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Panel on Home Affairs

**Paper prepared by Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 11 May 2007**

**Way forward in monitoring the work of preserving buildings or sites
with unique heritage value**

Purpose

This paper invites members to consider options to monitor the work in preserving buildings or sites with unique heritage value.

Background

2. The Panel on Home Affairs (the Panel) held two meetings to discuss the progress of the built heritage conservation policy review on 9 March and 20 April 2007. Members in general expressed dissatisfaction with the slow progress of the policy review and the passive role of the Administration in built heritage conservation work. They noted with grave concern that, since the Administration would not be able to announce concrete policy proposals and measures on built heritage conservation until the latter half of 2007, buildings or sites with unique heritage value which had not been declared statutory monuments, particularly those which had been included as redevelopment projects of the Urban Renewal Authority such as the Nga Tsin Wai Village, would not be preserved in time. Members were of the view that, before the formulation of an integrated policy for built heritage conservation, urgent actions had to be taken to protect buildings or sites with unique heritage value from being damaged or even destroyed in the rapid progress of redevelopment. They considered that, while the Panel would continue to discuss policy issues relating to built heritage conservation, further action had to be taken to follow up on individual redevelopment and/or preservation projects relating to buildings or sites with unique heritage value.

Options to be considered

3. The following two options were put forward at the meeting on 20 April 2007 to follow up on the issue -

Option One - A subcommittee to be formed under the Panel to review individual redevelopment and/or preservation projects relating to buildings or sites with unique heritage value.

Option Two - The subject matter to be followed up by the Panel.

Option One

4. In respect of Option One, sufficient information as specified in House Rule (HR) 22(u) would have to be provided to facilitate the consideration of the appointment of a subcommittee by a Panel. This includes information on the proposed terms of reference (which should be issue-specific or project-specific), time frame, work plan and extent of work involved in the study of the specific issue or project. Relevant proposals are set out in paragraphs 5 to 7 for members' consideration. At the same time, members are also invited to note the activation mechanism for such subcommittees as detailed in paragraph 8.

Proposed terms of reference

5. The proposed Subcommittee will review the planning for redevelopment and/or preservation projects relating to buildings or sites with unique heritage value, including the Nga Tsin Wai Village project, the Dragon Garden project and other similar projects.

Proposed work plan and time frame

6. The proposed Subcommittee will focus its work on the following major areas -

- (a) review of the planning for the Nga Tsin Wai Village project and the Dragon Garden project, as well as other similar projects with heritage value which are under threat;
- (b) monitoring of the Government and relevant authorities in taking forward these redevelopment and/or preservation projects to ensure that relevant buildings and sites with unique heritage value will be preserved; and
- (c) discussions with the Government and relevant parties on feasible alternatives to preserve relevant buildings or sites.

7. The proposed Subcommittee will complete its work within 12 months of its commencement and report to the Panel in June 2008. Members may also wish to consider the need for undertaking research into the subject matter, and for meeting with deputations to receive their views.

Activation mechanism for subcommittees

8. At the House Committee (HC) meeting on 2 March 2007, Members agreed that the total number of subcommittees relating to policy issues or Council business that might be in operation at any one time was eight, and that a queuing system would be activated if the number of such subcommittees exceeded eight. Members also agreed that if the number of Bills Committees in operation was less than 16, HC might activate subcommittees on the waiting list after considering a number of factors as listed in HR 26(b), an extract of which is in the **Appendix**. Members may also wish to note that currently, 11 policy-related subcommittees and 15 Bills Committees are in action, while a number of bills on the Administration's Legislative Programme will likely be introduced shortly.

Option Two

9. The proposal for the subject matter to be followed up by the Panel makes reference to the arrangement adopted by the Panel on Manpower. Instead of appointing a subcommittee to monitor the progress of the Wage Protection Movement and the introduction of legislation for a minimum wage and related issues, the Panel on Manpower decided at its meeting on 21 December 2006 for the subject matter to be followed up by the Panel on Manpower. The subject matter has since been included as a standing item for discussion at every regular meeting, and the duration of these meetings has been extended by one hour on each occasion.

10. Another alternative is for the Panel to hold special meetings to follow up on the issues/projects.

Advice sought

11. Members are invited to consider the options set out above.

26. Activation and Operation of Subcommittees

- (a) Subject to (b) and (e), the maximum number of subcommittees appointed by the House Committee for purposes set out in rule 20(j)(ii) and subcommittees appointed by Panels for purposes set out in rule 22(s) or (t) that may be in operation at any one time is eight.
- (b) Where the number of subcommittees referred to in (a) has reached the maximum number provided in (a), a queuing system will automatically be activated with a waiting list formed. The order of subcommittees on the waiting list is in the order of their appointment. Where the number of Bills Committees in operation is less than that referred to in rule 21(a), the House Committee may activate subcommittees on the waiting list after having considered the following -
 - (i) the number of vacant slots for Bills Committees;
 - (ii) the number of bills likely to be introduced to the Council in the next three months;
 - (iii) the number of subcommittees already or likely to be appointed by the House Committee for purposes referred to in rule 20(j)(i) and by Bills Committees; and
 - (iv) the availability of resources in the Secretariat.
- (c) A subcommittee referred to in (a) should complete its work within 12 months of its commencement and report to the House Committee or the relevant Panel(s). Should such a subcommittee consider it necessary for it to work beyond that 12 months, the subcommittee should, after obtaining the endorsement of the relevant Panel(s) if it is appointed by a Panel(s), report to the House Committee and give justifications for an extension of the 12-month period.
- (d) There is no restriction on the maximum number of subcommittees appointed by the House Committee for purposes set out in rule 20(j)(i) that may be in operation at any one time.
- (e) Notwithstanding (a), (b) and (c), exceptions to these subrules may be made by the House Committee where it considers appropriate.
- (f) The practices and procedures set out in rules 20 to 25 shall apply, where appropriate, to subcommittees of the House Committee, Bills Committees or Panels (including joint subcommittees appointed by two or more Panels).