

**立法會**  
**Legislative Council**

LC Paper No. ESC61/19-20  
(These minutes have been  
seen by the Administration)

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**Establishment Subcommittee of the Finance Committee**

**Minutes of the 6<sup>th</sup> meeting**  
**held in Conference Room 1 of Legislative Council Complex**  
**on Wednesday, 20 May, 2020, at 8:30 am**

**Members present:**

Hon Holden CHOW Ho-ding (Chairman)  
Hon CHAN Chi-chuen (Deputy Chairman)  
Hon WONG Ting-kwong, GBS, JP  
Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, SBS, JP  
Hon WONG Kwok-kin, SBS, JP  
Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBS, JP  
Hon Steven HO Chun-yin, BBS  
Hon WU Chi-wai, MH  
Hon YIU Si-wing, BBS  
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki  
Hon KWOK Wai-keung, JP  
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung  
Hon Elizabeth QUAT, BBS, JP  
Hon Martin LIAO Cheung-kong, GBS, JP  
Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH  
Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, SBS, JP  
Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok, SBS, MH, JP  
Hon CHUNG Kwok-pan  
Hon Alvin YEUNG  
Hon CHU Hoi-dick  
Hon SHIU Ka-fai, JP  
Hon SHIU Ka-chun  
Hon YUNG Hoi-yan, JP  
Dr Hon Pierre CHAN  
Hon CHAN Chun-ying, JP  
Hon Jeremy TAM Man-ho  
Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen, BBS

**Member absent:**

Hon James TO Kun-sun

**Public Officers attending:**

Mr Raistlin LAU Chun, JP	Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury) 1
Mr Brian LO Sai-hung, JP	Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service 1
Dr Raymond SO Wai-man, BBS, JP	Under Secretary for Transport and Housing
Mr CHAN Nap-ming, BBS	Project Director 1 Task Force on Transitional Housing Transport and Housing Bureau
Dr CHUI Tak-yi, JP	Under Secretary for Food and Health
Miss Erica NG Lai-man, JP	Deputy Secretary for Food and Health (Food)2
Ms Teresa CHEUNG Shuk-kau	Senior Principal Executive Officer (Food) Food and Health Bureau

**Clerk in attendance:**

Ms Connie SZETO	Chief Council Secretary (1)4
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**Staff in attendance:**

Miss Judy YEE	Council Secretary (1)4
Ms Alice CHEUNG	Senior Legislative Assistant (1)1
Miss Yannes HO	Legislative Assistant (1)7
Ms Haley CHEUNG	Legislative Assistant (1)10

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The Chairman drew members' attention to the information paper ECI(2020-21)1, which set out the latest changes in the directorate establishment approved since 2002 and the changes to the directorate establishment in relation to the four items on the agenda. He then reminded members that in accordance with Rule 83A of the Rules of

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Procedure ("RoP"), they should disclose the nature of any direct or indirect pecuniary interest relating to the item under discussion at the meeting before they spoke on the item. He also drew members' attention to RoP 84 on voting in case of direct pecuniary interest.

**EC(2020-21)2            Proposed creation of one supernumerary post of Administrative Officer Staff Grade C (D2) in the Housing Department with immediate effect upon approval of the Finance Committee up to 31 March 2025 to oversee the operation of the Task Force on Transitional Housing, including the implementation of the funding scheme to support transitional housing projects by non-government organizations ("NGOs") and other initiatives in facilitating transitional housing projects proposed and implemented by NGOs, with amendments made by the Administration as set out in LC Paper No. ESC45/19-20(01)**

2.        The Chairman remarked that the staffing proposal was to create a supernumerary Administrative Officer Staff Grade C ("AOSGC") (D2) post in the Housing Department ("HD"), to be designated as the Deputy Head of the Task Force on Transitional Housing ("Deputy Head, TFTH"), with immediate effect upon Finance Committee's ("FC") approval up to 31 March 2025 to oversee the operation of TFTH, including the implementation of the funding scheme to support transitional housing projects by non-government organizations ("NGOs") and other initiatives in facilitating transitional housing projects proposed and implemented by NGOs. The Chairman remarked that discussion of the item was carried over from the meeting on 6 May 2020.

