立法會 Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)4/12-13 (These minutes have been seen by the Administration)

Ref: CB1/BC/3/10/2

Bills Committee on Companies Bill

Minutes of the twenty-fourth meeting held on Friday, 16 December 2011, at 8:30 am in Conference Room 2A of the Legislative Council Complex

Members present: Hon Paul CHAN Mo-po, MH, JP (Chairman)

Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, JP (Deputy Chairman)

Hon Albert HO Chun-yan

Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, SBS, S.B.St.J., JP

Dr Hon Philip WONG Yu-hong, GBS Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, SBS, JP Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, GBS, JP

Hon Andrew LEUNG Kwan-yuen, GBS, JP

Hon WONG Ting-kwong, BBS, JP Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC

Members absent: Hon James TO Kun-sun

Hon Miriam LAU Kin-yee, GBS, JP
Prof Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing SBS, JI

Prof Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP

Public officers attending

: Agenda item I

Mr Darryl CHAN

Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the

Treasury (Financial Services)

Mr Nick AU YEUNG

Principal Assistant Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Financial Services)

Mrs Karen HO Deputy Principal Solicitor (Company Law Reform) Companies Registry

Mrs Christine Frances SIT Senior Solicitor (Company Law Reform) Companies Registry

Ms Marianna YU
Deputy Registry Manager (Registration)
Companies Registry

Mr Edward TYLER Senior Assistant Law Officer (Civil Law) Department of Justice

Ms Natalie WONG Senior Government Counsel Department of Justice

Miss Selina LAU Senior Government Counsel Department of Justice

Clerk in attendance: Ms Connie SZETO

Chief Council Secretary (1)4

Staff in attendance: Mr KAU Kin-wah

Senior Assistant Legal Adviser 3

Mr Timothy TSO

Assistant Legal Adviser 2

Ms Sharon CHUNG Senior Council Secretary (1)4

<u>Action</u>

I Meeting with the Administration

•	Part 12 Company Administration and Procedure The Bill (Part 12 and Schedules 1 to 10) Summary of views of deputations made at the
	meeting on 9 April 2011 and the Administration's response)
Other relevant papers	
	Legislative Council Brief
·	Legal Service Division Report
LC Paper No. CB(1)1406/10-11(01)	-
LC Paper No. CB(1)1879/10-11(03)	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
LC Paper No. CB(1)2132/10-11(03)	Administration's response to issues raised by members at the meeting on
LC Paper No. CB(1)2439/10-11(03)	6 May 2011 in relation to Part 9 and Part 12 Administration's response to issues raised by members at the meetings on 6 and 13 May 2011 in relation to

Part 9 and Part 12)

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<u>The Bills Committee</u> deliberated (Index of proceedings attached at the **Appendix**).

2. <u>The Bills Committee</u> requested the Administration to take the Admin. following actions --

<u>Clauses 539 (Power to propose written resolution) and 542 (Company's duty to circulate written resolution proposed by members)</u>

(a) to consider following the United Kingdom in setting the threshold for proposing and circulation of written resolutions at 5% of the total voting rights of members, and to provide information on relevant requirements in Australia and Singapore;

Clause 543 Circulation of written resolution

(b) to add a provision, similar to clause 160(4), under clause 543 to provide that a failure to make a proposed written resolution available on a website throughout the required period was to be disregarded if the failure was wholly attributable to circumstances that it would not be reasonable to have expected the company to prevent or avoid;

Clause 544 Application not to circulate accompanying statement

(c) to provide information on examples or precedent cases on abuse of right by members of a company to request for circulation of the members' statements:

Clause 547 Agreement signified by eligible members who are joint holders of shares

(d) to review the requirements under clause 547, taking into account practical difficulties, such as health problems, preventing the senior holder (of the joint holders of shares of a company) from signifying agreement to a proposed written resolution;

Clause 552 General provisions

(e) to review clause 552, in respect of the passing of a resolution at

Action - 5 -

a general meeting, with a view to clarifying whether the Companies Bill ("CB") or the articles of a company would prevail in case of conflict;

Clause 554 Special resolution

(f) to review the drafting of clause 554(2) to make it clear that the clause referred to 75% of the total votes cast by members in person and by proxies together, but not 75% of the votes cast by members in person and 75% of the votes cast by proxies;

