

ITEM FOR FINANCE COMMITTEE

Discussion paper on the working relationship between the Finance Committee and its subcommittees and on the attendance of public officers at meetings

Purpose

This paper sets out the outcome of consultation on the working relationship between the Finance Committee (FC) and its two subcommittees, namely the Establishment Subcommittee (ESC) and the Public Works Subcommittee (PWSC), in the scrutiny of financial proposals.

Background

2. At present, items which are supported and recommended by ESC/PWSC are put to FC en bloc for approval, unless separate voting on specific items is requested. Separate voting on individual ESC/PWSC items at a FC meeting may be requested at any time by a member. Where separate voting is requested one day before the FC meeting concerned, public officers are invited to the meeting to answer any questions which may be raised at the meeting. If no prior notice is given for separate voting, any questions raised by members on the floor are responded by the public officers designated to attend FC meetings on a regular basis, namely the Secretary for Financial Services and Treasury and his Deputy Secretary present at the meeting. To ensure that non-ESC/PWSC members can have the necessary information about the items before the FC meeting, all circulars, minutes and papers concerning ESC/PWSC items are copied to all FC members. All members are also reminded to approach the Clerk before the meeting if any information about any items is to be sought when the agenda of the meeting is issued.

Matter for consideration

3. The question of whether public officers in charge of individual ESC/PWSC items should be invited to attend the FC meeting as a standard practice irrespective of whether a discussion on the item would take place or not was raised at the FC meeting on 13 January 2006. To gauge members' views on whether the current arrangement of inviting public officers to respond to questions on ESC/PWSC items only when separate voting is requested one day

before the FC meeting shall remain, the Secretariat issued a consultation paper (LC Paper No. FC43/05-06) on 28 February 2006. The outcome of consultation reveals that the majority of members favour the status quo. A summary of response is given in the **Appendix**.

Advice sought

4. Members are invited to give views on the outcome of consultation in paragraph 3.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
17 March 2006

Appendix to FCR(2005-06)49

**Summary of response to question on the working relationship
between the Finance Committee and its subcommittees
and on the attendance of public officers at meetings**

Question - Current arrangement of inviting public officers to respond to questions on ESC/PWSC items at FC meeting only when separate voting is requested one day before the FC meeting shall remain

Number of Response received	Yes	No	No comment	Other views
59	56	1	2	Consideration should be given to requesting members to indicate at ESC/PWSC meetings their requests for attendance of Government officials at the FC meetings when the relevant proposals will be discussed