

**立法會**  
**Legislative Council**

LC Paper No. FC63/03-04  
(These minutes have been seen  
by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/F/1/2

**Finance Committee of the Legislative Council**

**Minutes of the 6th meeting**  
**held at the Legislative Council Chamber**  
**on Friday, 20 February 2004, at 2:30 pm**

**Members present:**

Hon NG Leung-sing, JP (Deputy Chairman)  
Hon Kenneth TING Woo-shou, JP  
Hon James TIEN Pei-chun, GBS, JP  
Dr Hon David CHU Yu-lin, JP  
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan  
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, JP  
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan  
Dr Hon Eric LI Ka-cheung, GBS, JP  
Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, JP  
Dr Hon LUI Ming-wah, JP  
Hon Margaret NG  
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, GBS, JP  
Hon James TO Kun-sun  
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong  
Hon HUI Cheung-ching, JP  
Hon CHAN Kwok-keung, JP  
Hon CHAN Yuen-han, JP  
Hon Bernard CHAN, JP  
Hon CHAN Kam-lam, JP  
Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun, SBS, JP  
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung  
Hon SIN Chung-kai  
Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP  
Hon WONG Yung-kan  
Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing, GBS, JP  
Hon Howard YOUNG, SBS, JP

Dr Hon YEUNG Sum  
Hon YEUNG Yiu-chung, BBS  
Hon LAU Chin-shek, JP  
Hon LAU Kong-wah, JP  
Hon LAU Wong-fat, GBS, JP  
Hon Miriam LAU Kin-yeet, JP  
Hon Ambrose LAU Hon-chuen, GBS, JP  
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP  
Hon CHOY So-yuk  
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo  
Hon SZETO Wah  
Hon Timothy FOK Tsun-ting, SBS, JP  
Dr Hon LAW Chi-kwong, JP  
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP  
Dr Hon TANG Siu-tong, JP  
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP  
Hon LI Fung-ying, JP  
Hon Henry WU King-cheong, BBS, JP  
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP  
Hon Michael MAK Kwok-fung  
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip  
Hon LEUNG Fu-wah, MH, JP  
Dr Hon LO Wing-lok, JP  
Hon WONG Sing-chi  
Hon IP Kwok-him, JP  
Hon LAU Ping-cheung  
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP  
Hon MA Fung-kwok, JP

**Members absent:**

Dr Hon Philip WONG Yu-hong, GBS (Chairman)  
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan  
Hon Martin LEE Chu-ming, SC, JP  
Dr Hon David LI Kwok-po, GBS, JP  
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee

**Public officers attending:**

Mr Frederick MA Si-hang, JP

Secretary for Financial Services and the  
Treasury

Mr Alan LAI Nin, GBS, JP

Permanent Secretary for Financial Services  
and the Treasury (Treasury)

Miss Elizabeth TSE, JP	Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury) 1
Mr K K LAM	Principal Executive Officer (General), Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau (Treasury)
Ms CHANG King-yiu, JP	Deputy Director of Administration
Mrs Helen YU LAI Ching-ping	Deputy Ombudsman, Office of The Ombudsman
Mr MOK Yun-chuen	Chief Executive Officer, Office of The Ombudsman
Mr Duncan PESCOD, JP	Acting Commissioner for Tourism
Mrs Winifred CHUNG	Assistant Commissioner for Tourism (4)
Mr C H YUE, JP	Director of Architectural Services
Mr Thomas YIU, JP	Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Health)
Mrs Ingrid YEUNG	Principal Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Health)
Dr Beatrice CHENG	Senior Executive Manager (Professional Services), Hospital Authority
Dr Regina CHING	Acting Deputy Director of Health
Mrs Brenda FUNG	Principal Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Elderly Services)
Mrs Rachel CARTLAND, JP	Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Social Security)
Mr Chris WARDLAW	Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower
Mr Andrew POON	Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower
Mr CHOI Chee-cheong	Secretary General, Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority
Mr Matthew CHEUNG Kin-chung, JP	Permanent Secretary for Economic Development and Labour (Labour)
Mrs DO PANG Wai-yee	Assistant Commissioner for Labour
Ms Kinnie WONG	Assistant Commissioner for Tourism (1)
Dr WONG Fook-yee	Assistant Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
Mr Donald TONG Chi-keung	Deputy Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene
Mr TSE Man-shing	Assistant Director of Home Affairs Department
Mr Johnny WOO Wai-man, JP	Assistant Director of Leisure and Cultural Services Department
Mr CHEUNG Hing-wah	Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Youth and Corrections)
Mr Alex LEUNG	Co-ordinator (Human Resources) of Hospital Authority

