

**立法會**  
**Legislative Council**

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by the Administration)

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**Establishment Subcommittee of the Finance Committee**

**Minutes of the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting  
held at Conference Room A  
on Wednesday, 28 November 2007, at 8:30 am**

**Members present:**

Hon LI Fung-ying, BBS, JP (Chairman)  
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH (Deputy Chairman)  
Hon James TIEN Pei-chun, GBS, JP  
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, SBS, S.B.St.J., JP  
Dr Hon David LI Kwok-po, GBM, GBS, JP  
Hon Margaret NG  
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong  
Hon SIN Chung-kai, JP  
Hon WONG Yung-kan, JP  
Hon Howard YOUNG, SBS, JP  
Dr Hon YEUNG Sum  
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP  
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, SBS, JP  
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki  
Hon WONG Ting-kwong, BBS  
Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP  
Hon KWONG Chi-kin

**Public Officers attending:**

Miss Amy TSE, JP	Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury)
Mrs Sarah KWOK, JP	Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service
Mr Alfred FOK	Principal Executive Officer (General), Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau (The Treasury Branch)

Mr Christopher WARDLAW	Deputy Secretary for Education (5), Education Bureau
Mrs Betty IP	Deputy Secretary for Education (4), Education Bureau
Mrs Alice LEUNG	Principal Assistant Secretary for Education (Adm), Education Bureau
Mr Stephen LAM, JP	Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs
Miss Denise YUE, GBS, JP	Secretary for the Civil Service, Civil Service Bureau
Mr Joshua LAW, JP	Permanent Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau
Mr Gary POON	Principal Assistant Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs (3), Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau

**Clerk in attendance:**

Ms Debbie YAU	Senior Council Secretary (1)1
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**Staff in attendance:**

Ms Pauline NG	Assistant Secretary General 1
Ms Guy YIP	Council Secretary (1)1
Ms Alice CHEUNG	Senior Legislative Assistant (1)1
Mr Frankie WOO	Legislative Assistant (1)2

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The Chairman drew members' attention to an information paper (ECI(2007-08)9) provided by the Administration before the meeting, which set out the latest changes in the directorate establishment approved since 2002.

2. The Chairman said that the meeting was scheduled to be held from 8:30 am to 10:30 am to deal with two staffing proposals. In view of the complexity of the second item which proposed the creation of two additional layers of political appointment positions, she suggested that a speaking time would not be imposed on the first item whereas the speaking time for each member (including the Administration's corresponding response) would be limited to five minutes for the second proposal. Members agreed.

**EC(2007-08)10 Proposed retention of two supernumerary posts of Principal Education Officer (D1) in the Education Bureau of Government Secretariat for a period of two years and six months up to 30 June 2010 to follow through the implementation of the New Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education**

3. The Chairman informed members that the Panel on Education was consulted on the proposal at the meeting on 12 November 2007.

4. Mr Howard YOUNG welcomed the proposal. Noting that the Administration proposed to retain the two supernumerary Principal Education Officer (PEO) (D1) posts for two years and six months from 1 January 2008 to 30 June 2010, Mr YOUNG questioned why the posts were not retained for either two or three years in line with the usual practice, but for two years and six months and would lapse before the end of an academic year i.e. 31 August.

5. In response, the Deputy Secretary for Education (4) explained that the Administration proposed in June 2005 to create the two supernumerary PEO posts for five years up to 30 June 2010 to cope with the additional work arising from the implementation of the new Academic Structure for Senior Secondary School Education and Higher Education (the 334 reform). Taking on board Members' views, the posts were created for an initial period of two years and six months. Owing to the need to follow through the implementation of the new academic structure, it was proposed to retain the two supernumerary posts for another two years and six months to continue with the overall planning and implementation work. As the duties of the two PEOs were mainly planning and supervisory in nature, there was no need for their tenure to tie in with the end of the academic year.

