

LegCo Panel on Home Affairs

Monitoring Mechanisms over the Expenditure on Minor Environmental Improvement Works Projects

Purpose

This paper informs Members of the mechanisms for monitoring expenditure on minor environmental improvement works projects in the Home Affairs Department.

Background

2. Minor environmental improvement works in districts can be funded from the following :

- (a) Rural Public Works (RPW) Programme introduced in April 1999 to replace the Rural Planning & Improvement Strategy Minor Works Programme and the Local Public Works Programme for the New Territories;
- (b) Urban Minor Works (UMW) Programme introduced in April 2000 to replace the Urban Environmental Improvement Programme which covered projects not exceeding \$2 million each; and
- (c) Funds under Head 63 subhead 215 for Minor Environmental Improvement (MEI) Projects.

The mechanisms for approving and monitoring expenditure under each category are given in the ensuing paragraphs.

RPW/UMW Programmes

3. The ambit of both programmes is basically the same in that they

are for small scale works projects costing up to \$15 million each to improve local facilities, living environment and hygienic conditions of the districts.

4. The allocation approved by Finance Committee and Public Works Subcommittee for the financial year 2000/01 is \$100 million and \$35 million respectively for the RPW and UMW programmes. Expenditure under these two programmes has to be approved by the Director of Home Affairs, who is the Vote Controller.

5. The Department has set up a two-tier administrative system to select and approve projects for implementation. On receiving a project proposal, the District Officer (DO) will first assess the feasibility and the estimated cost, consulting other departments as necessary. The projects (with details such as the location, the works involved, the cost and estimated completion date) will then be submitted to the relevant District Working Group (DWG) for consideration and prioritization. The DWG is chaired by the District Officer with representatives from the District Councils, Area Committees and other Government departments. Recommendations of the DWG on the district's projects will be forwarded to the UMW or RPW Steering Committee (SC) as appropriate for consideration. The SCs comprise the Director of Home Affairs (DHA) as Chairman and the relevant District Officers, District Council Chairmen and other relevant Government department representatives as members. Their tasks are to provide strategic direction for the programmes, approve the annual programmes, and offer advice and assistance to expedite implementation. Only projects which have been endorsed by the DWG and the SC would be given funding by the Director of Home Affairs.

6. Projects funded under these two programmes are authorised and monitored regularly by the Director of Home Affairs on the advice of the SC.

MEI Projects

7. The ambit of the funds for MEI projects covers small scale projects which aim at providing prompt remedy to urgent local problems, such as eliminating crime black spots, removing eyesores, and putting temporary vacant land to community use. Such projects are outside the scope of normal

Government works programmes, or those providing interim solutions to minor problems which are accorded a low priority under the normal departmental programmes. The expenditure ceiling for each MEI project is \$0.6 million.

8. Funds voted for MEI projects are controlled by DHA. MEI projects are identified by DOs based on the suggestions of local residents, District Council (DC) members and other government departments. The DC will consider and endorse the proposed projects if it is satisfied that the projects are worth implementing. The projects will then be submitted to DHA for authorization. The projects can be implemented by letting out contracts/tender, or supplying material assistance or cash in lieu to organisations to undertake non-contract projects. DOs are responsible for implementing the projects, monitoring the progress and ensuring that funds are expended according to the relevant government guidelines.

Home Affairs Department
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