

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. FC21/07-08
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/F/1/2

Finance Committee of the Legislative Council

**Minutes of the 15th meeting
held at the Legislative Council Chamber
on Friday, 15 June 2007, at 3:00 pm**

Members present:

Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP (Chairman)
Hon CHAN Kam-lam, SBS, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon James TIEN Pei-chun, GBS, JP
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, SBS, S.B.St.J., JP
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon Martin LEE Chu-ming, SC, JP
Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, JP
Hon Margaret NG
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon CHAN Yuen-han, JP
Hon Bernard CHAN, GBS, JP
Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun, SBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon SIN Chung-kai, JP
Dr Hon Philip WONG Yu-hong, GBS
Hon WONG Yung-kan, JP
Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing, GBS, JP
Hon Howard YOUNG, SBS, JP
Dr Hon YEUNG Sum
Hon LAU Chin-shek, JP
Hon LAU Kong-wah, JP
Hon LAU Wong-fat, GBM, GBS, JP
Hon Miriam LAU Kin-ye, GBS, JP
Hon CHOY So-yuk, JP
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
Hon Timothy FOK Tsun-ting, GBS, JP
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP

Hon LI Fung-ying, BBS, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee, SBS, JP
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP
Hon Vincent FANG Kang, JP
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH
Hon LEE Wing-tat
Hon LI Kwok-ying, MH, JP
Dr Hon Joseph LEE Kok-long, JP
Hon Daniel LAM Wai-keung, SBS, JP
Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, SBS, JP
Hon Andrew LEUNG Kwan-yuen, SBS, JP
Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
Hon CHEUNG Hok-ming, SBS, JP
Hon WONG Ting-kwong, BBS
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC
Prof Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP
Hon Albert Jinghan CHENG
Hon KWONG Chi-kin
Hon TAM Heung-man

Members absent:

Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Dr Hon David LI Kwok-po, GBS, JP
Dr Hon LUI Ming-wah, SBS, JP
Hon MA Lik, GBS, JP
Hon CHIM Pui-chung

Public officers attending:

Mr Frederick MA Si-hang, JP	Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury
Miss Amy TSE, JP	Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury) 1
Mr Alfred FOK	Principal Executive Officer (General), Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau (The Treasury Branch)
Mr Michael SUEN, GBS, JP	Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands
Mrs Carrie LAM, JP	Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs
Miss Annie TAM, JP	Deputy Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (Planning and Lands)1
Mr Philip YUNG, JP	Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (Transport)1

Mr John CHAI, JP	Director of Civil Engineering and Development
Mr MA Lee-tak, JP	Project Manager (Hong Kong Island and Islands) Civil Engineering and Development Department
Mr LAU Ka-keung, JP	Deputy Commissioner (Planning and Technical Services), Transport Department
Mr WAN Man-lung, JP	Principal Government Engineer (Railway Development), Highways Department
Dr Louis NG	Assistant Director (Heritage and Museums), Leisure and Cultural Services Department
Ms Phyllis LI	Chief Town Planner/Special Duties Planning Department
Ms Carol YUEN	Deputy Secretary for Security 2
Mr C H YUE, JP	Director of Architectural Services
Ms Margaret HSIA, JP	Assistant Director (2), Home Affairs Department
Mrs Kathy NG	Assistant Director (Elderly), Social Welfare Department
Mr Matthew LEUNG, FSMSM	Deputy Chief Ambulance Officer Fire Services Department
Ms Doris CHOW	Chief Property Manager (Site Utilisation) Government Property Agency
Ms Heidi CHAN	District Planning Officer/Tsuen Wan and West Kowloon, Planning Department
Ms IP Siu-ming	Chief Social Work Officer (Youth) Social Welfare Department
Mr Sammy FUNG	Senior Executive Officer (2)2, Home Affairs Department
Mrs Ingrid YEUNG	Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Health)2
Dr CHAN Wai-chi	Associate Consultant (Research Office) Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

Clerk in attendance:

Ms Pauline NG	Assistant Secretary General 1
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Staff in attendance:

Miss Becky YU	Chief Council Secretary (1)1
Mrs Mary TANG	Senior Council Secretary (1)2
Ms Alice CHEUNG	Senior Legislative Assistant (1)1
Mr Frankie WOO	Legislative Assistant (1)2

Item No. 1 - FCR(2007-08)17

RECOMMENDATION OF THE PUBLIC WORKS SUBCOMMITTEE MADE ON 23 MAY 2007

PWSC(2007-08)23 728CL Preservation of Queen's Pier

The Chairman informed members that the item was carried over from the last meeting on 12 June 2007.

