

<b>Doc Type</b>	HA
<b>Paper No</b>	33/95
<b>Title</b>	Review of Admission and Security Arrangements for Open Meetings of the Housing Authority
<b>CONTENTS</b>	<p>Paper No. HA 33/95</p> <p>THE HONG KONG HOUSING AUTHORITY</p> <p>Memorandum for the Housing Authority</p> <p>Review of Admission and Security Arrangements for Open Meetings of the Housing Authority</p> <p>PURPOSE</p> <p>This paper informs Members of -</p> <p>(a) the revised arrangements for admission of the general public to attend Housing Authority (HA) open meetings within the terms of the existing Standing Orders and House Rules; and</p> <p>(b) our proposal to set up a working group to consider the longer term arrangements to regulate the maintenance of order during open meetings.</p> <p>BACKGROUND</p> <p>2. Since 1991, it has been our policy to open up the full Authority meetings to members of the public and the media. Despite numerous occasions of disruptions by members of the public at the gallery, we have no intention to alter this basic policy, or to take steps which are retrogressive in nature.</p> <p>3. At the HA's Annual Special Meeting on 1 June 1995, a group of the rooftop dwellers of Kingland Apartment gained admission to the public gallery in the HA Chamber by using admission tickets issued to representatives of other concern groups. They created a scene by shouting and struggling with security guards when they were ordered to leave the public gallery by the Chairman. The meeting was interrupted several times and had to be re-convened at the Committee Room while live broadcast to the media at the Lecture Hall continued.</p> <p>4. Prior to the meeting, the Department was aware of the likelihood of protests from the audience and had accordingly stepped up the security arrangements. The incident clearly suggested that we need more efficient and effective measures to handle persons who attended our meetings with the sole purpose of attracting media and the Authority's attention.</p> <p>LEGAL STATUS OF THE STANDING ORDERS AND HOUSE RULES</p> <p>5. The Housing Authority headquarters is on private land granted to the Authority under a Conditions of Exchange which is virtually the same as a Crown lease. The Authority has all the common law rights of a land owner of the building and land against the intrusion of outsiders. Legally, the Authority may permit any member of the public to enter its property subject to such conditions as it deems appropriate. If such a person does not accept the conditions, he can be refused entry or he can withdraw himself. If, on the other hand, he breaches any of the conditions attached to his admission, he is no longer welcome as a visitor and becomes a trespasser. The Authority may order that person to leave the property within a reasonable time and should he refuse to comply, the Authority may use such force which is reasonable and necessary to evict him from the headquarters.</p> <p>6. The admission of members of the public to open meetings of the Authority is governed by our Standing Orders and House Rules (see Annexes A &amp; B). Unlike Legislative Council's Powers and Privileges Ordinance, the present HA's Standing Orders and House Rules have no legislative backing. To some extent, our ability to enforce these provisions effectively are restricted.</p> <p>EXISTING ARRANGEMENTS FOR OPEN MEETINGS</p> <p>7. The existing House Rules have clearly laid down the conditions for admission and the conduct and behaviour of persons attending HA open meetings. In view of the disturbance caused by a group of persons at the last Annual Special Meeting, we have concluded that the relevant House Rules should be strictly followed and enforced. In particular, we have tightened the following areas within the provisions of current House Rules-</p> <p>(a) admission tickets for attending open meetings at the Public Gallery will not be issued to those persons who have had a previous record of breaching our House Rules (House Rule No. 5);</p> <p>(b) the name and identity card number of the visitors will be shown on the tickets which will be clearly specified to be non transferable (House Rules No. 6 and 7);</p> <p>(c) the identity of the visitor will be checked and matched with that shown on the ticket at the admission point (House Rule No. 9);</p> <p>(d) we will require visitors to show to the security guards at the point of admission the contents of their handbag or any other items in their possession (House Rule No. 10);</p> <p>(e) loudhailers, banners and any materials/equipment which may be used to cause disturbance to the meeting will not be allowed to be taken into the Public Gallery (House Rule No. 11);</p> <p>(f) visitors must be seated 10 minutes before the start of the meeting (House Rule No. 12);</p> <p>(g) after the start of the meeting, admission to the Public Gallery will only be allowed at a convenient break, such as end of the speech of a Member or the end of an agenda item (House Rule No. 12);</p>

(h) a serialised and more durable identification tag should be worn by all visitors to open meetings and to be returned at exit points (House Rule No. 12);

(i) we will put up a notice at the entrance to the public gallery reminding our visitors of the conduct and behaviour inside the Public Gallery (House Rule No. 14); and

(j) to facilitate easy identification, members of the press will be required to report their presence to a nominated officer of the Information and Community Relations Division at the point of entry and wear a different serialised identification tag during their coverage of an open meeting (House Rules No. 9 and 12).

8. In anticipation of similar incidents at the regular open meeting on 29 June 1995, we have announced our decision to enforce the above via a press release on 23 June 1995 and subsequent press enquiries.

#### LONGER TERM ARRANGEMENTS

9. Subject to Members' advice, we consider it necessary to study the longer-term arrangements for the maintenance of order during open meetings. These include -

(a) whether it is necessary to give legislative backing to HA's Standing Orders and House Rules by making them into by-laws; and

(b) whether it is practical and practicable to improve the physical layout of the public gallery (e.g. glazing off part of the public gallery; dividing the gallery into smaller segments; improving the seating arrangements; providing TV monitors for better viewing of the proceedings, etc.).

10. A working group headed by the Assistant Director/Administration has been set up within the Department. It will be tasked to examine the above areas further and will report back to the Authority with proposals later. If Members have any views on these matters, the Department would take them into account in the review process.

#### PUBLICITY AND PUBLIC REACTIONS

11. The measures to regulate admission have been announced prior to this meeting and the revised arrangements put in place. Reactions from the media and the public are expected to be mixed. In general, we expect support for our reaffirmation of keeping the meetings open at the public gallery, and for our intention to tighten the admission arrangements which should not cause undue inconvenience to those with no intention to make a scene.

#### PRESENTATION

12. Members are invited to note the measures adopted for the open meeting on 29 June 1995 and the setting up of a working group to examine the longer term arrangements for conducting open meetings of the Authority.

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