

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. ESC30/16-17
(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/F/3/2

Establishment Subcommittee of the Finance Committee

Minutes of the 2nd meeting
held in Conference Room 1 of Legislative Council Complex
on Wednesday, 30 November 2016, at 8:30 am

Members present:

Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-yee, GBS, JP (Chairman)
Hon Alvin YEUNG (Deputy Chairman)
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, GBS, JP
Hon WONG Ting-kwong, SBS, JP
Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, SBS, JP
Hon Paul TSE Wai-chun, JP
Hon WU Chi-wai, MH
Hon YIU Si-wing, BBS
Hon MA Fung-kwok, SBS, JP
Hon Charles Peter MOK, JP
Hon CHAN Chi-chuen
Hon CHAN Han-pan, JP
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, BBS, MH, JP
Hon Alice MAK Mei-kuen, BBS, JP
Hon IP Kin-yuen
Dr Hon Elizabeth QUAT, JP
Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH
Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok, SBS, MH, JP
Hon LAM Cheuk-ting
Hon Holden CHOW Ho-ding
Hon SHIU Ka-fai
Hon Wilson OR Chong-shing, MH
Hon YUNG Hoi-yan
Hon CHAN Chun-ying

Hon Tanya CHAN
Hon LAU Kwok-fan, MH
Hon KWONG Chun-yu
Hon Jeremy TAM Man-ho
Dr Hon YIU Chung-yim
Dr Hon LAU Siu-lai

Members absent:

Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, GBS, JP
Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, SBS, JP
Hon WONG Kwok-kin, SBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
Hon Steven HO Chun-yin, BBS
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki
Hon KWOK Wai-keung
Hon Dennis KWOK
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan
Hon Martin LIAO Cheung-kong, SBS, JP
Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, JP
Hon CHUNG Kwok-pan
Hon CHU Hoi-dick
Hon Jimmy NG Wing-ka, JP
Hon HO Kai-ming
Hon SHIU Ka-chun
Hon HUI Chi-fung
Hon LUK Chung-hung
Hon Kenneth LAU Ip-keung, MH, JP
Hon Nathan LAW Kwun-chung

Public Officers attending:

Ms Carol YUEN Siu-wai, JP	Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury) 1
Mr Eddie MAK Tak-wai, JP	Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service 1
Mrs Vicki KWOK	Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (2)
Mr Elvis AU, JP	Assistant Director of Environmental Protection (Nature Conservation and Infrastructure Planning)

Clerk in attendance:

Ms Connie SZETO Chief Council Secretary (1)4

Staff in attendance:

Mr Keith WONG	Council Secretary (1)4
Ms Alice CHEUNG	Senior Legislative Assistant (1)1
Miss Yannes HO	Legislative Assistant (1)6
Ms Haley CHEUNG	Legislative Assistant (1)9

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The Chairman drew members' attention to the information paper ECI(2016-17)9, which set out the latest changes in the directorate establishment approved since 2002 and the changes to the directorate establishment in relation to the item on the agenda. She 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 proposal under discussion at the meeting before they spoke on the item. She also drew members' attention to RoP 84 on voting in case of direct pecuniary interest.

EC(2016-17)19 Proposed creation of a supernumerary post of Principal Environmental Protection Officer (D1) in the Environmental Protection Department with immediate effect upon approval by Finance Committee up to 31 March 2019 to lead the Food Waste Management Group for implementing the strategies as set out in the Food Waste Plan

2. The Chairman remarked that the staffing proposal was to create a supernumerary post of Principal Environmental Protection Officer ("PEPO") (D1) in the Environmental Protection Department ("EPD") with immediate effect upon approval by Finance Committee ("FC") up to 31 March 2019 to lead the Food Waste Management Group ("FWMG") for implementing the strategies as set out in "A Food Waste and Yard Waste Plan for Hong Kong: 2014-2022" ("Food Waste Plan"). She advised that the Administration had consulted the Panel on Environmental Affairs on the relevant proposal on 24 October 2016.

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3. Ms Tanya CHAN, Chairman of the Panel on Environmental Affairs, reported on the discussion by the Panel. She pointed out that members had no objection to the proposal in general. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said at the meeting that as it was uncertain whether the proposed post would involve the duties of implementing a food waste levy scheme in the future, Members from the Liberal Party might object to the creation of the proposed post. Some members suggested that the Administration should study the implementation of mandatory waste separation at source, and that the proposed post should include such duties. During the discussion, members enquired about the operation, monitoring and development of the Organic Waste Treatment Facilities ("OWTFs"), and urged for strengthening the food waste recycling schemes implemented in public and private housing estates.

