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30 October 2026

The President of the Legislative Council
Legislative Council Complex
Hong Kong

Sir,

In accordance with the paper tabled in the Provisional Legislative Council on 11 February 1998 on the Scope of Government Audit in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region — 'Value for Money Audits', I have the honour to submit my Report No. 87 on the results of value for money audits completed in accordance with the value for money audit guidelines laid down in the paper. These guidelines are also attached.

Yours faithfully,

Prof. LAM Chi Yuen Nelson

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The Director of Audit's Report No. 87 contains the following chapters:

Chapter (Note)	Subject
1	Consumer Council
2	Financial assistance schemes for post-secondary and tertiary students
3	Management of Inland Revenue Centre
4	Modification of conditions of land leases
5	Pre-school rehabilitation services: Pre-service support and administrative issues
6	Pre-school rehabilitation services: Service delivery
7	Revitalisation and improvement of rivers and nullahs by the Drainage Services Department
8	Work of the Narcotics Division in combating drug abuse and administering the Beat Drugs Fund

Note: *The chapter numbers are assigned in alphabetical order according to the titles of chapters in the English report.*

VALUE FOR MONEY AUDIT GUIDELINES

Value for money audit

Value for money audit is an examination into the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which any bureau of the Government Secretariat, department, agency, other public body, public office, or audited organisation has discharged its functions. Value for money audit is carried out under a set of guidelines tabled in the Provisional Legislative Council by the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee on 11 February 1998. The guidelines were agreed between the Public Accounts Committee and the Director of Audit and have been accepted by the Administration.

2. The guidelines are:

— firstly, the Director of Audit should have great freedom in presenting his reports to the Legislative Council. He may draw attention to any circumstance which comes to his knowledge in the course of audit, and point out its financial implications. Subject to the guidelines, he will not comment on policy decisions of the Executive and Legislative Councils, save from the point of view of their effect on the public purse;

— secondly, in the event that the Director of Audit, during the course of carrying out an examination into the implementation of policy objectives, reasonably believes that at the time policy objectives were set and decisions made there may have been a lack of sufficient, relevant and reliable financial and other data available upon which to set such policy objectives or to make such decisions, and that critical underlying assumptions may not have been made explicit, he may carry out an investigation as to whether that belief is well founded. If it appears to be so, he should bring the matter to the attention of the Legislative Council with a view to further inquiry by the Public Accounts Committee. As such an investigation may involve consideration of the methods by which policy objectives have been sought, the Director should, in his report to the Legislative Council on the matter in question, not make any judgement on the issue, but rather present facts upon which the Public Accounts Committee may make inquiry;

— thirdly, the Director of Audit may also consider as to whether policy objectives have been determined, and policy decisions taken, with appropriate authority;

— fourthly, he may also consider whether there are satisfactory arrangements for considering alternative options in the implementation of policy, including the identification, selection and evaluation of such options;

— fifthly, he may also consider as to whether established policy aims and objectives have been clearly set out; whether subsequent decisions on the implementation of policy are consistent with the approved aims and objectives, and have been taken with proper authority at the appropriate level; and whether the resultant instructions to staff accord with the approved policy aims and decisions and are clearly understood by those concerned;

— sixthly, he may also consider as to whether there is conflict or potential conflict between different policy aims or objectives, or between the means chosen to implement them;

— seventhly, he may also consider how far, and how effectively, policy aims and objectives have been translated into operational targets and measures of performance and whether the costs of alternative levels of service and other relevant factors have been considered, and are reviewed as costs change; and

— finally, he may also be entitled to exercise the powers given to him under section 9 of the Audit Ordinance (Cap. 122).

3. The Director of Audit is not entitled to question the merits of the policy objectives of any bureau of the Government Secretariat, department, agency, other public body, public office, or audited organisation in respect of which an examination is being carried out or, subject to the guidelines, the methods by which such policy objectives have been sought, but he may question the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the means used to achieve them.

4. Value for money audit is conducted in accordance with a programme of work which is determined annually by the Director of Audit. The procedure of the Public Accounts Committee provides that the Committee shall hold informal consultations with the Director of Audit from time to time, so that the Committee can suggest fruitful areas for value for money audit by the Director of Audit.