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Report of the Panel on Security for submission to the Legislative Council

Purpose

This report gives an account of the work of the Panel on Security (“the Panel”) during the 2023 session of the Legislative Council (“LegCo”). It will be tabled at the Council meeting of 13 December 2023 in accordance with Rule 77(14) of the Rules of Procedure of the Council.

The Panel

2. The Panel was formed by a resolution passed by the Council on 8 July 1998 and as amended on 20 December 2000, 9 October 2002, 11 July 2007, 2 July 2008 and 26 October 2022 for the purpose of monitoring and examining Government policies and issues of public concern relating to security, public order, corruption-related matters and nationality and immigration matters. The terms of reference of the Panel are in **Appendix 1**.

3. The Panel comprises 20 members in the 2023 session, with Hon CHAN Hak-kan and Hon Carmen KAN Wai-mun elected as its Chairman and Deputy Chairman respectively. The membership list of the Panel is in **Appendix 2**.

Major work

Safeguarding national security

Legislate for Article 23 of the Basic Law

4. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (“HKSAR”) is an inalienable part of the People’s Republic of China. The HKSAR Government has the constitutional duty to safeguard national security. The progress of the HKSAR Government to complete legislation for safeguarding national security as stipulated in Article 23 of the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special

Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China ("Basic Law") and refine relevant laws has all along been of considerable concern to the Panel. Following the announcement in the Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address that the Government is pressing ahead to draw up effective legislative options and will complete the legislative exercise in 2024, members drew the Administration's attention to certain issues that the relevant legislative preparatory work should take into account. The major one was the need for the Administration to launch multi-faceted publicity campaigns and extensive explanatory work to defend the false accusations against the legislative work by external forces on the one hand, and on the other hand to clearly explain to the public the justifications for the legislation and that the rights and freedoms of Hong Kong residents would continuously be protected by the Basic Law. The Administration advised that it would ensure that the relevant legislative proposals could effectively address past and present national security risks and threats, would be sufficiently forward-looking to address possible risks in future, and would be practicable in terms of implementation. It would conduct public consultation at a suitable juncture and work on all fronts to explain to the public the substance of the proposals.

Legislate for cybersecurity of critical infrastructure

5. Cybersecurity of critical infrastructure which includes systems and facilities in the industries of energy, telecommunications, transportation, financial institutions, etc. is essential to the basic functioning of an economy. The increase in cyber threats that go against national security in recent years has brought significant challenges to the cybersecurity of critical infrastructure. Of equal concern to members in the session was the progress of the Administration's work to formulate legislative proposals on the cybersecurity obligations of operators of critical infrastructure. Members were advised that together with the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer ("OGCIO") and the Hong Kong Police Force ("HKPF"), the Security Bureau ("SB") had consulted the cybersecurity industry in the first quarter of 2023 and met with major operators of critical infrastructure in the second and third quarters of 2023 to exchange initial views on the proposed legislative framework. SB was now formulating the legislative proposals, and the related code of practice in collaboration with OGCIO. This would be followed by consultation with the Panel and relevant stakeholders. The target of the Administration was to introduce the bill into LegCo within 2024.

Supporting youth development

6. Young people are masters of Hong Kong's future. As remarked by President Xi Jinping, Hong Kong will prosper only when its young people thrive; Hong Kong will develop only when its young people achieve well-rounded development; and Hong Kong will have a bright future only when its young people have good career prospects. Members noted that SB as well as its six

disciplined services departments (“DSDs”) and two auxiliary services departments had all along spared no effort in their youth development work for the aim of cultivating young people’s positive thinking, aspirations to serve the community, law-abiding and national identity awareness, sense of discipline and team spirits, and enhancing their understanding of the work of the disciplined services, among others. In the session, members followed up with SB and its departments on the implementation situation of the key performance indicators they set in 2022 for their youth development work and exchanged views with them on how to further the work in this regard.