<u>Clause 556 Members' power to request directors to call general</u> meeting

(g) to consider changing the Chinese rendition for "the directors" in clause 556(2) from "一眾董事" to "董事", as it was in the current Companies Ordinance ("CO");

Subdivision 4 of Part 12 (Calling meetings)

(h) to consider setting out arrangements for directors' and members' meetings in CB;

Clause 561 Notice required of general meeting

- (i) to consider raising the threshold for agreeing to shorter notice for calling general meeting (other than the annual general meeting) by shorter notice from 95% to 100% of the total voting rights at the meeting of all members;
- (j) to consider prescribing provisions in CB for right of members of a company to propose changes to the date and time of a general meeting/directors' meeting;

<u>Clauses 569 (Accidental failure to give notice of meeting or resolution) and 606 (Company's duty to circulate resolution for annual general meeting)</u>

(k) to provide information about the interpretation of "accidental failure";

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Clauses 570 (Members' power to request circulation of statement) and 605 (Members' power to request circulation of resolution for annual general meeting)

- (1) to consider raising the threshold of 2.5% of total voting rights in clause 570(2)(a) and clause 605(2)(a) for making a request for the circulation of a statement/resolution;
- (m) to consider deleting the reference in clause 570(2)(b) and clause 605(2)(b) to the average sum paid up per member at \$2,000;

Clause 574 (Meeting at 2 or more places)

- (n) to provide written response to the following concerns/views --
 - (i) the term "audio-visual technology" in clause 574(1) would not cater for advancement in technology, and that other words like "electronic means" and "technology" should be considered:
 - (ii) how would a company verify the identities of its members participating in a meeting at two or more places and how secret ballots could be conducted during a meeting held at two or more places using audio-visual technology; and
 - (iii) whether there should be provisions in CB to provide for the failure of electronic communication/equipment at some of the venues or some points of time during a meeting;

Clause 581 (Right to demand poll)

(o) to review the proposed 5% threshold (of the total voting rights of all the members having the right to vote at the meeting) for demanding a poll at a general meeting;

Clause 600 (Requirement to hold annual general meeting)

(p) to review clause 600 with a view to empowering the Registrar of Companies, instead of the Court, to consider company's application for extending the period for holding its annual general meeting; and

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<u>Clause 606 (Company's duty to circulate resolution for annual general meeting)</u>

(q) to review whether "accidental omission" in clause 606(3) should be replaced by "accidental failure" (as in clause 569) or vice versa to ensure consistency in the provisions.

II. Any other business

- 3. <u>The Chairman</u> reminded members that the next meeting of the Bills Committee would be held on Friday, 6 January 2012 at 8:30 am to meet with the Administration.
- 4. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:25 pm.

Council Business Division 1
<u>Legislative Council Secretariat</u>
11 October 2012

Bills Committee on Companies Bill

Proceedings of the twenty-fourth meeting on Friday, 16 December 2011, at 8:30 am in Conference Room 2A of the Legislative Council Complex

Time marker	Speaker	Subject(s)	Action required
000701- 000846	Deputy Chairman	Opening remarks	•
	clause examination of the Bil the Bill (LC Paper No. CB(1)	_	
000847- 001320	Administration Deputy Chairman Mr Andrew LEUNG	Brief introduction to clauses 537 to 545 of the Companies Bill ("CB")	
001321- 002027	Administration Deputy Chairman Mr Andrew LEUNG	Clause 538 Written resolution Clause 539 Power to propose written resolution Discussion on the above clauses Mr Andrew LEUNG's suggestion that the Administration should consider following the United Kingdom ("UK") in setting the threshold for proposing and circulation of written resolutions at 5% of the total voting rights of members, instead of 2.5% as stipulated in clause 539 Request for the Administration to provide a written response to Mr LEUNG's suggestion and information on relevant requirements in Australia and Singapore	The Administration to take action as in paragraph 2(a) of the minutes
002028- 002136	Administration Mr Albert HO	Clause 540 Company's duty to circulate written resolution proposed by directors The Administration's briefing on the clause, and Mr Albert HO seeking clarification on the clause	
002137- 002514	Administration Deputy Chairman Mr Albert HO	Clause 541 Members' power to request circulation of written resolution	

