services currently rendered by consultants, it would be necessary to expand the civil service establishment accordingly.

Control of pollution arising from the works

6. Mr WONG Sing-chi said that he had received complaints from some residents in Sha Tin that the flushing water for these households contained some oily pollutants and it was suspected that the source of the pollutants was the construction works of Science Park Phase 1. He enquired how the proposed infrastructure works at Pak Shek Kok (PSK) would be monitored to control pollution arising from the works.

7. DTD advised that TDD all along had accorded high priority to the control of pollution arising from TDD's projects. The department would conduct regular inspection at project sites to ensure compliance of the required environmental mitigation measures. He also affirmed that contractors were not allowed to discharge polluted effluent into water bodies nor sewers directly. The effluent must be properly treated before discharge. Contractors were required to include the effluent treatment arrangements in its waste management plan for approval by TDD.

Availability of access facilities to Pak Shek Kok development

8. Ms Emily LAU said that whilst she was in support of providing marine access in addition to land access to the PSK development, she asked if more facilities could be provided to improve the land access to the development by the general public. DTD explained that given the natural geographical constraints of PSK, land access to the development was currently only feasible from the southern and northern ends of the development. The proposed public landing steps facility would thus serve as supplementary infrastructure to facilitate marine access to the development, especially for emergency or incidental occasions.

9. In reply to Ms LAU's further enquiry on whether there was any plan to provide additional land access facilities, DTD advised that under the current plan, a new Road L7 connecting PSK development to Tai Po Road would be constructed at a later stage and the schedule of its construction would tie in with the development progress at PSK. He added that consideration had been given to developing a railway station at PSK but this was subsequently considered not justified in view of the small size of the population at PSK which would only be in the region of 10 000 upon full development.

Waterfront promenade and associated supporting facilities

10. Mr LAU Kong-wah said that residents in the Sha Tin and Tai Po districts had attached great importance and high expectation to the facilities provided on the waterfront promenade. He was disappointed to note that the Administration had not reverted to Sha Tin and Tai Po District Councils (DCs) to consult them on the design of the promenade. He opined that the waterfront of PSK provided good potentials for development into a popular civic place or even a tourist spot. However, the current design and provision of supporting facilities were not up to the standard required for such purposes.

11. Mr LAU Kong-wah in particular criticized the design of the following facilities -

- (a) the proposed public landing steps facility was located away from the existing piers at Ma Liu Shui, and thus might not serve to supplement the existing piers in catering for regular ferry services to Tap Mun and Tung Ping Chau;
- (b) the proposed refreshment kiosk would be inadequate to cater for the needs of users as shown in the experience of the waterfront promenade in Sai Kung; and
- (c) the proposed cycle track should be complemented by bicycle hiring facilities which were not provided under the present proposal.

12. Regarding consultation with DCs, the Chief Engineer (Tin Shiu Wai and PSK), TDD (CE/TDD), said that the Administration had consulted Tai Po and Sha Tin DCs on this project about two years ago. During the discussion of a related issue at a Tai Po DC meeting a few months ago, DC members requested the Administration to brief the DC on the details of this project. CE/TDD confirmed that the Administration had planned to consult Sha Tin and Tai Po DCs on this project again in July 2003.

13. Mr LAU Kong-wah pointed out that when the Administration consulted Tai Po and Sha Tin DCs on this project two years ago, there was little information about the design of the promenade and associated facilities and the DCs were not specifically consulted on these matters. At Mr LAU's request, DTD agreed to consult the two DCs on this project before the relevant Finance Committee meeting if the two DCs agreed. The Chairman then suggested and DTD agreed that the

Administration would provide a paper for the two DCs on this project in the first instance and request the DCs to provide an opportunity for the consultation before the relevant FC meeting scheduled for 18 July 2003. Ms Emily LAU suggested that if feasible, a joint meeting of the two DCs be arranged so that each could take into account the views of the other DC. Mr WONG Yung-kan informed the meeting that Tai Po DC would convene a full council meeting on 8 July 2003. He suggested that the Administration should take the opportunity to consult Tai Po DC on this project.

