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Panel on Development

Meeting on 23 October 2007

Proposal to set up a subcommittee to study issues relating to urban renewal

Purpose

This paper invites members to consider the proposal made by Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip to set up a subcommittee under the Panel on Development (the Panel) to study issues relating to urban renewal.

Background

2. At the Panel meeting on 11 October 2007, Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip pointed out that there was growing public concern over urban renewal in the community. The Urban Renewal Authority (URA) had launched a number of redevelopment projects in recent years and various serious problems had come into light during the implementation process. He suggested that the Panel should set up a subcommittee to look into the issues relating to urban renewal. As members considered it necessary to examine Mr CHAN's suggestion in greater detail, the Clerk to the Panel was requested to provide a paper to the Panel setting out the background and proposed terms of reference of the subcommittee.

Concerns raised during the deliberations of the Panel on urban renewal

3. During the 2006-07 legislation session, the Panel had reviewed the work of URA with the Administration and URA at several meetings. Members in general were dissatisfied with the progress and the manner in which urban renewal projects had been delivered by URA. Quite a number of members pointed out that the attitudes and expectations of the community towards urban

renewal had undergone substantial changes in recent years. For instance, there was rising demand for placing more emphasis on conservation of heritage, local characteristics and community networks in the urban renewal process; and there were strong calls for reducing the intensity of redevelopment projects and taking the opportunities to revitalize the old districts in the vicinity. In view of these important changes, the members considered it necessary to undertake a comprehensive review of the Urban Renewal Strategy.

4. At the meeting of the Panel on 24 September 2007, the Panel noted that the Administration was discussing with URA regarding the timing for commencing a review of the Urban Renewal Strategy, and would keep the Panel updated on further developments on the subject.

Proposal for the establishment of a subcommittee on urban renewal

5. After consulting Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip, the Legislative Council Secretariat has drawn up the following aspects pertinent to the proposal for establishment of a subcommittee on urban renewal for members' consideration.

Terms of reference of the Subcommittee

6. The proposed Subcommittee should be tasked to study issues in relation to the work of the Urban Renewal Authority and to examine possible measures to enhance the efficacy of the work of the Authority.

Proposed work plan and time frame

7. The proposed Subcommittee should focus its work on the following major areas --

- (a) to review the existing planning and acquisition procedures, acquisition policy, approach to heritage conservation and strategy/principles for financial management adopted by URA; and
- (b) to examine the need for changes to the relevant legislation, the Urban Renewal Strategy, and other arrangements at the policy and implementation levels.

8. The proposed Subcommittee should complete its work 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

9. At the House Committee 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, House Committee might activate subcommittees on the waiting list after having considered the following factors as specified in House Rule 26(b) --

- (a) the number of vacant slots for Bills Committees;
- (b) the number of bills likely to be introduced to the Council in the next three months;
- (c) the number of subcommittees on subsidiary legislation already or likely to be appointed by HC and by Bills Committees; and
- (d) the availability of resources in the Secretariat.

Currently, 12 policy-related subcommittees and 13 Bills Committees are in action. If the Panel decides that a subcommittee should be set up to study issues relating to urban renewal, the House Committee's advice would be sought as to whether the subcommittee should be activated.

Advice sought

10. Members are invited to consider the proposal set out above.