2. Ir Dr Raymond HO declared interest as a non-executive director of a construction company which might be participating in the tender exercise for the preservation of the Queen's Pier (the Pier).

Role of the Antiquities Advisory Board (AAB)

3. Mr James TO recalled that at the last meeting on 12 June 2007, members were told that the grading of historical buildings by AAB and the declaration of historical buildings by the Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO) as monuments were two separate mechanisms. He asked if the Grade I status of a historical building would lead to consideration being given to declaring it as a monument. He also enquired whether public aspiration would be taken into account in the declaration, particularly in respect of the Queen's Pier when the nearby Star Ferry Pier had already been demolished.

4. The Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs (PSHA) explained that at present, there were two distinct mechanisms dealing with the preservation of historical buildings. Section 3 of the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (Cap. 53) (the Ordinance) provided that if the Secretary of Home Affairs (SHA), in his capacity as the Antiquities Authority (AA), considered any building to be of public interest by reason of its historical, archaeological or palaeontological significance, he might, after consultation with the AAB and with the approval of the Chief Executive, by notice in the Gazette, declare such building to be a monument. Since the Ordinance came into operation, a total of 63 pre-war buildings with significant historical value had been declared as monuments. Meanwhile, the grading of historical buildings was an administrative mechanism of AAB which was meant to identify and compare the heritage value of historical buildings and to facilitate AA's consideration on whether the historical, archaeological or palaeontological significance of a particular building had crossed the threshold for declaration of a monument under the Ordinance and how it should be preserved. The administrative grading system would take into account a host of factors, including nostalgic feelings and social values. Having regard to the submissions on the preservation of the Pier from various concern groups, including one from the Hong Kong Institute of Architect (HKIA), AAB decided at its meeting on 6 March 2007 that a review of the heritage value of the Pier should be conducted. At its meeting on 9 May 2007, AAB accorded Grade I historical building status to the Pier. However, it was worth noting that there was no automatic linkage between graded buildings and monuments because not all graded buildings were significant

enough to be declared monuments under the Ordinance. The Administration was well aware of public aspiration for heritage conservation and it would be conducting public consultation on the subject. New criteria and guidelines would be worked out in the later part of the year and changes would be made to the Ordinance if and when necessary.

5. Mr James TO expressed regret that SHA had not attended the meeting to explain his role as AA in heritage preservation and to defend his decision in the preservation of the Pier. According to section 18 of the Ordinance, AAB might advise AA on any matters relating to antiquities, proposed monuments and monuments or referred to it for consultation. However, it appeared that AA had only consulted AMO but not AAB. He queried why AA had not consulted AAB in considering whether the Pier should be declared to be a proposed monument under section 2A of the Ordinance. In reply, PSHA reiterated that the Pier did not have archeological or palaeontological significance to justify for declaration as a monument. Hence, AA did not initiate the consultation process with AAB. Meanwhile, AMO, being a part of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, was the executive arm of AA and provided support to AA in the preservation of antiquities and monuments. As regards section 2A of the Ordinance, PSHA advised that this would usually be invoked when more time was needed for the declaration as a monument. As it was not considered necessary to declare the Pier as a monument, no action under the Ordinance was contemplated.

6. Mr James TO noted that as AAB had accorded Grade I status to the Pier, it followed that if the Pier was to be demolished, AAB should at least be consulted. Besides, according to the internal guidelines, Grade I buildings were "building of outstanding merit, which every efforts should be made to preserve if possible". PSHA said that the present proposal was meant to preserve the Pier as far as practicable and the relevant departments would take actions as appropriate in this respect.

7. Dr Fernando CHEUNG questioned the role of AAB because according to PSHA, AA would not need to consult AAB unless he decided to declare the historical building as a monument. Such an interpretation was too narrow and would have undermined the role of AAB which comprised experts in the field of heritage preservation. PSHA clarified that under section 3(1) of the Ordinance, if AA considered that public interest would be served by declaring a building as a monument, he would initiate the consultation process with AAB. However, if AA considered it not justified to declare the building as a monument, he would not have do to so. A more in-depth and comprehensive review would be conducted by the Administration later in the year on the preservation of heritage.

