

Revised

立法會

Legislative Council

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Finance Committee of the Legislative Council

**Minutes of the 17th meeting
held at the Legislative Council Chamber
on Friday, 4 July 2003, at 3:35 pm**

Members present:

Dr Hon Philip WONG Yu-hong, GBS (Chairman)
Hon NG Leung-sing, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Kenneth TING Woo-shou, JP
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon Martin LEE Chu-ming, SC, JP
Hon Margaret NG
Hon HUI Cheung-ching, JP
Hon CHAN Kwok-keung, JP
Hon Bernard CHAN, JP
Hon CHAN Kam-lam, JP
Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun, SBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing, GBS, JP
Hon YEUNG Yiu-chung, BBS
Hon LAU Chin-shek, JP
Hon LAU Wong-fat, GBS, JP
Hon Miriam LAU Kin-yee, JP
Hon Ambrose LAU Hon-chuen, GBS, JP
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
Dr Hon LAW Chi-kwong, JP
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Dr Hon TANG Siu-tong, JP
Hon LI Fung-ying, JP
Hon Henry WU King-cheong, BBS, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP
Hon Michael MAK Kwok-fung
Dr Hon LO Wing-lok, JP
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee
Hon LAU Ping-cheung
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP

Members absent:

Hon James TIEN Pei-chun, GBS, JP
Dr Hon David CHU Yu-lin, JP
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, JP
Dr Hon Eric LI Ka-cheung, GBS, JP
Dr Hon David LI Kwok-po, GBS, JP
Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, JP
Dr Hon LUI Ming-wah, JP
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon CHAN Yuen-han, JP
Hon SIN Chung-kai
Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP
Hon WONG Yung-kan
Hon Howard YOUNG, SBS, JP
Dr Hon YEUNG Sum
Hon LAU Kong-wah, JP
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon CHOY So-yuk
Hon SZETO Wah
Hon Timothy FOK Tsun-ting, SBS, JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon LEUNG Fu-wah, MH, JP
Hon WONG Sing-chi
Hon IP Kwok-him, JP
Hon MA Fung-kwok, JP

Public officers attending:

Mr Alan LAI Nin, JP	Permanent Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury)
Mr Stanley YING, JP	Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury) 1
Mr Rick CHAN	Acting Principal Assistant Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands
Mr C K AU	Assistant Director of Buildings
Ms Pauline PANG	Technical Secretary of Buildings Department
Mr Matthew CHEUNG Kin-chung, JP	Permanent Secretary for Economic Development and Labour (Labour)

Mr Donald TONG Chi-keung	Deputy Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene
Mr Charles CHAN	Assistant Commissioner for Tourism
Mr Johnny WOO, JP	Assistant Director of Leisure and Cultural Services
Mr CHEUNG Hing-wah	Assistant Director of Social Welfare
Mr TSE Man-shing	Assistant Director of Home Affairs
Mrs DO PANG Wai-ye	Assistant Commissioner for Labour (Policy Support and Strategic Planning)
Mr TSANG Kin-woo, JP	Assistant Commissioner for Labour (Employment Services)
Dr F Y WONG	Assistant Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation
Mr LAI Ip-cheung	Assistant Director of Housing

Clerk in attendance:

Ms Pauline NG	Assistant Secretary General 1
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Staff in attendance:

Miss Becky YU	Chief Assistant Secretary (1)1
Mrs Mary TANG	Senior Assistant Secretary (1)2
Ms Caris CHAN	Senior Legislative Assistant 1
Mr Frankie WOO	Legislative Assistant 2

Action

Item No. 1 - FCR(2003-04)34

**CAPITAL WORKS RESERVE FUND
HEAD 708 – CAPITAL SUBVENTIONS AND MAJOR SYSTEMS AND
EQUIPMENT**

Buildings Department

- ♦ **New Subhead “Provision of Electronic Imaging, Storage and Retrieval Service of Building Plans and Documents”**

Members approved the proposal.

