

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2003-04

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO  
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

HPLB(PL)095

Question Serial No.

1240

Head : 118 - Planning Department

Subhead (No. & title) : --

Programme : (2) – District Planning

Controlling Officer : Director of Planning

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

Question : It is said in the Report that the provision for "Programme (2) District Planning" was \$7.6 million (2.9%) higher than that for the previous year. The report also showed that among the 14 indicators, the number of jobs done for 10 of the indicators had dropped while that for the other indicators reflected no obvious increase. The report explained that the increase in provision was due to "increase in resources redeployed from Programme (1) for the enhancement of the district planning functions". In this regard, will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) of the details of the "increase in resources redeployed from Programme (1) for the enhancement of the district planning functions". What resources are redeployed, and what functions are enhanced?
- (b) as the estimated number of jobs is less than that for the previous year while provision increased, whether the Department will work out ways to streamline work procedures and reduce expenditure so as to raise efficiency? If not, the reasons for that.

Asked by : Hon. IP Kwok-him

Reply :

The increase in the estimated expenditure on district planning work mainly involves redeployment of staff resources from Programme (1) to Programme (2) as a result of redistribution of responsibilities of various Divisions in the Planning Department necessitated by the deletion in February 2003 of 1 Assistant Director and 1 Chief Town Planner posts previously heading the Housing Land Supply Division under Programme (1). The redeployed resources are mainly for handling remaining housing-related planning matters as well as strengthening some major planning tasks such as the work relating to the implementation of the Cultural District in West Kowloon and the planning of tourism projects.

The complexity of, and hence the resources required for, handling district planning work cannot be fully reflected by the indicators in numeric terms. Moreover, most of the indicators actually involve non-programmable work and the numbers given are estimates based on past trends and current predictions. Reduction in the estimates of some of our work indicators is the result of our on-going work in other areas some of which may not be reflected by the indicators. To illustrate, the reduction in the estimated number of planning applications processed is due to our work in revising the Master Schedule of Notes to Statutory Plans, which has recently been endorsed by the

Town Planning Board. The revised Schedule would help reduce the number of planning applications, as certain change of use within land use zones would in future no longer require planning permission. To effect the new Schedule of Notes, however, all existing statutory plans would have to be reviewed and amended progressively and this would be equally, if not more, resource demanding.

Streamlining work procedures and reducing expenditure are certainly the Department's objectives. The amendments to the Town Planning Ordinance to be introduced would further streamline statutory planning procedures, in particular the objection and planning application processes.

Signature	_____
Name in block letters	<u>          B C K FUNG          </u>
Post Title	<u>          Director of Planning          </u>
Date	<u>          20 March 2003          </u>