

Legislative Council Panel on Housing

Vice-Chairmanship of the Housing Authority

Purpose

This paper informs Members of the outcome of our review on whether a non-official should be appointed as Vice-Chairman (VC) of the Housing Authority (HA).

Background

2. At the request of the LegCo Bills Committee on the Housing (Amendment) Bill 2002, we undertook to consider whether a non-official should be appointed as VC of HA after the Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (SHPL) assumed its chairmanship.

3. Section 3(3)(b) of the Housing Ordinance provides that the Chief Executive (or the Governor before July 1997) shall appoint a member of HA as VC. When HA was established in 1973, the Director of Housing (D of H) was appointed as VC by the then Governor. As the appointment was by office, it is not necessary to make further appointments when holders of the office changed from time to time.

Considerations

4. In 2002, the Report of the Institutional Framework for Public Housing recommended that all statutory and advisory bodies relating to housing should be responsible to the Principal Official (PO) concerned, i.e. SHPL. The Report also recommended that the PO should be responsible for all aspects of his portfolio from policy formulation through to detailed implementation. The Administration has accepted this recommendation and accordingly appointed SHPL as Chairman of HA ex-officio with effect from 1 April 2003.

5. The function of VC, as provided under section 3(7) of the Housing Ordinance, is to preside at HA meetings during the Chairman's absence. To be consistent with the underlying rationale for the appointment of SHPL as Chairman of HA, it is appropriate for D of H, who is concurrently Permanent Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (Housing) and head of the executive arm of HA, to continue to serve as VC of HA. When CHA is not available, the VC can readily stand in to steer HA in considering operational policies and issues.

6. Non-official members of HA have been making significant contributions to HA. At present, most of HA's affairs are dealt with by standing sub-committees established under it. Of the six standing sub-committees¹, five are chaired by non-official members. Owing to its strategic policy-related functions, the Strategic Planning Committee is chaired by CHA. The chairmen of the other five standing sub-committees are appointed as members of this Committee.

Conclusion

7. We consider that D of H should continue to be appointed as VC of HA.

Housing Department
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¹ The six standing sub-committees are Strategic Planning Committee, Finance Committee, Subsidised Housing Committee, Commercial Properties Committee, Building Committee and Tender Committee.