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Legislative Council

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Finance Committee of the Legislative Council

Minutes of the 23rd meeting
held at the Legislative Council Chamber
on Friday, 8 July 2011, at 3:30 pm

Members present:

Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP (Chairman)
Prof Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, SBS, S.B.St.J., JP
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, SBS, JP
Dr Hon Margaret NG
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon CHAN Kam-lam, SBS, JP
Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun, GBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Dr Hon Philip WONG Yu-hong, GBS
Hon WONG Yung-kan, SBS, JP
Hon LAU Kong-wah, JP
Hon LAU Wong-fat, GBM, GBS, JP
Hon Miriam LAU Kin-yee, GBS, JP
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon LI Fung-ying, SBS, JP
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee, SBS, JP
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP
Hon Vincent FANG Kang, SBS, JP
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH

Hon LEE Wing-tat
Dr Hon Joseph LEE Kok-long, SBS, JP
Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, GBS, JP
Hon Andrew LEUNG Kwan-yuen, GBS, JP
Hon CHEUNG Hok-ming, GBS, JP
Hon WONG Ting-kwong, BBS, JP
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC
Hon CHIM Pui-chung
Hon KAM Nai-wai, MH
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, JP
Dr Hon LAM Tai-fai, BBS, JP
Hon CHAN Hak-kan
Hon Paul CHAN Mo-po, MH, JP
Hon CHAN Kin-por, JP
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che
Hon WONG Sing-chi
Hon WONG Kwok-kin, BBS
Hon IP Wai-ming, MH
Hon IP Kwok-him, GBS, JP
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBS, JP
Dr Hon PAN Pey-chyou
Hon Paul TSE Wai-chun, JP
Dr Hon Samson TAM Wai-ho, JP
Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
Hon Tanya CHAN
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon WONG Yuk-man

Members absent:

Dr Hon David LI Kwok-po, GBM, GBS, JP
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon Timothy FOK Tsun-ting, GBS, JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, SBS, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, SBS, JP
Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, JP
Dr Hon LEUNG Ka-lau

Public officers attending:

Professor K C CHAN, SBS, JP	Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury
Mr Stanley YING, JP	Permanent Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury)
Ms Alice LAU, JP	Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury)1
Ms Elsie YUEN	Principal Executive Officer (General), Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau (The Treasury Branch)
Mrs Jessie TING YIP Yin-mei, JP	Deputy Secretary for Development (Works) 1
Mrs Laura ARON	Commissioner for Heritage, Development Bureau
Mr Tom MING Kay-chuen	Executive Secretary (Antiquities and Monuments), Leisure and Cultural Services Department
Mrs Marigold LAU LAI Siu-wan, JP	Director of Architectural Services
Mrs Priscilla TAM DAI Wai-ming	Project Director (1), Architectural Services Department
Ms Ida LEE Bik-sai	Principal Assistant Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development (Communications and Technology) B
Dr Lawrence FUNG Siu-por, GBS	Chairman, Musketeers Education and Culture Charitable Foundation Limited
Mrs LO LEE Oi-lin	Principal Corporate Adviser (Development), Vocational Training Council
Dr Edmund LEE Tak-yue	Executive Director, Hong Kong Design Centre
Mr Stanley CHU Yu-lun	Chairman, PMQ Management Company Limited
Mr Stephen IP Man-kwong	Executive Director, PMQ Management Company Limited
Mr YAU Shing-mu, JP	Under Secretary for Transport and Housing
Mrs Apollonia LIU LEE Ho-kei	Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport and Housing (Transport) 5
Mr LAU Ka-keung, JP	Director of Highways
Mr TSANG King-man, JP	Assistant Director of Highways (Development)

Clerk in attendance:

Mrs Constance LI

Assistant Secretary General 1

Staff in attendance:

Ms Annette LAM

Chief Council Secretary (1)7

Mr Daniel SIN

Senior Council Secretary (1)7

Mr Frankie WOO

Senior Legislative Assistant (1)3

Ms Christy YAU

Legislative Assistant (1)8

Item No. 1 - FCR(2011-12)34

**RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PUBLIC WORKS
SUBCOMMITTEE MADE ON 14 AND 15 JUNE 2011**

The Chairman advised that the Public Works Subcommittee (PWSC) had recommended that the items endorsed at the meeting on 15 June 2011, i.e. PWSC(2011-12)26 and PWSC(2011-12)29 should be considered and voted on separately at this Finance Committee (FC) meeting.