14. Referring to Mr LAU Kong-wah's criticism on the proposed public landing steps facility, CE/TDD advised that the facility was planned to cater for leisure boats, small fishing vessels and marine access on emergency or incidental occasions. The facility was not intended to cater for regular ferry services to the outlying islands in the north-eastern waters of Hong Kong such as Tap Mun and Tung Ping Chau. Currently, there were two piers at Ma Liu Shui used for regular ferry services to Tap Mun and Tung Ping Chau. One of these piers would be demolished and three public landing steps facilities would be constructed. As these public piers were/would be close to the University Station of the East Rail, regular ferry services to the outlying islands in the north-eastern waters of Hong Kong would continue to make use of these public piers.

15. Mr LAU Kong-wah referred to paragraph 7 of the Administration's paper which set out the justification for the proposed public landing steps facility, and commented that the description in the paper gave the impression that the proposed landing steps facility would also be used for the ferry services to Tap Mun and Tung Ping Chau. He asked the Administration to clarify the intended uses of the facility.

16. DTD confirmed that the proposed landing steps facility was not planned to be used for regular ferry services destined for Tung Ping Chau and Tap Mun, as the Ma Liu Shui piers could adequately cater for the services and were more conveniently located for the general public.

17. Ms Emily LAU opined that the Administration should review the demand for marine access to the PSK development and for public ferry services destined for the islands in the north-eastern waters of Hong Kong in determining the uses of the proposed landing steps facility. In this connection, she also asked the Administration to review the location and design (including the size) of the planned car park and taxi/public light bus laybys to ensure that these facilities would be put to economical uses.

18. In reply to Mr WONG Yung-kan's enquiry, CE/TDD advised that the proposed public landing steps facility was about 55 metres in length and had adequate space for berthing two small vessels or one medium sized vessel. Mr WONG Yung-kan requested the Administration to consider upgrading the proposed public landing steps facility to cater for the estimated demand for marine access/ferry services. Miss CHOY So-yuk and the Chairman asked the Administration to clarify the planned uses of the facility when it consulted the Sha Tin and Tai Po DCs.

19. In response, DTD said that the Administration had conducted a detailed study for the PSK development, covering the provision of various facilities including transport facilities. The car park and taxi/public light bus laybys and the proposed public landing steps facility were planned on the basis of the results of the study.

20. On the suggestion of providing bicycle hiring facilities, DTD said that if there was sufficient demand for the service, such facilities could be provided as there was sufficient space on the promenade. CE/TDD also advised that there would be sitting-out areas along the waterfront promenade for the public to enjoy the scenery and take rest. In addition, there would be three viewing platforms, each would be extended 12 metres out to the Tolo Harbour.

21. On the suggestion of developing eateries, DTD said that as the promenade would be managed by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), TDD would discuss the suggestion with LCSD. In this respect, Mr Andrew WONG noted that no shopping centre or similar development was being planned for the Science Park. He cited his experience at London Docklands where he had enjoyed beautiful seaview at a waterfront Chinese restaurant, and suggested that the Administration should consider a small-scale development with restaurant(s), shop(s) and other leisure facilities at the PSK waterfront. Ms Emily LAU said that she shared the view of Mr Andrew WONG and opined that the waterfront of PSK was a good place with beautiful scenery and therefore the design of the promenade should not be sterile. She asked the Administration to consult the two DCs on the desirability of having a small-scale development with shops and eateries at the PSK waterfront.

22. On the provision of public toilets facility, CE/TDD advised that there would be one public toilet on the proposed waterfront promenade. There was one public toilet near the existing piers at Ma Liu Shui and there would be another one near the new public landing steps at Ma Liu Shui. Miss CHOY So-yuk requested the provision of western-style toilets to cater for elderly people and those who had difficulty in using Japanese-style toilets. Hon SIN Chung-kai suggested that both western-style and Japanese-style toilets should be provided. The Chairman requested the Administration to take note of members' views.

23. Mr WONG Yung-kan opined that that the PSK waterfront possessed good conditions for development of eco-tourism. He also requested the Administration to provide information on the species of trees to be planted at the waterfront promenade to Tai Po DC.