**Clerk in attendance:**

Ms Pauline NG

Assistant Secretary General 1

**Staff in attendance:**

Miss Becky YU

Chief Council Secretary (1)1

Mrs Mary TANG

Senior Council Secretary (1)2

Ms Caris CHAN

Senior Legislative Assistant 1

Mr Frankie WOO

Legislative Assistant 2

---

Action

As Dr Philip WONG, Chairman of the Finance Committee (FC), was away from Hong Kong, Mr NG Leung-sing, Deputy Chairman of FC, took over the chair.

2. Noting that many members would have to go to Beijing to participate in meetings of the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China as well as the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and were not able to attend the next FC meeting scheduled for 5 March 2004, the Chairman sought members' views on whether the next FC meeting should be advanced to 27 February 2004. He added that as arrangements had already been made for the Chief Secretary to attend the special House Committee meeting on 27 February 2004 at 2:30 pm, the proposed FC meeting, if held, would have to start at 9:00 am.

3. Ms Emily LAU remarked that as FC meetings were scheduled in advance, they should be adhered to as far as possible. She hoped that in future, members should be consulted on any changes to the meeting schedule. Such an arrangement should apply to meetings of the Public Works Subcommittee and the Establishment Subcommittee (ESC) as well. Given the importance of FC, Miss Margaret NG agreed with Ms LAU that FC meeting schedule should be adhered to in order to facilitate the attendance of members and should not be changed unless under very exceptional circumstances. Mr Andrew WONG said that he had no objection to advancing the FC meeting to 27 February 2004 at 9:00 am, but pointed out that the House Committee's meeting with the Chief Secretary would start at 2:30 pm on that day and there was the Legislative Council Fun Day in the same evening. Mr James TIEN said that Members of the Liberal Party had no strong views about the re-scheduling of the next FC meeting. However, it might not be desirable to slot in an additional FC meeting on 27 February 2004 having regard to the various activities scheduled for that day. Consideration might be given to holding the next FC meeting on 5 March 2004 as originally scheduled despite the absence of some members but the Administration should be requested to put forward agenda items which were more urgent. He added that as meetings of the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China as well as the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference were usually held in early March, FC should, in future, avoid scheduling its meetings during this period.

4. As regards the agenda for the next FC meeting, the Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury)1 (DS(Tsy)1) advised that the Treasury Branch had been processing the following funding proposals for the next FC meeting -

- (a) Incentive Scheme for Hygiene Improvement in Food Premises;
- (b) Grant to an early Retirement Ex-gratia Payment Fund;
- (c) Youth Self-employment Support Scheme; and
- (d) Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme.

5. The Chairman said that he would convey members' views to Dr Philip WONG who would decide on the date of the next FC meeting.

*(Post-meeting note: The Chairman decided that the meeting originally scheduled for 5 March 2004 should be advanced to 27 February 2004 to start at 9:00 a.m. The notice and agenda of the meeting was issued to members on 20 February 2004 vide FC38/03-04.)*

**Item No. 1 - FCR(2003-04)53**

**RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ESTABLISHMENT SUBCOMMITTEE  
MADE ON 7 JANUARY 2004**

6. At members' request to consider and vote on EC(2003-04)14 separately, the Chairman put FCR(2003-04)53 except EC(2003-04)14 to the vote. The Committee approved the proposal.

**EC(2003-04)14                      Proposed deletion of three permanent posts of one Deputy Ombudsman (D3) and two Assistant Ombudsman (D2) in the Office of The Ombudsman and the ranks of Deputy Ombudsman (D3) and Assistant Ombudsman (D2)**

7. Referring to Annexures A and B to LC Paper ESC19/03-04 which set out the changes in establishment and remuneration package of the staff of the Office of the Ombudsman (the Office), Ms Emily LAU said that had such information been provided at the ESC meeting on 7 January 2004, separate voting on the proposal would not be necessary. She recalled that when the proposal was considered by ESC on 7 January 2004, members were told that there was no change in salary at the directorate level while salary at non-directorate level was reduced. This had aroused members' concern that the Office was trying to cut cost at the expense of non-directorate grade staff while retaining high salaries for its top management staff.

