

Legal Aid Services Council
Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 19 November 2024
at 5:00 p.m. in the Council Office

PRESENT

Prof. William LEUNG, GBS, JP	Chairman
Dr Eugene CHAN, SBS, JP	Member
Mr Sebastian HUGHES	“
Mr Robin EGERTON	“
Mr Tom FU	“
Ms Serena LAU, MH, JP	“
Ms Rosita LEE	“
Mr Ronald SUM, JP	“
Mr Chris CHONG, JP	Director of Legal Aid
Mr Patrick WONG	Secretary

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Steve WONG	Deputy Director of Legal Aid (Policy & Administration)
Mr Bryan CHEUNG	EO/LASC

ABSENT WITH APOLOGIES

Ms Elaine SHIU	Member
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Item

Action By

(I) INTRODUCTION

The Chairman welcomed Members, in particular those new Members who attended the Council Meeting for the first time, and Mr Steve WONG of the Legal Aid Department (LAD) to the meeting.

(II) CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 20 AUGUST 2024

2. The Chairman said that the Secretariat had passed the draft minutes to those previous Members who attended the last meeting for comment and no news was received from them. As no comment was made by Members, the minutes were then confirmed without amendment.

(III) PAPERS FOR INFORMATION/COMMENT

(E) Quarterly Report of Income and Expenditure of LASC for the Second Quarter of Financial Year 2024-25 - Paper No. LASC I/P 21/24

7.1 The Chairman said that the Quarterly Report summarised the income and expenditure of the Council in the second quarter of financial year 2024-2025 from 1 July to 30 September 2024. The overall spending position as at the end of September arrived at 45% of the approved budget, which was under controlled.

7.2 The Chairman further mentioned that the expenditure on one item was less than 30%, namely the office stationery, but it was only a minor item. Since the annual procurement exercise was usually carried out in the third quarter, major expenses would be incurred later of the year. Besides, as endorsed by the Council at the last meeting, the position of contract clerk had been frozen and relevant estimates of this item would be adjusted accordingly by the end of this financial year.

7.3 Members took note of the Quarterly Report.

Item

Action By

(F) Chief Secretary for Administration's Office's Paper on "Annual Reviews of Financial Eligibility Limits of Legal Aid Applicants and Director of Legal Aid's First Charge" - Paper No. LASC I/P 22/24

8.1 The Chairman said that the paper was a recent submission of the Chief Secretary for Administration's Office (CSO) on the matter to the Panel on Administration of Justice and Legal Services of Legislative Council (AJLS of LegCo) on 1 November 2024.

8.2 To provide Members with more background information of the review exercise, the Chairman gave a brief account of the financial eligibility limits (FELs) and the DLA's first charge set for the legal aid applicants. He also pointed out that there were two specified amounts under the DLA's first charge and illustrated how they were applied. Upon completion of the latest round of annual reviews, the Government proposed to adjust the FELs and the two specified amounts of DLA's first charge upwards by 2.0% to reflect the accumulated changes in Consumer Price Index (C) [CPI(C)] recorded for the period from July 2023 to July 2024.

8.3 In response to Dr Eugene CHAN's enquiry on the trend of adjustments over the past ten years, the Chairman said that it was mainly based on the change of CPI(C) in the reference period and it was generally stable with an upward trend. DLA also supplemented that if a decrease was recorded in the CPI(C) for a particular reference period, the Government might freeze the adjustment for that year and combine it together with any positive changes upon future rounds of reviews.

8.4 Members took note of the proposal.

(G) Chief Secretary for Administration's Office's paper on "Biennial Review of Criminal Legal Aid Fees, Prosecution Fees and Duty Lawyer Fees" - Paper No. LASC I/P 23/24

9.1 The Chairman said that the paper was also a recent submission of CSO on the matter to the Panel on AJLS of LegCo on 1 November 2024. The Government proposed to adjust the fees upwards by 3.9% to reflect the accumulated changes in CPI(C) recorded between July 2022 and July 2024.

9.2 Members took note of the proposal.

Item

Action By

(IV) ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(H) Schedule of Meetings for 2025 - Paper No. LASC I/P 24/24

10. The Chairman said that following the existing practice, the Council Meetings in 2025 were proposed to be held on the third Tuesday of the relevant months in each quarter to facilitate the preparation of quarterly statistics and reference information by LAD. As no comment was received from Members, the Chairman invited Members to take note of the tentative meeting dates for the coming year and to attend the meetings as scheduled.

(V) DATE OF NEXT MEETING

11. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:49 p.m. The next Council Meeting would be held on Tuesday, 18 February 2025.

LASC Secretariat
December 2024