7. Members were pleased to note the good progress of SB and its departments in meeting the targets set in 2022 for their youth development work, in particular that there had been a continued increase in the membership as well as the number of active members of the youth uniform groups of the disciplined and auxiliary services departments. To take the work forward, they were of the view that recurrent allocation be provided for related work with SB’s taking a proactive role in coordinating resource allocation among SB and its departments. In addition, greater efforts could be devoted to creating greater synergy among different youth development initiatives in place by setting up a collaboration mechanism. To enable the youth uniform group members under SB and its departments to become a new generation with a sense of ownership and responsibility, and with an aspiration and willingness to strive for the future of the Mainland and Hong Kong, members suggested that the elements of moral education, education relating to the rule of law, as well as life planning education in the work of the youth uniform groups be further stepped up, exchanges between members of the youth uniform groups and their counterparts in the Mainland be deepened, and opportunities for such members to gain appropriate exposure in the international arena to help telling good stories of Hong Kong be further increased.

Enhancing the rehabilitation services for persons in custody

8. Assisting persons in custody (“PICs”) to rehabilitate through education, vocational training and provision of psychological services and employment support will help facilitate their smooth reintegration into society after release and become, once again, active and fulfilled members of the society. To assess the effectiveness of the rehabilitation services provided by the Correctional Services Department (“CSD”) to PICs, the Panel requested a briefing by the Administration on the latest development of the relevant services in this session. Prior to the discussion took place, members paid a visit to five correctional facilities¹ to obtain first-hand understanding of the rehabilitation services for

¹ The five correctional facilities were Sha Tsui Correctional Institution, Lai Chi Rehabilitation Centre, Lai King Correctional Institution, Chi Lan Rehabilitation Centre and Pik Uk Correctional Institution.

young PICs. Expressing concern over the low success rate of the drug addiction treatment centre programme, as well as the relatively low success rate of the training centre programme when compared with that of the detention centre and rehabilitation centre programmes, members called on CSD to step up its rehabilitation effort in this regard. To ensure that PICs would be well equipped for reintegration into society, whether for further education or employment after release, members urged CSD to collaborate with self-financing institutions to further promote higher education opportunities for PICs on the one hand, and on the other hand provide additional vocational education and training to enable PICs, who were of diverse academic abilities and background, to pursue multiple pathways after discharge. For PICs who aspired to further their education, additional measures should be put in place to facilitate their daily studies and examination preparation, such as provision of tablet computers for access to learning materials, table lamps and study rooms. Members were subsequently advised that as a policy measure under the Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address, CSD would establish the Ethics College by end-2023 to provide a one-year full-time Diploma of Applied Education programme as well as life-wide learning activities for voluntary enrolment by adult PICs to equip themselves. Members called on CSD to continue to make use of different channels and engage with non-governmental organizations to provide employment and personal support to PICs after release to guide their return to the right course.

Strengthening overall emergency preparedness

9. Emergencies are inevitable in everyday life. It is therefore of paramount importance for DSDs to maintain a high level of preparedness to ensure that they can respond promptly and effectively to different emergency situations. Of particular concern of members in this session is the work of the Hong Kong Fire Services Department ("FSD") to prepare its emergency ambulance service to meet future challenges after weathering the storm of an upsurge in demand during the fifth wave of the coronavirus disease 2019 epidemic. Members welcomed FSD's enhancement measures to make use of the rapid response vehicles and emergency medical assistant motor cycles, as well as its pilot to test out the new rapid response motor cycles, which could all be manned by a single ambulance officer for ensuring timely delivery of support for emergency calls, and to modify four newly introduced 24-seater passenger vehicles into Multi-stretchers cum Personnel Carries to strengthen its capability in the conveyance of patients between hospitals and in case of major incidents. To better assess future ambulance service demand, members suggested FSD to include demographic and health data, say the prevalence of heart diseases in a district, as part of its big data for analysis of the demand for and planning of emergency ambulance service.

10. In respect of FSD's community education work in recent years to promote the use of Automated External Defibrillator ("AED") and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation ("CPR") with a view to enabling members of the public to seize the

window of opportunity to save lives by offering immediate help to cardiac arrest patients, members were concerned that as of May 2023, there were only 1 700 AEDs registered on the web-based Centralised AED Registry for Emergency. They called on FSD to incentivize those organizations that had yet installed AED at their premises or provided information about their AEDs on the above platform to do so as soon as possible; develop a mobile application to notify qualified rescuers of nearby emergencies and enable detection of the locations of the rescuers and their nearby AEDs for achieving FSD's long-term goal that a by-stander could locate an AED for use within three to five minutes upon witnessing a cardiac arrest; and launch extensive educational and publicity work in schools, old-age home and the community and for high risk groups such as family members of patients with heart diseases to promote AED and CPR. The Administration advised that FSD was working in full gear for the formation of an alliance to pool together community efforts to boost the development in publicity, promotion, training and supporting measures in rescuing cardiac arrest patients. It was expected that member organizations of the alliance would provide training on administering CPR or using AED for 30 000 to 50 000 citizens every year.