However, judging from the supplementary information provided, there had been marked reductions in salaries at both the directorate and non-directorate levels. She sought clarification on the discrepancy and enquired about the possibility of further streamlining. Mr Andrew WONG echoed that upon delinking from the Government, the Office should have the flexibility to devise its salary structure and recruit its own staff.

8. The Deputy Director of Administration explained that as the main purpose of the ESC proposal was to delete one Deputy Ombudsman and two Assistant Ombudsman civil service posts from the establishment of the Office which did not carry any additional financial implications on the Government, the officers attending the meeting did not have the information at hand to answer members' enquiries on the changes in establishment and remuneration package of the Office. The required information was subsequently provided for members' reference. Upon delinking from the Government, the Office would receive annual funding from the Government to cover the staff remuneration calculated using the mid-point salary plus lump-sum allowances. Savings derived from downward adjustment of staff remunerations would be used for other office expenses at the discretion of the Office. She assured members that the Office would endeavour to make the best use of its resources. On the possibility of further streamlining the establishment, the Deputy Ombudsman explained that the Office would keep its establishment under constant review. While the establishment must carry adequate full-time contract staff for continuity, the Office would employ temporary or part-time staff to cope with additional workload.

9. The Chairman put the item to vote. The Committee approved the proposal.

#### **Item No. 2 - FCR(2003-04)54**

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PUBLIC WORKS SUBCOMMITTEE MADE ON 4 FEBRUARY 2004**

10. At members' request to consider and vote on PWSC(2003-04)62 separately, the Chairman put FCR(2003-04)54 except PWSC(2003-04)62 to the vote. The Committee approved the proposal.

#### **PWSC(2003-04)62      385RO      Tsim Sha Tsui Promenade Beautification Project**

11. The Chairman drew members' attention to the letter tabled at the meeting from a member of the public expressing concern about the works to be carried out at the Tsim Sha Tsui waterfront.

12. Referring to the perspective drawing at Enclosure 2 to the paper, Ms Emily LAU said that she failed to see significant improvements to the design of the promenade, in particular the Marine Deck which was not as spacious as imagined.

Nevertheless, the construction works along the waterfront and continued disruption to the area would be unacceptable to the neighbourhood as pointed out by the author of the letter just tabled. There were also concerns that the proposed facilities at the waterfront would deprive members of the public of a peaceful and quiet place to enjoy the view of the harbour and therefore would not be able to meet public aspirations.

13. In response, the Acting Commissioner for Tourism (C for Tourism) said that he had spoken to the author of the letter to address her various concerns, and had offered to take her to the site but she declined. He added that the area which was described as a quiet area would not be removed but would be enhanced by replacing the existing ramps with a lift. This would substantively increase the space for people to enjoy the waterfront and facilitate more user-friendly service to the disabled. He further clarified that one of the fundamental objectives in the design was to maximize pedestrian access to the waterfront but without underpasses.

14. Mrs Selina CHOW emphasized the need to expedite the construction works at the waterfront as both the trades and the residents had long been suffered from the inconvenience arising from the works. It would be best if the works could be fast tracked to tie in with the opening of the Avenue of Stars in April 2004. The Administration should also ensure the compatibility of the project design and the activities, both of which should appeal to tourists and local community alike.

15. Ms Cyd HO opined that the theme of the present design was more on the side of leisure and recreation. Attention should also be directed to the appreciation of local culture. She hoped that some degree of flexibility should be retained in the project design to allow for changes to meet the needs of tourists and the local community. Ms Emily LAU enquired if there was room for further consultation with the arts and cultural sectors on the project design in an attempt to make the area more artistic and attractive. C for Tourism said that since the Tourism Commission did not have the capability to provide the artistic input, it had placed the Salisbury Road Garden under the authority of Arts Development Council to work out the artistic requirements and arrange for the performance on the artistic side. The Salisbury Road Garden would be an adjunct to the Cultural Complex and would form the centre of arts. Meanwhile, further consultation on the process of development would be held with the arts and cultural sectors.