8. Dr KWOK Ka-ki said that as it appeared, AA would have the absolute authority in deciding whether a building should be declared as a monument irrespective of the grading of historical buildings accorded by AAB. Therefore, the Administration would only need to brief members and the public about the preservation plans without consulting them on the decision made by AA. As a result,

the four options had not been further discussed following the grading. He opined that as AAB represented public aspiration over heritage preservation, the Administration should respect its decision when it had rated the Pier as Grade I status. He was dissatisfied that the Administration had chosen not to consult AAB on whether the Pier should be declared a monument under the Ordinance. He was also concerned that the placing of AAB under the new Development Bureau would further undermine its advisory role. He asked if the Administration had conducted other consultation exercise on the preservation of the Pier other than discussing the subject with the relevant Panels. PSHA affirmed that the Administration attached great importance to the views of AAB and acted in accordance with the legislation on heritage preservation. The Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (SHPL) requested to put on record that the relevant Panel supported the submission of the present proposal to the Public Works Subcommittee (PWSC) and the Finance Committee (FC). Without the funding approval, the proposal could not be taken forward. He also assured members that the relevant Panels would be briefed on details of the preservation plans in due course. At members' request, the Administration undertook to provide findings of the public opinion polls conducted by the Administration on the preservation of the Pier.

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9. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that as there was no automatic linkage between graded buildings and declared monuments, this had led to the conflict that Grade I historical buildings would not necessarily be declared as monuments and provided with the protection they deserved. He enquired if the Administration had plans to link the two mechanisms together through the setting of common assessment criteria. In this way, the scenario where highly graded buildings were not given the needed protection as declared monuments would not arise. Besides, this would avoid any subjective ruling by AA in declaring a building as a monument. PSHA said that the Administration was well aware of public aspiration over the role of AA in heritage preservation. It was considering what more could be done in the conservation of heritage in the later part of the year and public consultation within the 18 Districts was being carried out. Meanwhile, AAB members recognized that there were differences between the administrative grading system and the statutory declaration mechanism, and that graded buildings might not necessarily be declared as monuments. It was based on this understanding that they had graded the Queen's Pier as Grade I historical building. Noting that there was a number of Grade I historical buildings which had not been declared as monuments, Dr CHEUNG considered it necessary that these should be provided with the needed protection. PSHA affirmed that measures to conserve these buildings would be taken as appropriate.

10. Given that a review would be conducted on the preservation of heritage later in the year, Dr KWOK Ka-ki queried the justifications for dismantling the Pier at this stage when it was just accorded Grade I status. He also enquired if there were Grade I buildings which had been demolished over the years. PSHA said that there were over 100 graded historical buildings which had not been declared as monuments. As regards those Grade I buildings which had been demolished over the years, the Assistant Director (Heritage and Museums), Leisure and Cultural Services Department said that the Old Mental Hospital at High Street was one of the Grade I

Admin historical buildings which had been partially demolished after consultation with the relevant District Councils (DCs) on the preservation of the facade. Dr KWOK however recalled that members of the Central and Western DC (CWDC) were in support of the preservation of the Old Mental Hospital and efforts had since been made to preserve the façade of the building. At members' request, the Administration undertook to provide details of Grade I buildings which had been demolished over the years and outcome of consultation with DCs.

11. Prof Patrick LAU said that there was a need for commitment on the part of the Government in preserving heritage which was complementary to town planning. He said that he had held talks with students on the need for heritage preservation and was pleased to learn that even primary students were well aware of its importance. He was of the view that SHA, in his capacity of AA, should have consulted AAB when making his decision on the preservation of the Pier. He further pointed out that actions taken in respect of heritage preservation would have a significant impact on future generations.

Dismantling, storage and preservation plans

12. Mr Alan LEONG requested to put on record his appreciation for the strenuous efforts made by some members, professional bodies and concerned groups to preserve the Queen's Pier. He did not agree that in-situ preservation of the Pier was technically infeasible because the site had to be used for the provision of Road P2, drainage culverts, Airport Railway Extended Overrun Tunnel (AREOT) and the North Hong Kong Island Line (NHKIL). He pointed out that the said infrastructure should not entail the immediate demolition of the Pier because plans for AREOT and NHKIL had yet to be materialized while the drainage culverts could be replaced as it was only meant to cater for extremely heavy rainfall. Besides, the Administration had confirmed that Road P2 could be re-aligned if the Pier was to be reassembled at its original location. Therefore, he was not convinced that the Government should use technical infeasibility as an excuse to justify its action to dismantle the Pier. HKIA had also expressed dissatisfaction about the dismantling of the Pier in its submission dated 7 June 2007. It was regretted that despite repeated requests for the reassembly of the Pier at its original location upon completion of construction works, the Administration had declined to make any undertaking on grounds that further consultation on the reassembly location was required.

