

Minutes of the
Social Welfare Advisory Committee (SWAC) Meeting
held on 4 April 2003 (Friday)

Present

Mr Wilfred Wong Ying-wai (Chairman)

Ms Vivien Chan

Mr Darwin Chen

Mrs Cheung Ang Siew-mei

Ms Christine Fang Meng-sang

Mr Wilfred Lee Chee-wah

Dr Leung Cho-bun

Professor Diana Mak Ping-see

Mr Poon Huen-wai

Mr Wan Chi-keung Aaron

Miss Deborah Wan Lai-yau

Ms Marina Wong Yu-pok

Mr Stephen Yau How-boa

Ms Jessie Yu Sau-chu

Miss Katharine Choi (Secretary)

In Attendance

Rehabilitation Advisory Committee

Dr Raymond Wu Wai-yung

Miss Iris Chan Sui-ching

Dr Margaret Chung Wai-ling

Mrs Jackie Ma Lai Bik-lin

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau (HWFB)

Mr Robin Gill	Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Welfare)
Miss Diane Wong	Principal Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Welfare)

Social Welfare Department (SWD)

Mrs Carrie Lam	Director of Social Welfare
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(For item 3)

Mr Patrick Nip	Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Elderly Services)
Mrs Brenda Fung	Principal Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Elderly Services) ²
Mr Stephen Pang	Commissioner for Rehabilitation
Mr Paul Wong	Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Elderly Services) ⁴
Mr Tommy Lai	Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Rehabilitation)

(For item 4)

Mr Cheung Hing-wah	Assistant Director (Youth and Corrections), SWD
Mr Fung Man-chung	Chief Social Work Officer (Corrections), SWD
Mr David Tong	Chief Architect, Architectural Services Department

(For item 5)

Mr Fung Pak-yan	Assistant Director (Family and Child Welfare), SWD
Mr Peter Ng	Chief Social Work Officer (Family and Child Welfare), SWD
Mr Kenneth Chan	Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food

(1) Relevance of the Population Policy to Social Welfare

(SWAC Paper No. 04/03)

Members noted the major concerns and challenges arising from the projected demographic trends and characteristics of the Hong Kong community, as well as the corresponding proposals on welfare policy put forward in the Report of the Task Force on Population Policy.

2. Members in general supported the Administration' s proposal to tighten the residence requirements for new arrivals to become eligible for social security benefits. There were views that the proposed residence requirements should be matched by a corresponding adjustment in the issue of One Way Permits (OWPs), and flexibility in exercising discretion to grant welfare benefits. The meeting noted that discretion could be exercised to waive the residence requirement under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA), taking account of individual needs and circumstances.

3. The proposal about developing the potential of new arrivals was supported. There was a suggestion that greater efforts should be made to promote their acceptance and inclusion into local society. It was noted that new arrivals in general, welcomed the services provided to them in the context of family services, and the demand for specific new arrival services appeared to be on the decline.

4. As regards the impact of an ageing population on society, there were views that while it might pose challenges to the community, the trend could also be seen in a positive light. The Administration remarked that active and healthy ageing would continue to be promoted, and a life-course approach would be adopted as a preventive health initiative.

5. The meeting concluded that the recommendations in the Report, including those related to welfare services and social security benefits, were supported.

(2) Proposed Residential Training Complex for Juveniles in Tuen Mun (SWAC Paper No. 05/03)

6. Members noted the plan to re-locate and co-locate the six existing SWD correctional / residential homes, to a new residential training complex for juveniles in Tuen Mun.

7. As regards measures to be put in place to avoid possible problems arising from co-locating offenders and non-offenders, as well as male and female residents, the meeting noted that the physical design of the complex had already taken account of the need for segregation. Co-location would enable greater flexibility in staff deployment to meet the needs of different groups of residents. The activity schedules of individual groups of residents, would take account of the need to achieve effective segregation. Experience in running home with both male and female residents, would serve as a useful reference.

8. There were suggestions that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with experience in providing residential services to both young offenders and non-offenders, might provide assistance in running the complex. However, it was noted that the service focus of NGOs who provided non-statutory residential services with an emphasis on community-based rehabilitation, was very different from the service orientation of the complex, which was statutory in nature.

9. As regards the capacity of the complex, the meeting noted that the physical design of the complex would allow for flexibility in adjusting the capacity to meet demands for different homes within the complex. As regards outsourcing some of the services to be provided in the complex, the meeting noted that while there were no current plans to outsource the management of the complex or any of the professional human services, the Administration was actively considering contracting out the provision of some non-core services.

10. The meeting concluded that the proposed project was worthy of support.

(3) Adoption (Amendment) Bill 2003 (SWAC Paper No. 06/03)

11. Members were briefed on the current provision of adoption services in Hong Kong, the rationale of introducing amendments to the Adoption Ordinance, as well as the detailed legislative proposals including those pertaining to the Hague Convention on Inter-country Adoption.

12. As regards the current mechanism and rules that governed the adoption of children from the Mainland, the meeting noted that the relevant adoption authorities on the Mainland had established rules and practices in this regard. Whether these adopted children could reside in Hong Kong was subject to the prevailing policies, legislation and arrangements for Mainlanders to settle in Hong Kong.

13. The meeting decided that the proposed amendments to the Adoption Ordinance were supported.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

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