3.        The Chairman remarked that, in his letter dated 8 May 2020, Mr Jeremy TAM asked whether the arrangement of making the proposed supernumerary AOSGC post directly reportable to the Under Secretary for Transport and Housing ("USTH"), a politically-appointed official, was in breach of the Civil Service Code ("the Code"), which stipulated that civil servants report to their supervisors in the Civil Service. As instructed by the Chairman, the letter had been copied to the Administration for response. The relevant written response was issued to members on 18 May 2020 vide LC Paper No. ESC45/19-20 (01).

4.        At the invitation of the Chairman, and in elucidating the written response of the Administration, USTH said that the Deputy Secretary for

Transport and Housing (Housing) ("DSTH(H)") would be the direct supervisor of the candidate of the supernumerary AOSGC post proposed to be created. As the officer holding the AOSGC post would work closely with USTH in TFTH, DSTH(H) would consult USTH on the performance assessment. USTH stressed that in the papers to be submitted to FC, the Administration would illustrate the position of the officer concerned vis-à-vis the organizational structure of the Transport and Housing Bureau ("THB").

### Implementation of transitional housing projects

#### *Optimal use of land resources*

5. Mr WU Chi-wai recognized the importance of identifying suitable land for the implementation of the transitional housing projects. He suggested that THB should liaise with various bureaux/departments ("B/Ds") pro-actively to be fully informed about the idle government land under their respective purview with a view to increasing available land resources for development and enhancing the efficiency in project implementation. Mr WU asked whether there were any dedicated staff members in TFTH who were responsible for identifying available land, the estimated number of housing units to be made available out of the identified sites, as well as details of the participating NGOs.

6. Dr KWOK Ka-ki noted the target of the Administration for provision of 15 000 transitional housing units in three years. He requested detailed information, including a timetable for meeting that target, the estimated number of units to be provided each year, matters relating to liaison with prospective NGOs, and the estimated time for approval to be given to individual project etc.

7. Dr Fernando CHEUNG made similar requests. USTH undertook to provide the following supplementary information after the meeting: a specific timetable for implementing the transitional housing projects for provision of 15 000 units in three years, including the timeframe for site identification and construction of units by NGOs, the estimated number of units to be provided every year, together with a tabulated breakdown by the location, the target completion date and the number of estimated units of these projects.

*(Post-meeting note: The supplementary information provided by the Administration was circulated to members on 8 June 2020 vide LC Paper No. ESC53/19-20(01))*

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8. Regarding identifying sites for transitional housing and giving assistance to participating NGOs, USTH remarked that senior professionals in the Facilitation/Advisory Team under TPTH were responsible for identifying sites for transitional housing projects and offering advice on planning-related matters. While TPTH did not have all the information on idle government lands available for transitional housing projects, it would keep liaising with various B/Ds to explore the feasibility of providing transitional housing by converting the buildings or using the idle sites under their respective purview. B/Ds would also make optimal use of government land that had no development plans in the short term to implement transitional housing projects. After a site was identified for an individual project, TPTH would advise NGOs on individual assessment items of the project, including environment, traffic, fire services, infrastructure provision, etc. It would accompany these NGOs and their professional consultants to meet with relevant government departments, with a view to resolving problems and expediting the development process. He added that the Administration had identified land for construction of 10 000 units and continuous efforts would be made to identify other suitable sites to provide the remaining 5 000 units expeditiously. The Administration would make announcements in due course after suitable sites had been identified.

9. Regarding the estimated number of transitional housing units to be provided annually, USTH remarked that the Administration had not set a fixed target, and it was expected that around 1 000 units would be made available in the first year. Project Director 1, TPTH added that the some 1 000 units to be provided in the first year would be built on land of smaller size. As the planning and mode of development were relatively less complex, the project could be completed quickly. The remaining units were to be built on larger sites and they would take longer time to build as planning and infrastructure provision were more complex. That being the case, it was expected that most of those units (around 10 000 units) would be completed in the third year.

10. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan expressed support for the implementation of transitional housing projects. Given that the land identified by the Government could be used for building multi-storey buildings, she enquired why they were not used for development of public housing. Dr CHIANG was concerned that as only 1 000 transitional housing units would be provided in the first year under the project, the target of providing 15 000 units in three years might be difficult to reach.

