



WHAT IS A COMMITTEE SYSTEM



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL IN BRIEF No.16

Legislative Council Members perform the important functions of scrutinizing bills, approving public expenditure and monitoring the Government's performance through a committee system. There are three standing committees under the Legislative Council, namely the Finance Committee, the Public Accounts Committee and the Committee on Members' Interests. There are also the Committee on Rules of Procedure, the Committee on Access to the Legislature's Documents and Records, the House Committee, 18 Panels, investigation committee and select committees. Bills Committees are formed by the House Committee, as the need arises, to study legislative proposals.

STANDING COMMITTEES

Finance Committee – The Finance Committee is vested with the power of and responsibility for scrutinizing and approving public expenditure proposals put forward by the Government. One of its roles is to scrutinize the annual Draft Estimates of Expenditure presented by the Financial Secretary to the Legislative Council together with the Appropriation Bill, which sets out the Government's annual expenditure proposals for the following financial year.

Public Accounts Committee – The Public Accounts Committee considers reports of the

Director of Audit on the Government's accounts and the results of value for money audits of the Government and other organizations which are within the purview of public audit. The committee may invite public officers and senior staff of public organizations to attend public hearings to give explanation, evidence or information, or any other person to assist it in relation to such explanation, evidence or information if considered necessary.

Following public hearings, the Public Accounts Committee will compile a committee report listing its conclusions and recommendations and table the report at the Legislative Council.



The meetings of the Finance Committee and the House Committee are normally held in Conference Room 1

Committee on Members' Interests – The Committee on Members' Interests examines the arrangements made for the compilation, maintenance and accessibility of the *Register of Members' Interests*. It considers and investigates complaints made in relation to Members' registration and declaration of interests and their conduct concerning claims for the reimbursement of operating expenses or applications for advance of operating funds. It also considers matters of ethics in relation to the Members' conduct in their capacity as such, and gives advice and issues guidelines on such matters, etc.

COMMITTEE ON RULES OF PROCEDURE

The Committee on Rules of Procedure is responsible for reviewing the Rules of Procedure of the Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region ("RoP") and the committee system, and for proposing to the Legislative Council such amendments or changes as are considered necessary. The committee also examines matters of practice and procedure relating to the Legislative Council referred by the Legislative Council or its committees or the President of the Legislative Council, or raised by its own members.

COMMITTEE ON ACCESS TO THE LEGISLATURE'S DOCUMENTS AND RECORDS

The Committee on Access to the Legislature's Documents and Records determines whether a document or record of the Legislature (or its committee) should be made available for access earlier than the expiry of the closure period specified in the Policy on Access to the Legislature's Documents and Records ("the Policy"), and sets guidelines for implementing the Policy. The committee also considers any objection against the denial of access to such a document or record by the Clerk to the Legislative Council, and any other matter relating to or arising from the Policy.

HOUSE COMMITTEE

The House Committee makes preparations for Council meetings and considers matters relating to the business of the Legislative Council. The House Committee may form Bills Committees to scrutinize bills. It may also appoint subcommittees to study any item of subsidiary legislation in greater detail; assist its consideration of issues of public concern which fall outside the purview of Panels or straddle the purview of a number of Panels, and any other matters relating to the business of the Legislative Council.



BILLS COMMITTEES

A Bills Committee is tasked with considering the principles and general merits of the bill concerned, and may propose amendments to the bill. After completing its task, the Bills Committee notifies the House Committee of its deliberations and reports further to the Legislative Council. The Bills Committee is dissolved upon the passage of the bill concerned or as decided by the House Committee.

PANELS

Panels are tasked with monitoring and examining specific policy areas, corresponding to their respective bureaux. They give views on major legislative or financial proposals before their formal introduction into the Legislative Council or the Finance Committee, and are consulted on a draft of any bill intended to be presented by a Member. Panels will also examine important issues of wide public concern.

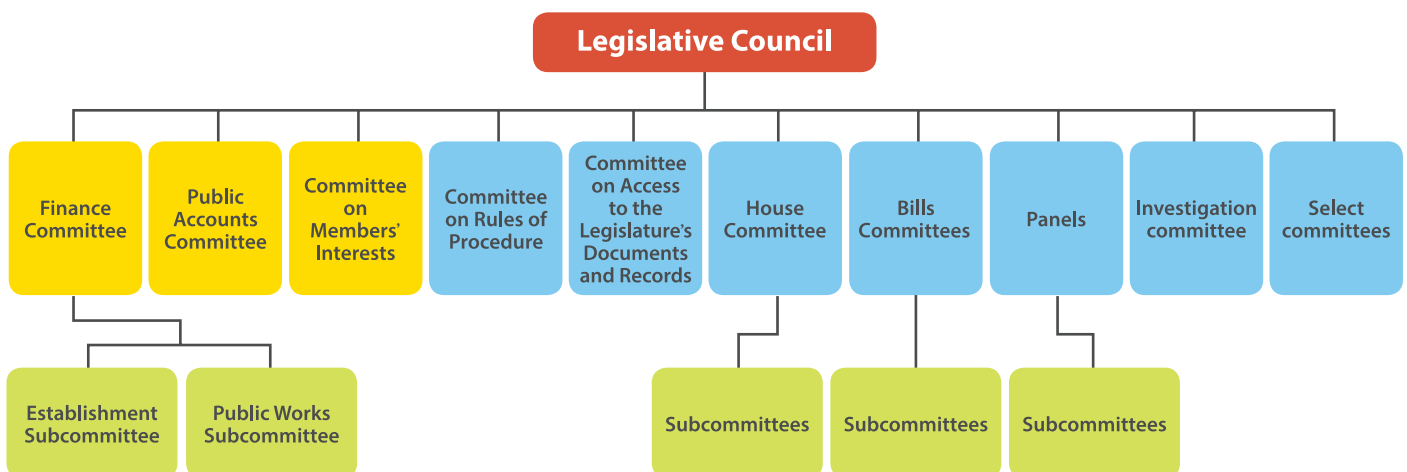
INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE

An investigation committee may be established under Rule 49B(2A) (Disqualification of Member from Office) of RoP upon the moving of a censure

motion under Rule 49B(1A). The committee so established is responsible for gathering information relevant to the censure motion and gives its views on whether or not the facts as established constitute grounds for the censure of the Member concerned. After completing its work, the investigation committee is required to report to the Legislative Council.

SELECT COMMITTEES

The Legislative Council may appoint one or more select committees for in-depth consideration of matters or bills referred by the Legislative Council. Where so authorized by the Legislative Council, select committees may, as required when exercising its powers and functions, summon persons concerned to attend before the committee to give evidence or to produce documents. As soon as a select committee has completed consideration of the matter or bill referred to it, it reports to the Legislative Council and is thereupon dissolved.



■ Standing committee of the Council

The committee system of the Legislative Council

Further Reference:

Legislative Council in Brief No.18 - Quorum of the Legislative Council and its Committees

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