立法會 Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)9/12-13 (These minutes have been seen by the Administration)

Ref: CB1/BC/3/10/2

Bills Committee on Companies Bill

Minutes of the thirty-sixth meeting held on Friday, 4 May 2012, 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)

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

Prof Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP

Members absent : Hon Albert HO Chun-yan

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

Hon James TO Kun-sun

Hon Miriam LAU Kin-yee, GBS, JP

Public officers attending

: Agenda item II

Mr Darryl CHAN

Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the

Treasury (Financial Services)

Mr Maurice LOO

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

Mr Nick AU YEUNG

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

Ms Rita HO Registry Solicitor Companies Registry

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

Ms Phyllis MCKENNA Deputy Principal Solicitor (Company Law Reform) Companies Registry

Ms Kitty TSUI Senior Solicitor (Company Law Reform) Companies Registry

Ms Margaret CHAN Solicitor (Company Law Reform) Companies Registry

Mr CHUNG Wai-tim Solicitor (Company Law Reform) Companies Registry

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

Miss Selina LAU Senior Government Counsel Department of Justice Mr Henry CHAN 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

Action

I Submissions from the Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accountants on clause 399 of the Bill

(LC Paper No. CB(1)1743/11-12(01) -- Submission dated

21 December 2011 from the Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public

Accountants

LC Paper No. CB(1)1743/11-12(02) -- Submission dated

26 April 2012 from the Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public

Accountants)

<u>The Bills Committee</u> noted the submissions from the Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accountants ("HKICPA") on clause 399 (Offences relating to contents of auditor's report) of the Companies Bill ("CB"). <u>The Chairman</u> suggested and <u>members</u> agreed that a meeting be held to receive views from deputations, including HKICPA, on clause 399.

(*Posting-meeting note*: The meeting to receive views from deputations on clause 399 was held on 16 May 2012 at 8:30 am.)

II Meeting with the Administration

Draft Committee Stage amendments proposed by the Administration (LC Paper No. CB(1)1591/11-12(01) -- Draft Committee amendments in relation to Part 1 (Preliminary) of the proposed by Bill the Administration LC Paper No. CB(1)1747/11-12(01) -- Draft Committee Stage amendments in relation to Part 7 (Debentures) of the Bill proposed bv the Administration LC Paper No. CB(1)1747/11-12(02) -- Draft Committee Stage amendments in relation to (Registration Part 8 of the Bill Charges) the proposed by Administration LC Paper No. CB(1)1747/11-12(03) -- Draft Committee Stage amendments in relation to Part 10 (Directors and Secretaries) Company of the Bill proposed by the Administration LC Paper No. CB(1)1747/11-12(04) --Draft Committee Stage amendments in relation to Part 13 (Arrangements, Amalgamation, and Compulsory Share Acquisition in Takeover and Share Buy-Back) of the Bill proposed by the Administration LC Paper No. CB(1)1591/11-12(05) -- Draft Committee Stage amendments in relation to Part 15 (Dissolution by Striking off or Deregistration) of the Bill proposed by the

Administration

LC Paper No. CB(1)1591/11-12(06) -- Draft Committee Stage amendments in relation to Part 17 (Companies not Formed, but Registrable, under this Ordinance) of the Bill proposed by the Administration

LC Paper No. CB(1)1747/11-12(05) -- Draft Committee Stage amendments in relation to Part 18 (Communications to and by Companies) of the Bill proposed by the Administration

LC Paper No. CB(1)1591/11-12(07) -- Draft Committee Stage amendments in relation to Part 20 (Miscellaneous) of the Bill proposed by the Administration)

Matters arising from previous meetings

(LC Paper No. CB(1)1490/11-12(02) --Administration's response issues raised at the meeting on 16 March 2012 in relation to alignment of penalties for offences under the Companies Bill)

Other relevant papers

(LC Paper No. CB(3)412/10-11 -- The Bill

LC Paper No. CB(1)339/11-12(01) -- Summary of views of

deputations made at the meeting on 9 April 2011 and the Administration's

response

File Ref: CBT/17/2C -- Legislative Council Brief

LC Paper No. LS26/10-11 -- Legal Service Division

Report

LC Paper No. CB(1)1406/10-11(01) -- Paper on Companies Bill

prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat

(Background brief))

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

Admin

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

Alignment of penalties for offences under the Companies Bill

(a) to review Annex A to the Administration's paper relating to alignment of penalties for offences under the Companies Bill (LC Paper No. CB(1)1490/11-12(02)) taking into account members' views and the situations in other ordinances regarding the imposition of daily default fines for offences;

