

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. ESC110/14-15
(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

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Establishment Subcommittee of the Finance Committee

Minutes of the 14th meeting
held in Conference Room 1 of Legislative Council Complex
on Tuesday, 23 June 2015, at 8:30 am

Members present:

Hon Kenneth LEUNG (Chairman)
Hon SIN Chung-kai, SBS, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Prof Hon Joseph LEE Kok-long, SBS, JP, PhD, RN
Hon WONG Ting-kwong, SBS, JP
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan, JP
Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, JP
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-yee, GBS, JP
Hon Paul TSE Wai-chun, JP
Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon Claudia MO
Hon NG Leung-sing, SBS, JP
Hon Steven HO Chun-yin
Hon WU Chi-wai, MH
Hon YIU Si-wing
Hon Gary FAN Kwok-wai
Hon MA Fung-kwok, SBS, JP
Hon Charles Peter MOK
Hon CHAN Chi-chuen

Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN Ka-lok
Hon KWOK Wai-keung
Hon Dennis KWOK
Hon Christopher CHEUNG Wah-fung, SBS, JP
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
Hon Martin LIAO Cheung-kwong, SBS, JP
Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH

Members absent:

Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee, SBS, JP
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC
Hon WONG Kwok-kin, SBS
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki
Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan
Hon IP Kin-yuen
Hon TANG Ka-piu, JP
Hon CHUNG Kwok-pan

Public Officers attending:

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|-----------------------------|--|
| Ms Esther LEUNG, JP | Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury)1 |
| Mr Eddie MAK Tak-wai, JP | Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service (1) |
| Ms Anissa WONG, JP | Permanent Secretary for the Environment/Director of Environmental Protection |
| Mr Howard CHAN, JP | Deputy Director of Environmental Protection(2) |
| Mr Samson LAI | Assistant Director of Environmental Protection (Waste Management Policy) |
| Mr John LEE, PDSM, PMSM, JP | Under Secretary for Security |
| Mr Alex CHAN | Principal Assistant Secretary for Security B |
| Mr LI Kin-yat, FSMSM | Deputy Director of Fire Services |
| Mr WONG Chun-yip | Deputy Commandant (Fire Services Training), Fire Services Department |
| Mr Joseph LAI, JP | Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Transport) |
| Mr Kerr LI Ming-yat | Assistant Secretary for Transport and Housing (Transport)11A |

Clerk in attendance:

Ms Connie SZETO

Chief Council Secretary (1)4

Staff in attendance:

Ms Anita SIT

Assistant Secretary General 1

Mr Jason KONG

Council Secretary (1)4

Ms Alice CHEUNG

Senior Legislative Assistant (1)1

Miss Yannes HO

Legislative Assistant (1)6

Ms Clara LO

Legislative Assistant (1)8

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The Chairman drew members' attention to the information paper ECI(2015-16)5 which set out the latest changes in the directorate establishment approved since 2002. He then reminded members that in accordance with Rule 83A of the Rules of Procedure ("RoP"), they should disclose the nature of any direct or indirect pecuniary interest relating to the funding proposals under discussion at the meeting before they spoke on the items. He also drew members' attention to RoP 84 on voting in case of direct pecuniary interest.

EC(2015-16)3 Proposed creation of two supernumerary posts of one Administrative Officer Staff Grade B (D3) and one Administrative Officer Staff Grade C (D2) in the Environmental Protection Department for three years with immediate effect upon approval by the Finance Committee to lead a new Waste Management (Special Duties) Division

2. The Chairman remarked that the Administration's proposal was to create two supernumerary directorate posts in the Environmental Protection Department ("EPD") to lead a new Waste Management (Special Duties) Division ("SDD"), including an Administrative Officer Staff Grade B post (to be designated as Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (4) ("DDEP(4)")) and an Administrative Officer Staff Grade C post (to be designated as Assistant Director of Environmental Protection (Special Duties)) ("ADEP(SD)").

3. The Chairman said that the Panel on Environmental Affairs ("EA Panel") discussed the proposal at the meeting on 25 February 2015. Panel

members did not object to the Administration submitting the proposal to the Establishment Subcommittee for consideration. Members enquired about the justifications for the two proposed posts which were to take charge of the preparation for introducing quantity-based municipal solid waste ("MSW") charging in Hong Kong, the frontline staffing support in EPD and coordination among relevant Government bureaux/departments in implementing MSW charging. In response to members' request, the Administration had provided supplementary information on the implementation timetable and work plan for MSW charging in May 2015.