24. Mr WONG Sing-chi also urged the Administration to seriously consider members' suggestions about the provision of various leisure facilities at the waterfront promenade for the enjoyment of the public and for development of tourism. He also conveyed the suggestion of Tai Po DC to designate those sites on the PSK development where development had yet to take place as temporary cycle parks.

25. Mr LAU Kong-wah commented that more trees should be planted along the waterfront promenade and 1 000 new trees as currently planned were not enough. He also commented that notwithstanding that the Tourism Commission had recently issued a consultancy study report on development of tourism in the Northern New Territories, the planning of the PSK development had not taken into account this perspective. This reflected a lack of co-ordination within the Administration. He considered that PSK possessed good potential for development of eco-tourism and the future marine access facility at the PSK waterfront promenade could complement this development. He urged the Administration to seriously consider members' views expressed at this meeting and suggested that the two DCs be informed of members' views.

Clerk 26. Ms Emily LAU requested the Clerk to PWSC to summarize members' views and provide the summary to the two DCs for reference.

27. In reply to Mr Andrew WONG, DTD confirmed that the project site in question straddle across the constituencies of Tai Po and Sha Tin DCs, and therefore both DCs should be consulted on this project. Mr Andrew WONG commented that consideration should be given to place the entire PSK development within the constituency of either Tai Po or Sha Tin DC.

Admin 28. The Chairman requested and DTD agreed that after consultation with DCs, the Administration would provide a paper to PWSC to report the outcome of the consultation.

29. The item was voted on and endorsed.

Clerk Admin 30. Ms Emily LAU and Mr LAU Kong-wah said that they had reservation on the proposal. Ms LAU requested that this proposal be further discussed and voted on separately at the FC meeting.

HEAD 708 - CAPITAL SUBVENTIONS AND MAJOR SYSTEMS AND EQUIPMENT

PWSC(2003-04)38 19EA Redevelopment of Yuen Long Chamber of Commerce Primary School at Castle Peak Road, Yuen Long

31. Dr TANG Siu-tong expressed support for the proposal as it would enable the school to convert to a whole-day school and to upgrade the facilities of the school to meet present-day standards.

32. Ms Emily LAU also expressed support for the proposal. In reply to her enquiry about the accommodation arrangements for the school during the construction period, Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower

(Infrastructure & Research Support) (PAS/IRS) explained that as the school was located at the centre of Yuen Long, the Administration was not able to identify vacant premises in the district for decanting during the construction of the new school blocks. The school sponsor would carry out some minor alteration works at two existing school blocks to provide temporary accommodation during the construction of the new classroom block. The Administration and the school sponsor considered that with implementation of the recommended mitigation measures, the temporary accommodation arrangements would not give rise to serious problems. Ms Emily LAU urged the Administration to assist the school sponsor in making proper arrangements to minimize disruption to the school's operation during the construction period. She also suggested that the project works should be scheduled outside school hours as far as possible.

Admin

33. The Chairman requested the Administration to provide more information on the reprovisioning or temporary accommodation arrangements in future proposals on school redevelopment projects.

34. The item was voted on and endorsed.

PWSC(2003-04)39

36EC

Redevelopment of Marymount Primary School and improvements to Marymount Secondary School, Wan Chai

35. Ms Emily LAU declared interest as a past student of Maryknoll Sisters' School, the primary and secondary sections of which were now known as Marymount Primary School (MPS) and Marymount Secondary School (MSS) respectively. She noted that under this project, no swimming pool would be provided for the schools while under the next item PWSC(2003-04)40 on the construction of a new private independent school, a swimming pool was included. She reiterated her view as expressed in previous discussions on schools projects that consideration should be given to providing swimming pool to schools when space was available and where technically feasible. She emphasized that swimming pool should not be regarded as a luxurious facility for schools. In response, PAS/IRS advised that under the current standards of accommodation for schools, swimming pool was not a standard facility. For the project under item PWSC(2003-04)40, the capital grant provided by the Government would be no more than the money-of-the-day construction cost for a standard design public sector school accommodating the same number of students and did not cover the swimming pool. The cost higher than the capital grant would be borne by the school sponsor. Ms Emily LAU said that she

would take the issue of providing swimming pool for schools to the Panel on Education for discussion.