Clause 313 -- Return of allotment

(b) to review the Chinese text of the last sentence of clause 313(6) ("...而第(1)款在猶如提述一個月是提述該延長的限期的情況下具有效力。") and to consider the Legal Adviser's suggestion ("...而第(1)款具有效力,猶如提述一個月是提述該延長的限期。");

Clause 449 -- Direction requiring company to appoint director

(c) to amend the proposed Committee Stage amendment ("CSA") to clause 449(3) to address members' concern about confusion with the requirement under clause 636(1) (Duty to notify Registrar of appointment and change);

Clause 454 -- Director's right to protest against removal

(d) to amend "... more than 2 days before the day ..." in clause 454(4)(a) to "... more than 2 days before the <u>last</u> day...", so as to align with clause 413(5);

<u>Clause 467 -- Direction requiring company to appoint company secretary</u>

(e) to make the amendment to the proposed CSAs to clause 467(3) to be in line with changes in the proposed CSAs to clause 449(3);

<u>Clause 662 -- Explanatory statements to be issued or made available</u> to creditors or members

(f) to delete the proposed CSAs to clause 662(5) and preserve the original text of the clause; and

<u>Clause 887 -- Registrar may give notice to suspected offender about not instituting proceedings under certain conditions</u>

- (g) to review both the English and Chinese texts of clause 887(1)(b) in the light of comments by the Legal Adviser.
- 4. <u>The Chairman</u> requested the Legal Advisers to review the offence provisions listed in Annex A to the Administration's paper relating to alignment of penalties for offences under CB (LC Paper No. CB(1)1490/11-12(02)) and advise the Bills Committee on whether the offences meet any of the following criteria --
 - (a) whether the provision involves a listed company only;
 - (b) whether the provision may involve the protection of minorities' rights;
 - (c) whether the provision relates to the keeping of proper records by a company having only one member/director; and
 - (d) whether the provision is a new provision concerning publication of a notice.

(*Post-meeting note*: The Legal Service Division's opinion on the general categorization of the offence provisions in accordance with the Chairman's criteria as above was set out in LC Paper No. LS66/11-12 and circulated to members vide LC Paper CB(1)2019/11-12 on 28 May 2012.)

III Any other business

5. <u>The Chairman</u> informed members that the meeting with deputations on clause 399 would be held on Wednesday, 16 May 2012 at 8:30 am. He

reminded members that the next meeting of the Bills Committee would be held on Friday, 7 May 2012 at 8:30 am to meet with the Administration.

6. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:10 pm.

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

Bills Committee on Companies Bill

Proceedings of the thirty-sixth meeting on Friday, 4 May 2012, at 8:30 am in Conference Room 2A of the Legislative Council Complex

Time marker	Speaker	Subject(s)	Action required
000130- 000410	Chairman	Opening remarks	
	on the submissions from the Ho(LC Paper Nos. CB(1)1743/11-	ong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accou	ntants on clause 399
000411-000602	Chairman Mr Andrew LEUNG	Members noted the submissions from the Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accountants ("HKICPA") on clause 399 (Offences relating to contents of auditor's report) of the Companies Bill ("CB") and the Institute's request to meet the Bills Committee on its concerns on the clause. The Chairman's suggestion that the HKICPA be invited to a meeting to give views on the clause Mr Andrew LEUNG's suggestion that other concerned organizations should be invited to give views on the clause The Chairman's instruction for the Clerk to make arrangements for the meeting, including preparing a list of deputations	The Clerk to take action accordingly
Discussion	on follow-up actions for the m	to be invited and consulting members on the list seeting held on 16 March 2012 relating to all	ignment of penalties
	-	C Paper No. CB(1)1490/11-12(02))	
000603- 001125	Administration	The Administration's briefing on its paper –	
		(a) paragraphs 1 to 4; and(b) Annex A (i.e. list of non-filing offences under CB punishable by a Level 3 fine and a daily default fine of which the daily default fine would	

