

立法會

Legislative Council

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Paper for the House Committee meeting on 16 October 2020

Proposed timeline for activation of subcommittees on policy issues in the 2020-2021 session

Purpose

This paper invites Members to consider the proposed timeline for activation of subcommittees on policy issues ("policy subcommittees") in the 2020-2021 session.

Background

2. Under rules 26(a) and (b) of the House Rules ("HR"), the maximum number of policy subcommittees appointed by the House Committee ("HC") and Panels that may be in operation at any one time is 10 ("the quota"). Where the number of policy subcommittees has reached the quota, a queuing system will automatically be activated with a waiting list formed. The order of policy subcommittees on the waiting list is in the order of their appointment.¹

3. Under HR 26(c), a policy subcommittee should complete its work within 12 months of its commencement and report to HC or the relevant Panel(s). Should such a subcommittee consider it necessary for it to work beyond that 12 months, the subcommittee should, after obtaining

¹ According to the broad principles for the activation, operation and extension of period of work of policy subcommittees agreed by HC at its meeting on 15 November 2013, the number of subcommittees under each Panel operating at the same time should not exceed two. For this purpose, a joint subcommittee will be counted as one subcommittee for each of the Panels concerned. The broad principles also provide that HC can decide the order of activation/re-activation of policy subcommittees on the waiting list.

the endorsement of the relevant Panel(s) if it is appointed by a Panel(s), report to HC and give justifications for an extension of the 12-month period.²

4. At the HC meeting on 7 July 2017, Members agreed to adopt the following arrangements for extension of period of work of policy subcommittees in the Sixth Legislative Council ("LegCo"): upon completion of the 12-month period, a policy subcommittee in operation will vacate its slot for activation of a subcommittee on the waiting list. If the subcommittee in operation considers it necessary for it to work beyond the 12-month period, upon obtaining endorsement of HC, it will be put on the waiting list for re-activation. It was further agreed that the Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways ("the Railways Subcommittee")³ and the Joint Subcommittee to Monitor the Implementation of the West Kowloon Cultural District Project ("the WKCD Subcommittee")⁴ be given permission to continue to operate in the coming session if they proposed to do so.⁵

Latest position of policy subcommittees

5. Details of policy subcommittees in operation during the 2019-2020 session and policy subcommittees on the waiting list at the end of the 2019-2020 session are in **Appendices I** and **II** respectively. There are presently one policy subcommittee in operation (namely the Subcommittee to Study the Development of Textbooks and Teaching Materials for Kindergartens, Primary and Secondary Schools, with its 12-month period of work expiring on 27 April 2021), and two policy subcommittees on the waiting list (namely the Subcommittee on Issues Relating to the Silver Age Card and the Subcommittee to Study Issues

² It is the established practice to determine duration of the 12-month period on the basis of the date of the first meeting of the subcommittee.

³ The Railways Subcommittee had been set up under the Panel on Transport to monitor issues relating to the planning and implementation of new railway projects, and the operation of existing railways since the Second LegCo.

⁴ The WKCD Subcommittee was appointed by the Panel on Development and the Panel on Home Affairs to monitor issues relating to the implementation of WKCD project, including the work of the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority, the project's interface with arts and cultural development, and other related matters. This Subcommittee had been set up since the Fourth LegCo.

⁵ These two Subcommittees were subsequently given further permission for continuation of work in the 2018-2019 session and 2019-2020 session at the HC meetings on 6 July 2018 and 11 October 2019 respectively.

Relating to Animal Rights). Having regard to the terms of reference of the Railways Subcommittee and the WKCD Subcommittee having a continuous nature and their previous proposals to extend the period of their work over the last few sessions, it is highly likely that the relevant Panels will consider it necessary to have these two Subcommittees to operate in the 2020-2021 session, and that Members may wish to accord priority for these two Subcommittees to work in the 2020-2021 session. Hence, five slots are expected to be available for other newly appointed policy subcommittees.⁶

6. In this connection, Members are invited to note that as at the end of the 2019-2020 session, three select committees ("SCs") formed pursuant to Rule 20(6) of the Rules and Procedure are awaiting activation⁷, and four investigation committees ("ICs") have not yet commenced work.⁸ Based on the past experience, as the operation of IC is akin to that of SC, the servicing work for IC is much more complex and demanding than that of a policy subcommittee, and the workload for servicing one IC was at least twice that for one policy subcommittee. Members noted at various HC meetings⁹ that having regard to the Secretariat's manpower constraint, the number of slots available for the operation of policy subcommittees had been reduced in order to free up resources to service ICs. If members are minded to take forward the work of ICs and SCs, the resources available for servicing policy subcommittees will be diminished.