13. Mr Albert CHAN said that he would object to the funding proposal as the decision to dismantle the Pier had failed to take account of public aspiration. The high-handed approach adopted by the Administration to clear and dismantle the Pier might lead to confrontation and disharmony in the community, resulting in bad publicity for Hong Kong. If the decision to dismantle the Pier was to remove the reminiscence of the past colonial days under British rule, it would give the world an impression that there was a political intention to shed off Hong Kong's colonial past. He enquired if the Administration had assessed the serious implications associated with the dismantling of the Pier.

14. SHPL said that the Administration had all along attached great importance to public aspiration and the present proposal was no exception. For the past six months, the Administration had on many occasions explained to the public about its plans to preserve the Pier. The proposed course of actions to be taken was a result of extensive discussions with professional bodies and concerned groups, and was generally supported by the public. The proposal was also supported by the Panel on Planning, Lands and Works which had agreed that it should be submitted to the FC for consideration.

15. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung said that he had earlier suggested the holding of a global tender to invite experts from all over the world to participate in the preservation of the Pier which was a symbol of Hong Kong. He questioned whether the demolition of the Pier was a pre-determined decision of the Government as it appeared that no effort had been made to protect the Pier. SHPL said that the proposed preservation plan for the Queen's Pier was made after extensive consultation with professional bodies and concerned groups.

16. Noting that it would be some time in 2011 that the Pier could be reassembled, Ms Audrey EU enquired how the retainable parts could be preserved and stored during the interim. She was concerned that the retainable parts of the Pier, if allowed to be left out and exposed in the open, would be eroded as were the statues from the former Tiger Balm Garden. SHPL said that efforts were being made to identify sheltered locations for storage. Possible sites would include Tseung Kwan O and Kai Tak. Details of the storage plans would be announced in a few weeks' time. He assured members that the retainable parts of the Pier would not be battered by wind and rain.

17. Miss CHOY So-yuk was concerned that the Administration was seeking funding approval before the preservation plans for the Pier was worked out. She enquired about the actions to be taken if it turned out that the preservation plans were not practicable. She also failed to understand why the Pier had to be demolished to make way for reclamation works when many Tin Hau Temples, which were situated at the seashore, had been preserved during reclamation works. SHPL said that he did not foresee any technical difficulties in the preservation of the retainable parts of the Pier. The Deputy Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (Planning and Lands)1 added that a temporary shelter would be constructed for storing all the preserved parts of the Pier. Subject to the location and availability of the site for the reassembly of the Pier, the strengthening of the preserved parts and the reassembly of the Pier would start as early as around December 2009 for completion around December 2010. At members' request, the Administration undertook to brief the relevant Panels and DCs after the implementation details for storage and reassembly of the Pier had been worked out. It would also advise on the number of Tin Hau Temples which had been preserved in the context of reclamation.

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18. As regards the time-table for dismantling the Pier, the Deputy Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands (Planning and Lands)1 said that the scope of works would cover the preservation, storage and reassembly of the Pier at a suitable location.

The whole process would be carried out with reference to relevant international charters and guidelines in respect of heritage preservation. A government architect with adequate seniority and proven experience in building preservation would advise and supervise the works. Ms Audrey EU requested an undertaking from the Administration that it would provide details of the works and storage plans to the relevant Panels for consideration before proceeding with the dismantling of the Pier. SHPL agreed that details of the preservation plan would be made available to members. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung said that the Administration should provide members with details of preservation plans before proceeding with the dismantling of the Pier. As the Pier was accorded Grade I status, the Administration should provide evidence to show that it had taken efforts to preserve the Pier. He also urged members to lend their support for the in-situ preservation of the Pier.

Need for further consultation

19. Miss TAM Heung-man said that according to the survey conducted by the Civic Party, 60% of the respondents were opposed to the dismantling of the Pier. She added that the Administration should take on board the suggestions of professional bodies on the holding of an open competition on the ways to preserve the Pier. It should also conduct extensive public consultation before proceeding with the dismantling of the Pier. SHPL said that a number of professional bodies and concerned groups had been invited to attend meetings of the Panel on Planning, Lands and Works to give views on the preservation of the Pier in the earlier part of the year. The four options as contained in the PWSC paper referenced PWSC(2007-08)23 had been subject to public consultation and the present proposal had been widely accepted by the public.