6. Ir Dr Raymond HO said that Members of the Alliance supported the proposal in principle. He recalled that when the creation of the two supernumerary posts was discussed in June 2005, members generally agreed that it was prudent for the Administration to review the continued need of the two posts in mid 2007 before deciding on the way forward for these two posts taking into account the outcome of the review.

7. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that Members of the Democratic Party (DP) were in support of the proposal. While appreciating the need to specify the job descriptions of the two posts to justify the proposed retention, he considered that flexibility should be allowed to modify the duties and responsibilities of the two posts to tie in with possible changes in the implementation of the new academic structure during different stages of development.

8. The item was voted on and endorsed.

**EC(2007-08)11                      Proposed creation of 24 non-civil service positions (11 Deputy Directors of Bureau and 13 Political Assistants to Directors of Bureau) with effect from 1 April 2008 under the Political Appointment System and remuneration for positions at these two ranks**

9.            The Chairman informed members that the Panel on Constitutional Affairs (CA Panel) was consulted on the proposal at the meeting on 23 October 2007.

Remuneration packages for Deputy Directors of Bureau (DDs of B) and Political Assistants to Directors of Bureau (PAs)

10.          Mr Howard YOUNG said that Members of the Liberal Party (LP) were in support of the Political Appointment System (PAS). Noting that candidates found suitable for DD of B and PA positions might be appointed at varying entry points, he reminded the Administration to take note of the current practice in the labour market when deciding the remuneration packages for new appointees. While acknowledging that the remuneration packages should be sufficiently competitive to attract political talents, consideration should be given to offering lower remuneration packages than those proposed in the paper for bureaux with little recruitment difficulties.

11.          The Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs (SCMA) said that the DDs of B and PAs would be offered remuneration commensurate with their experience and qualifications in line with the recruitment practice adopted in the private market. He considered the proposed ranges of remuneration for DDs of B (i.e. equivalent to 65% to 75% of that for Directors of Bureau (Ds of B)) and for PAs (i.e. equivalent to 35% to 55% of that for Ds of B) was suitable for attracting potential candidates. The actual remuneration for individual appointees would be determined by the Chief Executive (CE) on the advice of the Appointment Committee, having regard to the recommendation of the Principal Officials (POs) to whom these appointees would report.

12.          Mr Howard YOUNG asked whether DDs of B would be redeployed to other bureaux during their service and whether they would retain their prevailing salaries upon redeployment to bureaux with little recruitment difficulties. SCMA advised that DDs of B and PAs would be employed by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government (HKSARG) and not by individual bureaux. Subject to service needs, they might be redeployed to work for other bureaux while retaining their prevailing salaries. He added that the remuneration for DDs of B and PAs would be reviewed in the middle of the term (i.e. around end of 2009 for the third term HKSARG), and might be adjusted within the ranges stipulated in the paper.

13.          Noting the Administration's plan to conduct a mid-term review, Mr WONG Kwok-hing suggested that the scope of the review should not only be confined to the remuneration for DDs of B and PAs but also the effectiveness of PAS after creating these two additional layers of political appointees as there was always

room for further improvement. SCMA replied that the mid-term review would encompass the remuneration for individual political appointees. If appropriate, the Appointment Committee might recommend a revision for approval by CE. As regards PAS, SCMA said that this had been implemented for five years. The Administration proposed to expand the existing PAS into a three-layered structure, and it was not uncommon in overseas jurisdictions to have a multi-layered political appointment system. It was premature to forecast the need to further expand the system in future, which could be considered only having regard to the latest situation at that time.

14. Ms Emily LAU said that apart from Singapore, the remuneration package offered to political appointees, such as POs, in Hong Kong was among the highest in the world. She had serious doubts on the justification for further developing PAS at the expense of the public purse. Ms Margaret NG echoed that the Administration had failed to justify the high remuneration for political appointees. There was also a lack of stringent criteria to ensure that candidates for DDs of B and PAs would be selected on an open and fair basis. She said that Members of the Civic Party (CP) were opposed to the current proposal and their stance had been clearly stated at the relevant meeting of the CA Panel. SCMA replied that the remuneration packages would have to be competitive having regard to the state of economy of the community concerned. Given the level of economic development achieved by Hong Kong, it was normal for the local private sector entities to offer higher salaries than its overseas counterparts. The comparison of remuneration for "ministers" in different communities should be put in perspective.