Implementation timetable of municipal solid waste charging

4. Dr Kenneth CHAN noted from paragraph 4 of the Administration's paper that SDD would be responsible for four key areas of preparatory work in the coming three years, including formulating implementation plans for MSW charging mechanism, developing relevant complementary systems, enhancing public education, and drafting the enabling legislation. He expressed concern about delay in implementing MSW charging as there were neither details on the major deliverables of SDD nor any timetable for accomplishing the various tasks involved. Ms Cyd HO enquired about the respective timeframes for the development and implementation phases of MSW charging.

5. Permanent Secretary for the Environment/Director of Environmental Protection ("PSE/DEP") responded that MSW charging had been under discussion for a number of years and the Government had made preparation for taking forward the initiative. Paragraph 4 of the paper had outlined in broad terms the four key areas of preparatory work. Details of the various tasks involved and their timetables would be worked out in the coming years. The Government would report the work progress to EA Panel and consult members on the implementation details where necessary. It was the Government's target to introduce the relevant bill into the Legislative Council ("LegCo") within the 2016-2017 session.

6. Dr Kenneth CHAN urged that the Administration should provide more information to LegCo to enhance public understanding on the initiative of MSW charging and facilitate its smooth implementation. He requested the Administration to provide supplementary information on (a) the deliverables and the relevant timeframes for completing the various tasks in the development phase of MSW charging and the road map and timetable for the actual implementation of MSW charging, and (b) the key performance indicators of SDD and the proposed supernumerary posts in respect of MSW charging in the coming three years.

(*Post-meeting note:* The Administration's supplementary information was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. ESC102/14-15(01) on 7 July 2015.)

Staffing support for the planning and implementation of municipal solid waste charging

7. Mr POON Siu-ping expressed support for the establishment proposal in principle. Noting that the new SDD would be supported by 20 non-directorate officers, including 13 officers redeployed from other divisions in EPD and seven newly created time-limited posts, he asked whether the Administration would consider making the seven time-limited posts permanent at a later stage to ensure continuity in the work, and if redeployment of the other 13 officers would have impact on the work of the divisions concerned.

8. Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (2) ("DDEP(2)") responded that no frontline public services would be affected by the redeployment but the divisions concerned would have to re-prioritize their work and absorb the duties of those who were redeployed to SDD. DDEP(2) supplemented that the redeployment arrangement also reflected the prudent practice of the Government before creating any additional directorate and non-directorate posts.

9. Ms Cyd HO pointed out that as currently different types of housing, such as private housing estates, public rental housing ("PRH") estates, tenement buildings, buildings without property management service, rural houses, etc., had different refuse collection systems, it would be a great challenge for the Government to revamp these systems and could take a long time to develop in collaboration with various stakeholders details of MSW charging. She considered that the Government might be over-optimistic that the development phase of MSW charging could be completed within the proposed three-years for the two supernumerary posts. She was also concerned whether SDD would have sufficient staffing support in taking forward MSW charging.

10. PSE/DEP responded that the major responsibility of the two proposed posts would be to support the development phase of MSW charging. The actual implementation of MSW charging would require additional manpower resources on a recurrent basis. The Government would work out the relevant manpower plan having regard to the legislative proposal and implementation plan to be developed, and seek requisite resources for the implementation phase in due course. It was envisaged that both permanent directorate and non-directorate staff would be required in the implementation phase.

11. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that while he agreed with the need to strengthen EPD's manpower resources for handling the additional workload arising from MSW charging, he was concerned that implementation of MSW charging would exacerbate fly-tipping at the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department ("FEHD")'s refuse collection points ("RCPs") thereby creating more workload for the frontline staff of FEHD. He was aware that staff unions, in particular those of frontline staff members of FEHD, were opposed to MSW charging due to concerns about the heavy workload and inadequate frontline staffing support in the department. He asked if the Administration would review FEHD's staffing support when preparing the implementation plan for MSW charging.

12. Mr Martin LIAO, Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung and Mr KWOK Wai-keung echoed the concern about inadequate staffing support in the departments involved in implementing MSW charging. They questioned if the present staffing proposal could meet the manpower need arising from the various tasks relating to MSW charging, such as ensuring enforcement on charges and enhancing public awareness of the policy. Mr LIAO enquired if the Administration had formulated a manpower plan for the development phase in the coming three years. Mr KWOK urged that the Administration should provide adequate training to the frontline staff concerned, and closely monitor the manpower situation and submit relevant staffing proposals to LegCo as soon as possible.

