

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CRM 605/16-17

Ref : AM12/01/19 (16-20)

**Subcommittee on Members' Remuneration and
Operating Expenses Reimbursement**

**Minutes of meeting held on 20 January 2017 at 12:00 noon
in Conference Room 2A of the Legislative Council Complex**

Members Present : Hon WONG Ting-kwong, SBS, JP
Hon CHAN Hak-kan, BBS, JP
Hon WU Chi-wai, MH
Hon IP Kin-yuen
Hon Martin LIAO Cheung-kong, SBS, JP
Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok, SBS, MH, JP
Hon CHU Hoi-dick
Hon HO Kai-ming
Hon Jeremy TAM Man-ho

Clerk in attendance: Ms Amy YU
Principal Council Secretary 1

Staff in attendance : Mr Kenneth CHEN, SBS
Secretary General

Miss Odelia LEUNG
Deputy Secretary General

Miss Roxanna LO
Accountant

Mrs Goppi CHENG
Senior Deputy Accountant

Mr Simon CHEUNG
Deputy Accountant 4

Action

I. Election of Chairman

Mr WONG Ting-kwong, the member with the highest precedence among members of the Subcommittee, presided over the election of the Chairman of the Subcommittee. Mr WONG invited nominations for the chairmanship of the Subcommittee.

2. Mr WONG Ting-kwong was nominated by Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok and the nomination was seconded by Mr Martin LIAO. Mr WONG accepted the nomination.

3. There being no other nomination, Mr WONG Ting-kwong was elected Chairman of the Subcommittee.

4. Members agreed that it was not necessary to elect a Deputy Chairman.

II. The way forward

(LC Paper No. CRM 307/16-17)

5. The Chairman referred members to the background brief (LC Paper No. CRM 307/16-17) prepared by the Legislative Council ("LegCo") Secretariat for information on the outstanding proposals of the Subcommittee formed in the Fifth LegCo. He said that a major task of the Subcommittee was to review the level of remuneration and operating expenses reimbursement ("OER") for LegCo Members and make proposals thereon for Members of the following term for consideration by the Independent Commission on Remuneration for Members of the Executive Council and the Legislature, and Officials under the Political Appointment System of the HKSAR ("Independent Commission"). Given that the current LegCo term had just started for a few months, members might consider how to take forward the review after the current term had operated for some time, say one whole year, when more information was available for assessing the amount of resources required for Members to perform their duties. He invited Members' views on the way forward.

6. Mr HO Kai-ming said that while some Members were newly-elected, their political parties should have a good understanding of the issues relating to Members' OER. He considered it not necessary to wait for a year before embarking on the review. He further pointed out that high turnover of Members' assistants had been a

Action

long-standing problem faced by Members and suggested that the Subcommittee might consider receiving views and conducting a survey to collect update information in this regard.

7. Mr WU Chi-wai said that the turnover rate of Members' assistants had remained consistently high owing to their low salaries, particularly for those employed by Members returned from geographical constituencies ("GC"). He suggested that the Secretariat should conduct an analysis on the salary levels of Members' assistants, with a breakdown according to whether they were employed by Members returned from functional constituencies ("FC"), GC or District Council (Second) FC (commonly known as "super DC seats"), given the difference in the size of their constituencies.

8. The Chairman reminded members that the remuneration of Members and the salaries of their assistants, which were paid under OER, should be discussed separately.

9. Mr Jeremy TAM opined that Members did not have sufficient resources to recruit and retain quality and experienced staff to assist them in carrying out their LegCo duties. He shared the view of Mr WU Chi-wai that the salary levels of staff employed by Members returned from FC and GC should be analyzed separately. He further suggested that the number of district offices operated by Members be included in the analysis. Regarding Members' remuneration, Mr TAM expressed concern that the current level of remuneration of Members was substantially lower than that of Political Assistants in the Government. He suggested that the remuneration level of Members be reviewed.

