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Minutes of the
Social Welfare Advisory Committee (SWAC) Meeting
held on 28 March 2002

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Present

Mr Peter Wong Hong-yuen, GBS, JP	(Chairman)
Dr Philemon Choi Yuen-wan, JP	
Dr the Hon Law Chi-kwong, JP	
Mr Darwin Chen	
Mr Stephan Yau How-boa, JP	
Mr Ng Yau Yung	
Miss Christine Fang Meng-sang	
Dr Leung Cho-bun	
Professor Diana Mak Ping-see	
Mr Wan Chi-keung, JP	
Ms Marina Wong Yu-pok	
Ms Dorothy Lau Wai-ling, JP	
Mr Poon Huen-wai	
Miss Jessie Yu Sau-chu	
Mrs Mary Leung Ling Tien-wei	
Ms Tsang Yin-mei	(Secretary)

In Attendance

Health and Welfare Bureau

Mr Robin Gill	Deputy Secretary for Health and Welfare

Social Welfare Department

Mrs Carrie Lam	Director of Social Welfare
Mrs Patricia Chu	Deputy Director of Social Welfare (Administration)
Mrs Eliza Leung	Deputy Director of Social Welfare (Services)

(For item 1)

Mr Alfred Lau   Chief Town Planner /Strategic Planning
                                 Planning Department (PlanD)

(For item 2 & 4)

Mr Lee Wing-wai   Assistant Director (Subventions and
                                 Performance Monitoring) Social Welfare
                                 Department (SWD)

Mr Fu Tsun-hung   Chief Social Welfare Officer (Help Centre)
                                 Social Welfare Department

(1) Hong Kong 2030 : Planning Vision and Strategy

Stage Two Public Consultation – Key Planning Issues and Evaluation Criteria [SWAC Paper No. 6/02]

       This paper sought Members' comments on nine strategic planning issues (including closer links with the Mainland, greater responsiveness to special land needs, more sustainable use of land resource, new development opportunities and better quality, more jobs closer to homes, facilitating business tomorrow, essential but unwelcome facilities, better planning for waterfront uses, and more choices for recreation and sports), and evaluation criteria (assessments in economic, environmental, land use planning, social and transport aspects).

2.   <u>Members</u> made the following points -

(a) there was a need for support services for the large number of Hong Kong people crossing the boundary everyday for school, work or other activities, but to what extent should the Government be responsible for these;

(b) quality of life should be used as one of the evaluation criteria in the Study. This should include the elements of providing space for nature and culture;

(c) linkage between quality of life and local economic development should be examined;

(d) physical and non-physical items, and needs of all ages in society should be considered;

(e) family cohesiveness, family togetherness and a sense of belonging to the community should be included in the list of evaluation criteria. Families should be given more choice on healthy and accessible recreational activities to strengthen their cohesiveness;

(f) the Government should take the lead to move Government Offices and to build A-class office buildings to less centrally located sites, in order to provide more job opportunities and enable people to work closer to home;

(g) old industrial buildings should be better utilized;

(h) space should be reserved for certain industries, such as environmental protection and culture, which could provide job opportunities to the under-privileged with low skills;

(i) adequate space for foreign domestic helpers to use on Sundays should be provided;

(j) the frontier-closed area should be better utilized;

(k) communal facilities for people in Tai Po and North districts should be enhanced; and

(l) there were concerns about the positioning of the Study and whether PlanD was able to handle and implement proposals collected in the public consultation exercise. The Central Policy Unit was found to be in a better position to involve all related bureaux and departments to take forward the ideas and suggestions from the public.