11. USTH replied that the consideration had to be given to factors such as whether the landscape and environment of the identified site was

suitable for dwelling. While some transitional housing projects would utilize government sites designated for specific purposes, it was the intention of the Administration to make optimal use of land resources by building transitional housing prior to the commencement of the pre-defined planning on the related land. Contrary to public housing, transitional housing was temporary in nature, built generally using the Modular Integration Construction method. Transitional housing had fewer storeys, and each unit cost around \$550 000. Preliminary planning took less time, making it possible for provision of temporary housing for people with housing needs in an expeditious manner.

12. Dr KWOK Ka-ki expressed concerns that by leasing land (including agricultural land) to NGOs at a low price to develop transitional housing projects, developers might seek to apply for rezoning the relevant land for residential use subsequent to termination of the projects. He enquired about what measures were in place to avoid that.

13. Mr SHIU Ka-chun noted that transitional housing projects involved the Government, developers and NGOs. He asked about the party responsible for site formation prior to commencement of the projects and land restoration works upon termination of the projects. Mr SHIU enquired, upon termination of the transitional housing projects on individual sites, whether the Administration would continue renting the site from the developers, or resume the land by invoking the Lands Resumption Ordinance (Cap. 124).

14. USTH replied that prior to leasing land to NGOs at a nominal price for the implementation of transitional housing projects, developers were required to carry out preliminary site formation works and provide infrastructure. Upon termination of the projects, if developers intended to rezone the relevant land, they should make applications to the Town Planning Board according to the established procedures under the Lands Resumption Ordinance (Cap. 131). Approval would be subject to compliance of relevant requirements.

15. Project Director 1, TFTH added that once a transitional housing project was terminated, whether the project had been carried out on privately-owned land or government land, NGOs would be responsible for land restoration.

16. Dr KWOK Ka-ki suggested that consideration should be given to acquiring from developers the land on which transitional housing projects were developed. In addition, the Administration should enter into an agreement with the developers with a provision that the proceeds from land

sale should go to NGOs to be used for the development of transitional housing. Dr KWOK requested the Administration to follow up on his suggestions and provide a response at the relevant FC meeting. USTH remarked that matters relating to land uses fell outside the ambit of THB's policy areas; however, he noted Dr KWOK's views.

*Consulting occupants on their needs*

17. Dr Fernando CHEUNG reiterated that residents might be reluctant to move into transitional housing units if they had to travel across districts for work or schooling. He opined that the Administration should consult the prospective occupants beforehand. He also enquired how the Administration would consult the prospective occupants in order to ensure that the projects could cater for their housing, employment and schooling needs.

18. Regarding selection of sites for transitional housing, USTH advised that consideration would be given to a number of factors prior to selection of sites for the development of transitional housing, including whether the project would have any ecological impacts and whether slope maintenance would be required etc. There were cases in which the Administration had not given approval to NGOs for development of transitional housing at sites not suitable for such proposes. Furthermore, the Administration would make no additional financial commitment for provision of infrastructures and supporting facilities on account of development of transitional housing on the relevant land.

19. USTH added that the Chief Executive announced in January 2020 that a Task Force for Study on Tenancy Control of Subdivided Units ("SDUs") ("the Task Force") would be set up under THB, which would visit SDU households to identify the different needs of people with housing problems. The Administration would keep liaising with NGOs who operated the transitional housing projects and the occupants of such projects. The operational experience gathered from implementing the projects and the views of the stakeholders would be collated and applied to upcoming new projects to ensure that new projects would run more smoothly and better address the needs of the occupants.

*Support to non-government organizations*

20. Mr WU Chi-wai noted that TFTH mainly comprised professional and technical support staff. He enquired whether the Administration would consider deploying relevant resources to participating NGOs, enabling NGOs to employ professionals for the implementation of the

projects themselves with a view to eliminating repetitive administrative procedures and achieving optimal use of resources.

21. Mr SHIU Ka-chun pointed out that NGOs were concerned about whether transitional housing projects would be monopolized by organizations working in close collaboration with the Government. He enquired about the specific criteria regarding the tender for such projects (e.g. whether more than one NGO could collaborate in implementing a transitional housing project) and whether the Administration would put in place any mechanisms to prevent monopoly by some NGOs.