2. The Chairman put the remaining items of FCR(2011-12)34 (i.e. PWSC(2011-12)19-22, PWSC(2011-12)24-25 and PWSC(2011-12)27) to vote. The Committee approved these items.

PWSC(2011-12)26

400IO – Transformation of the former Police Married Quarters on Hollywood Road into a creative industries landmark

3. The Chairman advised that PWSC(2011-12)26 sought to upgrade 400IO to Category A at an estimated cost of \$560.1 million in money-of-the-day (MOD) prices for the transformation of the former Police Married Quarters ("PMQ") on Hollywood Road into a creative industries landmark.

Project cost and financial arrangements

4. In view of the high project cost involved, Mr KAM Nai-wai asked whether the Administration would periodically report progress to the Panel on Development to enable members' monitoring of the project progress and expenditure. Deputy Secretary for Development (Works)1 (DS(W)1)

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confirmed that progress of heritage conservation and revitalization projects, including the project at PMQ, would be reported to the Panel on Development on a regular basis.

5. Ms Cyd HO referred to the supplementary information paper about the financing arrangements and asked how the net operating surplus of the project at PMQ would be shared between the Government and the special purpose company (SPC) set up by the Musketeers Foundation. She asked whether the net operating surplus would be credited to a separate account for sharing between the Government and SPC at the end of the five year period, or the surplus of each year would be re-invested in the project. As the tenancy term of the PMQ site was ten years and renewable for another five years only, she considered that the intervals for profit sharing should be less than five years, and the rate of apportionment should be determined in the light of the prevailing economic situations and the financial circumstances of SPC.

6. DS(W)1 explained that the project aimed to achieve three objectives, i.e. heritage conservation, promotion of creative industries and provision of local open space. The project would be operated on a non-profit making basis similar to that of a social enterprise. Given the considerable public investment in the project, it would only be reasonable for any net operating surplus to be returned to the Government Revenue after the five-year period. DS(W)1 confirmed that any operating surplus within the five years would be re-invested in the project, while the apportionment of the net surplus would take place at the end of the five-year period taking into consideration the accounting position of SPC at that time. Setting a period of five years would allow SPC to carry out longer term business planning. The Musketeers Foundation would reinvest its share of the net surplus back to the project, whereas the Government's portion would be returned to the General Revenue Account.

7. Regarding the financial implications of the project, DS(W)1 advised that the project would be operated on a self-financing basis, and the Musketeer Foundation was responsible for the repair and maintenance of the site and the premises at its own expense. The Administration would contribute the capital cost of \$560.1 million which was the subject of this funding proposal.

8. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung expressed concern about projects that involved co-operation between the public and the private sectors with substantial Government subsidies. He said that such projects often provided opportunities for transfer of benefits and abuse. He remarked that the Administration tended to appoint pro-government personalities to manage such projects, where their remuneration or the bodies overseeing these projects were beyond public monitoring. He asked about the options the Administration

would take if the project failed to deliver its intended objectives in promoting creative industries.

9. DS(W)1 explained that the Musketeer Foundation's revitalization proposal of PMQ was selected following a rigorous and competitive process. Submissions were evaluated against a set of criteria including conservation value, ability of the project proponents to promote creative industries, financial viability and management capability of the project proponents. The proposals would be incorporated into the tenancy agreement to be signed between the Government and the winning project proponent. There would be provisions for early termination of tenancy in case of material breach of the conditions. To monitor the business performance of the project, SPC was required to submit mid-year progress reports (including financial reports and cash-flow statements) and year-end annual reports (including the annual audited financial statements) for examination by the Development Bureau (DEVB). DS(W)1 added that the implementation of the project would be monitored by the Advisory Committee on Revitalization of Historic Buildings.