3.   The Government's responses included -

(a) bureaux and departments were working together to improve the   quality of life; PlanD would provide land reservation for cultural development;

(b) views and comments from different sectors would be considered; PlanD was working towards addressing the needs of all ages and providing an integrated environment;

(c) PlanD had standards and guidelines on the establishment of various facilities;

(d) a number of Government offices had been and would be moved to less centrally located sites. The Government had also reserved sites in the New Territories for commercial purposes. But it still depended on market forces to create job opportunities in these areas;

(e) more flexible use of old industrial buildings was encouraged. They could be divided into home-cum-studio units and converted to other uses such as gymnasiums and galleries;

(f) views on supporting certain industries and providing space for foreign domestic helpers were agreed;

(g) the development of the frontier-closed area as well as the needs of residents in Tai Po and North districts would be reviewed; and

(h) PlanD, taking the lead in the Study, had a Steering Committee comprising representatives from various bureaux and departments. PlanD might be unable to deal with all the policy issues in the Study and need to reflect them to relevant bureaux/departments, but it would continue to monitor/review them as part of the planning process.

4. The meeting concluded that attention should be paid to being a suitable forum to take forward the ideas and suggestions from the public.

(2) Hong Kong Council of Social Service [SWAC Paper No. 8/02]

5. The paper informed Members of the organizational reforms undertaken by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS) over the past year and sought Members' comments on the work of the Council in strengthening the welfare sector, and in working in partnership with Government and SWAC.

6. Members made the following comments -

(a) recent media reporting on reduced subvention by the Community Chest had an undesirable impact on its image of "giving to the community". Action from the HKCSS, SWAC and Government might be required to support the image of the Community Chest;

(b) the welfare sector needed to control costs and enhance efficiency;

(c) the Community Chest should also promote participation by people in the community;

(d) the organizational reforms of the HKCSS were welcomed, as its structure and roles had become much clearer and simplified;

(e) if a larger proportion of HKCSS' income came from NGOs themselves, instead of from Government, the Council's independence and identity as representative of NGOs would be stronger;

(f) it would be difficult for the HKCSS to be in a genuine partnership with Government in promoting social services if it was solely funded by its member organizations;

(g) HKCSS would not provide direct service; hence it might not be a priority in SWD's allocation of subvention;

(h) SWD could delegate the task of promoting quality management and efficiency enhancement of NGOs to the HKCSS;

(i) the HKCSS could help NGOs to enhance their public accountability, raise their fund-raising ability and improve their service delivery;

(j) the HKCSS and NGOs could have partners and funding from various sectors, other than SWD;

(k) the HKCSS should review and re-position its roles and tasks, especially following the implementation of Lump Sum Grant (LSG);

(l) the HKCSS should assist NGOs to adjust to changes in the welfare sector and promote mutual sharing of good practices;

(m) participation of member organizations in the work of the HKCSS should be encouraged; and

(n) the Government should involve the HKCSS and NGOs in the process of developing its welfare policy.

7.   The Government responded as follows -

(a) the Community Chest had to review its positioning, and adopt greater accountability for the use of donations received and ensure that member organizations had effectively utilized their resources;

(b) SWD should provide funding mainly for the provision of direct services. Many of the HKCSS' operations did not have sufficient performance indicators for monitoring purposes. The Council's only direct service was its employment service, which seemed to overlap with other employment assistance projects funded by the Employees Retraining Board or SWD under its support for Self-Reliance Scheme;

(c) the HKCSS could play a more active role in supporting NGOs, such as promoting the use of information technology through its Information Technology Resource Centre (ITRC) or corporate governance or its agency development work which was currently undertaken by SWD's Help Centre;

(d) the HKCSS could partner with other government departments and the private sector, in providing quality social services;

(e) the current funder-provider relationship should be revisited. Consideration could be given to providing funding on a project or assignment basis in future; and

(f) there was a basic concern in the positioning of the HKCSS in advocating the views of member organizations. In some situations, the Council might be caught in between its member organizations.

8.   Miss Fang (representing the HKCSS) made the following responses -

(a) the HKCSS as a collective platform of NGOs would work closely with the Government to assist NGOs to provide quality social services;

(b) the HKCSS' partnership with SWD should continue and both parties should work together to promote the quality of social services;

(c) the HKCSS currently had other project-based funding sources; and

(d) the HKCSS had devised more concrete performance indicators in its business plan, which could be further discussed with SWD.