11. In the session, members also discussed with the Administration its contingency measures for emergencies that occurred within Hong Kong, as well as incidents that occurred outside Hong Kong and affected the personal safety of Hong Kong residents. Members note that the vast majority of emergencies in Hong Kong could be handled by the disciplined services with their specialist skills and resources under the Administration's three-level emergency response system. As regards other unforeseeable emergencies, such as nuclear incidents and emergency response outside Hong Kong, SB and its departments had formulated different contingency plans and conducted regular inter-departmental exercises. In respect of the former, members opined that the Administration could leverage the networks of the care teams in 18 districts to assist in handling emergencies as and when necessary. As regards the latter, a separate discussion on the results of the 2023 Exercise on the Daya Bay Contingency Plan was held by the Panel with the Administration in the session. While noting that feedback from players, simulators, umpires and observers on the Exercise was generally positive, members gave some views on how to further enhancing the capability of the Administration in nuclear emergency response. These included the need to engage the Radio Television Hong Kong as an official source of information to provide timely updates on the situation during nuclear emergencies, step up education and publicity efforts to enhance public understanding of such emergencies, including compilation of a list of actions to be taken by the public based on the level of severity of nuclear events, and explore whether the Electronic Casualties Management Solution by HKPF and the Patient Tagging System for Multiple Casualties Incidents by FSD could be interlinked such that only one tagging system would be used to facilitate the provision of medical services during emergencies.

12. As a related issue, members commended on the nine-day rescue operation in Türkiye in February 2023 conducted by the rescue team² formed up in a very short span of time at the request of the Turkish Consulate General in Hong Kong after the occurrence of the 7.8 magnitude earthquake that struck Türkiye and Syria on 6 February 2023, which was the first ever overseas rescue operation conducted since the establishment of HKSAR. Noting that there was a lack of emergency response supplies and equipment (including food and clothing) for use under adverse weather conditions during the operation, members considered that SB should play a central role to acquire and stockpile adequate supplies and equipment for operations of similar nature in future. The Administration undertook to review provisions in this regard. It further advised members that the rescue team had acquired invaluable experience from working alongside the China rescue team throughout the operation. Looking ahead, Hong Kong would work with other cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (“GBA”) to formulate a “GBA Emergency Response and Rescue Operational Plan” to enhance the capability of the cities in the region for collaborative disaster prevention, mitigation and relief, and for responding to major public emergencies.

Enhancing the law enforcement capability

Building up the technological and physical capacity of disciplined services

13. In the face of rapid technological advancement, upgrading their systems and facilities to effectively exploit technology is key for the disciplined services to build up their capacity to meet the rising social expectations in the increasingly complex environment. Members were in general supportive of such initiatives in the course of examining the four proposals in relation to the development and enhancement of the disciplined services’ systems and facilities put forth by the Administration for the consideration of the Panel in the session. To ensure the proper use of public funds, members sought the Administration’s elaboration on the details as well as the cost estimates of the projects for assessing their cost-effectiveness, and drew the Administration’s attention to the need to step up related publicity work to clearly explain to the public the justifications for and the benefits of certain projects.

14. Two among the four proposals that the Panel examined in the session were in relation to HKPF, which involved a proposed increase in the approved commitment for completing the acquisition of a new Mobile Response Command Platform and its two ancillary vessels to bring up the overall maritime operational capability, and the preliminary estimation of the non-recurrent expenditure for HKPF’s three major information technology (“IT”) projects in the coming years

² The rescue team comprised 49 officers from FSD, four officers from SB, two officers from the Immigration Department and four medical staff from the Department of Health.