13. PSE/DEP re-iterated that the two proposed supernumerary posts would be responsible for the preparatory work of MSW charging which included development of the relevant complementary systems, such as considering scope of improvement of RCPs and enforcement framework against illegal waste disposal, as well as formulating public education and community involvement programmes to promote behavioural changes for waste reduction. She said that the frontline manpower requirements for the relevant departments and the training needs of these staff would be taken into account during the development phase of MSW charging. The Government would seek additional frontline manpower resources in due course.

14. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung opined that holders of the two supernumerary posts should be engaged in the implementation stage of MSW charging so as to ensure work continuity and monitor the policy. He enquired whether the Administration would consider extending the duration of the two posts or converting them into permanent posts, and why the Administration did not prepare the long-term manpower plan for MSW charging at the present stage.

15. PSE/DEP said that it was difficult to realistically ascertain the manpower resources required for the implementation of MSW charging at the present stage, given that the detailed legislative proposal and implementation plan had yet to be worked out. She assured members that a manpower plan covering staff at various levels in EPD, FEHD and other relevant departments would be developed in tandem with preparation of the detailed legislative proposal. As regards the duration of the two supernumerary posts, the Administration would evaluate the continued need of the posts in due course having regard to the progress of work and operational needs, and would consider extending the posts if necessary.

16. The Chairman opined that incumbents of the two proposed supernumerary posts should take up the permanent posts for implementing and monitoring MSW charging in future to ensure continuity of work. PSE/DEP took note of the view and added that in preparing the relevant staffing arrangements, the Administration would take into account factors including the experience and expertise of the candidates.

Inter-departmental coordination and community involvement

17. Ms Emily LAU supported the staffing proposal and urged the Administration to implement MSW charging and other waste management measures expeditiously. She asked if there was a community consensus in implementing MSW charging, as she noted that there were controversies surrounding the charging mechanism. Noting that the Government had set up an inter-departmental working group ("WG") comprising senior representatives of EPD, FEHD, the Housing Department ("HD"), the Home Affairs Department ("HAD") and other departments as necessary for steering and coordinating the preparatory work for MSW charging, Ms LAU enquired about the party responsible for leading WG. She expressed particular concern as how WG could maintain effective communication and collaboration among bureaux/departments in taking forward MSW charging as problems were often exposed in the Government's coordination mechanisms in pursuing policies and work straddling various bureaux/departments. Mr WU Chi-wai also asked about the role of the two proposed posts in facilitating inter-departmental coordination.

18. PSE/DEP responded that the policy objective of MSW charging was to create a financial incentive to drive behavioural changes in waste generation and reduce overall waste disposal. The Government had been maintaining close dialogue with stakeholders, including residents, users of commercial and industrial ("C&I") establishments and other institutions, etc., on the charging mechanism and implementation details over the years. In 2013-2014, the Council for Sustainable Development ("SDC") conducted a public engagement exercise on the policy framework of MSW charging, and

respondents generally agreed with the policy objectives and board principles in implementing MSW charging as set out in paragraph 3 of the Administration's paper, i.e. MSW would be in line with the principle of "polluter pays" and be implemented across the board for all sectors in one go, and the charging mechanism should be built upon the existing MSW collection and disposal systems so as to minimize adverse impacts on environmental hygiene.

19. On inter-departmental coordination, PSE/DEP said that she was the convenor of WG, and EPD, FEHD, HD and HAD which were responsible for administering the various processes of the refuse collection and disposal systems were involved. The purpose of WG was to enhance inter-departmental communication in developing a practical implementation plan of MSW charging for all departments concerned. The four departments generally agreed with the policy direction and had been maintaining close communication on MSW charging. They were also aware of the need to adjust their existing systems and work procedures in support of the new policy. In fact, three non-directorate posts had already been created in FEHD for the preparatory work. PSE/DEP added that besides WG, the Government had put in place other mechanisms to enhance coordination across bureaux/departments at the high-level.

20. Dr Kenneth CHAN shared the concern about the effectiveness of WG in taking forward MSW charging. Pointing out the importance of public education in bringing about waste reduction, he suggested that representatives from the Education Bureau should be co-opted in WG. Mr Martin LIAO enquired about the Administration's plans in public education and community involvement programmes in taking forward MSW charging.