Item No. 2 - FCR(2003-04)35

HEAD 90 – LABOUR DEPARTMENT

- ♦ **Subhead 700 General other non-recurrent**

Item 535 Skills Enhancement Project

Item 536 Incentive allowance for local domestic helpers

New item “Provision of job opportunities through improvement in environmental hygiene in public housing estates”

- ♦ **Subhead 000 Operational expenses**

HEAD 145 – GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT :ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND LABOUR BUREAU (ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BRANCH)

- ♦ **Subhead 700 General other non-recurrent**

New item “Tourism Development Assistant Training Project”

HEAD 49 – FOOD AND ENVIRONMENTAL HYGIENE DEPARTMENT

- ♦ **Subhead 700 General other non-recurrent**

Item 013 Special improvement in environmental hygiene

HEAD 95 – LEISURE AND CULTURAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

- ♦ **Subhead 700 General other non-recurrent**

New item “Leisure, Cultural, Sports and Arts Training Project and Leisure and Cultural Guide Project”

New item “Provision of cleaning-related service to public leisure venues”

HEAD 63 – HOME AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

- ♦ **Subhead 700 General other non-recurrent**

New item “Community Building Project and Positive Life Project”

HEAD 22 – AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT

- ♦ **Subhead 700 General other non-recurrent**

New item “Promoting Natural Environment Project”

New item “Provision of additional maintenance service to country parks”

HEAD 170 – SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT

- ♦ **Subhead 700 General other non-recurrent**

New item “Community Care Project and provision of additional support to measures under the Support for Self-reliance Scheme”

2. Mr TAM Yiu-chung declared interest as the Chairman of the Employees Retraining Board responsible for organizing re-training programmes.

3. Members noted that the Panel on Manpower was consulted on the proposal on 19 June 2003.

4. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan queried whether the proposed provision of \$715 million for enhanced employment measures was adequate in relieving the problem of unemployment. The Permanent Secretary for Economic Development and Labour (Labour) (PSL) said that the current unemployment problem was structural in nature and could only be resolved through reviving the economy. Efforts were being made by the Administration to improve the business environment and to create employment opportunities. In May 2003, \$432 million had been approved for the creation of

21 500 short-term training and employment opportunities under the employment-cum-training package. The further provision of \$715 million now sought to create yet another 32 000 temporary job and training places demonstrated the Administration's commitment to relieve the unemployment situation. Together with the earmarked provision of 12 000 training places under the Youth Pre-employment Training Programme, 2 000 training places under the Graduate Employment Training Programme and 5 000 places under the Youth Work Experiences and Training Scheme, it was expected that more than 70 000 employment opportunities would be made available by August 2003.

5. Noting that the Finance Committee approved on 16 May 2003 a commitment of \$30 million for the provision of special incentive allowance to qualified local domestic helpers (LDHs) who were willing to work across the harbour or during unsocial hours, Mr LEE Cheuk-yan asked if the 4 000 places under the initial scheme had been fully taken up. He explored the feasibility of redeploying part of the unused commitment, if any, of the \$30 million being sought to provide more needed employment opportunities in other sectors. PSL said that the scheme aimed to promote employment opportunities by addressing the mismatch in supply and demand of LDHs arising from geographic locations and working hours. Given that the scheme had just been launched, its effectiveness had yet to be assessed. So far, several hundred of enquiries had been received, but it was still too early to assess the effectiveness of the scheme. The Administration would review the scheme after six months.

6. Mr NG Leung-sing pointed out that there were over 200 000 foreign domestic helpers in Hong Kong which were approximately the same as the number of unemployed locals in Hong Kong. He considered that efforts should be made to encourage unemployed locals to take up domestic jobs. PSL said that consequent upon the outbreak of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome and the economic downturn, there had been a significant drop in the number of foreign domestic helpers in Hong Kong which was conducive for a cultural change in the domestic employment market in Hong Kong. Over the past years, the Employees Retraining Board had provided training for about 59 000 eligible applicants and 17 000 of them had become qualified LDHs. It was expected that with the introduction of the special incentive allowance scheme for LDHs, the cultural change in domestic employment would take place with time. Mr NG opined that publicity on the scheme should be stepped up with a view to tackling the mismatch in domestic employment market, thereby reducing the unemployment rate in Hong Kong. PSL affirmed that efforts, including the use of the Integrated Scheme for Local Domestic Helpers as a means to promote the employment of LDHs, would continue to be made to encourage unemployed locals to re-enter the job market.

7. Referring to the provision of special improvement in environmental hygiene in public housing estates, Mr CHAN Kam-lam enquired if the cleaning work would be absorbed by staff of the Housing Department (HD) who had become redundant following the recent re-organization of the Department. The Assistant Director of Housing confirmed that the work would be outsourced and recruitment would be open to the public but ex-HD staff were welcome to apply for the 580 additional temporary posts created under HD.

8. Members approved the proposal.
9. The Chairman reminded members that the next meeting of the Finance Committee would be held on Friday, 18 July 2003, at 4:30 pm.
10. The meeting was adjourned at 3:55 pm.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
28 July 2003