9.   The meeting concluded that the HKCSS and SWD should work closer to address and discuss the mentioned concerns, in order to enhance social services.

(3) Implementation of the Information Technology Strategy for The Social

  Welfare Sector [SWAC Paper No. 9/02]

10.   This paper updated Members on the progress of the implementation of the information technology (IT) strategy for the social welfare sector, since SWAC was last consulted in January 2001. A Joint

Committee on Information Technology for the Social Welfare Sector under the Chairmanship of DSW was set up in May 2001 to steer implementation of the IT strategy and to oversee IT developments in the sector. The Strategy covered five components, namely infrastructure, communications, system applications, accessibility and humanware. Since 2001, over $150 million had been committed from the Lotteries Fund to implement the Strategy.

11.   <u>Members</u> made the following comments -

(a) SWD needed to monitor the utilization of IT equipment for the elderly, as this was found on some occasions not to put to proper use;

(b) apart from the casework approach, social services were also delivered through other ways, such as group work and community networking. The Clientele Information System (CIS), which would be implemented in around 2005, was on a casework basis. To promote service integration, SWD and the HKCSS should consider ways of enhancing the system to include these other types of service;

(c) use of IT was important for service integration, in response to the changing needs for social services. But NGOs did not have adequate resources to develop their IT to support their service integration;

(d) the needs of individual NGOs who were at different stages of IT development, should be catered for;

(e) the mindset of staff needed to be changed, in order to enhance IT development and applications;

(f) district websites to disseminate information about social welfare programmes and activities should be set up; and

(g) consideration should be given to developing an IT protocol in the welfare sector.

12.   The Government made the following responses -

(a) SWD would consider setting up district websites about the welfare services available;

(b) on the core applications in human resource management (HRM) and financial management (FM), user requirements would be identified and developed to cater for the general needs of NGOs and also allow flexibility to cater for some specific needs of individual NGOs;

(c) SWD would not adopt a generalized approach in supporting IT. Some NGOs were quite advanced in this IT ability and could move faster than others. However, most NGOs' needs in HRM and FM

were common, and to achieve cost-effectiveness, NGOs might have to wait for a communal system for those common items; and

(d) in respect of training for social workers, SWD had organized a sharing session on 17 April 2002 to share with Members of the Advisory Committee on Social Work Training and Manpower Planning and tertiary institutions (TIs) of the progress of IT development in the sector and how curricula in the TIs should gear towards this development.

13.   The meeting noted encouraging progress in the past year and concluded that the social welfare sector still needed to catch up in the IT development and applications.

(4) Progress Report on Work of Social Welfare Department's Help Centre [SWAC Paper No.10/02]

14.   The paper updated Members on the work of the Help Centre, which was set up in 2001. The work included enhancing corporate governance; information and advice; special projects; business improvement projects; training; and liaison and enquiry service.

15.   The importance of the work on enhancing corporate governance and training for NGO was stressed, as NGOs under the LSG mode would have greater flexibility and a higher level of accountability. The Help Centre was preparing guidelines on Corporate Governance. And at the same time the Hong Kong Polytechnic University was conducting a survey on NGO Boards.

16.   A Working Group on Training Programme for Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and Senior Managers (SMs) for NGOs had been formed. Whilst the preference was to source programmes from local institutions, it now appeared that a tailor-made programme had to be devised. SWD with the support of the Civil Service Training & Development Institute was working on the project and it was targeted to commence in the second half of 2002-03.

17.   Members made the following comments -

    (a) it was difficult to assess the performance of CEOs in the welfare sector;

    (b) there were tools to assess a CEO's performance, but it would depend on the attitude of an NGO Board; and

    (c) the Help Centre had provided substantial assistance to NGOs.

18.   The meeting concluded that the Help Centre had achieved progress in its work.

Health and Welfare Bureau

April 2002