16. Mr James TIEN noted that the part of the promenade outside the New World Hotel and the Intercontinental Hotel would also be re-paved and installed with colour-changing lights. He enquired whether these hotels should also contribute financially to the project. The Assistant Commissioner for Tourism (4) (AC for Tourism(4)) advised that the area referred to was the Avenue of Stars which was funded and constructed by the New World Development Company Limited (NWDC) at a cost of \$40 million, which was not included as part of the total project cost of \$183 million. In reply to Mr Andrew WONG's question, AC for Tourism(4) clarified that while the Avenue of Stars would be owned by the Government, it would be managed by NWDC at its own expenses, which would amount to around \$4 million per year. Consent from the Government would need to be obtained in the organization

of events at the Avenue of Stars. Any proceeds from these activities, after netting the management expenses, would be shared between Government and NWDC. C for Tourism added that the Avenue of Stars was meant to showcase the film industry through the use of special lighting effects, video walls etc. NWDC would cover the cost of operation plus any maintenance as required.

17. Given that the Avenue of Stars was a Government-owned property to be managed by NWDC, Mr James TO hoped that it would not be subject to the strict management rules applicable to private properties. Otherwise, this would deprive young people of gathering places at the Tsim Sha Tsui waterfront, which they were accustomed to. C for Tourism said that the Avenue of Stars was an integral part of the promenade. While the day-to-day management of the Avenue of Stars would be undertaken by NWDC, the overall management of the entire promenade would be overseen by a management committee. The Avenue of Stars would be open 24 hours a day and standard management rules commensurating with the nature of the place would apply.

18. The Chairman put the item to vote. The Committee approved the proposal.

**Item No. 3 - FCR(2003-04)55**

**HEAD 149 – GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT : HEALTH, WELFARE AND FOOD BUREAU**

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

**Item 020 Commitment for the fight against Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)**

19. The Chairman informed members that the Panel on Health Services was consulted on the proposal at its meeting on 5 January 2004.

20. Ms Emily LAU thanked the Administration for providing the supplementary information on the breakdown of the 2 420 jobs created by the Hospital Authority (HA) as well as the build up of the additional funding required for the fight against Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). She enquired whether the additional funding would ensure that there would not be a shortage of staff to cope with the workload as reported in the press. The Deputy Secretary for the Health and Welfare and Food (Health) said that the Hospital Authority (HA) had a system of allocating resources and distributing workload among clusters. For example, because of the recent heavy pressure on the hospitals in the New Territories East Cluster in handling fever patients, HA had been redeploying resources from other clusters. The additional resource requirements under the current funding proposal were meant for the delivery of SARS related services up to 31 March 2004. Separate funding for SARS related activities had been included in HA's draft estimates for 2004-05. He affirmed that HA's system of allocating manpower and resources among clusters would ensure that service demands relating to SARS could be met.

21. The Committee approved the proposal.



**Item No. 4 - FCR(2003-04)56**

**HEAD 170 – SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT**

**♦ Subhead 179 Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme**

22. The Committee approved the proposal.

**Item No. 5 - FCR(2003-04)58**

**HEAD 156 – GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT : EDUCATION AND MANPOWER BUREAU**

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

**New Item “Grant to Support the Assessment Development and Research Activities of the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority”**

23. The Chairman informed members that the Panel on Education was consulted on the proposal at its meeting on 15 December 2003.

24. Noting that the funding of \$136.7 million for the proposal would be met by savings achieved in 2003-2004 under the approved Estimates for the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB), Ms Emily LAU asked how such savings were attained. She also questioned why it was quoted that a key recommendation of the strategic review on the roles and functions of the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) published in May 2003 was the need for Government to provide development funding for HKEAA to deliver assessment development and research activities. This was at variance with the actual recommendation of the review which stated that -

“Because the Government is clearly focused on balancing its books by 2007, we recommend that any public funding of the HKEAA should in principle be fiscally neutral within the Education Vote, and be sourced from a combination of efficiencies and revenue generation within HKEAA, and resources held within the Curriculum Development Institute (CDI) and related functions in the EMB. This signals to the authority that any public money is unlikely to be new money, and it places a strong discipline on it, and the other players funded by the Vote, to seek internal efficiencies or revenues”