10. Chairman, Musketeers Education and Culture Charitable Foundation Limited advised that the Musketeers Foundation was founded with an aim of nurturing new local young talents. The Musketeers Foundation and its partner would donate \$110 million towards the project. To sustain financial viability of the project, commercial facilities would be included, and efforts would be made to attract visitors to the project. He added that the Musketeers Foundation had made considerable contribution to the project as part of its corporate social responsibility. Knowing that considerable public resources were put into the project, the Musketeers Foundation would exercise diligence in ensuring expenditures were well spent.

11. Prof Patrick LAU declared that he was a sponsor of some of the designers who might use the premises in PMQ. While expressing support for the proposal, Prof LAU noted that \$182.5 million was proposed for revitalization and conversion of existing two quarters blocks and the former Junior Police Call House (JPC House), and considered the cost unreasonably high. He commented that the objective of revitalizing old buildings was to provide readily available and suitable premises to meet Hong Kong's economic and social needs in a cost-effective manner. The Administration should simply make available vacant premises with minimal essential infrastructures and let the users create their own workplace. He was of the view that the building was rather ordinary and did not worth such a high cost for preservation. Sharing the concerns expressed by Prof LAU, Dr PAN Pey-chyau queried whether historic buildings should be preserved in its entirety and originality with

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minimal internal renovation, and suggested that only the facade of buildings should be saved in some cases.

12. Director of Architectural Services (DArchS) said that the proposed building cost was comparable to other similar revitalization projects such as Mei Ho House in Shek Kip Mei. The cost of \$182.5 million was required to upgrade existing building blocks to meet major functional needs, and to comply with the statutory building and fire prevention regulations and guidelines. To address Prof LAU's concern, DArchS undertook to provide more detailed and itemized cost breakdown of the project. She added that historic buildings had their own heritage significance and their preservation cost could not be compared directly with the cost of constructing a new building. DS(W)1 added that the proposed conversion works for the existing two quarters blocks and the former JPC House, including the internal renovation and fitting out works for studios, were only the bare minimum. The capital cost also included provisions for a new "Underground Interpretation Area" for the display of remnants of the former Central School and relevant artefacts, and the "i-Cube" for indoor activities.

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13. Mr Andrew LEUNG declared that he was a consultant to the project at PMQ and the Chairman of Vocational Training Council (VTC). He expressed support for the proposal which would attract tourists and help promote creative industries. While noting members' concern about the building costs, he considered the former Central School site worth preserving to form part of the community's collective memories.

14. Mr IP Kwok-him said that Members belonging to the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong supported the proposal. He said that the Central and Western District Council welcomed the initiative to preserve the architectural remnants of the former Central School and to transform the site into a creative industries landmark. The Panel on Development had been consulted on the proposal which was also recommended by the Public Works Subcommittee. Noting that rental discounts would be offered, Mr IP was worried that rental cost would gradually go up and that would pose a burden on designers using the premises in PMQ.

15. While noting the laudable efforts of the Musketeers Foundation, Prof Patrick LAU still considered the funding proposal unjustified. He said that as the Musketeers Foundation devoted considerable resources to this project, it would expect a reasonable return from the project operation. He was concerned that the designers using the premises in PMQ might be charged high rent. Understanding that many fledging designers had been driven out of industrial buildings because of soaring rental cost, Prof LAU emphasized the importance of providing an affordable platform offering preferential terms to

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young start-up designers, in a bid to encouraging them to create their own brands.

16. Chairman, Musketeers Education and Culture Charitable Foundation Limited said that apart from providing rental discounts, start-up designers were encouraged to market their creative products from their studios so that they could generate income and build up business. The level of rental discount for start-up designers would gradually be reduced when their businesses grew. Chairman, PMQ Management Company Limited assured members that the rental of studios for young start-up designers would be set below market rates.

Fostering creative industries and support for tenant designers

17. Mr LEE Wing-tat commented that the business plan of the project at PMQ was aggressive, as it aimed to develop the site into a creative industries landmark in Asia in four years' time from 2014 to 2017. He queried whether the target was realistic and asked what benchmarks would be used to evaluate the success of the project as a hub for creative talents and brands. Executive Director, PMQ Management Company Limited, anticipated that the project would undergo three stages of development from 2014 to 2024 during its full tenure in PMQ. Their vision was that the project at PMQ would become a creative hub in Asia starting from 2017 to 2024.