15. Ir Dr Raymond HO agreed that the proposed remuneration packages for DDs of B and PAs were comparable with the private market. While supporting in principle that flexibility should be allowed in determining the entry pay for political appointees to commensurate with their experience, particularly those with professional experience, to attract suitable candidates, he noted that this might be different from the current recruitment practice in the civil service where new recruits were normally offered the minimum entry pay point even if they had some working experience. The Secretary for the Civil Service (SCS) explained that the appointment system for political appointees under PAS was different from the appointment system for civil servants. For example, the term of appointment for political appointees would tie in with the term of office of CE while that for civil servants would be on a 'permanent' basis. Another example was there would be no laid down career progression path for political appointees, unlike that for civil servants. Referring to the employment of new recruits into the civil service at the relevant minimum entry pay point even though they possessed relevant working experience, SCS explained that the Administration had to adopt a pay policy which could ensure the prudent use of the public funds on the one hand and enable the attraction and retention of suitable calibre individuals into the civil service on the other. She said that under the existing policy, higher entry pay would be offered to new recruits who had relevant working experience only if there were recruitment difficulties in the recruitment exercises concerned.

Duties and working relationship of political appointees and senior civil servants

16. Mr James TIEN said that LP Members were supportive of the proposal for the executive-led Government to be given additional resources to strengthen its governance. Noting that DDs of B would be charged with duties such as attending meetings of the Legislative Council (LegCo) and its committees as assigned by Ds of B, maintaining regular liaison with Members and attending public fora, he asked if these duties were currently shouldered by Ds of B, Permanent Secretaries (PSs) or Deputy Secretaries (DSs) and if so, there might be a need to delete some of the civil service posts to offset the creation of some political posts. He was also concerned about possible duplication of work when Ds of B, DDs of B, PSs and DSs would all be required to explain and lobby support for Government policies and legislative proposals etc.

17. SCMA responded that DDs of B, being deputies to Ds of B, would represent their respective bureaux in handling major policy issues, particularly the more politically sensitive ones. On the delineation of duties among Ds of B, DDs of B, PSs and DSs, he said that Ds of B or DDs of B would normally attend the regular Panel meetings to explain Government policies. Whilst they would tackle the more political issues of the business involved, the accompanying PSs and/or civil service colleagues would deal with issues that were more technical in nature. As Ds of B and DDs of B would focus more on political matters whereas PSs and DSs would focus more on policy analysis or research, there would be a clear delineation of work between the political stream and the civil service stream. In response to further enquiry by Mr James TIEN on the job description of DDs of B, SCMA said that DDs of B would, apart from LegCo meetings, also attend open fora as part of their duties.

18. Mr Abraham SHEK said that he supported the current proposal which would help enhance governance of the executive-led Government. He, however, expressed concern as to whether the promotion prospects of Administrative Officers (AOs) would be adversely affected after the creation of the DD of B and PA positions and thus undermining staff morale. SCS responded that different groups of civil servants, including AOs, had expressed views on the further development of PAS. Views expressed by members of the AO grade focused on three main areas, viz, (a) delineation of responsibilities between the political tier and the civil service, (b) line of command between political appointees and PSs, and (c) implications of adding two layers of political appointees on the workload of the supporting civil service stream. They also requested that the recruitment and promotion mechanisms for AO should remain intact under the further developed PAS. Noting their views, the Administration was drafting a code for civil servants to set out the framework within which civil servants were expected to work with political appointees. As for the line of command of PSs, SCS advised that they would continue to report to Ds of B. However, during the absence of Ds of B, PSs would report to the DDs of B who acted in the capacity of Ds of B.