Time marker	Speaker	Subject(s)	Action required
		be removed) and Annex B (i.e. list of filing offences under CB punishable by a Level 3 fine and a daily default fine of which the daily default fine would be retained)	
001126- 001526	Ms Audrey EU	Ms Audrey EU's enquiries on (a) the rationale for the Administration's proposal to delete the daily default fines for the offences listed in Annex A of the paper; and (b) whether the offences listed in Annexes A and B were new offences under CB punishable by daily default fines or existing ones under the Companies Ordinance ("CO") The Administration's response that (a) the proposal was made in response to members' concerns expressed at the meeting on 16 March 2012 that the imposition of a daily default fine of \$300 for Level 3 fine offences would impose undue burden on some small and medium-sized enterprises ("SMEs") and the fine was not proportionate to the severity of the Level 3 fine offences which were mostly minor regulatory offences; and (b) of the 30 non-filing offences listed in Annex A, about two-thirds were new offences under CB	
001527- 001832	Mr Andrew LEUNG Administration	Mr Andrew LEUNG's support for the proposal in Annex A (deletion of daily default fines for 30 non-filing offences punishable by a Level 3 fine) and his enquiry on whether there were caps on the accumulated daily default fines for an offence The Administration's response that there were no such caps	

Time marker	Speaker	Subject(s)	Action required
001833- 002214	Ms Audrey EU	Ms Audrey EU's views that –	1
002214		(a) the daily default fine for the first item in Annex A should not be deleted (i.e. an offence under clause 161(2) that applied to listed companies which failed to publish in the Gazette a notice of the issue of the new certificate and cancellation of the original certificate, and to deliver a copy of the notice to the recognized stock market concerned within the prescribed time); and	
		(b) the relevant requirement under clause 161(2) was of public interest, and listed companies, with their resources, should have no problem in complying with the requirement	
002215- 002321	Mr Jeffrey LAM	Mr Jeffrey LAM's support for the Administration's proposal to delete the daily default fines for some relatively minor non-filing offences	
002322- 002536	Chairman Administration	The Chairman's enquiry on which items listed in Annex A were existing offences in CO punishable by daily default fines, and the Administration's response	
002537- 004142	Mr Ronny TONG Ms Audrey EU Administration	 Mr Ronny TONG's views that (a) offenders should be penalized according to the law; (b) the imposition of daily default fines was not unique to CO or CB and it was an important mechanism to ensure quick remedial actions by offenders; and (c) the Administration should provide information about the offences in other ordinances which were punishable by daily default fines and compare the situations under CB and these ordinances 	

Time marker	Speaker	Subject(s)	Action required
		Ms Audrey EU's concern that the removal of the daily default fine in some cases would leave the Registrar of Companies ("the Registrar") powerless in dealing with continuing default	
		The Administration's response that –	
		(a) the intention of the proposal to delete the daily default fines for non-filing offences was to reduce the amount of fine that would be imposed for such offences;	
		(b) there was no intention to change the nature of the offence or to restrict the ability of the Registrar to prosecute breach of a continuing nature; and	The
		(c) the Administration would review Annex A taking into account members' views and the situations in other ordinances	take action as in
004143- 004533	Mr Andrew LEUNG	Mr Andrew LEUNG's views that (a) the level of penalties for an offence should be commensurate with the severity of the offence; and	
		(b) the financial burden on SMEs caused by daily default fines for minor regulatory offences should not be ignored	
004534- 004918	Chairman	The Chairman's request for the Legal Advisers to review the offence provisions listed in Annex A of the Administration's paper, and advise on whether the offences meet any of the following criteria	_
		(a) whether the provision involves a listed company only;	
		(b) whether the provision may involve the protection of minorities' rights;	

Time marker	Speaker	Subject(s)	Action required
		 (c) whether the provision relates to the keeping of proper records by a company having only one member/director; and (d) whether the provision is a new provision concerning publication of a notice 	
004010	M. P. MONG		
004919- 005231	Mr Ronny TONG Mr Andrew LEUNG	Mr Ronny TONG's view that the nature of the offences, such as whether immediate remedies could be made, should be taken into account when considering whether a daily default fine should be deleted	
		Mr Andrew LEUNG's view that the level of penalties for offences relating to the keeping of proper records by a company having only one member/director should take into account the low level of public interest involved	
005232- 005453	Mr Jeffrey LAM	Mr Jeffrey Lam's declaration of interest that he was non-executive director of a number of companies, and his views that	
		(a) financial burden due to imposition of fines was not only the concern of SMEs, but also professionals' companies; and	
		(b) the rewrite of CO should seek to improve Hong Kong's business environment, and the alignment of penalties for offences under CB should cater for development in the business environment	
005454- 005923	Mr WONG Ting-kwong Senior Assistant Legal Adviser 3 ("SALA3")	Mr WONG Ting-kwong's concern that heavy penalties under the CO/CB would discourage young people from starting their businesses, and his enquiry on action to be taken by the court/the Registrar for non-compliance by company with a court order	