to enhance policing capability through digital policing³. In respect of the former, members expressed grave concern about the delay in its implementation schedule and the need for seeking additional funding to complete the acquisition which was due to, among others, unsuccessful tender exercises. They urged the Administration to put in place appropriate measures to avoid further delays and cost overruns in the above project, as well as other future projects. Subsequently, in the context of examining the latter proposal, the Administration advised the Panel that it had taken on board members' suggestions on previous projects and parallel tendering would thus be adopted to take forward HKPF's three future major IT projects to avoid the need to increase the approved project estimates and delays in implementation in case of a higher-than-expected tender outturn price. Whereas funding applications for these three major IT projects would only be submitted to the Finance Committee in the financial years 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 respectively, members urged the Administration to revert to the Panel on related financial proposals as early as possible for timely implementation of these IT projects.

15. On HKPF's overall implementation strategies, members pointed out the importance of HKPF's work in upholding national security and the sensitivity of its work. In this regard, they were particularly worried about the potential interruptions of provision of related after-sale services and supply of spare parts, as well as the integrity of systems and facilities, taking into account the volatile geopolitical development and the adverse impacts of the sanctions by external forces on the services of the existing Personnel Information Communal System of HKPF. They suggested that measures be put forth to promote a wider use of Chinese and local products by HKPF and other disciplined services, which could safeguard the integrity and continued operation and maintenance of related systems.

16. Another two proposals which the Panel examined in the session involved in-situ redevelopment of two facilities of CSD, namely the Hong Kong Correctional Services Academy Multipurpose Gymnasium in Stanley and Annex to Lai Chi Kok Reception Centre to, among others, address the problems of dilapidated and insufficient facilities and enhance training and operational efficiency respectively. Members requested the Administration to put in place measures to mitigate potential impacts of such redevelopment projects on those parts of the facilities which would continue to operate during the project periods. Meanwhile, in the light of CSD's efforts to develop "Smart Prison" in recent years, the incorporation of "Smart Prison" elements in these two redevelopment projects to bring up efficiency and at the same time to improve the unique work

³ These projects are the Next Generation Communications System Infrastructure, the Centralised Digital Image Platform and the Third Generation Personnel Information Communal System. Funding applications would be submitted for the first project in the financial year 2025-2026 and for the other two projects in the financial year 2024-2025.

environment of CSD for staff retention purposes, continued to be of prime concern to members. To facilitate further understanding of the existing condition and operation of the Lai Chi Kok Reception Centre, the Panel would conduct a visit to the Centre on 12 December 2023.

Building up a pool of talents for the disciplined services

17. Albeit the Administration's continued efforts to build up their capacity, the acute manpower shortage faced by disciplined services in recent years is of considerable concern to members. At the Panel's request, the Administration provided an update on the manpower, salaries and conditions of services of the disciplined services in the session. Members appreciated HKPF's recruitment efforts in the Mainland, as well as the recruitment campaigns of the Immigration Department ("ImmD") with the promotion aid of the Economic and Trade Offices in the Mainland and overseas to attract aspiring permanent Hong Kong residents studying outside Hong Kong. They suggested that other DSDs follow suit. Meanwhile, consideration should be given to, as means to build up a pool of talents, encourage self-financed and publicly-funded tertiary education institutions to offer courses or programmes to develop specialties in specific areas of DSDs' work, and further young people's understanding of and interest in the work of disciplined services, as well as counteract the false accusations against the disciplined services in the community, say by leveraging social media platforms. The Administration subsequently advised that it had taken on board members' suggestion and ImmD would assist other DSDs in liaising with the offices in the Mainland and overseas for promotional activities on the recruitment campaigns of DSDs in the places concerned.

18. In respect of the retention efforts, SB was called on to assume a more proactive role in coordinating the retention strategies of various disciplined services, as well as to explore the feasibility of extending the retirement age of other non-directorate disciplined services staff joining the Government before 1 June 2000 to the new retirement age of 60, as in the case of non-directorate police officers joining HKPF before the above date. That apart, members also put forth a wide range of suggestions on enhancing work arrangements and conditions of services for staff retention purposes, covering medical benefits, five-day week work pattern, and provision of staff quarters. Since the acute manpower shortage was on-going, members further suggested that the Administration provide better support for individual DSDs' leveraging technology and critically review the scope of work of individual DSDs to, among others, meet the service demands.