22. USTH advised that TFTH would coordinate with and provide supporting services to NGOs participating in transitional housing projects, including consulting the B/Ds concerned, advising on relevant administrative or statutory procedures, and assisting NGOs in funding applications, etc. TFTH would also provide comments to NGOs on different aspects of transitional housing projects, including statutory requirements on the architectural layout, traffic, and fire services, etc. In addition, meetings would be held with NGOs and the professionals they employed, as well as relevant departments (e.g. Buildings Department, Lands Department, Transport Department and Fire Services Department), with a view to offering assistance to NGOs for resolving the problems they encountered during the implementation of transitional housing projects and accelerating the process for obtaining relevant approvals.

23. USTH added that NGOs could employ professionals to carry out transitional housing projects with the resources they received under the funding scheme. An Assessment Committee under the funding scheme would assist in the vetting of NGOs' applications and overseeing the implementation of the scheme. Chaired by USTH and comprising representatives from relevant B/Ds and non-official members appointed by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, the Assessment Committee would assess the technical and financial aspects of the proposed projects, matters of concern raised by relevant districts, as well as checking whether the projects were within the scope and financial ceiling. The Assessment Committee would see to it that the amount of funding granted to each approved project should be in line with the principles of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in the use of resources. It would also take into account the experience and capability of applicants, and the timeframe required by them in implementing the projects.



*Feasibility of continual development of transitional housing projects*

24. Mr SHIU Ka-chun enquired whether the Administration would continue implementing transitional housing projects after the expiry of the five-year term of the proposed AOSGC post. Given the prolonged waiting time for public housing, Mr SHIU asked whether consideration would be given to extending the tenancy period (i.e. two to three years) until offers for public housing were made to the occupants of transitional housing, inclusion of transitional housing projects into the Long Term Housing Strategy ("LTHS"), reviewing the effectiveness of the projects on a regular basis to alleviate continuously the housing pressure face by the occupants.

25. Dr KWOK Ka-ki noted that politically-appointed officials would be reshuffled along with the change of Government. He was concerned that TPTH under the leadership of USTH, a politically-appointed official, might affect the continuity and effectiveness of transitional housing projects.

26. USTH responded that well-established mechanisms were in place to ensure effective implementation of policies and measures in a consistent manner by bodies under B/Ds in the event of changes of leading principal officials. A good number of programmes under the transitional housing projects had already commenced, among them some projects of a larger scale running for five to seven years. As the tenure of the proposed AOSGC post would be up to March 2025, which would straddle across the current term of the Government, the Administration would review whether extension of the tenure of the post would be warranted in light of prevailing situations and operational needs.

27. USTH continued that the Administration currently had no plan to include transitional housing projects into LTHS, which premised upon "supply-led" and "flexibility" principles. Under LTHS, the Administration would update the projection on long-term housing demand annually and address the supply-demand imbalance by increasing housing supply. The Administration would make timely adjustments to LTHS and prepare an LTHS Annual Progress Report. Transitional housing projects were temporary in nature comprising individual projects of various scales (e.g. site location, area, and number of storeys etc.), making it difficult for the Administration to set up targets in terms of the number of such housing units to be provided annually. At present, the Administration was implementing transitional housing projects with a target of providing 15 000 units in three years. Regarding extension of the tenancy of transitional housing units, USTH advised that participating NGOs would set the tenure of tenancies in accordance with their respective vision for the

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projects. For instance, in operating transitional housing projects, some NGOs placed emphasis on re-integration into society, while some other NGOs allowed change of occupants within the two-year tenancy period.