21. PSE/DEP responded that the Government was aware of the importance of public education and community involvement, as well as enforcement actions, in achieving waste reduction. To this end, the Government had been working in partnership with schools to strengthen green education for students and had launched various schemes to enhance their awareness of environmental protection and waste reduction, including the Hong Kong Green School Award and Student Environmental Protection Ambassador Scheme. The objectives of the relevant public education and community involvement projects for MSW charging were to inform the public (especially residents of domestic households and users of C&I establishments) of the new policy and prepare them for the behavioural change. For this purpose, the Government would engage non-profit-making organizations, green groups, professional bodies, the Environment and Conservation Fund, organizations at the district level, etc., in implementing MSW charging, reviewing existing MSW disposal situations, as well as developing other measures for waste reduction.

Duties of the Waste Management Policy Division and Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (2)

22. Mr WU Chi-wai remarked that some items in the work plan for the implementation of MSW charging outlined in Enclosure 1 to the paper, such as the development of Community Green Stations ("CGSs") in 18 districts, were currently handled by other divisions of EPD. He sought details about the work arrangements of the staff members in these divisions after creation of the new SDD. In addition, he asked whether details of the major initiatives covered in the work plan, including the arrangements for MSW reception points and development of complementary and technical systems, could be finalized in 2016-2017.

23. Ms Cyd HO noted that the new SDD would take over from the Waste Management Policy Division ("WMD") all relevant duties relating to the preparation for MSW charging. She enquired about the rationale for transferring duties relating to MSW charging and the arrangement for the current staff in WMD after creation of the new SDD.

24. PSE/DEP and Assistant Director of Environmental Protection (Waste Management Policy) ("ADEP(WM)") explained that WMD, which was currently under the supervision of DDEP(2), was responsible for, among other things, formulating the policy of MSW charging in the initial stage. As the workload of DDEP(2) was already overstretched, it would not be practical for the incumbent to absorb the responsibility for MSW charging in addition to his existing duties. Hence, it was proposed to create the new DDEP(4) post to supervise the new SDD (who would be assisted by ADEP(SD)) in taking forward the preparatory work for MSW charging. Moreover, the relevant duties of WMD and staff concerned would be transferred to the supervision of DDEP(4). This arrangement had been formulated having regard to the fact that MSW charging and the other major policy initiatives currently undertaken by WMD, including various producer responsibility schemes ("PRSs"), public fill management, management of construction and demolition materials and development of CGSs, would be complementary to each other.

25. ADEP(WM) added that the Government had already introduced the bill on PRS for waste electrical and electronic equipment into LegCo, and had consulted EA Panel on the legislative proposal on PRS for glass beverage containers. It was envisaged that the development and implementation of these two PRSs would be greatly facilitated by the enactment of the legislation on MSW charging.

26. Ms Cyd HO requested the Administration to provide supplementary information on the arrangements for the existing work of the policy divisions under the supervision of DDEP(2) after the transfer of WMD to the supervision of the newly created DDEP(4) post.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration's supplementary information was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. ESC102/14-15(01) on 7 July 2015.)

Financial implications of the establishment proposal

27. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung sought clarification on the financial implications of the proposed two supernumerary directorate posts and other non-directorate supporting posts. PSE/DEP explained that the full annual average staff cost of the two supernumerary directorate posts, including their notional annual salary cost at mid-point and staff on-cost, was \$5,641,000. The average staff on-cost was calculated based on the established formula for civil service posts and had taken into account employee benefits such as allowances and Mandatory Provident Fund contributions. As for the supporting posts, the full annual average staff cost of the eight non-directorate posts (including one Personal Secretary I post and the seven newly created posts in SDD) in EPD was \$7,742,000, and that of the three non-directorate posts in FEHD was \$2,614,000.

Suggestion on granting exemption to low-income households

28. Mr Martin LIAO remarked that at the EA Panel meeting on 25 February 2015, there was a suggestion for the Administration to consider granting exemption to people with financial hardship from paying the MSW charges, such as recipients of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance. He asked if the two proposed posts would study the suggestion.

29. PSE/DEP said that SDC had explored the suggestion during its public engagement exercise and subsequent internal deliberations. SDC concluded that any financial support for low-income households should be explored under the established mechanisms, and EPD would follow-up the issue with the Labour and Welfare Bureau. Exemption from MSW charging was not recommended as it might not be practicable to do so and might lead to controversies.