36. Dr David CHU and Dr TANG Siu-tong expressed support for the proposal. Dr CHU expresses his disappointment with the slow progress of the implementation of the whole-day schooling policy in primary schools. In reply to Dr TANG, PAS/IRS advised that in the nine-storey school building, MPS would occupy six storeys, namely LG1, G/F to 4/F, while the three storeys from LG2 to LG4 would be used by MSS. He confirmed that the design of the building would allow through access between MPS and MSS.

37. Mr Albert CHAN noted that the estimate for the piling works was \$21.5 million, which was relatively higher than similar projects. PAS/IRS explained that as the project site was a sloping site, additional slope stabilization works needed to be carried out. A special combined piling system would be adopted to suit the geotechnical and topographical conditions of the sloping site, hence higher cost was involved.

38. Ms Emily LAU noted that there was inconsistency in the provision of names of school sponsors in PWSC papers. She considered that the names of the relevant school sponsors of school projects should be specified to enhance transparency. In response to Ms LAU's enquiry about the name of the school sponsor for this project, PAS/IRS said that the school was already in operation and the name of the school sponsor was therefore not provided in the paper. He undertook to inform Ms LAU of the name of the school sponsor for this project and to consider specifying the names of the relevant school sponsors in future proposals on school projects.

Admin

39. The item was voted on and endorsed.

PWSC(2003-04)40

39EC

**A private independent school
(secondary-cum-primary) in Area 90B,
Ma On Shan**

40. Ms Emily LAU said that she supported the policy intention of offering more choices in the selection of schools for students and parents. She understood that the Administration was negotiating with the English School Foundation (ESF) about reduction in recurrent subsidy for ESF schools and expressed concern about the effect of such reduction on the school fees of ESF schools. She also enquired about the process in the allocation of sites for the construction and operation of private independent schools.

Admin

41. On the allocation of sites for private independent schools, PAS/IRS advised that the allocation exercises were conducted on a competitive basis. Proposals received were considered by the School Allocation Committee according to a set of established criteria. As regards the review of the subsidy arrangements for ESF, he advised that the overall review mapping out the medium and long term subvention arrangements was aimed to be completed within this year. For the year 2003-04, ESF had already accepted the proposal for a 1.8% cut of the recurrent subvention for the 2003/04 school year. At Ms LAU's request, the Administration agreed to confirm the monetary amount of the 1.8% cut in government subvention.

42. Ms Emily LAU referred to the statement in the discussion paper that the financial assistance and the provision of land at nominal premium would give school sponsors incentives to charge affordable school fees. She enquired how far the Administration monitored the school fees of private independent schools and what measures were available to ensure that the school fees were affordable to students from low-income families.

43. PAS/IRS replied that the school fees charged by private independent schools were to be approved by the Administration. In vetting the proposed school fees, the Administration would consider the actual expenditure of the schools. According to the service agreement signed between the Administration and private independent schools, the school sponsoring body should set aside a sum not less than 10% of the total annual school fee income to provide scholarships/financial assistance for deserving students.

44. Mr Albert CHAN expressed concern on whether the present proposal was consistent with the established policy towards private independent schools. He enquired if there had been any precedent case of this type of projects. In response, PAS/IRS said that in his 1998 Policy Address, the Chief Executive announced that to foster growth in the number of quality private schools, the Government would provide land and capital grants to help non-profit-making school sponsors to build private independent schools. Funding for the construction of a private school in Po Kong Village Road had been approved by PWSC and FC last year and the school would be completed in 2004. The basis for determining the capital grant in that case and in the present case was that the amount should be no more than the cost for constructing a standard design public sector school accommodating the same number of students.

45. Noting that the present proposal was to facilitate the construction of a non-profit-making private independent school, Mr Albert CHAN enquired whether and how the Administration would ensure that the private independent school would

operate on a non-profit-making basis. Mr CHAN was in particular concerned how the Administration would monitor the remuneration paid to the management and teaching staff of those private schools which had received capital grants from the Government. PAS/IRS replied that when the Administration processed the school's fee proposals from the school, it would examine the school's expenditure records in comparison with those of other schools to see if any item of expenditure was excessive.

