

LCQ1: Appointed members of District Councils and Area Committees

Following is a question by the Hon Martin Lee and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Dr Patrick Ho, in the Legislative Council today (March 22):

Question:

According to Government stipulations, a non-official member of an advisory or statutory body should neither, in general, serve more than six years in any one capacity, nor as a member on more than six boards or committees at the same time. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) of the respective numbers of years that the incumbent appointed members of various District Councils (“DCs”) and Area Committees (“ACs”) have served in their present office and, among them, the names of those who have been appointed for more than six years or who are serving on more than six boards or committees, the reasons leading to such situation; and;
- (b) whether the authorities have set a timetable for improving the situation, in order that the appointments of the relevant DC and AC members comply with the “six-year” and “six-board” rules?

Reply:

Madam President,

- (a) Out of a total of 102 appointed District Council (DC) members, 59 (57.8%) served the first term from 2000 to 2003, and have been re-appointed for a second term in 2004. They have served on the respective DCs for just over six years. There are seven appointed DC members (6.9%) who serve on more than six boards or committees (including public sector advisory and statutory bodies and district-based committees).

The current term of Area Committee (AC) members is about to expire at the end of March 2006. In the proposed appointments to ACs for the new term from April 1, 2006 to March 31, 2008, 434 are DC members (who will be ex-officio members) and 1 553 are district personalities.

Among the 1 553 district personalities we propose to appoint to ACs, 67 (4.3%) will have served in the same posts for six years or more. Ten (0.6%) AC members will have served on more than six boards or committees (including public sector advisory and statutory bodies and district-based committees). As the appointment exercise has not yet been completed, their names cannot be released for the time being.

The main reason for continuing to appoint a number of individuals who do not comply with the “six-year” rule or the “six-board” rule is that some serving members have particular skills or experience essential to the effective and efficient functioning of the board or committee. In the case of ACs, some of these proposed re-appointees are key office bearers of major local organisations or leading figures in particular fields. There are difficulties in identifying suitable replacements in some cases.

Moreover, as the work of ACs focuses on specific local issues and is activity-oriented, they are quite different in nature from advisory and statutory bodies which are set up to advise on the development of Government policies. We are concerned that the application of the “six-year” and “six-board” rules to these district-based committees would hamper our community building efforts. With the above caveat, we will continue to observe the “six-year” and “six-board” rules as far as possible.

At Annex A is a breakdown of the years of service of appointed DC members and individuals we intend to appoint to ACs respectively. At Annex B is a list of DC members who have been appointed for more than six years or who are serving on more than six boards or committees.

(b) As explained in item (a) above, the work of the district-based committees is quite different in nature from advisory and statutory bodies, and that the application of the “six-year” and “six-board” rules to these district-based committees would hamper our community building efforts. Notwithstanding, we will continue to observe the “six-year” and “six-board” rules as far as possible.

End/Wednesday, March 22, 2006