Waste recycling and source separation of waste

30. Noting that the proposed two posts would be responsible for the development of major waste management policies, Mr YIU Si-wing asked whether issues relating to the management of the three-colour waste separation

bins ("3-colour bins") would be under their purview. He expressed concern that the work of Government's contractors in managing the 3-colour bins was unsatisfactory and overflow of the bins had caused hygienic problems in public areas. He stressed the need for the Government to establish performance indicators for contractors, enhance monitoring of contractors' work and impose penalties on substandard performance.

31. PSE/DEP and DDEP(2) responded that the management of 3-colour bins was under the purview of FEHD, which had established a monitoring mechanism including conducting on-site inspection and imposing penalties on contractors for unsatisfactory performance in accordance with the terms and conditions of the service contracts. With a view to enhancing contractors' performance and improving the monitoring mechanism, FEHD had introduced new requirements in the new contracts awarded. For instance, the contractors were required to use transparent plastic bags for collection of recyclables which would facilitate public monitoring of the contractors' work. The contractors were also required to increase the frequency in clearing 3-colour bins placed in busy areas. PSE/DEP added that the development of MSW charging included formulation of complementary systems such as refuse collection and recycling. WG would review the overall provision of 3-colour bins as well as litter bins placed in public places.

32. Dr Kenneth CHAN pointed out that there had been debates on MSW management and charging in the community in the past years, and the issues were also brought up in LegCo during the discussions on the extension of three landfills and the development of integrated waste management facilities. During the discussions, LegCo Members had expressed grave concerns about the Government's over reliance on waste treatment and the lack of concert measures to promote waste recycling and waste reduction at source.

33. Mr Albert CHAN said that he was opposed to the establishment proposal because he did not agree with the Government's approach in waste management. He called on the Government to develop a comprehensive system comprising source separation of domestic waste for managing and tackling Hong Kong's waste problem in a holistic manner instead of adopting the current approach of implementing piecemeal waste management measures, including MSW charging and various PRSs. He criticized EPD for failing to introduce a mandatory source separation system for domestic waste in Hong Kong which had been widely implemented in many countries. He further expressed disappointment towards the lack of commitment of PSE/DEP in her work and her poor performance in leading EPD in fulfilling its missions.

34. PSE/DEP responded that based on the research conducted by the Government, MSW charging was among the most common and the most

practical measures for achieving waste reduction in densely populated cities like Hong Kong. Having considered the situation in Hong Kong and various waste reduction options, including mandatory source separation, the Government considered that MSW charging was suitable for Hong Kong. Feedback from consultation exercises so far also showed that there was a general consensus about MSW charging. The Government would work out the complementary systems carefully and ensure effectiveness of the enforcement work, which were pivotal to the successful implementation of MSW charging and attainment of the policy objective of waste reduction. She supplemented that mandatory source separation systems had been developed in Hong Kong for specific types of waste, including chemical waste and clinical waste.

35. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung observed that the management of waste recycling in some PRH estates, such as Kai Yip Estate, was unsatisfactory and 3-colour bins were not provided in many estates. He enquired if the Government had plans to improve the situation. PSE/DEP said that EPD had been working in close collaboration with HD on waste recycling in PRH estates. Apart from the provision of recycling facilities, the Government also organized community involvement programmes, for example, exchange of used goods through a barter system in some PRH estates to reduce the amount of waste disposal.

36. The Chairman put EC(2015-16)3 to vote. At the request of Mr Albert CHAN, the Chairman ordered a division and the division bell rang for five minutes. Twenty two members voted for and three voted against the item. The Chairman declared that the Subcommittee agreed to recommend the item to the Finance Committee ("FC") for approval. The votes of individual members were as follows –

For

Mr LEE Cheuk-yan
 Ms Emily LAU
 Ms Cyd HO
 Mr Paul TSE
 Ms Claudia MO
 Mr Steven HO
 Mr YIU Si-wing
 Mr MA Fung-kwok
 Dr Kenneth CHAN
 Mr Christopher CHEUNG
 Mr Martin LIAO
 (22 members)

Mr James TO
 Mr WONG Ting-kwong
 Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che
 Mr Alan LEONG
 Mr NG Leung-sing
 Mr WU Chi-wai
 Mr Gary FAN
 Mr Charles MOK
 Mr KWOK Wai-keung
 Mr SIN Chung-kai
 Mr POON Siu-ping