Promoting the policy on food waste reduction and its effectiveness

4. Mr WU Chi-wai pointed out that the current work under the Food Waste Plan mainly sought to promote the recycling of food waste generated by the commercial and industrial ("C&I") sectors, but it was projected to be more difficult to recycle domestic food waste than C&I food waste. He enquired about the Administration's strategies, plans or timetables for promoting the recycling of domestic food waste, and whether it would specifically implement domestic food waste recycling through the proposed post.

5. The Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (2) ("DDEP(2)") advised that the main function of the OWTF network, which was under development, would be to process C&I food waste. In early 2017, the Government would launch a territory-wide study on organic waste collection, covering issues relating to domestic food waste recycling. The Government would also make reference to the operation of OWTF Phase 1 while reviewing the way forward for the policy on food waste recycling. Duties of the proposed post would include developing and implementing OWTFs, and overseeing the territory-wide study on organic waste collection.

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6. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen said that whether he would support the proposed post hinged on the Administration's determination in implementing a mandatory food waste source separation scheme. He requested the Administration to submit supplementary information stating that the duties of the proposed post would include studying the implementation of a mandatory food waste source separation scheme. He believed that this would indicate the Government's determination in implementing the scheme.

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7. DDEP(2) advised that the duties of the proposed post would include studying the feasibility of implementing a mandatory food waste source separation scheme. Furthermore, the new post would also review the effectiveness of OWTF Phase 1 after its commissioning as well as the implementation of a waste charging scheme in the future with a view to formulating an overall policy on food waste recycling.

8. Mr WONG Ting-kwong said that the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong supported the proposed post. He commented that it was essential to achieve food waste reduction through educating and encouraging members of the public to minimize food wastage. He asked how the Administration would step up efforts in this regard. He also enquired about the plans to implement the initiatives of turning food waste to energy and producing fodder with recycled food waste after the commissioning of OWTF Phase 1. He pointed out that the food catering industry was concerned about increase in operating cost resulted from the implementation of food waste recycling among the C&I sectors. He asked how the Administration would address such concerns.

9. DDEP(2) advised that the Food Wise Hong Kong Campaign introduced by the Government in 2013 had made some initial achievements. According to the latest statistics, food waste disposal at landfills in 2015 had dropped by 7.1% and 5.6% as compared to 2014 and 2011 respectively. Moreover, the per capita disposal rate of food waste had dropped, showing that the efforts of the Government and different parties in the community on food waste reduction had borne fruit. As regards the operating cost of the trade, she advised that the waste charging scheme to be implemented by the Government would provide incentives to the food catering industry and engage them in food waste recycling so as to help alleviate the cost of refuse disposal of the trade in the long run. Early participation in food waste recycling would also enhance the image of the trade. Assistant Director (Nature Conservation and Infrastructure Planning) ("AD(NC&IP)") added that considering that the scale of Hong Kong's farming industry was not large enough to absorb the products made from food waste, the policy emphasis of the Food Waste Plan would be turning food waste to energy, and residual food waste could also be used for making fertilizer.

10. Mr YIU Si-wing supported the creation of the proposed post. He pointed out that the operation of the hotel and food catering industries in 2015 was unsatisfactory. He asked whether the Administration had considered this factor in calculating the drop in C&I food waste, and how the proposed post would spur food waste reduction further.

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11. AD(NC&IP) advised that the Administration had not included the impact of sector business on the drop in food waste in the calculation. He added that C&I food waste had dropped by about 5% in recent years. The Administration would continue to promote food waste reduction among the C&I sectors, including encouraging diners to take leftover away through the "Food Wise Eateries" campaign, which had been joined by 600 eateries or so. In addition, the proposed post would be responsible for implementing OWTF Phase 1 and preparing for the development of other new OWTFs. After the commissioning of OWTF Phases 1 and 2, it was projected that 500 tonnes of C&I food waste would be processed daily, which was enough to absorb half of the around 1 000 tonnes of food waste generated by the C&I sectors every day.

12. Mr KWONG Chun-yu enquired about the Administration's timetable for promoting food waste reduction in Hong Kong, and asked whether the Administration would make reference to some forward-looking overseas initiatives on food waste reduction and work with local community groups in promoting the work.

