

LCQ11: Office of Former Chief Executives

Following is a question by the Hon Michael Tien and a written reply by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Chan Kwok-ki, in the Legislative Council today (May 22):

Question:

Regarding the Office of Former Chief Executives (FCEO), will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the person who decided to rent the office unit in Pacific Place, Admiralty as FCEO;

(2) given that a Former Chief Executive indicated in response to media enquiries earlier on that the policies and practical arrangements of FCEO were formulated and implemented by the Government with the approval of the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council, and it is learnt that the relevant arrangement was that the Government would set up FCEO in government premises, of the justifications for renting a private premise with public funds as FCEO;

(3) given that in the reply to my question on October 26, 2022, the Government indicated that the net rent of FCEO in Pacific Place was about \$377,000 per month, and in the reply to a question raised by a Member of this Council on the Estimates of Expenditure 2024-2025, the Government indicated that the rent and related expenses of the office in 2023-2024 amounted to \$5.67 million (i.e. \$472,500 per month on average), of the reasons for the discrepancy between the two;

(4) as there are views pointing out that the rental of office buildings in core business districts (CBD) is high, and it may be necessary to set up offices for more Former Chief Executives in the long run, whether the Government will study identifying suitable premises in existing government properties to set up a larger office for use by a number of Former Chief Executives upon the expiry of the lease of FCEO in Pacific Place, so as to save rent and administrative costs while facilitating the meeting of guests with a number of Former Chief Executives; if no suitable premises are available in existing government properties, whether the Government will, having regard to the principle of the proper use of public funds, consider purchasing premises which meet the necessary requirements of ancillary facilities and security in a strategically located non-CBD (e.g. Wan Chai North), so as to set up a larger FCEO; if not, of the reasons for that; and

(5) given that after I raised a question on reviewing the FCEO mechanism on October 26, 2022, it is learnt that the public is still very concerned about the relevant use of public funds, whether the Government will consider afresh

reviewing the relevant mechanism so that it will set up FCEO only for the last three Former Chief Executives at 28 Kennedy Road, so as to ensure the sustainability of the mechanism and the proper use of public funds; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The consolidated reply to the question raised by the Hon Michael Tien is as follows:

In April 2005, the Government appointed the Independent Commission on Remuneration Package and Post-office Arrangements for the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) (the Independent Commission) to consider and make recommendations on the remuneration package and post-office arrangements for the Chief Executive (CE). The Independent Commission completed its study and submitted its report to the Government in June 2005. The recommendations in the report included the provision of support and other life-long benefits for all former CEs. The Government accepted the recommendations of the report and presented related recommendations as well as the financial arrangements for implementing the recommendations to the Finance Committee (FC) of the Legislative Council in November 2005. Since then, the Government has been providing support and other life-long benefits, including office accommodation and administrative support, for all former CEs to support them in performing promotional and protocol-related functions for Hong Kong after leaving office.

The Government set up The Office of Former Chief Executives of the HKSAR (FCEO) at 28 Kennedy Road in 2007. The premises can only accommodate three former CEs at most and no space was available to set up an office for the fourth former CE. Taking into account that the new office has to be commensurate with the status of a former CE, coupled with the operational requirements including the location, transport, facilitation for meeting people from different sectors, and security, etc., the Central and Admiralty districts were considered suitable for setting up the office in question. As there were no suitable and available government premises in the districts at the time, a leasable office unit was identified at Pacific Place as FCEO for a tenancy period of three years starting from May 2022. In the written reply to Special Meetings of the FC to examine the estimates of expenditure 2024-25, the Government has pointed out that the rent and related expenses of the Office in 2023-24 were \$5.67 million. The figure included, apart from the rent, management fee, cleaning service and electricity expenses. We will consider at the suitable juncture the arrangement after the expiry of the lease.

The Government will continue to provide support and other life-long benefits to all former CEs according to the recommendations set out in the Independent Commission's report, including appropriate office accommodation and administrative support, to facilitate their performance of promotional and protocol-related functions for Hong Kong.