

TITLE: ENHANCING THE ONE STOP CENTRE (OSC) DECISIONS

PURPOSE OF POSITION PAPER

The Institution of Engineers, Malaysia (IEM) wishes to seek the Minister's consideration to appoint representative from The IEM as one of the OSC committee members at each Local Authority in Peninsula Malaysia. This paper will explain why IEM should be considered the most appropriate amongst the building services professional sector to provide the necessary inputs for the OSC, in the form of independent and expert views from The IEM, the learned engineering society's perspective to the decision makers in the OSC committee.

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 Proposed Improvement of Government Delivery System

The recent policy move by the government initiated to improve the government delivery system for the whole building industry by various measures and initiatives are commendable. The existing building laws have been amended to replace the Certificate of Fitness for Occupation (CFO), formerly issued by Local Authority, with the Certificate of Completion and Compliance (CCC) to be issued by the Professionals (Architects and Engineers). The One Stop Centre at each Local Authority has been restructured and empowered to approve projects in order to reduce and streamline the approval processes in getting building projects off the ground in the shortest time possible. The desired objective of the improvement to the government delivery system is to speed up project implementation, facilitate the application for early approval, reduce costs to business and house owners and promote greater accountability by all parties in the whole value chain in the Building Industry.

1.2 Implementation Issues

The effectiveness of the totally revamped delivery system has yet to be tested as it was only from April this year that the various amendments to

the Acts have been gazetted for implementation. There are a number of issues that have already surfaced on the CCC implementation with many Local Authorities interpreting the policies and procedures their own way. Already there are procedures and conditions set by some Local Authorities whereby building plan submissions will not be accepted until all the necessary approvals from other relevant authorities/agencies have been obtained. In the past, the building plans are accepted and processed by the Local Authorities while the professional pursue the relevant approvals from related authorities/agencies. Such conditions effectively defeat the purpose of having OSCs. As such, there is a need for your ministry to re-examine the practices on the ground by Local Authorities as the OSC secretariat to correct the concept as was originally intended.

There is no doubt that the newly constituted OSCs will face the same problems in the different interpretation of policies and procedures. A wrong decision by a Local Authority may result in long lasting consequences to the people and the economy. The new approval system is facing resistance from some officials still longing to maintain the old ways.

2.0 THE RATIONALE FOR A SEAT IN THE OSC

2.1 Facilitating the OSC

OSC is empowered to act independently on the approval of land conversion, planning permission (development order), building plans and infrastructure plans. The new OSC has four Councilors from the Local Authority and, being mainly non technical persons would have to seek technical opinions from representatives of Government technical departments, agencies and service providers being part of the OSC. The representatives from the various government departments, agencies and service providers constituting the other OSC members are normally expected to assert their viewpoints strictly from a regulatory perspective. On the other hand, the IEM representative at the OSC meetings can provide a more holistic and independent view from the perspective of asset usage and management. The IEM can also act as a counter balance to any unreasonable demands from the government sector and service

providers which could deviate from normal practices and not be adequately supported by the current government policies and industry best practices.

2.2 Public – Private Sector Partnership

The government sector and the private sector should work seamlessly and together to bring about greater efficiency and effectiveness of the OSC. By welcoming private sector participation in the OSC we believe that this will certainly enhance the image of the government in terms of openness and transparency of its governance.

2.3 Awareness of the Current or Innovative Engineering Issues

We anticipate that the OSC in the course of discharging its responsibilities over time will encounter current or innovative engineering or other technical issues which have implications on the projects to be approved. IEM representatives backed by the matrix of expertise amongst its membership can provide better insights on these current issues and dispense appropriate advice on engineering best practices, risk management, professional liability and strategies and techniques for overcoming difficulties. Where certain issues are known beforehand prior to the OSC meeting, the IEM representative can collate from the IEM pool of expertise to provide the required inputs.

We would like to point out that the IEM in the past had assisted the Local Authorities in drawing up guidelines for hill slope development and management.

3.0 **IEM AS THE INDEPENDENT REPRESENTATIVE**

IEM is the largest professional body in Malaysia with membership extending over a wide range of engineering disciplines including Civil, Structural, Electrical, Mechanical, Chemical, Geotechnical, Highway, Drainage, Water and Sanitary and Environmental engineers, etc. The majority of the IEM members are actively practicing engineering. The

diversity of different engineering disciplines and experiences of the engineers is well reflected in the current membership of IEM and this will provide the depth and breadth of the engineering knowledge that could be made available for the IEM representative to the OSC.

IEM representatives while given the privilege to serve in the OSCs will focus on public safety (such as slope stability, seismic design considerations, fire and other safety issues) that will have the greatest impact on the decisions to be made by the OSCs. Next, he will be able to comment on new technologies currently being introduced in the construction industry. What is of crucial importance for the decision makers is the unbiased and independent opinions offered by the IEM representatives.

4.0 MECHANISM EXPLAINED

The IEM representative will be an experienced professional practising engineer having at least 15 years of relevant experience and must be conversant with the practices of the Local Authority and in the building industry. IEM will form a committee consisting of experienced professional practicing engineers of various branches of engineering and specialized fields, charged with the selection and maintenance of a pool of qualified professional engineers for this task, making arrangements for the deployment of representatives to the OSC committee and providing the necessary briefings on their role and responsibilities. This committee shall also act as the referral body for the representatives to obtain information and policy guidelines to conduct themselves in OSC meetings and for them to forward feedback on areas where improvements are necessary. Representatives will be required to sign a non disclosure form on the proceedings of the OSC. However information from the representatives for the purpose of improving the implementation process of both the Local Authorities and Submitting Persons should be permitted to be fed back to the IEM committee. Problem areas could then be brought up for discussion during the regular dialogue sessions suggested to be held between IEM and the Ministry of Housing and Local Government.

As the representatives will be contributing their time to attend meetings on a voluntary basis, our request is for them to be accorded the normal government allowances payable for attending each meeting to help defray their traveling and car parking costs.

We request that official letters of appointment to the nominated IEM representatives for the respective Local Authority be issued by the OSC secretariat under Ministry of Housing and Local Government through IEM.

5.0 IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

It is envisaged that the implementation of appointment of an IEM representative to each of the Local Authorities should be carried out in stages due to the large number (96) of Local Authorities in Peninsula Malaysia.

We propose that in the first stage of implementation the Local Authorities in the Klang Valley should have their IEM representatives, followed by those in Penang, Johor Baru, Ipoh and Melaka in the second stage and subsequently to all other areas.

6.0 CONCLUSION

Having outlined the purpose and role of having IEM representatives in the OSCs, The IEM believes that the benefit of appointing IEM representatives to OSC committees to provide the necessary technical expertise and advice have been brought across. The IEM is here to serve the community as a learned society in the technical field. The IEM strongly believes that the progress so far achieved in the improvement of the building delivery system could be further enhanced with our participation in the approval process.