19. Mr Abraham SHEK pointed out that Ds of B were appointed by the Central People's Government (CPG) and since the implementation of PAS, it had been a

usual practice for a D of B to act in another D of B during the latter's absence. He doubted the legitimacy of the Administration's plan to arrange for DDs of B to act as Ds of B during the latter's absence. SCMA clarified that the Basic Law required POs to be appointed by CPG upon nomination by CE. Apart from this, there was a standing practice within the Government for deputies to act in the capacity of their senior officials during the latter's absence. He said that the proposed arrangement for DDs of B to act as Ds of B on a short-term basis would not contravene the Basic Law. SCS added that the current arrangement for a D of B to cover the business of another D of B during the latter's absence was not made because of any consideration relating to compliance of the Basic Law. Rather, it was an administrative arrangement designed to avoid requiring a civil servant, e.g. a PS, to act in the capacity of a PO during the latter's temporary absence, as such a situation could cause confusion to the public about the role of civil servants and would not be conducive to maintaining the civil service's political neutrality.

20. Ms Margaret NG opined that the Administration had failed to protect the integrity of the civil service system as further development of PAS would only bring adverse impact on the existing mechanism. On the one hand, civil servants would be overburdened by the additional support required by DDs of B and PAs and on the other, DDs of B who were unfamiliar with the Government's working practices would fail to make meaningful exchanges with Members at meetings of the LegCo committees. As such, she suggested that SCS should consider streamlining existing arrangements by devising a dual mechanism to enable both the political stream and civil service stream to accomplish their own tasks and complement each other's work at the same time.

#### Further development of PAS

21. Ir Dr Raymond HO noted that in democratic countries, the head of a government was the leader of the political party that won the majority of parliamentary seats in an election and would usually appoint his own governing team. There was also a need for Hong Kong to enhance the capacity of the governing team to ensure effective governance. He recalled that the First CE who was not provided with team members sharing his governing philosophy faced constraints in pushing forward more effective governance. The situation was slightly improved after the implementation of PAS in 2002. However, there was still room for improving the communication between POs and Members, district councillors and other stakeholders. He, therefore, considered it justified to create the proposed additional layers of political appointees to help strengthen the support to CE and POs as well as the communication with political camps.

22. In response, SCMA said that with the additional two layers of political appointees, there might be some division of responsibilities between the D of B and DD of B within a bureau. For instance, the D of B and DD of B would need to agree among themselves how to share the duties relating to legislative proposals and briefings to Panels on important policy issues when drawing up the annual work plans at the commencement of the legislative session in October each year.

23. Ms Emily LAU expressed grave concern on the hasty development of PAS, which in her view had not undergone thorough review since its implementation. Referring to of the Report on Further Development of the Political Appointment System (the Report), Ms LAU did not agree to paragraph 2.03 which stated that "while the working of PAS had not been entirely smooth in the initial period, it had started to run in after several years of operation". She pointed out that the former CE would not have to step down in the middle of his term had PAS been operating smoothly. She considered the Report not sufficient to justify the further development of PAS and requested the Administration to conduct a more in-depth review of PAS.

24. In response, SCMA did not agree that PAS was developed in a hasty manner. In July 2006, the Government issued a consultation document on the further development of PAS to examine the development of PAS since its inception in 2002 and set out the proposal to create two additional layers of political appointment positions. A total of more than 200 written submissions were received during the public consultation period. After taking into account the views received, the Government published the Report on 17 October 2007 to recommend implementation of the proposal. He added that in the 2007-2008 Policy Address, CE had also made it clear that the Administration would allow more room for participation in public affairs through establishing the additional political appointment positions. The expanded PAS would provide a more comprehensive career path for political talents to pursue. Apart from joining LegCo and District Councils (DCs) through elections, public spirited individuals could also join the Government to pursue a political career by serving as politically appointed officials. SCMA pointed out that since the implementation of PAS, all POs were members of the Executive Council and were tasked to promote the policy agenda of the Government under the CE's leadership according to their respective policy portfolios. Moreover, POs were required to shoulder political responsibility for the success and failure of policy under their purview.

25. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that DP Members were strongly opposed to the proposal as they were not convinced that the creation of the political positions could pave the way for further democratic development, enable the Government to have a wider spectrum of expertise for better governance, and enhance the political capacity of the governing team. He criticized that rather than implementing universal suffrage and promoting party politics, the "small circle" elected CE was seeking to centralize power by expanding his governing team to some 40 political officials. As the Government would be inclined to appoint candidates who were like-minded people with CE, DP Members considered that the current proposal was undemocratic and not conducive at all to the grooming of all-round political talents. They were also concerned that the new political stream would undermine the checks and balances currently exemplified by LegCo and political parties to monitor the Government.

26. SCMA explained that it was a common international practice for the head of a government to appoint his cabinet members and to form his political team. Referring to the Green Paper on Constitutional Development issued in July 2007 to



canvass views from the public on the options, roadmap and timetable for implementing universal suffrage for CE and LegCo, he stressed that it had demonstrated the Administration's commitment in taking forward the discussion on implementation of universal suffrage. In this regard, the further development of PAS would pave the way for universal suffrage, since it could help develop the software of political talents, so that by the time when CE was returned by universal suffrage, there would be a pool of political talents available for appointment as cabinet members and deputies.

27. Dr YEUNG Sum pointed out that in overseas democratic countries, their leaders were returned by universal suffrage and hence had the mandate of the people. Their governance would also have the support of the multiple political parties in the parliaments. However, the political structure in Hong Kong was an imbalanced one. By tapping on the support from the pro-Government camp, the Administration was trying to strengthen its power through the creation of additional layers of political appointees using public funds. In his view, good governance should best be achieved if CE and LegCo Members were returned by universal suffrage. He did not consider it appropriate to use public funds for the creation of the DD of B and PA positions.

28. Dr KWOK Ka-ki pointed out that the Establishment Subcommittee (ESC) was tasked to scrutinize each and every staffing proposal based on merits. However, the current proposal was made without well justified grounds. He shared Dr YEUNG Sum's view that the head of a government and his deputies in a democratic country were returned by universal suffrage and were accountable to the public. In Hong Kong, the political appointees were only accountable to CE who was returned by an electorate made up of a "small circle". Any further development of PAS on the basis of this political setting would not be paving the way for greater democracy because it only sought to offer attractive political rewards to those who supported CE indiscriminately. In fact, it might even be a step backward from the return of CE and LegCo Members by universal suffrage as well as the gradual development towards majority rule.

29. SCMA responded that the incumbent CE was elected by the Election Committee which was broadly representative of different sectors of the community. In an opinion survey conducted by a university after the CE's Election, the findings indicated that over 70% of Hong Kong people expressed support for the incumbent CE. He stressed that it was common in overseas jurisdictions to have a multi-layered political appointment system, and Hong Kong was heading towards this direction. It would be an important milestone in Hong Kong's democratic development and would also enable the Government to have a wider spectrum of expertise for better governance. Besides, LegCo's monitoring role had provided checks and balances to the executive authorities' governance in Hong Kong.

30. Dr KWOK Ka-ki was not convinced. He stressed that only a CE returned by universal suffrage, which was provided under the Basic Law, should deserve public recognition. He was disappointed to note that since the negation of the motions in relating to the political reforms by the LegCo on 21 December 2005, the

Government had not been taking any proactive step in promoting the democratic development of Hong Kong towards universal suffrage. He commented that the Administration's claim that the mere use of some \$50 million per annum for the appointment of DDs of B and PAs would help pave the way for further democratic development in Hong Kong was in reality a fallacy.

31. In response, SCMA reiterated the CE's electoral promise to resolve the issue of universal suffrage in accordance with the Basic Law within his current term of office. He pointed out that this ultimate aim of attaining universal suffrage was widely accepted, and that political appointees were expected to support the CE's commitment to resolve this issue during the current term. The publication of the Green Paper on Constitutional Development was aimed at initiating wide-ranging discussions within the community on the implementation of universal suffrage. He hoped that the opposition camp would maintain consistency in their stance in advocating the formation of a ruling coalition and the widening of avenues for political participation. He reiterated that the proposal was a step forward to groom political talents and would pave the way for further democratic development, so that future CE candidates would have a pool of political talents possessing diversified background to assist them in electioneering activities, and to form a political team after being elected.