Time marker	Speaker	Subject(s)	Action required
		The Administration's briefing on the clause	•
		Discussion on the maximum number of words (no more than 1 000 words as provided in the clause) in a statement to be circulated to members of a company with the written resolution	
002515- 003846	Administration Assistant Legal Adviser 2 ("ALA2") Mr Andrew LEUNG Deputy Chairman Senior Assistant Legal Adviser 3 ("SALA3")	Clause 542 Company's duty to circulate written resolution proposed by members Clause 543 Circulation of written resolution The Administration's briefing on the above clauses	
		Mr Andrew LEUNG's view that the Administration should consider setting the threshold for circulation of written resolutions at 5% of the total voting rights of members, instead of 2.5% as stipulated in clause 542(2)	
		ALA2's suggestion for the Administration to add a provision in clause 543, similar to clause 160(4), to provide that a failure to make a proposed written resolution available on a website throughout the required period was to be disregarded if the failure was wholly attributable to circumstances that it would not be reasonable to have expected the company to prevent or avoid	
		Discussion on the liabilities of a company and the "responsible person" for contravening the requirements under the clauses	
003847- 004301	Administration ALA2 Deputy Chairman	Clause 544 Application not to circulate accompanying statement The Administration's briefing on the clause	
		ALA2's suggestion that the Administration should provide information on examples	

Time marker	Speaker	Subject(s)	Action required	
		or precedent cases on abuse of right by members of a company to request for circulation of the members' statements to enable the Bills Committee to have a better understanding of what would constitute such abuse	take action as paragraph 2(c) the minutes	
004302- 004809	Administration Mr Andrew LEUNG ALA2 Deputy Chairman	Clause 545 Company's duty to notify auditor of proposed written resolution Briefing and discussion on the clause		
004810- 005751	Administration Mr Albert HO Mr WONG Ting-kwong Ms Audrey EU Deputy Chairman	Clause 546 Procedure for signifying agreement to proposed written resolution Clause 547 Agreement signified by eligible members who are joint holders of shares		
		The Administration's briefing on the above clauses		
		Members' concern that clause 547 had not taken into account practical difficulties, such as health problems, preventing the senior holder (of the joint holders of shares of a company) from signifying agreement to a proposed written resolution, and request for the Administration to review the clause	Administration take action as	
005752- 010033	Administration Ir Dr Raymond HO Deputy Chairman	Clause 548 Period for agreeing to proposed written resolution Ir Dr Raymond HO's enquiry about justifications for setting a time limit of 28 days (after the circulation date), instead of one calendar month, for passing a proposed written resolution, and the Administration's response		
		The Deputy Chairman's enquiry on the consequence for a proposed written resolution upon the lapse of 28 days and the Administration's response		
010034- 010451	Administration	Clause 549 Company's duty to notify members and auditor that written resolution has been passed		

Time marker	Speaker	Subject(s)	Action required	
		Clause 550 Sending document relating to written resolution by electronic means Clause 551 Relationship between this Subdivision and provisions of company's articles The Administration's briefing on the above clauses and its response to deputations' views on Part 12 of CB (LC Paper No. CB(1)339/11-12)		
010452- 010734	Administration SALA3	Clause 552 General provisions The Administration's briefing on the clause which provided that a resolution would be regarded as validly passed if it had been passed in accordance with provisions in CB and the company's articles SALA3 seeking clarification on whether CB or the articles of a company would prevail in case of conflict	The Administration	
010735- 011330	Administration ALA2 Mr Albert HO	Clause 553 Ordinary resolution Clause 554 Special resolution The Administration's briefing on the above clauses ALA2's suggestion that the drafting of clause 554(2) should be reviewed to make it clear that the clause referred to 75% of the total votes cast by members in person and by proxies together, but not 75% of the votes cast by members in person and 75% of the votes cast by proxies	Administration take action as paragraph 2(f)	to in of
011331- 012011	Administration Ms Audrey EU Mr Ronny TONG	Clause 555 Directors' power to call general meeting Clause 556 Members' power to request directors to call general meeting Discussion on the above clauses Members' views that the Administration should consider changing the Chinese rendition for "the directors" in clause	The Administration	to in

