

Abolish Urbco? Views divided

URBAN council members are divided over the suggestion that the council should be abolished.

Three councillors and an ex-member were commenting on the call for replacing Urbco with a central council. The call was made by the Hongkong Democracy Association chairman, Tsin Sai-nin, at a seminar.

Elected urban councillor, Elsie Elliot said the council should have only elected members who can represent the public, otherwise it should be abolished.

She said the elected members in Urbco now had no chance to represent the people because among the 15 elected members, only seven really know the people.

"The rest are just pretending they know," she said.

Another 15 seats in the council are filled by appointed members.

Mrs Elliot, however, doubted the possibility of abolishing the council. "Who's going to abolish it?" she asked.

"The Urban Council was set up by the government who likes to pretend to be democratic," she said.

Mrs Elliot also ruled out the possibility that the council could be replaced gradually by district boards. She pointed out they were merely advisory bodies. Her views contrasted those of a former urban councillor, Peter P.F. Chan.

Mr Chan said although it was not the right time to abolish the council, the district boards would gradually replace it after they were fully established.

"District administration is still a new concept to the public, but when localisation is accepted, there is a great tendency for the power to be transferred from the council to the boards," he said.

Mr Chan also said regional recreational activities now were run by district boards, and the government had set up different groups to organise various citywide activities.

The idea was rejected by the council's vice-chairman, Gerry Forsgate, who said it was a ridiculous suggestion to abolish the council.

He said: "The district boards are only responsible for specific districts, and the Urban Council needs to cater for different fields along certain lines."

He said the boards were giving advice only and their work were outside the scope of the Urban Council.

"The Urban Council does a good job and will continue to serve the public," he said.

Another councillor, Maria Tam, also said she did not think that the council could be phased out.

"The Urban Council is functioning quite well and none of the councillors is sitting there doing nothing," she said.

At a seminar held on Sunday, Mr Tsin suggested that the council should be replaced by a central council because he thought most of the functions of Urbco had been taken over by the district boards.