

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. ESC35/10-11
(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/F/3/2

Establishment Subcommittee of the Finance Committee

Minutes of the 6th meeting
held in Conference Room A of Legislative Council Building
on Wednesday, 2 March 2011, at 8:30 am

Members present:

Dr Hon Margaret NG (Chairman)
Dr Hon PAN Pey-chyou (Deputy Chairman)
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, SBS, S.B.St.J., JP
Dr Hon David LI Kwok-po, GBM, GBS, JP
Hon WONG Yung-kan, SBS, JP
Hon LAU Kong-wah, JP
Hon LI Fung-ying, SBS, JP
Hon WONG Ting-kwong, BBS, JP
Prof Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP
Hon WONG Sing-chi
Hon IP Wai-ming, MH
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBS, JP

Members absent:

Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon WONG Yuk-man

Public Officers attending:

Ms Alice LAU, JP	Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury)1
Mrs Ingrid YEUNG, JP	Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service (1)
Mr Christopher WONG, JP	Deputy Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development (Commerce and Industry)2
Mr Stephen SELBY, JP	Director of Intellectual Property
Miss Finnie QUEK	Assistant Director of Intellectual Property (Hearings)
Prof Gabriel M LEUNG, JP	Under Secretary for Food and Health
Mr Owin FUNG	Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Food)3
Dr LEUNG Siu-fai	Deputy Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation
Dr Thomas SIT	Assistant Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation (Inspection and Quarantine)
Mr Timothy TONG	Commissioner, Independent Commission Against Corruption
Mr Ryan WONG	Director of Investigation (Government Sector), Independent Commission Against Corruption
Mr Ricky YAU	Assistant Director of Investigation (3), Independent Commission Against Corruption
Mrs WONG CHEUK Wai-kuen	Assistant Director (Administration), Independent Commission Against Corruption

Clerk in attendance:

Ms Annette LAM	Chief Council Secretary (1)7
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Staff in attendance:

Mrs Constance LI	Assistant Secretary General 1
Mr Simon CHEUNG	Senior Council Secretary (1)9
Ms Alice CHEUNG	Senior Legislative Assistant (1)1
Miss Queenie LAM	Legislative Assistant (1)7

The Chairman drew members' attention to the information paper provided by the Administration, i.e. ECI(2010-11)12, which set out the latest changes in respect of the Administration's directorate establishment approved since 2002.

EC(2010-11)21 Proposed upgrading of two permanent posts from Senior Solicitor (MPS 45 - 49) to Assistant Principal Solicitor (DL1) in Intellectual Property Department with effect from 1 August 2011 to strengthen directorate support in the Hearings Team

2. The Chairman advised members that the Administration's proposal was to upgrade two permanent posts of Senior Solicitors (MPS 45-49) to the rank of Assistant Principal Solicitor (DL1) in Intellectual Property Department (IPD) with effect from 1 August 2011.

3. Mr WONG Ting-kwong, Chairman of the Panel on Commerce and Industry, reported that the proposal was discussed at the Panel meeting on 18 January 2011. Panel members in general supported the proposal and were of the view that it would strengthen professional support at the directorate level for the IPD Hearings Team. Some Panel members however expressed doubts as to whether the upgrading proposal could help ease the problem of increased caseload and address the problem of high staff wastage and recruitment difficulties faced by IPD. The Administration explained that the upgrading proposal would help retain staff members through enhancing the promotion prospects for the Solicitor grade, and strengthen IPD's capacity to train junior hearing officers, which would in turn help clear the caseload backlog. The Administration would step up staff training, including providing overseas training opportunities, as an incentive for raising staff morale. At the Panel's request, the Administration had provided supplementary information in the paper for this Subcommittee on the effectiveness of the upgrading proposal on raising staff morale and resolving the wastage and recruitment problems.

4. The item was voted on. Members agreed that the Subcommittee should recommend the item to Finance Committee (FC) for approval.