Time marker	Speaker	Subject(s)	Action required
		556(2) from "一眾董事" to "董事", as it was in the current Companies Ordinance ("CO")	_
012012- 012357	Administration Mr WONG Ting-kwong	Clause 557 Directors' duty to call general meeting requested by members Clause 558 Members' power to call general meeting at company's expense The Administration's briefing on the above clauses	
012358- 014030	Administration Deputy Chairman Mr Ronny TONG Dr Philip WONG Mr WONG Ting-kwong SALA3	Clause 559 Members' power to call general meeting when there is no director etc. The Administration's briefing on the clause Discussion on clauses 555 to 559 Mr WONG Ting-kwong's enquiry about voting and the Administration's response Dr Philip WONG's enquiry relating to giving notices of meetings and the Administration's response Members' concerns about holding general meeting in short notice and improper arrangements in time and venues for directors' and members' meetings Members' suggestion for the Administration to consider setting out arrangements for directors' and members' meetings in CB	The Administration to take action as in paragraph 2(h) of the minutes
014031- 020239	Administration Mr Albert HO Deputy Chairman SALA3 Dr Philip WONG Mr Jeffrey LAM Mr Abraham SHEK Mr Ronny TONG	Clause 560 Power of Court to order meeting Clause 561 Notice required of general meeting The Administration's briefing on the clauses Members' concerns about possible abuse of clause 561 in giving shorter notice for	

Time marker	Speaker	Subject(s)	Action required
		general meeting and protection of the interest of minority shareholders	-
		Request for the Administration to	The Administration to
		(a) consider raising the threshold for agreeing to calling general meeting (other than the annual general meeting) by shorter notice from 95% to 100% of the total voting rights at the meeting of all members; and	paragraphs 2(i) and
		(b) consider providing in CB for the right of members of a company to propose changes to the date and time of a general meeting/directors' meeting	
020240-021317	Administration Dr Philip WONG Mr Andrew LEUNG ALA2	Clause 562 Manner in which notice to be given Clause 563 Publication of notice of general meeting on website Clause 564 Persons entitled to receive notice of general meeting Clause 565 Duty to give notice of general meeting to auditor Clause 566 Contents of notice of general meeting Clause 567 Explanation of improving director's emoluments to be set out in notice of general meeting Clause 568 Resolution requiring special notice Clause 569 Accidental failure to give notice of meeting or resolution Briefing by the Administration on the above clauses Members seeking clarification on clauses 563, 568 and 569 ALA2's suggestion that the Administration should provide information about the interpretation of "accidental failure" in clause 569	take action as in

Time marker	Speaker	Subject(s)	Action required
023027- 023444	Chairman Administration Mr Andrew LEUNG	Clause 570 Members' power to request circulation of statement Discussion on the clause	requireu
		Request for the Administration to consider (a) raising the threshold of 2.5% of total voting rights for making a request for the circulation of a statement related to a general meeting to be held; and (b) deleting the reference to the average	The Administration to take action as in paragraphs 2(1) and 2(m) of the minutes
		sum paid up per member at \$2,000 in clause 570(2)(b)	
023445- 024316	Administration Mr Andrew LEUNG Mr Albert HO ALA2	Clause 571 Company's duty to circulate members' statement Clause 572 Expenses of circulating members' statement Clause 573 Application not to circulate members' statement Briefing by the Administration on the above clauses Mr Andrew LEUNG's enquiry on why the wordings in clause 572 deviated from section 316(1)(a) of the United Kingdom Companies Act 2006 ("UKCA 2006") on which the clause was modelled, and the Administration's response Mr Albert HO's enquiry on the reasons for all the court applications in relation to CB to be made with the Court of First Instance, and the Administration's response	
024317- 030101	Administration Chairman Dr Philip WONG Mr Andrew LEUNG Mr Albert HO Ms Audrey EU Mr Ronny TONG SALA3	Clause 574 Meeting at 2 or more places Members' concerns/views on (a) the term "audio-visual technology" in clause 574(1) would not cater for advancement in technology, and that other words like "electronic means"	The Administration to take action as in paragraph 2(n) of