18. Chairman, Musketeers Education and Cultural Charitable Foundation Limited added that the project would be a platform for developing local brands, which would bring in international traders and buyers to source products/services and help nurture a new breed of local talents. Citing Business of Design Week, Knowledge of Design Week and DETOUR as examples, Executive Director, Hong Kong Design Centre, said that the numbers of visitors and participants in the activities of the project at PMQ might be reasonable indicators. At the request of Mr LEE, DS(W)1 undertook to provide the indicators the Administration would base on to assess how far the objectives of the project had been achieved.

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19. Mrs Sophie LEUNG declared that she had previously enlisted the support of the Musketeers Education and Cultural Charitable Foundation Limited in helping a group of young people to explore initiatives for turning the PMQ site into a focal point of creative activities. She appreciated the efforts of the Musketeers Foundation in realizing this vision. The timelines laid down in the proponent's business plan should serve as a roadmap in achieving its objectives. On the selection of tenants for the project at PMQ, Mrs LEUNG expressed concern about the criteria and stressed that opportunities should be open to all.

20. Executive Director, PMQ Management Company Limited assured members that the selection process would be open and fair. Applications would be open to all individuals and independent groups. An independent selection committee would be formed to screen and select prospective applicants based on predetermined assessment criteria; and would make recommendations to the board of directors of the Musketeers Foundation for decision. Mrs LEUNG said that preference should be given to applicants who were committed to promoting creative industries. In response to the Chairman's enquiry on the composition of the selection committee, Executive Director, PMQ Management Company Limited advised that the selection committee had not been set up. He added that to ensure impartiality, representatives from the design industry and business sectors would be invited to participate.

21. Mr Andrew LEUNG commented that the project should provide a platform for new young local talents to demonstrate their creativity. Mr Jeffrey LAM said he supported the proposal and agreed that the site should be preserved for its historic significance. Mr LAM asked what economic benefits could be derived from the long-term development of culture and local creative industries brought about by the project.

22. Chairman, PMQ Management Company Limited advised that apart from creating jobs and increasing visitor flows, the project would become a platform for nurturing new young local talents in developing their brands, a cluster for local and overseas designers to market and launch their creative products, and a hub for international traders and buyers to sourcing new product designs or creative ideas/services. In the end, the SMEs in the Mainland and Hong Kong would be able to develop high added-valued products and national brands, which would boost Hong Kong's competitiveness. Executive Director, Hong Kong Design Centre said that through organizing events to build up network with overseas countries, the project at PMQ would gradually be developed into a creative industries landmark, which would help convert small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) in the Mainland and Hong Kong from low-skilled low-value industries into high-value-added production in the long run.

23. In response to the Chairman's enquiry about the number of jobs created, DS(W)1 advised that about 630 jobs would be directly created in the creative industries through employment by the future tenants of the studios upon commissioning of the project.

Accessibility to open space and conservation

24. Miss Tanya CHAN enquired whether an independent landscape architect specializing in stonewall trees would be engaged in the protection and management of all stonewall trees found at the site. Referring to other revitalization programmes being undertaken by the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) and The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust (HKJCCT) for Central Market (to be turned into a Central Oasis) and the Central Police Station Heritage Compound respectively, she enquired whether the Musketeers Foundation would work with URA and HKJCCT to promote the Central Oasis, Central Police Station and PMQ together as a "Cultural Triangle".

25. DS(W)1 said that a tree expert had been engaged to monitor the implementation of the tree preservation measures during construction and to provide professional advice in tree preservation within the site. Executive Director, PMQ Management Company Limited advised that the Musketeers Foundation had communicated with HKJCCT in respect of the revitalization programme for Central Police Station Heritage Compound and was advised that their focus would be contemporary arts, modern arts, and/or visual arts while the project would focus on promoting creative industries. As the revitalization plan of the Central Oasis was recently announced, the Musketeers Foundation would engage URA in dialogue in due course. Besides, the Musketeers Foundation had maintained close liaison with antique shops and art galleries along Hollywood Road with a view to achieving better integration of different elements within the neighbourhood.