EC(2010-11)22 Proposed creation of a new rank of Principal Veterinary Officer (D1) in the Veterinary Officer grade and one permanent post of Principal Veterinary Officer (D1) in the Inspection and Quarantine Branch of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department to provide the support and high-level expertise required to enhance public veterinary services in Hong Kong

5. The Chairman informed members that the Administration was seeking the support of the Subcommittee to create a new rank of Principal Veterinary Officer (PVO) (D1) in the Veterinary Officer (VO) grade and one permanent PVO post in the Inspection and Quarantine Branch of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) to enhance public veterinary services in Hong Kong. The Administration's proposal was discussed by the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene (the Food Safety Panel) on 11 January 2011. Panel members were generally supportive of the Administration's proposal arising from the recommendation of the Standing Commission on Civil Service Salaries and Conditions of Service (the Standing Commission) to establish another tier beyond the Senior Veterinary Officer (SVO) level to provide high-level professional advice to guide the development of the relevant policies and appropriate measures in the areas of food safety, public health, animal welfare and management. Panel members had, however, expressed concern as to how the creation of the PVO post could facilitate policy development in promoting animal management and welfare, in particular the formulation of animal-friendly policies given the increasing community concern about animal welfare and animal management issues. The Panel had requested the Administration to provide supplementary information on the strategic role of the PVO in this respect.

Responsibilities of the new Principal Veterinary Officer Post

6. Mr WONG Ting-kwong supported the staffing proposal and enquired about the responsibilities of the proposed PVO post.

7. Referring to the proposed job description of the PVO post and paragraphs 16 to 18 in EC(2010-11)22, Under Secretary for Food and Health (USFH) advised that the new PVO would be responsible for overseeing the Animal Management (Operations) Division, Animal Management (Development) Division, Animal Health Division, and the Veterinary Laboratory Division. The key responsibilities were to spearhead various service development and improvement initiatives relating to animal management and welfare, and the control of animal diseases. Major initiatives to be led by the proposed PVO included enhancing measures for the management of stray dogs, cats and cattle, promoting responsible pet

ownership and animal welfare, improving animal re-homing services, devising a Dog "Trap-Neuter-Release/Return" Trial Scheme, reviewing the licensing control of animal trading and formulation of legislative proposals on animal management and welfare. The PVO would also provide high-level professional advice and leadership in the development of animal and public health measures to facilitate rapid detection and effective containment of emerging animal diseases.

Response of the Veterinary Officer Grade to the proposal

8. Ms LI Fung-ying referred to paragraph 24 of the Administration's paper which stated that members of the VO grade generally supported the proposal to create the PVO rank and one PVO post. Ms LI enquired about the extent of staff support for the proposal.

9. USFH responded that to follow up on the recommendation of the Standing Commission, AFCD had conducted a review in early 2009 and concluded that it was necessary to create a PVO rank at D1 level in view of the increased complexity of the work of the VO Grade. The new PVO rank would help enhance professional leadership in the Grade and strengthen regulation of the veterinary profession. The Deputy Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation (DDAFC) supplemented that apart from the creation of the new PVO rank, there were other improvement measures such as increase in the starting salary points for the VO Grade and enhancement of professional training and technical support. Some of these improvement measures had already been implemented. The VO grade had been fully consulted in the process and the proposal to create the new PVO rank and one PVO post had received the support of the VO Grade and the other three professional grades, i.e. the Agricultural Officer (AO), Fisheries Officer (FishO), and Forestry Officer (ForO) grades.

The problem of abandoned animals

10. Mrs Regina IP said that while she did not object to the Administration's proposal, she would expect the Administration to step up its efforts in addressing the problem of abandoned pets which not only was a form of cruelty to animals but also caused nuisance to members of the public and led to deterioration in environmental hygiene. Due to the no pet policy in public rental housing (PRH) estates and in some private housing estates, a large number of pets, mainly cats and dogs, were abandoned by their owners. Many people were concerned about the danger, nuisance and environmental hygiene problems caused by stray animals. The problem was particularly serious in outlying islands. She urged the Administration to step up public education to raise public awareness of responsible pet ownership and also to be sympathetic and lenient to singleton tenants in PRH estates who kept dogs

and cats as their only companions.

11. USFH advised that in the case of PRH estates, Temporary Permission Rule (TPR) allowing PRH tenants to continue to keep small dogs until the death of these dogs was once introduced by the Housing Authority (HA) as a one-off measure, and it was unlikely that HA would re-introduce the TPR. He hoped that members could appreciate the need for HA to strike a balance between the needs of individual tenants who are pet lovers and the need to mitigate nuisance and prevent public health hazards. As for private housing estates, it would not be appropriate for the Administration to interfere with the decision of owners' corporations on pet-keeping. He highlighted that to address the problem of abandoned animals, AFCD had been adopting a multi-pronged approach. This included stepping up animal welfare promotion and education through various channels to raise public awareness of responsible pet ownership, reducing the number of stray cats and dogs in collaboration with animal welfare organizations and district offices and regulating animal traders through licences.