25. The Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (DS(EM)) explained that part of the savings were achieved through rationalization of the Capacity Enhancement Grant by the replacement of the two-tier grant structure, allowing a one-off saving of \$60 million per annum. Additional savings of about \$90 million were made through annual price adjustment mechanism of the Operating Expenses Block Grant in accordance with the Composite Consumer Price Index. As regards the strategic review of HKEAA, DS(EM) said that EMB supported the direction as set out in the review as well as the statements contained therein, and agreed that HKEAA would need to review its whole financing model. In the past five months, EMB had

been working with HKEAA in putting a new financing model in place. Joint efforts were made in reviewing the business and funding models, re-structuring its organization and reviewing the salary and benefit structure of its staff. As these processes would take time, the consultants had recommended a one-off grant to enable HKEAA to undertake the more urgent assessment development activities. On the recurrent funding for policy and research activities in the longer term, EMB believed that HKEAA should be able to establish a healthy financial position in the medium term to meet its recurrent expenditure requirement. As HKEAA was operating within a limited Ordinance and with limited resources of revenue, it would have to identify ways to become capable of taking its ongoing research and development which would take a few years. Ms Emily LAU said that the Administration would need to put in place a framework to enhance the cooperation between HKEAA and CDI as well as arrangements to monitor the effective use of the grant and the effectiveness of the working mechanism. At members' request, the Administration undertook to provide more details on how savings were achieved.

26. Mr Kenneth TING sought explanation on the high cost of \$113 million to be spent on assessment development. DS(EM) said that the \$113 million would be spent on a wide range of projects and proposals which were developmental in nature, spanning over a period of two to five years. The Secretary General, Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (SG/HKEAA) supplemented that assessment development would assist in the establishment of clear grading standards for public examinations and would broaden the basis of assessment. It would also improve the reliability of marking and quality control processes. New modes of assessment would also be explored. A number of trials and studies on standards-referenced and school-based assessment were required to improve the existing systems. Care would also be taken to minimize the inconvenience caused to teachers and students in implementing the standards-referencing approach in the public examinations.

27. Mr TSANG Yok-sing questioned the rationale for conducting assessment development and research activities for public examinations, particularly the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE), at this stage when public consultation on the new academic structure of 3+3+4 (three year junior secondary, three-year senior secondary and four-year undergraduate) was still underway. He was worried that the development and research work, which would take years to complete, would become abortive if a decision on the new academic structure was made during the interim. This would create unnecessary confusion to both teachers and students. Sharing similar concern, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that the Administration should explain how these activities should be conducted before and after the implementation of the new academic structure.

28. In reply, DS(EM) said that that there was a pressing need to change the prevailing examination-driven learning culture in school, to bridge the gap between examinations and the senior secondary curriculum under continuous development, and to take in new and appropriate assessment approaches. As such, the present proposal, which was parallel and complementary to the new academic structure,

should be implemented regardless of the outcome of the public consultation. SG/HKEAA added that changes in the academic structure would not affect the assessment development and research activities. There were a number of generic developments, such as research on the development of grade descriptors, method of moderation of the school-based assessment scores, enhancement of marking reliability, new assessment methods and on-line script marking, which were essential regardless of the academic structure. These activities were planned in the interest of the students and would be beneficial to HKCEE and would set the foundation for any new academic structure. He assured members that the efforts put into these activities would not be wasted.

29. Mr James TIEN questioned whether it was justified for HKEAA to spend all the \$136.7 million savings in assessment development and research activities amid the rising fiscal deficit when most Government departments were trying to cut down their expenditure. He also noted that the Panel on Education had only indicated support for the direction of these activities and had asked for more details of the activities and cost estimates, the latter of which had yet to be provided. Furthermore, the cost of the strategic review of HKEAA had not been made available. DS(EM) confirmed that the \$136.7 million savings were within EMB's envelope. He said that EMB believed that the proposal was a fundamental one which would affect annual cohorts of 120 000 students. The proposal incurred a very small unit cost per student for an important part of their learning and was an important contribution by EMB to HKEAA. The Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower added that details of the savings achieved by EMB had been set out in the Administration's paper submitted to FC at its meeting on 30 May 2003 in relation to the operational expenses of EMB.

30. Mr Andrew WONG pointed out that assessment development was an ongoing process and should be part and parcel of the day-to-day functions of HKEAA. The proposal to seek a one-off grant to strengthen the assessment development and research capacity of HKEAA was contrary to the basic philosophy of matching assessment with international standards and changing social expectations on a continuous basis. If HKEAA could adopt a more pragmatic approach in deciding on the assessment principles, the need for a \$136.7 million exercise might not be required. He also supported the setting of an absolute standard for public examinations.