20. Mr LEE Wing-tat asked if the Administration was prepared to consult AAB and the relevant DCs on the dismantling of the Pier. SHPL said that while the Administration would follow the relevant guidelines before dismantling the Pier, it was not advisable to consult all parties on each and every implementation detail which was too time-consuming. As to whether AAB and the relevant DCs should be consulted on the demolition of Grade I historical buildings, PSHA explained that AAB was responsible for the grading of historical buildings, but the decision on the preservation works to be taken, which would depend on the structure and condition of the buildings, was not a part of AAB's duty. Nevertheless, AAB would likely be pleased if the relevant departments responsible for the preservation works would provide the preservation plans for its reference. Mr LEE said that the Administration should adopt a people-oriented approach and make efforts to consult AAB and relevant DCs on its demolition and preservation plans. SHPL said that there was a need to draw a line on the extent of consultation. The Administration could not conduct endless consultation before proceeding with the works. Once a decision was made and funding approval was given, the Administration would proceed in accordance with the plan as approved and make arrangements to brief members and the public as appropriate.

21. In response to Mr James TO's enquiry on whether CWDC would be consulted on the preservation of the Pier as in the case of the preservation of other Grade I buildings, including the Old Mental Hospital at High Street, the Project Manager (Hong Kong Island and Islands) said that the Administration briefed CWDC members on the plans for the preservation of the Pier at a recent special meeting in May 2007, the details of which were already set out in the Administration's paper to PWSC. SHPL added that CWDC would be provided with the information papers on the latest development of preservation plans for the Pier submitted to the relevant Panels.

22. Dr Fernando CHEUNG noted that the consultation on the four proposed options to preserve the Pier was conducted before the Pier was accorded Grade I status by AAB. Since the grading of the Pier on 9 May 2007, no further consultation was held as AA had then decided that the Pier would not be declared a monument and there was no re-evaluation on the four options. He enquired whether the grading by AAB would bear any significance on the preservation of the buildings. PSHA said that steps would be taken to preserve graded historical buildings as far as practicable.

23. Dr YEUNG Sum said that Members of the Democratic Party would vote against the proposal because they were concerned about the lack of commitment on the part of the Administration in heritage preservation which had all along been compromised for the sake of development. They supported the in-situ preservation of the Queen's Pier which, along with the Star Ferry Pier, Edinburgh Place, City Hall and Government Hill, could be developed as a heritage trail in Central. However, as the Administration had failed to undertake that the Pier would be reassembled at its original location upon completion of the construction works, they would object to the present proposal.

24. The Chairman put FCR(2007-08)17 to the vote. 28 members voted for the proposal, 18 members voted against and one member abstained. The individual results were as follows:

For :

Mr James TIEN Pei-chun	Ir Dr Raymond HO Chung-tai
Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye	Mr Bernard CHAN
Mr CHAN Kam-lam	Mrs Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun
Dr Philip WONG Yu-hong	Mr WONG Yung-kan
Mr Jasper TSANG Yok-sing	Mr Howard YOUNG
Mr LAU Kong-wah	Mr LAU Wong-fat
Ms Miriam LAU Kin-ye	Mr Timothy FOK Tsun-ting
Mr TAM Yiu-chung	Mr Abraham SHEK Lai-him
Ms LI Fung-ying	Mr Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan
Mr Vincent FANG Kang	Mr WONG Kwok-hing
Mr LI Kwok-ying	Dr Joseph LEE Kok-long
Mr Daniel LAM Wai-keung	Mr Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung
Mr Andrew LEUNG Kwan-yuen	Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming
Mr WONG Ting-kwong	Mr KWONG Chi-kin

(28 members)

Against :

Mr LEE Cheuk-yan
Mr James TO Kun-sun
Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung
Dr YEUNG Sum
Mr Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Ms Audrey EU Yuet-mee
Mr Alan LEONG Kah-kit
Dr KWOK Ka-ki
Prof Patrick LAU Sau-shing
(18 members)

Ms Margaret NG
Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong
Mr SIN Chung-kai
Mr LAU Chin-shek
Mr Frederick FUNG Kin-kee
Mr LEE Wing-tat
Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung
Dr Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
Miss TAM Heung-man

Abstention :

Miss CHOY So-yuk
(1 member)