Against

Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung
Mr CHAN Chi-chuen
(3 members)

Mr Albert CHAN

37. Mr Albert CHAN requested separate voting on the item at the relevant FC meeting.

EC(2015-16)4 Proposed creation of one permanent post of Deputy Chief Fire Officer (GDS(C)1) in the Headquarters Command of Fire Services Department with immediate effect upon approval of the Finance Committee for implementing quality assurance and training accreditation mechanisms

38. The Chairman remarked that the Administration's proposal was to create a permanent post of Deputy Chief Fire Officer (at GDS(C)1 or D1 equivalent) in the Headquarters Command of Fire Services Department ("FSD") with immediate effect upon approval of FC for implementing quality assurance ("QA") and training accreditation mechanisms.

39. The Chairman advised that the Panel on Security discussed the proposal at its meeting on 3 March 2015. Panel members noted that the firefighting skills and techniques of firefighters in Hong Kong were in line with international standards. The proposed QA and training accreditation mechanisms would be tailored to the circumstances of Hong Kong. Panel members had no objection to the Administration submitting the proposal to the Establishment Subcommittee for consideration.

Duties and qualifications of the post holder

40. Mr YIU Si-wing expressed support for the proposal. He enquired whether the post holder would be responsible for enhancing the personal equipment of staff members and transport carriers of FSD and if so, whether he/she would prepare the estimates.

41. Under Secretary for Security ("US for S") advised that the proposed QA mechanism would cover, inter alia, enhancement of the equipment of FSD and its staff members. Deputy Director of Fire Services ("DDFS") added that the specialized teams to be established under the proposed QA mechanism ("the specialized teams") would examine the need of frontline staff, including whether they had been provided with suitable equipment. If FSD identified the need to procure additional equipment, it would seek resources in accordance with the established procedures.

42. Mr WONG Ting-kwong relayed the support of the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong for the proposal and commended the hard work of FSD. He enquired how the Administration would ensure that the post holder would possess the necessary experience and knowledge for the effective discharge of the required duties, and whether suitable training would also be provided to the relevant non-directorate supporting staff in FSD.

43. DDFS responded that the post holder should possess sufficient frontline experience and would closely keep track of the relevant international fire services development. FSD would also have due regard to its operational needs in appointing a suitable candidate to fill the new post. He added that FSD had a well-established training and development mechanism for its staff, which would be further enhanced upon the establishment of the new Fire and Ambulance Services Academy at Pak Shing Kok, Tseung Kwan O.

Implementation of the proposed quality assurance mechanism

44. Mr Martin LIAO said that he was the Chairman of the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications. He expressed support for the proposal and enquired about the jurisdictions the Administration had made reference to in formulating the proposed QA mechanism, the comparison of Hong Kong's fire services with the prevailing international standards, and the timeframe for making further improvement to the standards.

45. US for S advised that the Administration had made reference to the corresponding QA mechanisms in the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany and Australia in formulating FSD's QA mechanism, and would consider incorporating the good practice of other jurisdictions as appropriate. DDFS added that QA mechanisms had been established for certain services of FSD, including paramedic and high angle rescue services. Development of the proposed QA and training accreditation mechanisms did not imply that Hong Kong's fire services lagged behind the prevailing international standards. As firefighters were facing greater challenges with more complicated and difficult rescue operations arising from increasingly complex structures of new infrastructure and buildings, the completion of a number of large-scale cross-boundary and inter-district mass transit systems and infrastructures in recent years, it was necessary to equip firefighters with advanced techniques for firefighting and rescue operations in order to maintain a high quality of service. He reiterated that the proposed QA and training accreditation mechanisms would be developed with regard to the relevant international developments and local circumstances of Hong Kong.

46. Dr Kenneth CHAN said that it was necessary to set out objectives and clear indicators for the proposed QA mechanism which would be essential to evaluate the performance and effectiveness of the mechanism, as well as facilitate public monitoring of FSD's performance. However, the Administration's paper had not provided such information. He requested the Administration to provide the above information, including whether the proposed QA mechanism would cover areas relating to (a) assisting flat owners of old buildings in complying with the statutory requirements under the Fire Safety (Buildings) Ordinance (Cap. 572) and enhancing co-ordination with the relevant departments in implementing the statutory requirements; and (b) improvement on the investigation of fire incidents, in particular identifying the parties responsible for the incidents. US for S undertook to provide the requested information.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration's supplementary information was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. ESC103/14-15(02) on 14 July 2015.)