Playing a role in the international and regional arena

19. Under the “One Country, Two Systems”, Hong Kong has distinctive advantages of enjoying strong support of the Mainland and being closely connected to the world. In the session, the Panel received a briefing from the Customs and Excise Department (“C&ED”) on how it leveraged on the above advantages to proactively involve itself in international affairs to, among others, enhance customs mutual cooperation and facilitate international trade activities. Members considered it an honour for C&ED being nominated as the next Vice-Chairperson for the Asia/Pacific Region (“A/P Region”) of the World Customs Organization (“WCO”)⁴ with a tenure from July 2024 to June 2026, which signified international recognition of C&ED’s high quality work and could help promote the positive image of the Mainland and Hong Kong. Members sought information on the additional resources required for C&ED to discharge related duties. The Administration advised that subject to confirmation of the assumption of office at the Customs Co-operation Council Sessions to be held in June 2024, C&ED would set up a new secretariat for the office to cope with the workload involved. It would consult the Panel on the resources proposals in the next session if additional resources were required.

20. Referring to the increasing misuse of virtual currencies in money laundering which often involved cross-border crimes and the local incidents relating to a non-licensed virtual asset trading platform known as “JPEX” which promoted its products and services through over-the-counter virtual asset money changers, members urged C&ED to leverage its position as the next Vice-Chairperson for the WCO A/P Region to set the regional development agendas to enhance intelligence sharing among and the strengths of the regulatory regimes for money service operators of the jurisdictions in the region. Pointing out that Hong Kong was a prime platform for the Belt and Road Initiative to promote trade among the countries and regions concerned, another area members considered that C&ED should strengthen its work was to further its cooperation with customs administrations along the Belt and Road, especially the 10 member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, all of which were also members of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, the largest free trade agreement in the world.

21. In the context of receiving the briefing by the Commissioner, Independent Commission Against Corruption (“ICAC”) on the relevant initiatives of ICAC under the Chief Executive’s 2023 Policy Address, members were particularly

⁴ WCO is an intergovernmental organisation dedicated to simplifying and harmonising customs systems and procedures, advancing techniques, improving operational effectiveness and promoting cooperation among its members to facilitate international trade development. It currently has 185 members, divided into six geographical regions. Hong Kong, China is one of the 34 members in the A/P region.

pleased to note the establishment of the Hong Kong International Academy Against Corruption (“HKIAAC”) in the first quarter of 2024. They were of the view that HKIAAC’s launch of training programmes for overseas professionals could showcase to the world Hong Kong’s success story in its fight against corruption and tell the good story of Hong Kong, and suggested that ICAC develop HKIAAC into a platform for exchanges of anti-graft experience for advancing global anti-corruption cause. In this regard, they sought ICAC’s elaboration on target number of training programmes to be offered by HKIAAC for non-local professionals, as well as the resources plan for operating HKIAAC. ICAC advised that 20 tailor-made training programmes were targeted to be offered by HKIAAC for anti-graft professionals worldwide in 2024, which would enable participants to share their views and experience in fighting corruption. Whereas the demand for such training programmes was on the high side and the training capacity of HKIAAC was expected to be fully utilized in 2024, additional resources would be sought for HKIAAC to, among others, cope with such demand.

22. The demonstrably effective anti-graft regime of Hong Kong is conducive to maintaining a level playing field for business in Hong Kong, which has in turn strengthened Hong Kong’s competitiveness and consolidated its leading positions in various fields. When examining the anti-corruption work of ICAC in the above context, members noted the increase of 36.5% in the number of corruption complaints against the building management subsector in the first nine months of 2023 when compared with the same period in 2022 and urged ICAC to take further actions to curb corruption in related sectors. Meanwhile, referring to the holding of the 2023 District Council Ordinary Election (i.e. the first public election after the implementation of the improved district governance structure) in December 2023, members called on ICAC to put in place new measures to disseminate clean election messages to the public with a view to upholding integrity and fairness in the above election.