26. Dr PAN Pey-chyou commented that the creative industries to be operating in the project at PMQ might not be easily integrated into the cultural landscape of the community along Hollywood Road, which was clustered with antique shops. DS(W)1 responded that Hollywood Road had recently developed into a contemporary art district with the opening of a number of modern arts galleries in the area. The project would be able to capitalize on its geographical advantages and create synergy between the site and various heritage, cultural and tourist attractions in the area.

27. Ms Cyd HO said that certain scenes of a locally produced film entitled "Three : Going Home" was shot at some of the units in the PMQ quarters blocks. She suggested that those units should be set aside and open to the public. Ms HO asked whether advice had been sought from conservation experts on replacement of steel windows, which was one of the distinctive features of the buildings in PMQ. Executive Director, PMQ Management

Company Limited advised that under the current design, the steel windows would be preserved as far as possible.

28. Regarding the landscaped public open space (POS) of about 1 400 square metres (m²), Mr KAM Nai-wai enquired how the Administration would ensure that public access would not be restricted. He asked whether location map or signage would be provided to public information of POS which was accessible to the public free of charge.

29. DS(W)1 advised that the site, including the "Underground Interpretation Area", would be open to the public free of charge. There would be 130 studios that would be open to the public and visitors for demonstration of design and production process. About 1 400 m² of landscaped open space would be provided free for public enjoyment. Appropriate location maps and information signs would be made available. Executive Director, PMQ Management Company Limited, added that the public could gain access to the project site through four pedestrian entrances, while the site would be opened daily for not less than 16 hours rather than 24 hours so as to allow for cleaning, repair and maintenance.

30. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung expressed concern about the price of products and services offered in the project site might be unaffordable to most ordinary members of the public. Quoting the plethora of swank shops occupying the revitalized former Marine Police Headquarters as a case in point, Mr LEUNG said that even if the site was accessible to the public free of charge, it would be meaningless if the amenities were too costly to use as that ordinary local visitors would feel out of place.

Restaurants and cafes

31. Miss Tanya CHAN enquired about the area of the site earmarked for commercial and restaurants/café uses, and its proportion to the total gross floor area (GFA) after conversion and construction of a new elevated i-Cube. Mr KAM Nai-wai expressed concern that the sale or supply of liquor for consumption at the food and beverage establishment in the landscaped open space at Plateau 4 outside the former JPC House would cause serious nuisance to residents nearby. He asked what preventive measures (e.g. limiting hours of sale of alcohol) would be adopted to address the problem.

32. DS(W)1 advised that 23% of the total GFA would be assigned to food and beverage establishments, a bookstore and a shop for sale of creative products. She added that the Administration had attached great importance to building up strong neighborhood and community relationships, and was fully

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aware of residents' concerns. Executive Director, PMQ Management Company Limited said that appropriate provisions would be provided for in the tenancy agreements with food and beverage establishments to allay residents' concerns. As the property manager, PMQ Management Company Limited would ensure that the site was properly managed.

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33. Noting that members were interested in the project, the Chairman requested the Administration to co-ordinate with the Musketeers Foundation to arrange for a visit for interested Members to the creative industries landmark in due course.

34. The Chairman put the item to vote. The Committee approved the funding proposal.

PWSC(2011-12)29

166TB – Provision of barrier-free access facilities at public footbridges, elevated walkways and subways

35. The Chairman advised that the item invited the Committee's approval to upgrade part of 166TB, as 167TB, entitled "Provision of barrier-free access facilities at public footbridges, elevated walkways and subways – design works and phase 1 construction works", to Category A at an estimated cost of \$292.1 million in MOD prices; and the retention of the remainder of 166TB in Category B.

36. Mr WONG Kwok-hing said that he would support the funding proposal. Referring to the "Hundred Steps" between Kwong Fai Circuit and Kwai Chung Estate which was not included in the current programme of hillside escalator links and elevator systems, Mr WONG asked the Administration to keep its promise to implement the programme on a rolling basis. This would allow the improvement works in the "Hundred Steps" to commence without having to wait until all the other priority projects had been completed.