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⁶ Members may wish to note that the Panel on Manpower has received a joint letter from Hon KWOK Wai-keung and Hon LUK Chung-hung proposing the appointment of a subcommittee by the Panel to study issues relating to the setting up of an unemployment support system in Hong Kong, as set out in LC Paper No. CB(2)1475/19-20(01) issued on 7 September 2020.

⁷ When a select committee was first established under RoP 20(6) pursuant to the presentation of a petition in 2013, HC has agreed at its meeting on 14 June 2013 that such select committee operating at any one time should be capped at one.

⁸ In addition, two censure motions were put on the Agenda of the Council meeting of 20 May 2020, and the matters stated in the two censure motions have not yet been referred to ICs. For details of the aforesaid three SCs, four ICs and two censure motions, refer to LC Paper No. CB(2)16/20-21 for the HC meeting on 16 October 2020.

⁹ These meetings included the HC meetings held on 7 July and 1 December 2017, 1 June and 23 November 2018, and 11 October 2019.

7. Subject to HC's decision to be made at its meeting on 16 October 2020 concerning how to deal with the work of the aforesaid three SCs and four ICs in the 2010-2021 session, Members may consider adopting the following proposed timeline for the activation of policy subcommittees in the 2020-2021 session:

- (a) the two policy subcommittees currently on the waiting list can commence work immediately, namely the Subcommittee on Issues Relating to the Silver Age Card and the Subcommittee to Study Issues Relating to Animal Rights;
- (b) upon obtaining the relevant Panels' endorsement, HC will accord priority to the Railways Subcommittee and the WKCD Subcommittee to work in the 2020-2021 session and they can commence work immediately; and
- (c) the remaining slots will be allocated to newly appointed policy subcommittees on a first-come-first-serve basis.

Advice sought

8. Members are invited to note the latest position of policy subcommittees set out in paragraphs 5 and 6 above, and consider the proposed timeline for activation of policy subcommittees in the 2020-2021 session set out in paragraph 7 above.

Appendix I

Subcommittees on policy issues in operation during the 2019-2020 session

Name of Subcommittee	Date of first meeting	Latest position
1. Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways under the Panel on Transport	18 November 2016	Work completed
2. Joint Subcommittee to Monitor the Implementation of the West Kowloon Cultural District Project under the Panel on Development and the Panel on Home Affairs	23 November 2016	Work completed
3. Subcommittee to Follow Up Issues Related to Inadequate Housing and Relevant Housing Policies under the Panel on Housing	14 December 2018	Work completed
4. Joint Subcommittee on Issues Relating to the Regulation of Devices and Development of the Beauty Industry under the Panel on Health Services and the Panel on Commerce and Industry	14 December 2018	Work completed
5. Subcommittee on Issues Relating to the Support for Cancer Patients under the Panel on Health Services	22 March 2019	Work completed
6. Subcommittee on Hillside Escalator Links and Elevator Systems under the Panel on Transport	26 March 2019	Work completed
7. Joint Subcommittee to Follow Up Issues Relating to the Redevelopment, Maintenance and Management of Aged Buildings under the Panel on Development and the Panel on Home Affairs	22 March 2019	Work completed
8. Subcommittee on Issues Relating to Policy on Industrial Buildings under the House Committee	17 December 2019	Work completed
9. Subcommittee on Issues Relating to the Development of Chinese Medicine under the Panel on Health Services	20 December 2019	Work completed
10. Subcommittee to Study Issues Relating to the Development of Electric Vehicles under the Panel on Environmental Affairs	21 April 2020	Work completed
11. Subcommittee to Study the Development of Textbooks and Teaching Materials for Kindergartens, Primary and Secondary Schools under the Panel on Education	28 April 2020	Work not yet completed and in operation
12. Joint Subcommittee on Long-term Care Policy under the Panel on Welfare Services and the Panel on Health Services*	16 December 2016	Work completed

* At the House Committee meeting on 1 December 2017, Members agreed that the Joint Subcommittee, after its 12-month period of work completed on 15 December 2017, would be put on the waiting list for re-activation of work when a vacant slot arose. The Joint Subcommittee re-activated its work on 26 March 2020.

Appendix II

Subcommittees on policy issues on the waiting list at the end of the 2019-2020 session[#]

Name of Subcommittee	Date of appointment
1. Subcommittee on Issues Relating to the Silver Age Card under the Panel on Welfare Services	11 May 2020
2. Subcommittee to Study Issues Relating to Animal Rights under the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene*	8 November 2016

To ensure that all the policy subcommittees currently on the waiting list which have not yet commenced work since appointment can have the opportunity to activate and commence work before the end of the Sixth Legislative Council, Members agreed at the House Committee meeting on 6 July 2018 that priority be accorded to these subcommittees over those subcommittees awaiting re-activation of work.

* At the House Committee meeting on 1 December 2017, Members agreed that the Subcommittee, after its 12-month period of work completed on 15 December 2017, would be put on the waiting list for re-activation of work when a vacant slot arose.