Law and order situation in Hong Kong

23. The Panel continued its effort to monitor the law and order situation in Hong Kong in this session. When receiving a briefing by HKPF in early 2023 on the law and order situation in 2022, members noted that there was a year-on-year increase of 8.7% in the overall number of crimes and a year-on-year decrease in the overall detection rate by 3.3%, both were mainly caused by the surge in the number of deception cases which recorded a year-on-year increase of 45.1% and were relatively difficult to detect when compared with other types of crimes. Members were concerned that the low detection rate of deception cases (which was 12% in 2022) would create the vicious cycle of encouraging deception activities. They suggested that a multi-agency approach be adopted to combat deception. For instance, the Police should join hands with the Securities and Futures Commission and the Investor and Financial Education Council to fight

against investment scams such as the “ramp and dump” schemes; work closely with the Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau in view of the fraudsters’ increasing use of technology; and engage the banking sector to play a more proactive role in facilitating timely detection of deception for cases involving the use of local bank accounts in the wiring of the defrauded money. An extensive publicity strategy should also be adopted to heighten public awareness of different types of fraud. HKPF assured members that it would do so, and would continue to engage relevant parties, including the Office of the Communications Authority, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, the Hong Kong Association of Banks and Internet service providers, in its anti-deception work.

24. Approaching the end of 2023, members were gravely concerned about the reportedly rampant deception in Hong Kong albeit the extensive publicity and enforcement efforts made by HKPF throughout the year. They called on the Administration to put forth further measures to combat deception, say by developing a mobile application automatically alerting users to potential scams upon receipt of suspicious calls, weblinks and messages and blocking bogus phone calls with the aid of telecommunications services providers. The Administration advised that it had implemented a wide range of measures to combat deception, including prefixing caller numbers with “+852” for calls made outside Hong Kong yet disguised as local calls, as well as introducing voice or text alerts to receivers of such calls. As a new measure to combat deception, the Fast Payment System platform would be linked with Scameter+, a one-stop search engine for suspicious calls and other anti-fraud tips, for detecting suspicious transfers via the above payment platform, as well as issuing alerts to transferors and requiring their further confirmation before proceeding with suspicious transfers. A new platform would also be set up by HKPF jointly with major banks by end-2023, whereby bank staff would be stationed at the platform office to render immediate assistance to HKPF regarding deception cases for combatting fraudulent activities.

Drug situation and anti-drug work

25. Drug abuse has all along been another major issue of concern of the Panel and members monitor the drug situation in Hong Kong on an annual basis. In the session, members gave views on the various anti-drug strategies and measures put in place by the Administration. There was a suggestion that C&ED had to adjust their enforcement strategies to deal with the challenges brought about by the new drug trafficking method involving the concealment of a relatively large quantity of drugs in consignments declared to be legitimate goods for local drug syndicates to stockpile the drugs in Hong Kong for future trafficking. In view of the increased popularity of cannabis and cocaine among young reported drug abusers, members called on the Administration to strengthen publicity to combat the abuse of cannabis and cocaine and educate the public about their harms. Consideration could also be given to raising the statutory penalty level for drug

trafficking and related offences to enhance deterrence, and at the same time make reference to the related publicity campaigns on airplanes and boundary control points of Singapore and Malaysia which highlighted the severity of the potential penalty for drug trafficking (i.e. death penalty in their cases).

26. On the Administration's proposal to add five substances⁵ to Part I of the First Schedule to the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (Cap. 134) as dangerous drugs, members were supportive of the legislative proposal. They took the opportunity to urge the Administration to consider also bringing Xylazine, a new type of drug which was commonly known as "zombie drug" and was reported to be rampant in some overseas jurisdictions such as the United States, under the control of the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance. The Administration advised that Xylazine was currently regulated under the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance (Cap. 138) as a poison that its importation or exportation required a licence and no person was allowed to sell Xylazine except on and in accordance with a prescription by a specified registered professional. It would monitor the abuse trend for Xylazine to evaluate the need to further regulate Xylazine in Hong Kong. The Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (Amendment of First Schedule) Order 2023, which was tabled before LegCo at its meeting of 25 October 2023, will come into operation on 15 December 2023.