37. Under Secretary for Transport and Housing (USTH) clarified that the item to be funded under this application was provision of barrier-free access facilities at public footbridges, elevated walkways and subways, instead of the provision of hillside escalator links and elevator systems. The provision of the latter, including those in the Kwai Tsing District, would be handled separately. He added that among the ten proposals included in the current feasibility studies on provision of hillside escalator links and elevator systems, five were located in Kwai Tsing District. In response to the Chairman, USTH advised that

improvement works in the "Hundred Steps" would be included in the feasibility studies of the provision of hillside escalator links and elevator systems at a later stage. The Administration would report the progress to the relevant Panel in due course.

38. Mr WONG Sing-chi said that the local community had been pressing hard for early provision of the facilities for a long time. However, the progress of such provision was too slow. While a total of 191 public footbridges, elevated walkways and subways were included in the technical feasibility studies and detailed design for the retrofitting works to provide barrier-free access facilities, only 19 had been confirmed to be technically feasible while progress for the remaining 172 structures were still underway. He asked the Administration to provide a timetable and priority for completion of the items. He added that during discussion at the Subcommittee on Improving Barrier Free Access and Facilities for Persons with Disabilities, the Administration had undertaken to complete by June 2012 90% of a major retrofitting programme involving about 3 700 Government premises and facilities. He considered that the Administration should provide the timetable and work priority of these programmes to the Subcommittee so as to assure members that Hong Kong could comply with the requirements under Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the Convention).

39. USTH advised that as at end 2010, out of a total of about 1 540 public footbridges, subways or elevated walkway structures under the purview of the Highways Department (HyD), about 1 270 structures were already installed with lifts or up-to-standard ramps. Retrofitting works at 12 structures were underway and those at 56 structures had been confirmed to be infeasible. USTH said that HyD would take forward the retrofitting works for the remaining 210 structures. Subject to FC's approval, the retrofitting of lifts or ramps at the ten pedestrian facilities covered in this funding proposal could commence. These works were expected to be completed by mid 2014, while the design of barrier-free access facilities at about 180 structures would be completed by end 2015.

40. Mr WONG Sing-chi urged the Administration to accelerate the provision of lifts or ramps at six footbridges and four subways covered in the funding proposal under discussion, otherwise the Administration would fail in its obligations under the Convention. The Chairman said that the Administration would need to give explanation at a hearing of the United Nations to be held in 2012 if Hong Kong was unable to meet the international obligation as specified in the Convention. USTH emphasized that all newly constructed structures would be provided with barrier-free facilities in

compliance with the Convention. The Administration was making an effort to provide barrier-free facilities in existing facilities.

41. Mr CHAN Kam-lam said that Members belonging to the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong would support the funding proposal. He requested the Administration to reconsider including the footbridge across Wang Chiu Road near Richland Gardens (Block 8) and the subway across Prince Edward Road West near Lion Rock Road in the retrofitting programme. He noted that under existing policy, structures which were not already equipped with barrier-free access facilities would be retrofitted with lifts or ramps if there were no alternative at-grade crossings within 100 m. Mr CHAN explained that although the nearest at-grade crossings close to the footbridge across Wang Chiu Road near Richland Gardens (Block 8) were 95m away, they were inconveniently located. Provision of barrier-free access facilities in addition to the subway across Prince Edward Road West near Lion Rock Road was justified in order to better enhance the accessibility of elderly who were residing in a number of elderly homes in the area.

42. For footbridges, elevated walkways and subways in Wong Tai Sin and Kwun Tong districts not under the jurisdiction of HyD, Mr CHAN Kam-lam noted that the Administration had earlier on undertaken to follow up with the Housing Department and respective management companies of those facilities to install barrier-free access facilities if they had not done so. Mr CHAN asked when and how the Administration would follow up the matter.