47. Responding to Dr Kenneth CHAN's enquiry on details of inspections under the proposed QA mechanism, DDFS advised that the specialized teams would conduct routine and spot checks at fire stations and scenes of incidents to inspect the day-to-day training and the approach adopted by frontline personnel in handling emergencies respectively.

Conditioned hours of work of firefighters

48. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung considered that the Administration should improve the conditioned hours of work of firefighters instead of creating the proposed post. He was disappointed that despite local firefighters had repeatedly urged for reduction of their current conditioned hours of work of 54 hours per week to 48 hours of other disciplined forces, FSD had not paid heed to their request. Noting that the post holder would oversee departmental welfare and occupational safety and health matters, and steer the training and development of departmental human resources, Mr LEUNG stressed the need for the Administration and the post holder to listen to the views of staff members and the staff unions, and made reference to the conditioned working hours of firefighters in other jurisdictions in improving the conditioned hours of work of fire and ambulance personnel. He called on the Administration to strengthen the manpower resources of FSD and implement concrete measures to reduce the weekly conditioned hours of work of FSD's fire stream members. He said that he would not support the current proposal in the absence of such an undertaking from the Administration.

49. US for S responded that the work nature of various disciplined forces was different and it would be inappropriate to make a direct comparison

of their weekly conditioned hours of work. DDFS added that there was no prevailing international standard on the working hours of fire services personnel. As regards the efforts to strengthen the manpower resources of FSD, US for S advised that FSD had proposed an increase of 145 non-directorate posts and only one directorate post in the financial year 2015-2016. Of the 145 new non-directorate posts, 105 posts were junior fire and ambulance personnel, and the rest included technicians, supply officers and senior firemen. US for S further stressed that the proposed QA mechanism could facilitate frontline staff of FSD to acquire up-to-date techniques for firefighting and rescue operations with a view to maintaining a high quality of service.

50. US for S added that FSD had launched a three-year trial scheme with an attempt to reduce the conditioned hours of work of the fire stream members from 54 to 51 hours per week ("the trial scheme"), and briefed the Panel on Public Service on the details. The trial scheme, which had been implemented for over a year, was supported in general by FSD staff members, as reflected in the FSD Consultative Committee in which the relevant staff unions/association were represented. The Administration would collect feedback on the trial scheme and keep the matter under review.

51. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung queried if the trial scheme had received support from the staff members of FSD. At the request of the Chairman and Mr LEUNG, the Administration was required to provide information on the conditioned hours of work per week and related working conditions of firemen in major cities including Tokyo, New York and London.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration's supplementary information was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. ESC103/14-15(02) on 14 July 2015.)

Creation of directorate posts

52. Mr Albert CHAN observed that the Administration had been putting forward a lot of establishment proposals to create senior posts recently, and expressed concern about whether the Administration had created directorate posts at the expense of non-directorate posts. He requested the Administration to provide information on the respective numbers of directorate establishment and their ratios to the total size of civil service (a) when the past two and the incumbent Chief Executives took up their offices; and (b) for the current financial year.

53. Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service (1) said that in recent years, there had been a steady growth of civil service establishment of around 1% to 1.5% annually. As regards the creation/extension of directorate posts, he

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stressed that the Administration adopted a prudent approach in scrutinizing each and every proposal, and would only put forward a proposal when operational needs were fully justified. The proposals would then be required to go through the "three-tier vetting" by LegCo, namely consultation with the relevant Panel(s), consideration by the Establishment Subcommittee and approval by FC. The Administration also provided an information paper setting out the latest changes in the directorate establishment approved since 2002 at each meeting of the Establishment Subcommittee, i.e. ECI(2015-16)5 for the present meeting, to facilitate members in understanding the impact of the proposals considered by the Establishment Subcommittee at the meeting on the overall directorate establishment position. He said that the Administration would provide the information as requested by Mr Albert CHAN.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration's supplementary information was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. ESC103/14-15(01) on 14 July 2015.)

(At 10:26 am, the Chairman suggested that the meeting be extended for 15 minutes up to 10:45 am. Members raised no objection.)

54. The Chairman put the item to vote. Members agreed that the Subcommittee should recommend the item to FC for approval. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung requested separate voting for the item at the relevant FC meeting.

55. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10:39 am.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
19 August 2015