

**Minutes of the
Social Welfare Advisory Committee (SWAC) Meeting**

**3 March 2010 (Wednesday) at 10:00 a.m.
Room 215, Main Wing, Central Government Offices.**

Present

Professor CHAN Yuk-shee (Chairman)
Mr Bunny CHAN Chung-bun
Ms Maggie CHAN Mei-kit
Dr Dorothy CHAN Yuen Tak-fai
Mr Quentin FONG King-sang
Mr Herman HUI Chung-shing
Dr Benjamin LAI Sau-shun
Dr LAM Ching-choi
Dr LEUNG Wing-tai
Mr Vincent LO Wing-sang
Mr Timothy MA Kam-wah
Mrs Agnes MAK Tang Pik-yee
Mr Jovy SUEN Leung-kwong
Mrs Teresa TSIEN WONG Bik-kwan
Mr TUNG Chi-fat
Mr Michael WONG Yick-kam
Ms Vicky CHEUNG (Secretary)

In Attendance

Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB)

Mr Paul TANG Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare
(PSLW)
Ms Eliza LEE Deputy Secretary for Labour and Welfare
(Welfare)1 (DS(W)1)
Ms Irene YOUNG Deputy Secretary for Labour and Welfare
(Welfare)2 (DS(W)2)
Ms Karyn CHAN Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and
Welfare (Welfare)1 (PAS(W)1)

Mrs Alison LAU	Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare)2 (PAS(W)2)	} For Item 1
Ms Betty HO	Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare)3 (PAS(W)3)	
Mr Stephen SUI	Commissioner for Rehabilitation (C for R)	

Social Welfare Department (SWD)

Mr Patrick NIP Director of Social Welfare (DSW)

Absent with apologies

Ms LAM Shuk-yee
Mr Christopher LAW Kin-chung
Dr Sandra TSANG Kit-man
Ms Lisa YIP Sau-wah
Mr Ben WONG Chung-mat
Dr Jimmy WONG Chi-ho

**Discussion Item 1: Briefing on Welfare-related Initiatives in the
2010-11 Budget
[SWAC Paper No. 04/2010]**

Members were briefed on the welfare-related initiatives in the 2010-11 Budget.

2. Members asked the following questions / offered the following comments -

- (a) What was the extent of the increase in subsidised residential care places for the elderly and how it could help shorten the waiting time;

- (b) The manpower shortage problem in the care sector, especially that of nurses, care workers, occupational therapists and physiotherapists, should be addressed. The Government could consider establishing professional qualifications for different levels of training and inviting non-tertiary organisations such as the Employees Retraining Board (ERB) to organise training courses at different entry levels;
- (c) The Government should enhance the accessibility of transport services for persons with disabilities such as introduction of accessible taxi services; and
- (d) The Government should include more elderly facilities in the community and introduce more home-based care services. The concept of family support in elderly care services should also be promoted while the Government's role should be confined as a facilitator only.

3. The Administration gave the following response -

- (a) The number of subsidised residential care places would be increased by 1 087 over the next few years. In particular, the number of nursing home places would be increased by one-third. That said, it would be difficult to estimate how the waiting time would be shortened as it would depend on a number of factors such as the elders' specific preferences on the location of the residential homes;
- (b) SWD had been closely working with the Hospital Authority to train nurses and various training providers, including ERB, were offering health care professional training courses at entry level. Other possible solutions to ease the shortage problem of healthcare workers in the long run would also be considered;
- (c) The Government would continue to enhance the Rehabus services to meet service demand. The Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation had been providing personalised and round the clock accessible hire car service for persons with disabilities. The Transport Department would continue to facilitate the taxi trade and interested parties to identify suitable vehicles for operating accessible taxi service but the introduction of the accessible taxi service would involve a

host of complicated issues such as commercial viability, availability of suitable vehicle models which could meet statutory requirements on environmental protection, safety etc.; and

- (d) To facilitate elders to “age in place”, the Government would further strengthen community care services by launching a home care pilot scheme with funding support from the Lotteries Fund to provide more personalised home care services for the elderly and providing additional funding to extend the District-based Scheme on Carer Training.

**Discussion Item 2: Long-term Social Welfare Planning in Hong Kong: Second-stage Consultation
[SWAC Paper No. 05/2010]**

4. Members were briefed on the progress of the Task Group on Welfare Planning and considered the revised draft consultation paper and consultation plan.

5. Members offered the following comments -

- (a) Adopting preventive and developmental approach in welfare services and promoting multi-partite partnerships are important strategic directions for the long-term welfare development;
- (b) The consultation paper might need to touch on subjects such as welfare priorities and resource allocation, which were some of the concerns raised by the sector;
- (c) The welfare planning exercise should focus on the overall welfare development from a broad and forward-looking perspective, and SWAC should not put much emphasis on detailed service provision. SWAC would need to consider how to manage the sector’s expectations in coming up with concrete proposals on future welfare development;
- (d) Since an independent committee had already completed a review exercise on the lump sum grant (LSG) subvention system, SWAC would not repeat the work of the review committee and elaborate on the LSG system in the

consultation paper;

- (e) SWAC should carefully consider the target audience, list of invitees, involvement of media and publicity of the consultation sessions. As a press release would be issued, members of the public could register for the consultation sessions if they were interested; and
- (f) SWAC would consider attending meetings with individual organisations or agencies on a case-by-case basis if invited.

6. The Secretariat would further revise the consultation paper taking into account Members' comments and circulate it for Members' endorsement. The Secretariat would also proceed to arrange the consultation sessions and invite Members to sign up.

**Discussion Item 3: Report on SWAC's Study Tour to Japan 2010
[SWAC Paper No. 06/2010]**

7. A total of 16 SWAC members participated in the SWAC's study tour to Japan from 31 January to 3 February 2010. Members were briefed on the findings and observations of the study tour.

8. Members offered the following comments -

- (a) The welfare system of Japan was comprehensive but costly. The facilities were luxurious and the operating cost was extremely high. It would be difficult for Japan to sustain such social welfare system in the long run;
- (b) Some welfare services in Japan were charged according to the household income. The fee-charging system was however very complicated and would be difficult to be adopted in Hong Kong;
- (c) Various social issues, e.g. ageing population, expensive welfare system, low birth rate, economic downturn, etc., faced by Japan were very similar to those of Hong Kong. The experience of Japan would be useful to SWAC in studying the long-term social welfare planning in Hong Kong; and

- (d) Hong Kong's welfare system was indeed very comprehensive and of high-quality in the South East Asia region, but less costly if compared to the Japanese system.

SWAC Secretariat
January 2011