46. Mr Albert CHAN said that he was not satisfied with the Administration's reply, as it was still unclear whether the Administration had established a mechanism to monitor the remuneration paid to the management and teaching staff of private schools which had received capital grants from the Government.

47. In this connection, Mr YEUNG Yiu-chung said that for schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS), Government subvention was calculated in terms of the average unit cost of an aided school place for each eligible student enrolled. The schools had the discretion to determine the salary package of their staff. The Chairman also referred to paragraph 13 of the discussion paper which stated that for the proposed private independent school, the cost of furniture and equipment and the annual recurrent expenditure for the school would be borne by the school sponsor. There would not be recurrent expenditure for the Government.

48. Referring to the comparison of facilities proposed under this project with those at a standard design school, Ms Emily LAU noted that there would be a gymnasium, a swimming pool and a sports hall in the proposed school while these facilities were not included in the Government's standard designs for primary and secondary schools. Notwithstanding the provision of these "non-standard" facilities, the difference between the estimated construction cost of the whole project and the Government's capital grant was only \$13 million. In reply to Ms LAU's enquiry, PAS/EMB advised that the construction cost of the swimming pool was about \$5 million and that of the other indoor sports facilities was about \$6 million. He further explained that the Administration encouraged flexibility in school design by the PIS school sponsors with the provision of capital grant. The cost exceeding the level of government subvention would be borne by the school sponsors. Noting the information, Ms Emily LAU urged the Administration to critically review the standard school design to provide more sports facilities for schools as it was evident in the present project that the provision of more sports facilities would not necessarily involve significant additional capital cost.

Admin

49. In reply to Ms Emily LAU's enquiry about the site area and floor space of the proposed school in comparison with a standard design school, PAS/IRS advised that the total net operational floor area was 2 000 square metres more than that of a standard design school. The site area of the proposed school was 12 476 square

four beds. Measures such as putting patients with similar conditions in the same ward and providing individual showers and toilets would reduce the chance of cross-infections.

55. At the Chairman's invitation, the Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Health) (DS/HWFB) briefly explained the proposal. He said that isolation wards in Hong Kong's public hospitals needed improvement to deal with future outbreak of SARS and the existing number of isolation wards with negative pressure rooms was not enough. The temporary measure of using exhaust fans to create negative pressure was not effective as it created a hot environment. The present proposal was aimed at enhancing the infection control facilities of nine major acute hospitals. The scope of works comprised modifications of 67 wards in the nine hospitals to provide the standard facilities required for isolation rooms, and alteration works for existing treatment facilities in eight of the nine hospitals to provide infection control or isolation facilities. Upon completion of the works in October 2003, there would be a total of 536 rooms with 1 281 beds for isolation purposes in the nine hospitals.

56. Dr LAW Chi-kwong expressed concern on whether HA had any comprehensive plans in the deployment of staff resources for handling the outbreak of infectious diseases in future. He pointed out that upon completion of the proposed works, hospital beds in those new isolation wards would be more spaced out. When these new wards were utilized, the number of frontline medical staff of the hospitals should be increased to cope with the additional workload.

57. The Director, Hospital Authority (D/HA) acknowledged that as the beds in the new isolation wards would be more spaced out, the level of staffing support should be enhanced to ensure that patients in these wards were given adequate care. The actual number of additional staff needed would depend on the scale of any future outbreak of infectious diseases and the admission situation of the nine hospitals. He assured members that HA would make sure that adequate staff would be available to serve these new isolation wards. The hospital chiefs of the respective hospitals would deploy manpower as required and HA would make sure that adequate resources and flexibility were provided for the hospitals. Where necessary, HA would consult the Administration on the need for additional subvention for HA.

58. DS/HWFB supplemented that during the SARS outbreak, HA had employed some 200 additional nurses, mainly student nurses. The Administration would maintain close liaison with HA on the need for additional resources to handle any future outbreak of infectious diseases.