Keeping regulatory requirements and service fees abreast of time

Legislative proposal relating to e-licensing for security companies

27. Digitalization is an inevitable trend in driving the economy towards high-quality development and constructing Hong Kong into a smart city. An initiative under the auspices of "Smart Government", one of the smart areas under the Smart City Blueprint for Hong Kong 2.0, is the implementation of electronic licensing ("e-licensing") services under the "Be the Smart Regulator" Programme to digitalize all licensing applications. In the session, the Panel was consulted on the proposed amendments to the Security and Guarding Services (Licensing) Regulation (Cap. 460B) to enable e-licensing for security companies in order to reduce the compliance costs to business and streamline the licensing process. Members were supportive of the legislative proposal which provided greater convenience to the security companies by replacing the existing prescribed licence form with a revised prescribed licence form to save the need for the licensees to pay an annual visit to the Secretariat of the Security and Guarding Services Industry Authority for updating their licence in paper form to record the payment of annual licence fee. The Security and Guarding Services (Licensing) (Amendment) Regulation 2023, which was tabled before LegCo at its meeting of 10 May 2023, came into operation on 1 July 2023.

⁵ The five substances are (a) 2-Methyl-AP-237; (b) etazene; (c) etonitazepyne; (d) protonitazene; and (e) ADB-BUTINACA.

28. Riding on the opportunity of consideration of the above legislative proposal, members pointed out the present inconvenience for the 350 000-odd security personnel permit holders to keep and carry with them the A5-size paper permits and urged the Administration to consider also implementing e-licensing for security personnel permits. The Administration undertook to do so with the target of achieving digitalization in this regard within 2024. It advised that an issue that needed to be considered before the introduction of this initiative was the current legislative requirement of recording the holders' relevant employment details at the back of the paper permits.

Legislative proposal relating to the promotion of a wider use of portable equipment at homes

29. Analysis of FSD showed that between 2017 and 2021, over 80% of the 1 223 building fire incidents in which members of the public had used portable equipment⁶ (such as fire extinguishers or fire blankets) to tackle the fire prior to fire service attendance had the fires extinguished. Hence, having fire service portable equipment installed at homes could enhance home fire safety. To remove the regulatory hurdles that hindered members of the public from having portable equipment at homes of their own volition, the Panel was consulted on the proposed amendments to the Fire Service (Installations and Equipment) Regulations (Cap. 95B) to the effect that owners of portable equipment that was included in the list of approved portable equipment and installed at domestic premises were not required to keep such equipment in efficient working order at all times and have such equipment inspected by a registered contractor at least once in every 12 months, among others. Members were in support of the legislative proposal and made a number of suggestions to FSD to promote a wider use of portable equipment at homes. These included enhancing publicity on the selection of appropriate portable equipment in tackling different common causes of fire in domestic premises, facilitating members of the public in identifying approved portable equipment, encouraging the insurance industry to take into account whether portable equipment had been in place in the determination of the premium of fire or related insurance, and mobilizing community resources to reach out to and assist low-income households acquiring portable equipment.

30. Members were subsequently advised that in response to their suggestions, FSD had uploaded on to its website and its social media platform the statistics of and the recommended portable equipment for common causes of fire in domestic

⁶ "Portable equipment" is defined under regulation 2 of the Fire Service (Installations and Equipment) Regulations to mean any fire service equipment which is manufactured, used or designed to be used as an independent unit for the purpose of extinguishing, attacking, preventing or limiting a fire.

premises for the reference of the members of the public, and relayed members' view to the insurance industry for consideration. The above apart, FSD would introduce a new mobile application function in the fourth quarter of 2023 to help the public identify FSD-approved portable firefighting equipment, and would continue to exert efforts to reach out to different age and community groups through different channels on education and promotion in relation to the use of portable equipment to enhance home fire safety. The Fire Service (Installations and Equipment) (Amendment) Regulation 2023, which was tabled before LegCo at its meeting of 5 July 2023, came into operation on 1 November 2023.

Proposed revision of fees for services under the purview of the Hong Kong Police Force

31. Another legislative proposal which the Panel was consulted on in the session was the proposed increase in the level of 17 fees for services under the purview of HKPF⁷ by 10% to around 22%. There was a concern from members that for certain items whereby the proposed amount of increase was just trivial (which ranged from \$25 to \$70) and would have limited impact on the general public or the relevant trades, the cost recovery rate would still be less than 50% after the proposed fee revision while the Administration's ultimate objective was to recover the full cost under the "user pays" principle. The Administration advised that the fee levels proposed were revised in accordance with the Government's policy and the principles of achieving full-cost recovery gradually and avoiding a steep fee increase. Raising the fees of all items to a level with cost recovery rate of at least 50% would result in the fee levels of certain items increasing almost twofold or even more, which, in its view, was rather significant. Members noted that the plan of the Administration was to publish the relevant notices to effect the fee revision in the Gazette in the first quarter of 2024. The Administration assured members that the costs of the fee items concerned would be reviewed regularly and full-cost recovery would continue to be its objective in future fee revisions.

