

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. PAC 60/10-11

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**Paper for the House Committee meeting
on 7 January 2011**

**Proposed overseas duty visit to the United Kingdom
by the Public Accounts Committee**

Purpose

This paper invites the House Committee ("HC") to note that the Public Accounts Committee ("PAC") plans to undertake an overseas duty visit to London and Edinburgh of the United Kingdom ("UK") and to approve the charging of the expenditure for the visit to individual Members' Overseas Duty Visit accounts.

Background

2. At its meeting on 1 December 2010, PAC considered undertaking an overseas duty visit to other legislatures with a view to studying the operation and experiences of their equivalent parliamentary committees, which are responsible, like PAC, for considering reports on value for money audits into the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which government departments and other public bodies discharge their functions.

3. After discussion, PAC has decided to visit the Committee of Public Accounts of the House of Commons ("the Commons PAC") of the UK Parliament given its long history and well established system. Noting that the Scottish Parliament in the UK also has a comparable system under which its Public Audit Committee ("the Scottish PAC") considers the reports of the Auditor General for Scotland laid in the Scottish Parliament, PAC has also decided to make use of the opportunity to include the Scottish PAC in the planned visit.

Details of the planned visit

Timing and programme

4. The planned visit is proposed to be held from 19 to 26 March 2011. Subject to confirmation with the receiving parties, the delegation would tentatively depart Hong Kong for Edinburgh on 19 March 2011, depart Edinburgh for London on 21 March 2011, and depart London for Hong Kong on 25 March 2011 (arriving Hong Kong on 26 March 2011). On the timing of the visit, PAC members have taken care to schedule the visit outside the periods from November 2010 to February 2011 and April to July 2011 so as not to affect its work within the time limits for examining the Director of Audit's reports. It is also necessary to avoid the recess dates of the House of Commons and the Scottish Parliament during which the Commons PAC and the Scottish PAC would not be in session. The only convenient and available slot would be the fourth week of March 2011.

5. During the visit, arrangements will be made for the delegation to observe the public hearings of the Commons PAC and meet and exchange views with Members of the Commons PAC and the Scottish PAC as well as representatives of related bodies, including the National Audit Office, the HM Treasury, the UK Audit Commission and Audit Scotland, etc.

6. Assistance will be sought from the Consulate General of the UK in Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in London in drawing up the visit programme and making arrangements for the visit.

Membership of the delegation

7. PAC has decided that the Director of Audit should be invited to accompany the delegation in his official capacity and at his expenses to facilitate its study of the government audit systems in UK in relation to the Commons PAC and the Scottish PAC. The Director of Audit has accepted the invitation.

8. As agreed by PAC, the visit is open to non-PAC Members. A circular has been issued to invite both PAC and non-PAC Members to indicate interest in joining the visit. As at 5 January 2011, a total of six PAC members have indicated interest in joining the visit. A list of the participants is in the **Appendix**.

Funding arrangements

9. As approved by The Legislative Council Commission ("LCC"), each Member is provided with an Overseas Duty Visit account of \$55,000 for the purpose of duty visits outside Hong Kong organized by committees of the Council. The fund in the account is for use by the Member in a four-year term. Any expenditure incurred in excess of the available balance in a four-year term has to be paid by the Member personally.

10. A preliminary estimate of the expenditure (including airfare, hotel accommodation, meals, in-town travelling and miscellaneous expenses, etc.) to be incurred by each participating Member for the proposed duty visit is about HK\$70,700 (if travel on business class air passage) or HK\$30,500 (if travel on economy class air passage).

Advice sought

11. PAC notes that Rule 29A(a) of the House Rules ("HR") provides that where a visit to places outside Hong Kong is to be conducted under the name of a committee and/or funding for the visit of the committee is to be charged to individual Members' Overseas Duty Visit accounts, the prior permission of HC shall be sought. The decision of HC shall be referred to LCC for reference.

12. This will be the first overseas visit by PAC. PAC invites HC to take note of its planned overseas duty visit and also considers it appropriate, with reference to the practice of other committees of the Council as provided in HR29A(a), that HC's approval of the charging of the expenditure for the visit to individual Members' Overseas Duty Visit accounts be sought.

Council Business Division 4
Legislative Council Secretariat
5 January 2011

Public Accounts Committee

**Proposed overseas duty visit to the United Kingdom
in March 2011**

**List of participants
(as at 5 January 2011)**

Members of the Public Accounts Committee

Dr Hon Philip WONG Yu-hong, GBS (Chairman)
Hon Paul CHAN Mo-po, MH, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, SBS, JP
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, JP