13. DDEP(2) advised that the Food Waste Plan promulgated by the Government in 2014 was aimed at reducing the amount of food waste disposed of at landfills by 40% by 2022 through four strategies, namely reduction at source, reuse and donation, recyclable collection and turning food waste to energy. Food waste was projected to drop significantly after the commissioning of OWTF Phases 1 to 3. She added that the Administration would submit a legislative proposal on waste charging to the Legislative Council, and believed that implementation of related measures would help reduce and recycle food waste. In the long run, FWMG would continue to study other measures on food waste reduction, including making reference to relevant overseas experience.

Duration of the proposed post

14. Mr POON Siu-ping, Mr WONG Ting-kwong, Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok, Mr YIU Si-wing, Mr Paul TSE and Mr LEUNG Che-cheung pointed out that the target for reducing food waste disposal by 2022 had already been set out in the Food Waste Plan, but the proposed post would merely last till the end of March 2019. They expressed worries that the work might remain unfinished upon expiry of the tenure of the proposed post, thus affecting the effectiveness of the Food Waste Plan, and the Government might then have to seek FC's approval for extending the post. These members enquired about the rationale for setting the tenure of the proposed post up to the end of March 2019, and the reasons for not creating the post on a permanent basis.

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15. DDEP(2) said that when EPD set up FWMG in 2014, a PEPO post from the Cross Boundary and International Division ("CBD") was temporarily deployed to lead FWMG in view of the urgency of the work. She acknowledged the long-term nature of the work of promoting food waste recycling, and that manpower support was surely needed in the long run. However, future strategies in promoting the Food Waste Plan might be subject to change upon the implementation of other policies on waste recycling such as waste charging. The Administration would review the manpower and operational needs of FWMG in due course as appropriate and apply for the creation of required posts where necessary to support the work of FWMG. She added that subject to members' views, the Government would proactively consider converting the proposed post into a permanent one upon its expiry in 2019.

Staff deployment at the Environmental Protection Department

16. Mr POON Siu-ping asked whether FWMG would retain the eight existing non-directorate posts following the creation of the proposed post and have plans to turn three of the time-limited posts permanent. DDEP(2) advised that the eight non-directorate posts would continue to support FWMG. The Government would consider converting the time-limited posts into permanent ones where necessary.

17. Dr YIU Chung-yim enquired about the academic and professional qualifications of the holder of the proposed post, and the indicators to be devised by the Administration to evaluate whether that officer would meet the job requirements. He noted that following the creation of the proposed post, EPD would have 10 supernumerary directorate posts. He also expressed concern over the faster growth in the number of EPD staff at the directorate level in recent years compared with those at junior levels. He asked how the above situations would be improved.

18. DDEP(2) responded that it was necessary to create the nine existing time-limited supernumerary directorate posts in EPD for formulating and implementing various policies, handling administrative work and replacing officers on pre-retirement leave. Some of the posts were created upon FC's approval. As regards the changes in the number of staff below the directorate level, she advised that EPD would review its staffing arrangement on a regular basis and examine its overall staff deployment. AD(NC&IP) replied that the proposed post was generally taken up by an officer at the rank of Senior Environmental Protection Officer in EPD through promotion or by a PEPO on transfer. Apart from possessing a bachelor's degree or above in environmental protection-related disciplines,

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the officer was also required to have rich working experience in relevant fields. There would be specific work targets for the new post, including facilitating the smooth commissioning of OWTF Phase 1 and being responsible for the preparation and development of Phases 2 and 3.

19. Pointing out that a PEPO from CBD was now temporarily deployed to lead FWMG for as long as two years, Mr Paul TSE enquired who was responsible for the work of CBD at present.

20. DDEP(2) said that the work of CBD was very important, including examining the need of amending local climate-related legislation in alignment with global standards; assisting in the formulation of a work plan for addressing climate change; and coordinating Government bureaux and departments in implementing the plan so as to meet the relevant requirements under the Paris Agreement passed in the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and so on. She pointed out that the work of CBD was now shared among its staff. The Government did not consider this a long-term and sustainable work arrangement, and therefore suggested creating the proposed post. After the creation of the proposed post, the PEPO currently leading FWMG would return to CBD.

Voting on the item

21. The Chairman put the item to vote. The Chairman declared that the Subcommittee agreed to recommend the item to FC for approval. The Chairman consulted members on whether the item would require separate voting at the relevant FC meeting. No member raised such a request.

22. The Chairman informed members that the next meeting would be held on 14 December 2016 at 8:30 am.

[*Post-meeting note:* Members were informed that the meeting on 14 December 2016 would be cancelled vide LC Paper No. ESC21/16-17 on 6 December 2016.]

23. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 9:24 am.