Time marker	Speaker	Subject(s)	Action required
		SALA3's reply that	
		(a) non-compliance with a court order could amount to contempt of court and the regulator (the Registrar) could take further legal action against the company; and	
		(b) if a company committed a regulatory offence, not only the company but also the responsible person would be prosecuted/penalized	
005924- 010145	Administration	The Administration's briefing on paragraphs 5 to 11 of the paper	
010146- 010322 Draft Com 010323-	Dr Philip WONG mittee Stage amendments in	Dr Philip WONG's views that (a) the scales of companies would make a difference on their operation; (b) a company having only one member/director could have a large number of staff supporting its operation; and (c) when setting requirements for a company, the above factors should be taken into account Rriefing on the proposed Committee Rriefing on the Rriefing on the proposed Committee Rriefing on the Rriefin	12(01))
010323-	Administration	Briefing on the proposed Committee Stage amendments ("CSAs") to clause 2	
010757- 011422	Administration Mr Andrew LEUNG Chairman SALA3	Discussion on the proposed CSAs to clause 3 (Responsible person) Mr Andrew LEUNG's enquiry on whether the proposed CSA (to remove the limb of "fails to take all reasonable steps to prevent" in the formulation of "responsible person") would give a better protection to a director SALA3's response that	

Time marker	Speaker	Subject(s)	Action required
		 (a) the effect of the removal of the above limb would be that, in the prosecution of a director/officer of a company for contravention of requirement under CB, it would be necessary to prove that he/she actively "authorizes, permits, or participates in the contravention or failure"; and (b) in other words, the prosecution threshold would be raised 	
011423- 011729	Administration	Briefing on the proposed CSAs to clauses 5 and 15, sections 1, 2 and 4 of Schedule 1	
Draft CSAs	in relation to Part 7 (LC Paper I	No. CB(1)1741/11-12(01))	
011730- 013154	Administration	Briefing on the proposed general amendments across CB (CSAs to change "14 days" to "15 days" for delivery of documents to the Registrar) and the proposed CSAs to clauses 306, 310, 319, 322, 324, 325, 329 and 330	
013155- 013709	Assistant Legal Adviser 2 ("ALA2") Administration Chairman	Discussion on the Chinese text of the last sentence in clause 313(6) ("而第(1)款在猶如提述一個月是提述該延長的限期的情況下具有效力。")	
		Request for the Administration to review the above translation and consider ALA2's suggestion ("而第(1)款具有效力,猶如提述一個月是提述該延長的限期。")	The Administration to take action as in paragraph 3(b) of the minutes
Draft CSAs	in relation to Part 8 (LC Paper I	No. CB(1)1747/11-12(02))	
013710- 015124	Administration	Briefing on the proposed general amendments across CB (a) Item 1 – CSAs to change "14 days" to "15 days" for delivery of documents to the Registrar	
		(b) Item 2 – CSAs to amend the	

Time marker	Speaker	Subject(s)	Action required
		"Notes" in CB as appropriate and the proposed CSAs to clauses 331, 332, 334, 335, 336, 337, 339, 340, 341, 342 and 344	
015125- 015206	Mr Jeffrey LAM	Mr Jeffrey LAM's view that the revised Chinese rendition of terms should be applied to other provisions to maintain consistency throughout the entire bill	
015207- 015622	Administration	Briefing on the proposed CSAs to clauses 345, 346, heading of Division 6	
015623- 015808	Mr Jeffrey LAM Administration	Mr Jeffrey LAM's enquiry on whether the revised Chinese rendition of terms in CB would apply to relevant Government documents in Chinese to ensure consistency	
		The Administration's response that (a) the documents/forms in Chinese issued by the Companies Registry would follow the revised Chinese text of CB; and	
		(b) for the existing documents/forms in Chinese issued by the Companies Registry, they would be covered by the transitional arrangements under CB and would remain valid during the transitional period	
015809- 020402	Administration	Briefing on the proposed CSAs to clauses 350, 352, 353 and 355	
Break (020	0403-021842)		
Draft CSA	s in relation to Part 10 (LC I	Paper No. CB(1)1747/11-12(03))	
021843- 023035	Administration ALA2 Ms Audrey EU Mr Andrew LEUNG	Briefing on the proposed general amendments across CB (CSAs to change "14 days" to "15 days" for delivery of documents to the Registrar) and the proposed CSAs to clause 449 (Direction requiring company to appoint director)	

