

Legal Aid Services Council
Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 20 May 2025
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 Rosita LEE	“
Mr Chris CHONG, JP	Director of Legal Aid
Mr Patrick WONG	Secretary

IN ATTENDANCE

Ms Juliana CHAN, JP	Deputy Director of Legal Aid (Policy & Administration)
Mr Bryan CHEUNG	EO/LASC

ABSENT WITH APOLOGIES

Ms Serena LAU, MH, JP	Member
Ms Elaine SHIU	“
Mr Ronald SUM, JP	“



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(I) INTRODUCTION

The Chairman welcomed Members and Ms Juliana CHAN of the Legal Aid Department (LAD) to the meeting. He introduced Ms CHAN as the successor of Mr Steve WONG and she would attend Council meetings regularly to present the papers of LAD.

(II) CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 18 FEBRUARY 2025

2. The minutes were confirmed without amendment.

(III) PAPERS FOR INFORMATION/COMMENT

(A) Legal Aid Department's Replies to Written Questions Raised by Finance Committee Members in Examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2025-2026 – Paper No. LASC I/P 08/25

3.1 There were three questions raised by members of the LegCo Finance Committee in April concerning the work of LAD. The written replies of Director of Legal Aid (DLA) were provided in the paper and Ms Juliana CHAN briefly brought out certain main points of the replies for Members' reference.

3.2 The first question related to the effectiveness of mediation in legally-aided cases and the information on the legal aid granted to the disadvantaged groups. In the past five years, the proportion of legally-aided persons opting for mediation was stable and the use of mediation was proven to be effective. Taking the cases with approval to incur expenses for mediation in 2024 as an example, there was a considerable reduction of about 50% in legal costs for cases resolved with mediation and the handling time of these cases was shortened by nearly 30% on average. As regards the legal aid applications submitted by recipients of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance and persons aged 60 or above, about 40% to 50% of them were approved by LAD and the successful rate of their cases being favourably concluded was recorded in the range from 70% to 85% in the past five years.

3.3 The second question was about the legal costs incurred in cases involving the Government. The figures of both criminal and civil cases, including the legal proceedings initiated by or against the Government, were highlighted. Following the attendance of DLA at the LegCo

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meeting, one supplementary question was raised on the grant of legal aid for non-refoulement claims as well as judicial review (JR) cases of other natures. In 2024, only 86 certificates were granted to the non-refoulement claimants and the relevant legal aid expenditure amounted to \$1.5 million. For other JR proceedings, about 200 legal aid applications were received in 2024 but just a handful of them were approved by LAD. Moreover, significant outcomes were received for those JR cases supported by legal aid as 83% of them were concluded in favour of the legally-aided persons in 2024 and it even reached 100% in 2023.

3.4 The Chairman appreciated the elaboration given by LAD and Members took note of the written replies of DLA.

(E) Quarterly Report of Income and Expenditure of LASC for the Fourth Quarter of Financial Year 2024-25 – Paper No. LASC I/P 12/25

7.1 The Quarterly Report summarised the income and expenditure of the Council in the fourth quarter of financial year 2024-2025 from 1 January to 31 March 2025. The overall spending position as at the end of the financial year arrived at 97% of the approved budget and the Chairman appreciated that the forecast of expenditures was accurate and the entire budget was well controlled by the Secretariat.

7.2 Members took note of the Quarterly Report.

(VI) DATE OF NEXT MEETING

10. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:37 p.m. The next Council Meeting would be held on Tuesday, 19 August 2025.