10. Mr CHAN Hak-kan considered that the Subcommittee should wait until Members had run their offices for a longer period of time in the current term before conducting a comprehensive review on the level of OER, so that more data could be gathered to facilitate the review. This would also allow more time for new Members to have a better grasp of the amount of resources needed to support their work. Mr CHAN further pointed out that some Members returned from GC and the super DC seats had expressed concern that the existing level of the Entertainment and Travelling Expenses Reimbursement was inadequate to meet the increasing travelling expenses incurred in carrying out their constituency work. He suggested that the Subcommittee should look into ways to tackle this problem.

Action

11. Mr IP Kin-yuen enquired whether proposals put forward by the Subcommittee to revise the level of OER, if accepted by the Administration, would only be implemented in the following LegCo term or whether it was possible for the revisions to take effect in the current term. The Chairman responded that in general, the Subcommittee would recommend proposals on the level of remuneration and OER for Members of the following LegCo term. Nevertheless, if the Subcommittee considered that there was an urgent need for a well-justified proposal to take effect in the current term, it could raise the request with the Independent Commission through the Administration. The Chairman added that an adjustment to the level of OER had once taken effect in the same LegCo term in response to incumbent Members' request.

12. Mr IP Kin-yuen echoed the view that the current level of OER was far from adequate, in particular for Members returned from GC, and considered that the Subcommittee should conduct an early review on the matter. Referring to paragraph 5 of the background brief prepared by the LegCo Secretariat, Mr IP opined that the proposals put forward by the Subcommittee of the Fifth LegCo which had not been taken on board by the Independent Commission should continue to be pursued in the current term. He highlighted the outstanding proposals relating to the level and adjustment mechanism of salaries of Members' assistants and stressed the need to fight for a reasonable level of pay for their assistants.

13. Mr HO Kai-ming queried why annual adjustment of Members' OER was based on the movement of the Consumer Price Index ("CPI")(C) which reflected the inflation rate of luxury items. Pointing out that DC Members' OER were adjusted with reference to the movement of CPI(A), Mr HO considered it more appropriate to adjust LegCo Members' OER according to CPI(A), instead of CPI(C). He also considered that separate financial provisions should be provided for reimbursement of expenses on office rental and staff salaries so as to ensure that Members had sufficient resources to cover these expenses. He further suggested that the optimal staffing complement for Members to perform their duties should be reviewed again in this term.

14. Mr CHU Hoi-dick opined that relevant data from previous LegCo terms could provide a sufficient basis for the Subcommittee to conduct a review on the level of OER. He considered that a review on the level of OER should be conducted earlier so that changes to the level of OER might be implemented in the current term.

Action

15. Mr Jeremy TAM pointed out that it was difficult for new Members to rent offices in public rental housing estates, the rental charges for which were much lower than that in private properties. He considered that the problem of high rental expenses faced by Members, particularly for new Members, should also be taken into account when reviewing the level of OER.

16. Mr WU Chi-wai said that there was direct correlation between the amount of resources required by Members and the size of the constituency served by them. Pointing out that the maximum amount of election expenses for different constituencies in a LegCo election was set having regard to the size of the constituencies, he considered it more appropriate to set different levels of OER for Members based on the size of their constituencies. He requested the Secretariat to provide information on relevant past discussions by the Subcommittees set up in the previous terms, if any.

17. Summarizing the discussion, the Chairman said that in addition to staff salaries and office rental, members suggested that the review on the level of OER should also cover the following issues: (a) travelling expenses reimbursement; (b) whether CPI(C) should continue to be used as the basis for annual adjustment of OER; and (c) whether the level of OER for Members should be based on the size of their constituencies. Some members had suggested that information on the salaries and turnover rate of Members' assistants be collected to facilitate the review. The Chairman requested the Secretariat to collate relevant information on the issues raised by members at the meeting for the Subcommittee's consideration.

III. Any other business

18. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:30 pm.