32. Dr KWOK Ka-ki considered that members of the pan-democratic camp should be well qualified for DDs of B and PAs as they all shared the Administration's aspirations of pressing ahead with the formation of ruling coalition and universal suffrage. He enquired about the criteria for selecting suitable candidates to fill the proposed political positions. He hoped that the successful appointees could advocate publicly their determination to implement universal suffrage by 2012. SCMA affirmed that the Government would strive to achieve the ultimate aim as set out in the Basic Law for CE and LegCo to be returned by universal suffrage. The Administration was actively engaging the community and would assess if a consensus could be formed on the model, roadmap and timetable for implementing universal suffrage. On the criteria for selecting political appointees, SCMA advised that as the appointees would work as a team with other political appointees, they would need to support CE's election manifesto and share his governing philosophy. As to whether it was CE's aim to implement universal suffrage by 2012, SCMA reiterated that the Government had issued the Green Paper on Constitutional Development to set out the model, roadmap and timetable for implementing universal suffrage in Hong Kong, and was analyzing the views received during the consultation period.

#### Use of public funds for assuming political responsibilities

33. Ms Margaret NG pointed out that as a fundamental principle, public funds should not be used to groom particular political parties. By way of illustration, Members' reimbursement claims for operating expenses were subject to stringent guidelines and conditions and strictly confined to LegCo businesses and not activities related to their political work. However, she noted from SCMA's earlier reply to a question raised by Ms Audrey EU that the Government was prone to its

"different affinities" practices and would likely appoint candidates who shared the CE's governing philosophy. As such, the public funds would ultimately be used to support the growth of like-minded political parties. This would contravene the principle that public funds should not be used to groom particular political parties.

34. Expressing similar concern, Ms Emily LAU said that although Members were assuming political responsibilities in paving the way for the democratic development of Hong Kong and grooming of political talents etc., they were only eligible for claiming reimbursement for operating expenses at around \$120,000 per month for LegCo-related businesses but not other political duties. However, the Administration was now seeking public funds to appoint DDs of B and PAs for assuming political responsibilities. She criticized the Administration for adopting different standards in promoting political participation within and outside the Administration. She asked whether resources would be provided for both the Government and political parties to groom political talents on a level playing field.

35. In response, SCMA clarified that the current proposal of expanding the PAS did not contravene the existing arrangements whereby political appointees should not use public resources for non-government purposes, including purposes relating to any political party. Likewise, whilst LegCo Members were provided funding in the form of operating expense reimbursement to fund their discharge of the LegCo duties, they should not use such resources for other purposes. After all, it was a common practice for political parties in different communities to make their own efforts to secure financial support from various sectors of the society. In any event, according to his understanding, Members were given a free hand to use the operating expense reimbursement, for instance, to fund employment of personal assistants to perform political duties as long as they are related to the discharge of duties of LegCo Members.

36. Ms Emily LAU and Ms Margaret NG pointed out that unlike the allowances directly payable to Government's political appointees, the some \$120,000 per month reimbursable operating expenses were not allowances to be pocketed by Members. Ms NG said that reimbursement claims were subject to stringent guidelines and conditions. By way of illustration, the costs incurred for conducting opinion survey on the Green Paper on Constitutional Development by CP Members were non-reimbursable merely because all submissions from the public were sent direct first to CP's office. Members' personal assistants could only assist in political responsibilities on a voluntary basis. She said that SCMA should not only advocate political system where the head of the government was deputized by a political team, but also the fact that such a governing team was returned by election. SCMA reiterated that it was normal practice for political parties to provide the necessary resources for the activities of political parties in the pursuit of their political goals. As for Members' personal assistants who were remunerated by the public purse, it was only reasonable that they should carry out LegCo-related work.

