

ITEM FOR FINANCE COMMITTEE

Starting time of Finance Committee meetings and related meeting arrangements

Purpose

This paper sets out the outcome of the recent consultations with members on the starting time of Finance Committee (FC) meetings and on the suggestion of allowing FC meetings to extend for up to 15 minutes, and invites members to decide on the future meeting arrangements.

Present situation

2. The existing arrangements regarding the starting time and duration of the FC meetings, as decided at the FC meetings on 24 March 2006 and 23 May 2008, are as follows --

- (a) if there is no House Committee (HC) meeting scheduled for the same afternoon, the FC meeting will start at 2:30 pm;
- (b) if a HC meeting is scheduled for the same afternoon, the FC meeting will be scheduled to start at 3:00 pm;
- (c) if it is anticipated that the preceding HC meeting will go beyond 3:00 pm, the starting time of the FC meeting will be rescheduled to a fixed time after 3:00 pm, and the rescheduling notice should reach the Financial Services and Treasury Bureau by Wednesday noon; and
- (d) the duration of FC meetings should be maintained at two hours without extension, and that any item not dealt with at the meeting should be carried over to the next meeting.

The arrangements in (b) and (c) above are reflected in House Rule 20(e).

/Consultation.....

Consultation with the Administration and members on alternative arrangements

3. At the FC meeting on 8 October 2008, during the presentation of platforms and answering of questions by the nominees for the chairmanship of FC for the 2008-2009 legislative session, the issue of the starting time of FC meetings and HC meetings on Friday afternoons was raised. There were suggestions of reverting to the original arrangement of holding FC meetings before HC meetings and allowing FC meetings to extend for a short duration (e.g. up to 30 minutes) where necessary.

4. The Chairman subsequently directed the Secretariat to consult the Administration and members on suggestions on the FC meeting time, including the option of holding FC meetings at 10:45 am on Fridays.

5. In its reply dated 16 October 2008, the Administration indicated that it had no objection to holding FC meetings at 10:45 am on Fridays; but if possible, the Administration would like to revert to the original arrangement of holding FC meetings at 2:30 pm before HC meetings. The Administration also welcomes the suggestion of allowing FC meetings to extend for a short duration where necessary as this would increase the flexibility of FC to deal with time-critical agenda items. When consulted on the same subject on a previous occasion, the Administration's position was that to minimize the waiting time of public officers designated to attend FC meetings, it would be more convenient if the starting time of FC meetings was a fixed time.

6. Two rounds of consultation with FC members have been conducted. The first consultation paper (LC Paper No. FC9/08-09) was issued on 28 October 2008. Of the 53 members who returned the questionnaire, 30 members indicated preference for maintaining the existing arrangements regarding the starting time of FC meetings and 43 members indicated support for extension of a FC meeting for up to 15 minutes where necessary. A summary of members' responses to consultation paper FC9/08-09 is given in **Appendix I**.

7. Subsequently, the Chairman of FC and the Chairman of HC advised that members should be invited to give fresh consideration to the matter, taking into account the duration of House Committee (HC) meetings since the commencement of the 2008-2009 legislative session and other relevant factors. The second consultation paper (LC Paper No. FC36/08-09) was issued on 19 November 2008. Of the 49 members who returned the questionnaire, 33 members preferred maintaining the existing arrangements regarding the starting time of FC meetings, and 37 members supported extension of a FC meeting for up to 15 minutes where necessary. A summary of members' responses to consultation paper FC36/08-09 is given in **Appendix II**.

/Advice sought.....

Advice sought

8. Members are invited to advise whether the existing meeting arrangements as set out in paragraph 2(a) - (c) should continue, while allowing the Chairman to extend a FC meeting for up to 15 minutes where necessary.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
9 January 2009

Summary of members' responses to consultation paper FC9/08-09

Matters under consultation	Number of members choosing the option
<p>A. Starting time of Finance Committee (FC) meetings</p> <p>(a) retain the existing meeting arrangements</p> <p>(b) revert to the original arrangement of holding FC meetings at 2:30 pm before House Committee meetings</p> <p>(c) hold FC meetings at 10:45 am on Fridays</p>	<p>30</p> <p>4</p> <p>19</p>
<p>B. Duration of FC meetings</p> <p>(a) the duration of FC meetings should be maintained at two hours without extension</p> <p>(b) the Chairman may extend a meeting of FC for up to 15 minutes where necessary</p>	<p>8</p> <p>43</p> <p>(Note)</p>
<p>Total number of members who have returned the questionnaire</p>	<p>53</p>

Note

Two members did not indicate their preference for either option for "Duration of FC meetings" in their replies.

Summary of members' responses to consultation paper FC36/08-09

Matters under consultation	Number of members choosing the option
<p>A. Starting time of Finance Committee (FC) meetings</p> <p>(a) retain the existing meeting arrangements</p> <p>(b) revert to the original arrangement of holding FC meetings at 2:30 pm before House Committee meetings</p> <p>(c) hold FC meetings at 10:45 am on Fridays</p>	<p>33</p> <p>2</p> <p>14</p>
<p>B. Duration of FC meetings</p> <p>(a) the duration of FC meetings should be maintained at two hours without extension</p> <p>(b) the Chairman may extend a meeting of FC for up to 15 minutes where necessary</p>	<p>8</p> <p>37</p> <p>(Note)</p>
<p>Total number of members who have returned the questionnaire</p>	<p>49</p>

Note

Four members did not indicate their preference for either option for "Duration of FC meetings" in their replies.