Organizational structure of the Task Force on Transitional Housing

28. Jeremy TAM said that as illustrated in the organization chart of TFTH set out in Enclosure 3 of the discussion paper, the post of Deputy Head, TFTH was to be taken up by an AOSGC, with USTH, a politically-appointed official, as immediate supervisor, which, in his view, would not compile with the provision of the Code that "civil servants shall only report direct to supervisors in the civil service, except for some specific civil servants". Mr TAM was of the view that instead of simply being a clarification of the organization chart, as the Administration put it, the addition of two civil servants, namely, Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing) ("PSTH(H)") and Deputy Secretary for Transport and Housing ("DSTH(H)") in the revised TFTH's organization chart as set out in Enclosure 3 of the Administration's written reply (LC Paper No. ESC45/19-20(01)), where DSTH(H) would be made the direct supervisor of the candidate of the AOSGC post, constituted an alternation of the staffing proposal. Mr TAM also asked whether there were any precedents in the Civil Service Bureau ("CSB") in which politically-appointed officials were made a direct supervisor of civil service officials in other policy bureaux; and whether non-civil service contract staff, including such staff under the existing structure of TFTH, had to comply with the Code.

29. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen pointed out that in the revised TFTH's organization chart as set out in Enclosure 3 of the Administration's written response, DSTH(H), instead of USTH, was made the immediate supervisor of the candidate of the AOSGC post. He queried whether PSTH(H) and DSTH(H) would be involved in the day-to-day operations of TFTH and the degree of their involvement. Mr CHAN also asked whether similar arrangements had been made in the past under which politically-appointed officials (including Policy Secretaries, Under Secretaries and Political Assistants) were made a direct supervisor of civil service officials, and whether there was only one DSTH(H) post in THB.

30. USTH reiterated that the revised TFTH's organization chart set out by the Administration was based on a "dual-track" approach which aimed to clarify TFTH's organizational structure for its day-to-day operations in relation to the line of command of the civil service. As such, a civil service official DSTH(H) had been included in the chart and made a direct supervisor of the Deputy Head, TFTH, an AOSGC post, in order to address

members' concerns. DSTH(H) would consult Head of TFTH (i.e. USTH) when assessing the work performance of Deputy Head, TFTH. He added that there was only one DSTH(H) post in THB. While PSTH(H) was not directly engaged in TFTH's day-to-day operations, being the Controlling Officer of TFTH's budget account, the Permanent Secretary was well apprised of the operation of the task force.

31. Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service 1 ("DS(CS)1") replied that CSB promulgated the Code to civil service staff via a circular. Civil servants were required to comply with the requirements set out in the Code, non-civil service contract staff members were also required to comply with the Code by virtue of their conditions of employment. He undertook to provide supplementary information after the meeting on arrangements similar to those of the Task Force under which politically-appointed officials had been/were made a direct supervisor of civil service officials, or civil service officials made to render support to politically appointed officials direct in other policy bureaux.

*(Post-meeting note: The supplementary information provided by the Administration was circulated to members on 8 June 2020 vide LC Paper No. ESC53/19-20(01).)*

32. Mr Jeremy TAM said that he had asked if there were precedents of politically-appointed officials being made a direct supervisor of civil service officials in panel meetings and in the Subcommittee meeting held on 6 May. He expressed dissatisfaction that so far no direct response had been made by CSB on his enquiries.

33. Regarding the revised TFTH's organization chart, Mr Jeremy TAM asked whether USTH was the immediate supervisor of Senior Administrative Officer ("SAO"), Senior Architect ("SA") and Senior Building Services Engineer ("SBSE"), and whether Senior Executive Officer ("SEO") was in any way reportable to USTH.

34. USTH advised that being the Head of TFTH, he would need the support of the staff of the professional grade (including SA and SBSE) and other grades in his day-to-day operations in order to implement the transitional housing projects smoothly. The incumbent SA and SBSE were not civil servants; they were employed by the Government on contract terms. The SAO post had not been filled since the establishment of TFTH.

35. Project Director 1, TFTH added that SEO at TFTH was a civil service post under the Executive Officer ("EO") grade. The SEO

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deployed from HD was reportable to the officer in charge of the EO grade at HD.

36. Dr KWOK Ka-ki was concerned whether matters relating to promotion or work deployment within TPTH would be influenced by the arrangement of making USTH, a politically-appointed official, the Head of the Task Force.

37. DS(CS)1 remarked that matters relating to promotion and performance assessment of civil service officials would be handled according to the Code and the relevant civil service mechanisms currently in place; the same applied to matters relating to the promotion and performance assessment of the candidate of the SEO post.