37. Ms Emily LAU considered it unfair for the Administration to restrict the deployment of Members' operating expenses in undertaking political work on the one hand and create positions which were tasked to handle a full range of political

responsibilities or take up various aspect of political liaison work on the other. In this connection, she requested the LegCo Secretariat to prepare an information paper on the reimbursement of operating expenses for LegCo Members to facilitate Finance Committee (FC) members to consider the proposal at the relevant meeting. The paper should clearly specify the applicable guidelines and conditions for claiming reimbursement of operating expenses drawn up in consultation with the Administration and facilitate Members to compare those applicable to the political appointees under the current proposal.

*(Post-meeting note: After the meeting, the Chairmen of FC and ESC directed the Secretariat to prepare an information paper on the reimbursement of operating expenses for LegCo Members and requested the Administration to prepare a separate paper on issues relating to the use of public funds for assuming political responsibilities. The two papers have been issued to members vide ESC11/07-08 and ESC14/07-08 on 7 and 13 December 2007 respectively.)*

38. As a further response to the concerns of Ms LAU and Ms NG about the existing guidelines on claiming operating expenses, SCMA said that this should not be confused with the Administration's proposal to create over 20 political positions within the Government to undertake political work. The political appointees were employed by the Government to undertake government work, and the Government served the overall interests of Hong Kong. He considered that a clear distinction should be drawn among resources of the Government, the LegCo and political parties.

39. Ms Emily LAU was not convinced of the Administration's response. She said that by creating the DD of B and PA positions and selecting like-minded people to fill these positions, the Administration was abusing public funds. She considered it absurd for the governing team formed by a "small circle" election to claim that it represented the overall interest of Hong Kong. She reminded the Administration that LegCo Members were returned by direct election, and as such, they were genuinely representing the public's interest.

40. SCMA said that both Members and the political appointees, irrespective of their background, should strive to work for the overall interest of Hong Kong. He added that the proposed three-layered political structure would also help preserve a permanent, professional and politically impartial civil service which would continue to contribute to effective governance.

41. Mr WONG Kwok-hing opined that the dissolution of the two Municipal Councils in 2000 had resulted in fewer opportunities for aspired talents to pursue a political career path. Despite the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene had been monitoring municipal and environmental hygiene matters, there had been occasions whereby relevant issues could not be adequately dealt with due to the heavy agenda of the Panel meetings. To help alleviate the Panel's burden and groom political talents, he suggested that a dedicated body should be set up to deal with territory-wide municipal matters. Dr YEUNG Sum said that if the

Government truly aspired to grooming political talents in Hong Kong, it should empower DCs to undertake district governance which would help attract aspired talents to serve the public.

42. SCMA replied that the Government had no plan to re-instate the municipal councils. Nevertheless, there were plans to strengthen DCs' role in managing district facilities starting from January 2008.

43. The Chairman put EC(2007-08)11 to the vote. Nine members voted for the proposal and six members voted against the proposal. The individual results were as follows:

*For:*

Mr WONG Kwok-hing  
Ir Dr Raymond HO Chung-tai  
Mr Howard YOUNG  
Mr WONG Ting-kwong  
Mr KWONG Chi-kin  
(9 members)

Mr James TIEN Pei-chun  
Mr WONG Yung-kan  
Mr Abraham SHEK Lai-him  
Prof Patrick LAU Sau-shing

*Against:*

Ms Margaret NG  
Mr SIN Chung-kai  
Ms Emily LAU Wai-hing  
(6 members)

Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong  
Dr YEUNG Sum  
Dr KWOK Ka-ki

Admin

44. The item was endorsed. Ms Margaret NG requested that the item be voted separately at the FC meeting to be held on 14 December 2007. Ms Emily LAU requested that sufficient time should be allocated for discussion of the item at the relevant FC meeting.

45. The Subcommittee was adjourned at 10:10 am.