31. As the information requested by members could not be made available at the meeting, DS(Tsy) decided to withdraw FCR(2003-04)58. The requisite information would be provided for members' reference before the proposal was re-submitted for approval by FC at its next meeting.

**Item No. 6 - FCR(2003-04)57**

**HEAD 22 – AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT**

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

**Item 572 Provision of additional cleansing and maintenance service to country parks and other AFCD venues (commitment retitled)**

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

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

**Item 22 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 63 – HOME AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT**

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

**New item “Minor environmental improvement, community involvement and Clean Hong Kong projects”**

**HEAD 149 – GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT : HEALTH, WELFARE AND FOOD BUREAU**

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

**New item “Enhancing hospital care services and implementing minor capital works for hospitals and clinics”**

**HEAD 95 – LEISURE AND CULTURAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

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

**New Item “Leisure, Cultural, Sports and Arts Training Project, Leisure and Cultural Guide Project and provision of cleaning-related service to public leisure venues”**

**HEAD 170 – SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT**

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

**Item 529 Community Care Project and provision of additional support to measures under the Support for Self-reliance Scheme, Peer Counsellor Project, Programme Assistant Project and enhancing personal care services to frail elders (commitment retitled)**

32. The Chairman informed members that the Panel on Manpower was consulted on the proposal at its meeting on 12 February 2004.

33. Mr IP Kwok-him indicated that Members of the Democratic Alliance for Betterment of Hong Kong were supportive of the proposal. Noting that the number of temporary jobs had been reduced from 29 800 to 11 700, he requested a breakdown on the changes in the number of temporary jobs in each of the departments concerned. He also asked if the reduction was due to the need to achieve savings or completion of the departmental projects rendering these jobs no longer necessary.

34. The Permanent Secretary for Economic Development and Labour (Labour) (PSL) said of the 29 800 temporary jobs created since 2000, some 6 000 had been completed, another 18 000-plus would expire by end-March 2004 and the rest would expire at different times. Having considered the views expressed by Legislative Council Members, political parties and the community at large, the Administration proposed to extend some 11 700 temporary jobs in the public sector. The decision was made after careful consideration of the operational needs of the relevant departments and agencies. These included the Social Welfare Department (about 3 800 out of some 8 500 jobs were extended), the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) (about 3 200 out of some 8 000 jobs were extended), the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) (280 out of some 1 400 were extended) and the Tourism Commission (about 200 out of 3 000 jobs were extended). Meanwhile, almost all of the 2 500 temporary jobs in the Hospital Authority (HA) were retained. The extension of these temporary jobs had been discussed by the Panel on Manpower.

35. Noting that country parks were better managed with the engagement of temporary workers, Mr IP asked whether the standard of service could be maintained after the reduction of temporary workers. The Assistant Director of AFCD (ADAFC) advised that 967 temporary jobs had been created by AFCD since September last year mainly for cleaning and maintenance services (such as grass-cutting) in country parks and other AFCD venues. With the employment of temporary workers, the permanent staff had been deployed to projects which required higher skills. Upon completion of some of these projects, AFCD reviewed the need for the temporary jobs and decided that some 280 temporary workers would be required,. ADAFC affirmed that the standard of service would not be affected by the reduction in temporary jobs.

36. Mr Albert CHAN questioned the basis upon which the need for temporary jobs was assessed. He was not convinced that AFCD, which had been employing 967 temporary workers, could still maintain its service standard after the reduction of 687 workers. If a department could afford to lose so many of its workers, it must have been overstaffed in the first place. ADAFC said that with the cessation of employment of the temporary workers, the cleaning and management duties in country parks would be carried out by permanent staff and contractors. Mr CHAN further enquired whether the extended temporary jobs would be re-tendered and if so, whether the serving temporary workers would have an advantage over the others and whether there would be a downward adjustment in salaries. PSL advised that while some of the work would be contracted out, most of the temporary jobs were created by the departments concerned. The department heads would have the discretion in recruiting workers but the salaries would remain the same.

