

Legislative Council Public Accounts Committee

**The Director of Audit's Report on the
results of value for money audits (Report No. 51)**

Emergency ambulance service (Chapter 4)

Opening Remarks by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury

1. I am aware that during the last two hearings, Members of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) discussed whether the Fire Services Department (FSD) had adequate resources to provide the public with effective emergency ambulance service (EAS). PAC therefore requested the Administration to furnish it with information on the resources allocated for EAS in the 2005 to 2007 Resource Allocation Exercises (RAEs).
2. As Members may be aware, RAE is part of the Government's internal policy planning process. Nevertheless, to facilitate the PAC hearing on this Audit Report, we have given an account of the facts relevant to FSD's submissions in the RAEs as carried in record. We believe that the information is sufficient to let Members have a full understanding of the case.
3. Normally, bureaux and departments submit a lot of bids for additional resources each year for providing new services or improving existing services. As the resources available for allocation can seldom meet all the bids in full, it is inevitable that both the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau (FSTB) and the policy bureaux will need to scrutinise the bids received by them critically at their respective level to make sure that public resources can be efficiently and effectively allocated. I would like to emphasise that RAEs are not only about the allocation of new resources, but also about the review of the effective use of existing resources. Therefore, it is an integral part of the vetting process to raise enquiries or request additional information from the bureaux and departments concerned.
4. FSTB will consider a number of factors in processing the RAE bids. Officers responsible for resources allocation, policy bureaux and controlling officers are all required to ensure the effective use of the existing and new resources in providing public services and achieving performance targets in the respective policy areas.

5. In fact, the focus of this Audit Report is also on whether FSD has made effective use of the resources allocated for EAS to meet the genuine demands for the service, and whether it has had a good grasp of relevant data and management information (such as the use of EAS in various divisions, the repair and maintenance data of ambulances, etc.) so that it could make use of them to review the effectiveness of the service and identify room for improvement. We welcome the recommendations made in the Audit Report, and will be happy to exchange views with Members on the major concerns of the Audit Report.