Voting on the item

38. There being no further questions from members, the Chairman put the item EC(2020-21)2 to vote. At the requests of members, the Chairman ordered a division, and the division bell rang for five minutes. Fourteen members voted for the item and 8 against it. The Chairman declared that the Subcommittee agreed to recommend the item to FC for approval. The votes of individual members were as follows:

*For*

Mr WONG Ting-kwong	Mr WONG Kwok-kin
Mrs Regina IP	Mr Steven HO
Mr YIU Si-wing	Ms Elizabeth QUAT
Mr Martin LIAO	Mr POON Siu-ping
Dr CHIANG Lai-wan	Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok
Mr CHUNG Kwok-pan	Mr SHIU Ka-fai
Mr CHAN Chun-ying	Mr Tony TSE
(14 members)	

*Against*

Mr WU Chi-wai	Mr CHAN Chi-chuen
Dr KWOK Ka-ki	Dr Fernando CHEUNG
Mr Alvin YEUNG	Mr CHU Hoi-dick
Mr SHIU Ka-chun	Mr Jeremy TAM
(8 members)	

39. Dr KWOK Ka-ki requested that the item be voted on separately at the relevant FC meeting.

**EC(2020-21)1            Proposed retention of one supernumerary post of Senior Principal Executive Officer (D2) in the Food Branch of the Food and Health Bureau with effect from 24 May 2020 or upon approval of the Finance Committee, whichever is later, for a period of five years to monitor the work on food safety and continue to cope with the complex and challenging food safety policy issues by implementing new initiatives to safeguard food safety**

40.     The Chairman remarked that the staffing proposal was to retain one supernumerary post of Senior Principal Executive Officer ("SPEO") (D2) in the Food Branch of the Food and Health Bureau ("FHB"), designated as Senior Principal Executive Officer (Food) ("SPEO(Food)"), with effect from 24 May 2020 or upon approval of FC, whichever is later, for a period of five years to monitor the work on food safety and continue to cope with the complex and challenging food safety policy issues by implementing new initiatives to safeguard food safety.

41.     The Chairman pointed out that the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene had discussed the staffing proposal on making permanent the SPEO (Food) post at its meeting held on 10 December 2019. A member indicated support for the proposal; other members did not support the proposal at this stage, or remained undecided as to whether or not they would support the proposal. Some members recognized the importance of the work to enhance food safety, but they queried whether it was justifiable to make the SPEO (Food) post permanent at this point in time. They suggested that the Administration should consider retaining the supernumerary post for two to three years. The Administration remarked that the existing establishment of the Food Branch of FHB was not sufficient to cope with the increased workload arising from food safety policy issues and it was necessary to make permanent the existing supernumerary SPEO post. Some members considered that FHB should be prudent in manpower planning to avoid duplication of resources. The Administration advised that the three other SPEOs at the Food Branch of FHB were too stretched to share out the workload of SPEO (Food). In conclusion, the Chairman requested that when submitting proposals to the Subcommittee in the future, the Administration should take into account members' views. In the paper submitted afresh to the Subcommittee, the Administration proposed to retain the SPEO (Food) post for five years.

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Regulating the safety of imported food

42. Dr KWOK Ka-ki remarked that food safety was a matter of public concern; he pointed out that the number of spot checks conducted by the Centre for Food Safety ("CFS") on Mainland-imported food at the land boundary control points was inadequate. Besides, such inspections were mostly visual checks carried out in a casual manner. CFS and FHB rarely deployed staff to conduct inspection on premises for storing Mainland-imported food (such as aquatic products, fruits and vegetables, as well as meat, etc.) to ensure the quality of imported food and the hygienic conditions of the premises. Furthermore, Dr KWOK was dissatisfied with the Administration's lack of response with regard to the request made by members at the meeting of the Panel for a site visit to the Man Kam To Food Control Office to study CFS's operation of food surveillance on imported food from the Mainland. He queried the effectiveness of retaining the SPEO (Food) post on enhancing food safety management and food import control.

43. Under Secretary for Food and Health ("USFH") replied that CFS had put in place a regular surveillance system for testing the safety of various types of food imported from the Mainland and other areas. Besides, CFS staff would liaise closely with the authorities of the exporting end, including conducting site visits to local farms and food processing plants with a checklist of inspection items such as food production and management models, hygienic conditions and bio-security measures, as well as the storage and use of veterinary drugs and pesticides, etc.