37. Miss CHOY So-yuk remained concerned that the standard of service to the public would be lowered with the reduction of a large number of temporary workers who were performing essential duties such as toilet cleaning, grass cutting, care for elderly etc. She also questioned the need for temporary workers to assist in the delivery of meals and collection and handling of food waste. The Assistant Director

of Social Welfare (Youth and Corrections) advised that the provision of temporary workers would enhance the personal care services to frail elders. Ms Cyd HO pointed out that the service of temporary workers was essential to HA. As a result of the efficiency drives, the hospital services which were previously provided by permanent staff were now undertaken by temporary workers at a lower cost. She therefore considered that the employment of temporary workers should be included in the recurrent expenditure of HA, rather than as part of the extension programme.

38. Miss CHAN Yuen-han said that Members of the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions supported the proposal. She opined that instead of approving the extension of temporary jobs on a regular basis, consideration should be given to creating more permanent posts in departments such as AFCD and FEHD which required large numbers of unskilled workers for cleaning and maintenance. This would not only create more job opportunities for the unskilled workers but also help maintain a cleaner environment for Hong Kong. PSL explained that most of the temporary jobs were created as a result of the outbreak of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome last year. In considering the extension of temporary jobs, the departments concerned would have to provide justifications based on their operational needs. To assist those whose short-term jobs would not be extended in this exercise in finding jobs, the Labour Department (LD) had provided a special counter in each of its 11 job centres to provide employment services. With the improvement in the local employment situation, there were now 19 000 job vacancies registered at LD, of which 5 000 were suitable for low skilled workers. In addition, LD would organize a job fair on 27 February 2004 at the Central Library where 3 100 jobs, ranging from security service, building management, catering and cleansing etc, would be made available. The respective government departments had been encouraged to release their temporary workers to attend the fair. As regards the 4 800 temporary youth workers whose service would not be retained by the respective departments, the Economic Development and Labour Bureau (EDLB) would extend the Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme and launch the Youth Self-employment Support Scheme, the funding of which would be sought from FC at its next meeting. A separate recruitment exercise for youth workers would also be held in April 2004. Meanwhile, the Special Incentive Allowance Scheme for Local Domestic Helpers and the Re-employment Training Scheme would continue to provide assistance to the middle-aged unemployed with low skills and educational attainment. EDLB would endeavour to assist the unemployed workers to find employment.

39. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that the duties of temporary workers, in particular in respect of tourism development and cleaning-related services, were beneficial to the community as a whole. He pointed out that work of the Tourism Development Assistants (TDAs) in promoting the tourism in Tai O was well appreciated. While agreeing to the current proposal of extending temporary jobs to ensure the continued employment of workers, he considered it necessary for the concerned departments to re-assess their need for temporary workers bearing in mind the objective of enhancing the standard of service to the public. Sharing similar views, Mr LEE Cheuk-yan was disappointed that some of the youths employed as TDAs were not offered extension of employment despite their efforts in tourism-related

promotion activities which were seen to be a success. He said that in an attempt to enhance tourist development, the Tourism Commission should consider expanding the services of TDAs to major tourist spots. Likewise, other Government departments should also consider creating temporary jobs which would enhance the standard of service to the public. Ms Emily LAU echoed that more temporary jobs should be created, and that the Administration should review the situation having regard to the concern raised by TDAs about the loss of opportunities. PSL said that the departments concerned would continue to keep in view their operational needs to see whether additional jobs were required to meet changing circumstances.

40. While supporting the extension of the TDA project, Mr Howard YOUNG questioned whether the transportation allowance of \$200,000 for the 205 TDAs for a period of six months would be enough to cover the high travelling costs to and from land control points. The Assistant Commissioner for Tourism (1) clarified that transportation allowance would only be provided to TDAs stationed at Lo Wu on account of the high transportation charges. They were entitled to a transportation allowance of a minimum of \$8 for a return trip per day on a reimbursement basis.

41. As the purpose of creating temporary jobs was to ease unemployment, Ms LI Fung-ying questioned why these jobs should be cut when the unemployment rate was still high. PSL reiterated that the creation of temporary jobs was based on operational requirements and the departments concerned would keep the situation under review. The Administration would endeavour to assist the unemployed in finding employment but there was no guideline on when Government should render assistance. Mr Andrew WONG held the view that the proposed extension of temporary jobs was merely aimed at reducing the unemployment rate.

42. The Committee approved the proposal.

43. The meeting was adjourned at 4:33 pm.