43. USTH responded that priority for provision of barrier-free access facilities would be accorded to the pedestrian facilities which were not already provided with ramps or lifts, and alternative at-grade crossings were not available in the vicinity. The Housing Authority (HA) adopted the same principle for facilities in public housing developments. For those pedestrian facilities outside the management of HyD and HA, the Administration would work with the relevant organizations or management companies to conform to the standards as far as practicable. On the footbridge across Wang Chiu Road near Richland Gardens (Block 8), Director of Highways (DHy) advised that elderly or people with disabilities usually preferred to use the existing at-grade crossing nearby because it was more direct and convenient, without the need to go up and down ramps.

44. Mr KAM Nai-wai said that Members belonging to the Democratic Party supported the funding proposal, but they considered it unacceptable that the design works would be completed by 2015, and the majority of the retrofitting works by 2016-17. He expressed concern about the slow progress and asked the Administration to expedite the matter. DHy explained that the

Administration had taken efforts to expedite the provision of barrier-free access facilities. Detailed design would commence once technical feasibility on an retrofitting work was confirmed. The Administration anticipated that all design works for the items would be completed in phases by end 2015. Funding for construction for the portion of projects would be sought from FC as soon as their designs were ready. The Administration aimed to commencing construction in phases between 2013 and 2015, so that the majority of the works could be completed by 2016-17. The remaining items were expected to be completed by 2017-18. In fact, the technical feasibility studies on the retrofitting works of all the structures were being carried out in parallel.

45. DHy supplemented that the retrofitting works involved several critical activities and the Administration was proceeding on these activities one after another without any delay. He explained that such works involved relocation of some underground utilities before piling works for lift towers could be carried out. Detailed co-ordination with the utility companies was necessary. He added that time was also required for testing the facilities before they could be commissioned for public use.

46. Mr KAM Nai-wai asked whether the priority for provision of barrier-free access facilities in a district could be determined by the respective District Council. He commented that none of the detailed design of barrier-free facilities in the 22 structures in Central and Western District would be completed in 2011. He added that the local community had been pressing for early provision for barrier-free access facilities in the footbridges linked to Western Market and Sun Yat Sen Memorial Park.

47. USTH advised that views of District Councils had been taken into consideration in determining the scope and schedule of works. For the footbridge linking to the Western Market, DHy said that the technical feasibility was underway but certain technical issues need to be resolved as it might affect the Western Market which was a heritage building. For the footbridge leading to Sun Yat Sen Memorial Park, the existing structure was already provided with up-to-standard ramps.

48. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung commented that the procrastination in providing barrier-free access facilities reflected the Administration's lack of a will to expedite the matter. He suggested that the Administration should outsource the technical feasibility and detailed design works to accelerate progress. USTH responded that the earlier plan of HyD was to complete all the retrofitting works in phases according to their order of priority before 2020. Appreciating the wish of the public for the early provision of barrier-free access facilities to the pedestrian facilities concerned, the Financial Secretary had set

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out in his 2011-12 Budget the target to complete the majority of the barrier-free access facilities retrofitting works by 2016-17. DHy added that HyD had been outsourcing investigation and design works to consultants and a consultancy agreement for the design of the retrofitting works would be signed once funding application was approved.

49. Prof Patrick LAU expressed support for the proposal and urged for early provision of barrier-free access facilities. He sought clarification on the project scope under the funding proposal of \$292.1 million. DHy explained that the proposal included construction of lifts or ramps in six footbridges and four subways; and detailed design works of lift or ramp retrofitting works at about 180 public footbridges, elevated walkways and subways. Priority would be accorded to the pedestrian facilities which were not already fitted with ramps or lifts. In response to Prof LAU's further enquiry about the total costs for retrofitting works at these 180 structures, DHy said that the estimated costs were not available until detailed design had been completed. It was planned to complete the design works in phases by 2015 for completion of the majority of the retrofitting works by 2016-17.

50. The Chairman put the item to vote. The Committee approved the funding proposal.

51. The Chairman said that as the Committee had not finished the items on the agenda, the second meeting would be held at 5:35 pm to deal with the remaining items.

52. The meeting was adjourned at 5:26 pm.

Legislative Council Secretariat

14 March 2012