12. In response to Mrs Regina IP and the Chairman's enquiry on latest progress of the Dog "Trap-Neuter-Release/Return" trial scheme, DDAFC advised that AFCD was actively discussing with animal welfare organizations detailed arrangements for the trial scheme at selected locations. He said that strong community support at district level was vital in ensuring the success of the scheme in future. The Administration would continue to consult district councils and local residents to seek their support for the trial scheme. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals had been providing neutering service for cats across the territory.

Ranking of the new Principal Veterinary Officer Post

13. Dr PAN Pey-chyou said that members representing the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions supported the proposal. However, he questioned whether the proposed ranking of the post at D1 was appropriate given the importance of the post as well as the wide scope and complexities of responsibilities to be performed by the PVO. He said that the ranking of the post should be reviewed in the future in the light of the office holder's wide spectrum of cross-departmental coordination work over areas, such as animal smuggling and education on animal welfare, managing threats and challenges of animal-related diseases such as SARS and avian influenza, regulation of pet shops and veterinarians in private practice, and liaison with the Hong Kong Police over enforcement against cruelty to animals, etc.

14. In response, USFH said that the Administration was aware of the rising community concern about animal management and welfare and the control of animal related diseases. It was against this background that the

Administration proposed to create a new PVO post to oversee the implementation of various animal welfare and management issues to enhance public veterinary services in Hong Kong. On the ranking of the post, Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service (1) explained that the Assistant Director of Agricultural, Fisheries and Conservation (ADAFc) rank at D2 level was the promotion rank for officers at the senior professional level of the VO, AO, FishO and ForO grades. All the Senior professional officers in the four grades would be eligible for and would compete on an equal basis for promotion to the ADAFC rank. The Administration would review the work and grade structure of the VO Grade from time to time.

Other concern

15. Mr WONG Ting-kwong remarked that the Chinese translation, "i.e." 動物福利", for the term "animal welfare" was inappropriate and misleading. USFH noted Mr WONG Ting-kwong's view. He said that the Chinese term was a literal translation of the English term, and that "動物福祉" might be more appropriate.

16. Mr WONG Yung-kan said that the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong welcomed the Administration's proposal. He called on the Administration to review the licensing control of animal trading activities, establish an effective licensing system to enhance the regulation of pet shops and breeders, and step up enforcement actions against animal smuggling from the Mainland and other places. The Administration took note of the view.

17. The item was voted on. Members agreed that the Subcommittee should recommend the item to FC for approval.

EC(2010-11)23 Proposed creation of a new grade of Forensic Accountant comprising three ranks of Chief Forensic Accountant (IPS 45), Senior Forensic Accountant (IPS 41 - 44a) and Forensic Accountant (IPS 26 - 40); one permanent post of Chief Forensic Accountant (IPS 45) to head a new Forensic Accounting Group in the Operations Department; a new rank of Chief Commission Against Corruption Officer (IPS 45); and upgrading of two permanent posts from Senior Commission Against Corruption Officer (IPS 43 - 44a) to Chief Commission Against Corruption Officer (IPS 45) to head the G and R Groups respectively in the Operations Department of the

Independent Commission Against Corruption

18. The Chairman advised that the Subcommittee was invited to consider a proposal from the Administration on the creation of a new grade of Forensic Accountant (FA) comprising three ranks, the creation of a new rank of Chief Commission Against Corruption Officer (CCACO), and the creation of a post of Chief Forensic Accountant as well as two posts of CCACO to be offset by the deletion of two posts of Senior Commission Against Corruption Officer, in the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

19. The Chairman further advised that the Administration's staffing proposal had been discussed by the Panel on Security on 7 December 2010. While Panel members had no objection to the proposal, they were concerned about the possible overlap of duties between the two proposed new posts, and whether there had been significant changes in the nature and volume of the investigation work that necessitated the creation of the FA grade, a new CCACO rank and the new posts. The Administration was requested to provide the requisite information in its submission to the Subcommittee.

20. The item was voted on. Members agreed that the Subcommittee should recommend the item to FC for approval.

21. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 9:10 am.