25. The Committee approved the proposal.

Item No. 2 - FCR(2007-08)18

RECOMMENDATION OF THE PUBLIC WORKS SUBCOMMITTEE MADE ON 9 MAY 2007

26. The Chairman put FCR(2007-08)15 except PWSC(2007-08)14 to the vote. The Committee approved the proposal.

PWSC(2007-08)14 180GK Government complex at Mei Lai Road, Mei Foo, Lai Chi Kok

27. Mr LEE Wing-tat recalled that when the proposed provision of Government Complex at Mei Foo was discussed by PWSC, concern was raised about its close proximity to some of the residential developments in Kwai Tsing. The Administration was then requested to conduct further consultation with the Kwai Tsing District Council. He enquired about the outcome of consultation. The Deputy Secretary for Security 2 (DSS(2)) said that pursuant to members' request, the Administration had consulted 19 local bodies, including the Kwai Chung (Central & South) Area Committee, relevant Owners' Corporations, Owners' Committees and Mutual Aid Committees, which were generally supportive of the proposed provision of the Complex as they could enjoy the additional community facilities there. Nevertheless, one of the Owners' Committee at Kwai Tsing had requested the inclusion of an elderly centre in the Complex, but this was considered not justified by the Social Welfare Department because there were already four elderly centres in the vicinity and hence not justified to provide an additional one within the Complex. The Owners' Committee was duly informed of the decision and had not made further comments on the project.

28. Noting that most of the elderly centres were located in the Mei Foo Sun Chuen rather than its adjacent area within Kwai Tsing District, Mr LEE Wing-tat opined that consideration should be given to providing an elderly centre within the proposed Government Complex. The Assistant Director (Elderly) said that elderly residents at the Ying Fai Terrace and Wah Lai Estate could make use of the services provided by the elderly centre at the Pok Oi Hospital Mei Foo Lai Wan Kaifong Association at the Mei Foo Flyover and the Association of Evangelical Free Churches of Hong Kong Mei Foo Elderly Centre at Mei Foo Sun Chuen Stage II, both of which were within walking distances.

29. Mr LEE Wing-tat further requested for more elderly services to be provided to meet the surging demand as a result of the aging population. The Assistant Director (Elderly) said that apart from centre-based activities, some of the programmes for the elderly were provided in community halls to maximize the available resources in meeting the needs of the elderly. Besides, elderly centres had been adopting an open membership system where no limit was set on the number of elders joining the centres. The average membership ranged from about 700 to as high as more than 1000.

30. The Chairman put the item to vote. The Committee approved the proposal.

Item No. 3 - FCR(2007-08)19

HEAD 140 – GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT : HEALTH, WELFARE AND FOOD BUREAU

◆ Subhead 700 General Non-recurrent

Item 019 Health and Health Services Research Fund

31. The Chairman informed members that the Panel on Health Services (HS Panel) was consulted on the proposal at its meeting on 1 June 2007.

32. Dr Joseph LI, Chairman of the HS Panel, said that the Panel was in general support for the proposed increase in the approved commitment for the Health and Health Services Research Fund (the Fund) to continue supporting research in areas of human health and health services, which was useful in health policy formulation and health care services delivery.

33. Miss CHAN Yuen-han expressed support for the proposal. She welcomed the Administration's decision to accede to members' request of increasing the funding from \$40 million as originally proposed to \$50 million to take account of inflation over the next five years. She opined that more funds should be provided for the research on the prevention and cure of Hepatitis B which was very common in Hong Kong. The Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Health)2 (DSHWF(H)2) said that the Fund was open for application by researchers on health and health services. Where resources permit, the Administration would make available funds to encourage research on special health projects.

34. Mr Albert CHAN was concerned about the Administration's inaction against fraudulent practices by some members of the medical profession. He enquired about the measures to be taken to ensure the proper use of the Fund for the benefit of the general public. DSHWF(H)2 said that a proposed research project must have high scientific merit and potential for local application and benefit in order to be eligible for a grant. Each application for the Fund was subject to a stringent two-tier peer review process, involving experts in the field. A Research Council was established under the Fund to decide on the allocation of the Fund. Previous record indicated that only about 20% of the applications were able to pass the stringent vetting process. Efforts would be made to ensure the prudent use of public funds.

35. Dr KWOK Ka-ki expressed support for the proposal as funds were needed for health research. He enquired if funding was available for research on anti-smoking. DSHWF(H)2 answered in the affirmative as anti-smoking was a part of public health. In fact, a research on anti-smoking measures had been initiated last year by the Administration.

36. The Chairman put the item to vote. The Committee approved the proposal.

37. The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 pm.