Time marker	Speaker	Subject(s)	Action required
		and "technology" should be considered; (b) how would a company verify the identities of its members participating in a meeting at two or more places and how secret ballots could be conducted during a meeting held at two or more places using audio-visual technology; and (c) whether there should be provisions in CB to provide for the failure of electronic communication/equipment at some of the venues or some points of time	the minutes
030102- 030507	Administration	Clause 575 Quorum at meeting Clause 576 Chairperson of meeting Clause 577 Resolution passed at adjourned meeting Clause 578 General rules on votes Clause 579 Votes of joint holders of shares Clause 580 Declaration by chairperson on show of hands Briefing on the above clauses	
030508- 031445	Administration Mr Andrew LEUNG Ms Audrey EU	Clause 581 Right to demand poll Briefing on the clause Mr Andrew LEUNG's enquiry about the drafting in clauses 581(2) and 581(4) which were different from sections 321(2)(c) and 329(2)(c) of UKCA 2006 on which the two clauses were modelled, and the Administration's response Request for the Administration to review the 5% threshold (of the total voting rights of all the members having the right to vote at the meeting) for demanding a poll at general meeting vis-à-vis the current 10% threshold adopted in CO and in the UK and Singapore	The Administration to take action as in paragraph 2(o) of the minutes

Time marker	Speaker	Subject(s)	Action required
031446-032248	Administration	Clause 582 Chairperson's duty to demand poll Clause 583 Voting on poll Clause 584 Company's duty to record result of poll in minutes of general meeting Clause 585 Saving for provisions of articles as to determination of entitlement to vote Clause 586 Right to appoint proxy Clause 587 Notice of meeting to contain statement of rights etc. Clause 588 Notice required of appointment of proxy etc. Clause 589 Sending documents relating to proxies in electronic form Clause 590 Company-sponsored invitations to appoint proxies Clause 591 Requirement as to instrument of proxy issued by company Clause 592 Chairing meeting by proxy Clause 593 Company-sponsored proxy's duty to vote in the way specified in appointment of proxy Briefing on the above clauses	
032249- 033104	Ms Audrey EU Administration Chairman Mr Andrew LEUNG	Clause 581 Right to demand poll Discussion on the transitional arrangements for clause 581 Ms Audrey EU's concern about possible confusion to companies which were allowed to follow the 10% threshold under the current CO in the demand for poll if the proposed 5% threshold was adopted, and her suggestion that the Administration should provide a checklist of the requirements under Table A of the First Schedule to CO which would be changed or become obsolete when CB came into effect in order to facilitate companies' timely compliance with CB The Administration's response that it would publicize the changes made by the new CO after the CB was passed and	

Time marker	Speaker	Subject(s)	Action required
		before the new CO commenced operation	
033105- 033430	Administration Mr Andrew LEUNG	Clause 594 Notice required of termination of proxy's authority Clause 595 Effect of member's voting in person on proxy's authority	
		The Administration's briefing on the above clauses	
		Mr Andrew LEUNG seeking clarification on the clauses	
033431- 033635	Administration	Clause 596 Representation of body corporate at meetings Clause 597 Representation of recognized clearing house at meetings Clause 598 Saving for more extensive rights given by articles Briefing on the above clauses	
033636-	Administration	Clause 599 Interpretation	
034341	Chairman ALA 2	Clause 600 Requirement to hold annual general meeting The Administration's briefing on the clauses	
		The Chairman's view that it might be more cost-effective and efficient for the Registrar of Companies, instead of the Court, to be empowered under clause 600, for considering company's application for extension of the period for holding its annual general meeting	The Administration to take action as in paragraph 2(p) of the minutes
034342-	Administration	Clause 601 Exemption of dormant	
035222	Mr WONG Ting-kwong	company from requirement to hold annual general meeting Clause 602 Circumstances in which company not required to hold annual general meeting Clause 603 Dispensation with annual general meeting Clause 604 Revocation of resolution dispensing with annual general meeting Clause 605 - members' power to request	

Time marker	Speaker	Subject(s)	Action required
		circulation of resolution for annual general meeting The Administration's briefing on the above clauses Mr WONG Ting-kwong seeking clarification on clause 603 The Administration's advice that it would review the threshold of 2.5% of voting rights and the reference to the average sum paid up per member (at \$2,000) in clause 605	The Administration to take action as in paragraphs 2(1) and
035223- 035433	Administration ALA 2	Clause 606 Company's duty to circulate resolution for annual general meeting The Administration's briefing on the clause ALA2's suggestion for the Administration to (a) provide information about interpretation of "accidental failure"; and (b) to review whether "accidental omission" in clause 606(3) should be replaced by "accidental failure" (in clause 569) or vice versa to ensure consistency in the provisions	Administration to take action as in paragraphs 2(k)
035434- 035450	Chairman	Date of next meeting	

Council Business Division 1 <u>Legislative Council Secretariat</u> 11 October 2012