44. Deputy Secretary for Food and Health (Food)2 ("DSFH(F)2") added that CFS had responded to the recommendations of the Public Accounts Committee ("PAC") on the chapters "Centre for Food Safety: Management of food safety" and "Centre for Food Safety: Import control of foods" in Report No. 71 of the Director of Audit ("Report No. 71") in May and December 2019 respectively. CFS had set up a task group, led by its Controller, to take forward the recommendations of the Audit Commission and PAC. Tremendous efforts had been made by the Task Force for protection of food safety, including conduct of comprehensive reviews on CFS's operational manuals and guidelines, staff management and supervision arrangements, training requirements, and manpower and resource requirements. CFS was rolling out short, medium and long-term measures to enhance its effectiveness in a progressive manner, including updating the guidelines where there were inadequacies or ambiguities, enhancing training and supervision of the frontline staff, and strengthening staff's law enforcement mindset and the keeping of data and records. She stressed that according to the operational manual, CFS staff would personally inspect targeted consignment of foods by taking samples at

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random and examine the import documents to safeguard the safety of imported food. For the control of foods imported by road, CFS and the Custom and Excise Department worked closely together and conduct joint operations targeting vegetable vehicles and vehicles carrying regulated foods (e.g. eggs and meat). At present, the Man Kam To Food Control Office had already formulated a checklist on the required import documents for different types of foods and the items to be inspected, as well as requiring frontline staff to check whether the vehicles or containers transporting chilled meat and poultry were on the approved vehicle list to ensure that only approved vehicles or containers were released.

45. Mr Tony TSE expressed his support for this staffing proposal; he appreciated the views of the Administration and members on retention or making permanent the supernumerary post of SPEO(Food). Mr TSE noted that shopping for food through the Internet ("online food shopping") was becoming popular; he enquired whether measures would be introduced for regulating overseas and local food purchased online in the food safety polices in the future. He opined that every link of the online food supply chain (from storage, transport, packaging to retail of food products upon imported) should be regulated to ensure the safety of food purchased online.

46. USFH advised that when the Panel discussed the proposal to make permanent the SPEO (Food) post, some members considered it inappropriate to make relevant arrangements at the current stage. After taking into account members' views, and considering the demand for manpower, the Administration proposed to retain the post of SPEO (Food) on a supernumerary basis.

47. USFH(F)2 replied that for protection of food safety, samples of food at the import, wholesale and retail levels were taken for testing under the Food Surveillance Programme, with some 60 000 food samples being inspected and tested every year. The overall passing rate of the samples was high, reaching 99.8% in 2019. In case any food samples failed to pass the inspection and testing, follow-up actions would be taken by CFS as appropriate, including informing the relevant Administration of the places of origin, requesting the importers/distributors to recall, stop selling and dispose of the implicated foods as needed, etc. If there was sufficient evidence, CFS would institute prosecution. Regarding inspection and testing of samples of food purchased online, CFS had accepted the recommendations set out in Report No.71 to enhance surveillance on food purchased online. In 2015, around 1 500 samples of food purchased online had been tested. Given the prevalence of online food shopping, some 4 800 samples were taken by CFS in 2019, representing an increase of more than two times.

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48. Mr SHIU Ka-chun noted that in response to the promotion of green non-staple food programmes in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area ("GBA") in recent years, the Administration would work closely with cities in GBA and ensure a stable supply of food to Hong Kong. He enquired about the differences in food safety standards between Hong Kong and GBA, the safety standards to be adopted by CFS for testing food supplies from GBA, and whether the proposed SPEO (Food) would be responsible such work.

49. USFH responded that CFS had all along been using local food safety standards for inspection of imported food to ensure compliance of local food safety standards. FHB and CFS would monitor closely international development regarding protection of food safety and update local food safety standards and surveillance arrangements in a timely manner. This would also be among the duties of the SPEO (Food) post proposed to be retained.

50. The Chairman remarked that as some members were still waiting for their turn to ask questions, the Subcommittee would continue the discussion on this item at the meeting on 3 June 2020.

51. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10:27 am.