

Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs

Review of Advisory and Statutory Bodies

**Interim Report No. 13 –
Progress Report on the Establishment of the Public Affairs Forum**

PURPOSE

This paper reports progress made in setting up the Public Affairs Forum, a consultative forum to advise the Government on major public issues in Hong Kong.

BACKGROUND

2. At the meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs held on 14 July 2004, Members were consulted on our proposal to establish a consultative forum to canvass the views of business, professional and middle class people on political affairs and public issues in Hong Kong. Very briefly, the Government would appoint 600 persons from the middle class as well as the business, professional and academic fields as members of the forum to advise the Government on political affairs and public issues in Hong Kong. To bring in people who are currently outside our network of boards and committees, members of the consultative forum should not normally be members of other advisory and statutory bodies. The term of appointment would be one or two years, with a regular turnover of members to bring in fresh ideas and perspectives. A new modus operandi would be adopted for this advisory body. The consultative forum would conduct discussions by way of the Internet so as to allow forum members maximum flexibility in participating in the forum discussions.

PROGRESS MADE

3. Preparatory work for setting up the Public Affairs Forum (the Forum), including the establishment of a dedicated website for the Forum and the appointment of Forum members, is in hand. Our present plan is to launch the Forum in March next year.

Membership

4. Members of the Forum would comprise middle class people, including those from the business, professional and academic fields, who meet the following criteria:

- (a) they are mainly salaried employees;
- (b) they have attained tertiary education level or obtained professional qualifications;
- (c) they regard themselves as members of the middle class and are regarded as such by the community.

5. Members of the Forum should normally not be members of advisory and statutory bodies. Nor should they be Legislative Council members or civil servants. That said, we may consider appointing suitable candidates who are currently serving on one advisory/statutory body only as members of the Forum.

6. To achieve a balanced gender composition for the Forum, at least 25% of Forum members would be women. We would also appoint disabled persons, young people and members of ethnic minorities to the Forum.

7. The Secretary for Home Affairs will appoint about 600 persons who meet the selection criteria outlined in paragraphs 3-6 above as members of the Forum. Of these 600 places, we intend to designate:

- (a) 120 places (20%) for candidates nominated by political parties and groups with political affiliations:
We intend to invite political parties and groups with political affiliations currently represented in the Legislative Council to nominate candidates for appointment to the Forum with a view to taking up a total of 120 places. The 120 places would be distributed among the political parties and groups with political affiliations having regard to the number of seats currently held by the respective parties/groups in the Legislative Council. In the event a Legislative Council member has no political affiliation, the member would be invited to nominate names to fill two places;
- (b) 30 places (5%) for candidates from the Election Committee;
- (c) 90 places (15%) for the academia :
We intend to invite the eight tertiary institutions funded by the University Grants Committee to nominate suitable candidates for consideration of appointment as members of the Forum.

The remaining 360 places (60%) would be filled by the following means:

- (a) nominations from the community, including nominations from non-governmental organizations, professional organizations and commercial organizations as well as self-nominations; and
- (b) candidates selected from the Central Personality Index system maintained by the Home Affairs Bureau.

Term of Office and Reappointment

8. To test the suitability of appointees to serve as members of the Forum, all Forum members will initially be appointed for a term of one year. We shall review the suitability of serving Forum members for

re-appointment having regard to their level of participation in and contribution to the Forum at the end of their first year of service. A member may be reappointed for one year or two years. To ensure a healthy turnover, no member should serve the Forum for more than three years.

Dedicated Website

9. The Forum will operate mainly through a dedicated website which will provide a platform (in the form of a discussion room) for exchange of views among members of the Forum. Members of the public, government bureaux and departments, and Forum members can access the Forum website. Access to the discussion room will however be restricted to members of the Forum, and Government bureaux and departments. House rules will be drawn up to ensure that the discussions are conducted in an orderly and appropriate manner. Summary of views expressed by Forum members will be prepared and posted on the Forum website for viewing by members of the public.

10. Design and development of the Forum website is in hand. Present indications are that the website would be ready for launching in March next year.

The Secretariat

11. A small Secretariat will be set up to service the Forum, including maintaining the Forum website and providing support to Forum members.

ADVICE SOUGHT

12. Members are invited to note the contents of this paper.

Home Affairs Bureau
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