Meetings held and visits conducted

32. During the period between January and November 2023, the Panel held a total of nine meetings. The Panel has scheduled another meeting in December

⁷ These include (a) a fee under the Dutiable Commodities Regulations (Cap. 109A) on the issue of a temporary liquor licence; (b) a fee under the Pawnbrokers Regulations (Cap. 166A) on the grant or renewal of a pawnbroker licence; (c) nine fees under the Firearms and Ammunition Regulations (Cap. 238A) relating to various licences (and an exemption) in relation to firearms and ammunition; (d) four fees under the Firearms and Ammunition (Storage Fees) Order (Cap. 238B) relating to storage fees for arms, ammunition and imitation firearms; and (e) two fees under the Massage Establishments Regulations (Cap. 266A) for the issue or renewal of a massage establishment licence.

2023 to discuss the outcome of the public consultation on proposed amendments to the Fire Safety (Buildings) Ordinance (Cap. 572) to enhance fire safety standards of old composite and domestic buildings, the latest situation of the handling of non-refoulement claims and the measures to be introduced to enhance the handling of such claims, and the measures to enhance ImmD's capacity in processing Hong Kong identity card.

33. The Panel also conducted a visit to GFS's Flight Simulator Training Centre and Base of the Customs Canine Force in May 2023 to gain a better understanding on the work of the two disciplined services, a visit to five correctional facilities as referred to in paragraph 8 above in June 2023 to obtain first-hand understanding of the rehabilitation services provided by CSD for young persons in custody, and a visit to Sha Tau Kok and Liantang/Heung Yuen Wai Boundary Control Point in July 2023 to learn more about the Administration's plan to gradually open up the Sha Tau Kok Frontier Closed Area and the operation of the boundary control point. The Panel has scheduled another visit to the Lai Chi Kok Reception Centre in December 2023 to better understand its operation and the need for its redevelopment as referred to in paragraph 16 above.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
6 December 2023

Legislative Council

Panel on Security

Terms of Reference

1. To monitor and examine Government policies and issues of public concern relating to security, public order, public safety, corruption-related matters, nationality and immigration.
2. To provide a forum for the exchange and dissemination of views on the above policy matters.
3. To receive briefings and to formulate views on any major legislative or financial proposals in respect of the above policy areas prior to their formal introduction to the Council or Finance Committee.
4. To monitor and examine, to the extent it considers necessary, the above policy matters referred to it by a member of the Panel or by the House Committee.
5. To make reports to the Council or to the House Committee as required by the Rules of Procedure.

Panel on Security

Membership list for the 2023 session

Chairman	Hon CHAN Hak-kan, SBS, JP
Deputy Chairman	Hon Carmen KAN Wai-mun
Members	Hon Paul TSE Wai-chun, JP Hon Frankie YICK Chi-ming, GBS, JP Hon MA Fung-kwok, GBS, JP Hon Elizabeth QUAT, SBS, JP Hon Martin LIAO Cheung-kong, GBS, JP Hon Dominic LEE Tsz-king Dr Hon Johnny NG Kit-chong, MH, JP Dr Hon CHOW Man-kong Hon LAM San-keung, JP Hon YIU Pak-leung, MH, JP Hon Maggie CHAN Man-ki, MH, JP Hon Joephy CHAN Wing-yan Hon Benson LUK Hon-man Dr Hon Kennedy WONG Ying-ho, BBS, JP Hon Edmund WONG Chun-sek Hon TANG Ka-piu, BBS, JP Hon LAI Tung-kwok, GBS, IDSM, JP Dr Hon TAN Yueheng, JP (Total : 20 members)
Clerk	Ms Maisie LAM
Legal Adviser	Mr Timothy TSO (up to 10 July 2023) Miss Joyce CHAN (since 11 July 2023)