Time marker	Speaker	Subject(s)	Action required
		Discussion on the proposed CSA to clause 449(3)	_
		Members' concern that the proposed CSA to clause 449(3) (the time limit for delivering a notice of the appointment of director to the Registrar) would cause confusion to the time limit set out in clause 636(1) (Duty to notify Registrar of appointment and change)	The
		Request for the Administration to amend the proposed CSA to clause 449(3) to address members' concern	Administration to
023036- 024427	Administration ALA2 Mr Andrew LEUNG	The Administration's briefing on the proposed CSAs to clauses 453 and 454	
	SALA3	Discussion on the proposed new clause 454(4)(a)	
		Request for the Administration to amend " more than 2 days before the day" in the proposed new clause 454(4)(a) to " more than 2 days before the <u>last</u> day", so as to align with clause 413(5)	Administration to take action as in
024428- 024743	Administration Chairman	The Administration's briefing on the proposed CSAs to clauses 456, 460, 462, 464 and 467	
		The Chairman's advice that the same amendment should be made to the proposed CSAs to clause 467(3) to be in line with changes in the proposed CSAs to clause 449(3)	Administration to take action as in
024744- 024845	Administration	Briefing on the proposed CSAs to clauses 472 and 474	
Draft CSA	s in relation to Part 13 (LC Pap	er No. CB(1)1747/11-12(04))	<u> </u>
024846- 025309	Administration	Briefing on the proposed general amendments across CB (CSAs to change "14 days" to "15 days" for delivery of documents to the Registrar) and the proposed CSAs to clauses 657 and 658	

Time marker	Speaker	Subject(s)	Action required
025310- 025606	Administration Chairman Mr Andrew LEUNG	The Administration's briefing on the proposed CSAs to clause 662 (Explanatory statements to be issued or made available to creditors or members)	
		The Chairman's suggestion, supported by Mr Andrew LEUNG, to preserve the original clause 662(5) without any amendment, as the clause applied to liquidators and trustees, who, being professionals, should take all reasonable steps to prevent the contravention of the requirements under CB	Administration to take action as in paragraph 3(f) of
025607- 030748	Administration	Briefing on the proposed CSAs to clauses 666, 668 to 671, 673, 678, 680, 682 to 684, 688, 689, 691 to 694, 696 to 698, 701 to 703, 707, 709 and 710	
Draft CSA	s in relation to Part 15 (LC Paper	No. CB(1)1591/11-12(05))	
030749-	Administration	The Administration's briefing on the	
031435	Chairman	proposed CSAs to clause 738 (Application for deregistration)	
		The Chairman's enquiries on clause 738(2)(e) and the proposed CSA to add a "Note" in clause 738, and the Administration's response	
031436- 031906	Administration	Briefing on the proposed CSAs to clauses 740, 742, 743, 746, 747 and 761	
Draft CSA	s in relation to Part 17 (LC Paper	No. CB(1)1591/11-12(06))	<u> </u>
031907- 032100	Administration	Briefing on the proposed CSAs to clauses 805 and 807	
Draft CSA	s in relation to Part 18 (LC Paper	No. CB(1)1747/11-12(05))	
032101- 032604	Administration	Briefing on the proposed CSAs to clauses 811, 812, 816, 817, 819 to 821	
Draft CSA	s in relation to Part 20 (LC Paper	No. CB(1)1591/11-12(07))	<u>I</u>
032605-	Administration	The Administration's briefing on the	
033254	ALA2	proposed general amendments across CB (CSAs to delete the relevant provisions	

Time marker	Speaker	Subject(s)	Action required
		to effect abolition of capital duty and to amend the "Notes" in CB as appropriate) and the proposed CSAs to clauses 883, 885 and 887	
		ALA2's view that the revised Chinese text of clause 887(1)(b) ("視乎有關罪行符合第(5)款抑或第(6)款描述而載有該款的內容。") did not accurately convey the meaning of the English text (" contains the terms of the notice by reference to subsection (5) or (6)"), and his suggestion for the Administration to review both the English and Chinese texts of clause 887(1)(b)	The Administration to take action as in paragraph 3(g) of the minutes
023255- 033933	Administration SALA3	The Administration's briefing on the proposed CSAs to clauses 889, 897 and Schedule 7 SALA3's enquiry about prescription of fees (clause 897), and the Administration's response	
033934- 034020	Chairman	Date of next meeting	

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