59. Mr Albert CHAN said that it would be difficult for outsiders to comment if the nine hospitals in question really needed the additional resources or whether the resources were fairly distributed among hospitals which might also be required to handle SARS cases in any future SARS outbreak. He was concerned whether other smaller hospitals would have the necessary resources to enhance their infection control facilities. He also pointed out that the issue of whether a centralized handling approach should be adopted for the handling of SARS and other infectious diseases was still under discussion. If the centralized handling approach was subsequently adopted, the resources used for the proposed alteration works might be wasted.

60. D/HA said that the present proposal was a short-term urgent measure to provide the required number of beds for isolation purposes in the major acute hospitals with Accidents and Emergency (A&E) service, where most of the cases with high fever (the main symptom of SARS cases) were handled. Centralized handling of infectious cases was still under discussion. Any proposal for centralized handling would involve long-term planning of HA and the Panel on Health Services would be first consulted on the proposal.

61. On the need of other public hospitals for infection control facilities, D/HA advised that the nine acute hospitals under the present proposal were the larger hospitals with A&E service and thus would assume the burden of taking in SARS cases and suspected SARS cases in any future SARS outbreak in the near future. The present proposal was an urgent measure to equip these hospitals with the required infection control facilities. HA was still reviewing if other public hospitals would need similar facilities. He further advised that Pok Oi Hospital was under redevelopment and some isolation wards would be provided under the redevelopment project, while some new hospitals already had isolation wards.

62. DS/HWFB said that the present policy of HA for handling SARS was for acute hospitals to share the handling of SARS cases, so that any one hospital would not handle more than 100 cases at a time. The Administration and HA was confident that with the accumulated knowledge and experience in SARS, the 1 281 beds for isolation purposes in the nine major acute hospitals upon completion of the proposed works should be sufficient for handling the next outbreak of SARS, if any. He assured members that the Administration would continue to discuss with HA about the need of the other public hospitals for infection control facilities.

63. Dr LAW Chi-kwong pointed out that patients treated in these new wards would be isolated and would not be able to contact their family members face to face,

but the support of family members was very important for the patients' recovery. He asked if the Administration/HA had considered installing video conferencing facilities or other communication facilities in these new wards. He remarked that installation of such facilities might involve difficulties and a higher cost if the supporting infrastructure was not incorporated into the proposed alteration works.

64. In reply, D/HA advised that installation of video conferencing facilities had not been incorporated into the proposed alteration works, but based on the experience during the SARS outbreak period, he understood that such facilities could be installed in a short time if needed. He however agreed to consider the need of installing the supporting infrastructure for video conferencing facilities.

65. The item was voted on and endorsed.

PWSC(2003-04)46 8MA Redevelopment of Caritas Medical Centre, phase 2

66. Members noted that this item had been discussed at the meeting of the Panel on Health Services on 9 June 2003.

67. Dr LO Wing-lok, Chairman of the Panel on Health Services, reported that the Panel supported the proposal but members had raised the following concerns at the Panel meeting -

- (a) the need to review the second phase of the development project of the Caritas Medical Centre (CMC) in tandem with the formulation of short, medium and long-term measures to combat infectious diseases;
- (b) consideration to set aside, say, 5% of the 1 267 inpatient beds in the phase 2 redevelopment for observation purposes;
- (c) the impact of the implementation of phase 2 redevelopment of CMC on existing patient services and the hospital environment; and
- (d) whether priority consideration would be given to local firms bidding for the contract of the project, as local firms had better understanding of local needs and constraints.

68. Dr LO Wing-lok further reported that according to HA's response, it had no intention to designate CMC as a primary hospital to receive patients suffering from

infectious diseases, as this role was and would be continued to be played by Princess Margaret Hospital in the Kowloon West Cluster. Nevertheless, CMC had infection control facilities to take care of patients suffering from infectious diseases.

69. The Deputy Director (Professional Services and Facilities Management), HA responded that HA would make provision for isolation facilities in CMC when inviting bids from outside. On the concern about disruption of the construction works to existing patient services and the environment, he explained that the CMC covered a large area and there was quite a distance between the construction site of phase 2 redevelopment and other existing services buildings, and HA would make sure disruption would be kept to a minimum.

70. The item was voted on and endorsed.

71. The meeting ended at 12:55 pm.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
17 July 2003