

**Confirmed Minutes of the 42nd Meeting
of the Waste Management Subcommittee
on Thursday, 1 June 2023 at 10:00 a.m.**

Present:

Prof Dan TSANG (Chairman)
Ms Carmen CHAN, BBS, JP
Dr Sylvia CHAN, MH
Ms Ada FUNG, BBS
Mr Eric HO
Ms Linda HO
Prof Dennis LEUNG
Mr Simon NG
Dr Raymond YAU
Ms Karen CHEK (Secretary)

Absent with Apologies:

Mr Alex KWAN
Prof Alexis LAU, JP
Ms Christina TANG
Dr WONG Kwok-yan, MH
Dr William YU

In Attendance:

Mr Bruno LUK, JP	Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (Waste Reduction), Environmental Protection Department (EPD)
Dr Vanessa AU	Assistant Director (Waste Reduction), EPD
Mr Kenneth CHENG	Assistant Director (Waste Management), EPD
Ms Theresa WU	Assistant Director (Municipal Solid Waste Charging), EPD
Miss Sally SHEK	Executive Officer (CBD) 1, Environment and Ecology Bureau (EEB)
Miss Avynn WONG	Executive Officer (CBD) 2, EEB

Action

The Chairman welcomed Members for attending the meeting, and informed them that apologies of absence had been received from Mr Alex Kwan, Prof Alexis Lau, Ms Christina Tang, Dr Wong Kwok-yan and Dr William Yu.

Item 1 : Matters arising

2. The Chairman advised Members that the minutes of the last meeting held on 29 March 2021 were confirmed by circulation on 26 May 2021. There was no matter arising from the minutes of the last meeting.

Item 2 : Waste Management and Reduction Initiatives

(ACE-WM Paper 1/2023)

3. The Chairman indicated that the paper reported the waste management and reduction initiatives launched by the Government that was briefly discussed at the Advisory Council on the Environment (ACE) meeting on 20 March 2023. EPD was invited to attend the current Waste Management Subcommittee (WMSC) meeting to facilitate a more in-depth and focused discussion of the subject matter. The Chairman added that EPD had arranged for ACE Members two site visits to waste management facilities in April and June 2023 to complement its briefing on the matter.

4. The Chairman declared that he was currently the Vice Chairman of the Hong Kong Waste Management Association and would take up the chairmanship in September. A Member declared that her organisation had been engaged in some trial schemes related to municipal solid waste (MSW) charging, the operation of a Recycling Store and other waste-related initiatives of the Government. Another Member declared that his organisation had also participated in the trial scheme of MSW charging as well as a study on Producer Responsibility Scheme (PRS) on electric vehicles (EV) batteries. Another Member declared that he was an adviser of the Hong Kong E-vehicles Business General Association.

5. With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, Mr Bruno Luk briefed Members on the various waste management and reduction initiatives such as MSW charging, PRSs, Plastic Shopping Bag (PSB) Charging Scheme, etc.

Publicity and Public Education

6. Members commended the efforts of EPD in implementing various waste reduction and recycling measures. A Member suggested that EPD should convey to the public the meaning behind those measures to encourage more participation.

Pointing out that waste reduction at source should be the priority, two Members and the Chairman added that the Government should promote responsible and sustainable consumption with a view to minimising waste generation in the first place. Mr Bruno Luk responded that EPD would continue to emphasise the importance of waste reduction in publicity campaigns.

7. A Member suggested and echoed by the Chairman and a Member that the Government should quantify and promote the positive results of waste management measures to further motivate public participation. The Member supplemented that relevant statistics on the overall progress in reducing the disposal of MSW and the increase in rate of recycling should be promulgated.

8. To better prepare the public for the implementation of new policies or initiatives, a Member suggested that EPD should proactively disseminate information packs to the public in collaboration with key influencers. She added that concise and practical lesson briefs such as promotional videos and scenario discussion materials should be provided to schools for educating students on the subjects. The Chairman echoed that better preparation of the public for MSW charging in the coming months would bring positive experiences of the public and would be key to the smooth implementation of the initiative. Another Member added that EPD should strengthen efforts for educating the younger generation who could bring habit changes in waste reduction and recycling to their families. With reference to the experience of other places, Mr Bruno Luk remarked that it would take time for the public to get adapted to MSW charging and EPD would step up publicity and public education for its implementation.

9. To solicit the support of the young generation, a Member suggested that EPD should collaborate with universities to engage their students in waste management initiatives. While a Summer Internship Programme was already in place in the Government, the Chairman pointed out that students' involvement was limited in scale given the quota of the programme. He proposed that EPD might consider engaging tertiary students on a part-time basis. Mr Bruno Luk responded that EPD would take the suggestion into consideration.

10. With a view to providing one-stop and easily accessible information to the public, a Member suggested that all waste-related information such as the locations of the recycling stores and retail outlets for the designated bags (DBs) and designated

labels (DLs) under MSW charging should be included in one single mobile application. The types of recyclables accepted by each recycler should also be clearly indicated. The Chairman added that the mobile application should indicate the locations of the prospective community recycling outlets to be set up. Mr Bruno Luk advised Members of the long-term plan to combine the existing mobile application “Waste Less” with locations of community recycling outlets and the other one on retail outlets of DBs and DLs. To better manage public expectation, another Member suggested that EPD should promulgate the expected timeframe for combining the two mobile applications.

11. A Member opined that it was important for docents of waste treatment facilities such as EcoPark to suitably adjust their presentation and guided tours according to the age and background of the visitors in order to achieve better publicity results. Mr Bruno Luk agreed with the Member and said that EPD would strengthen the training for docents of waste treatment facilities.

Community Recycling Network

12. A Member reminded that the Government should allocate sufficient resources for old private residential buildings with no property management services to participate in recycling. Another Member added that community recycling facilities were also inadequate in some exclusive residential districts. Acknowledging the difficulty of providing recycling services for “three-nil” buildings, Mr Bruno Luk advised that EPD had set up Recycling Spots near single block and “three-nil” residential buildings to facilitate the residents’ participation in recycling. He added that EPD would explore the possibility of incorporating collection of recyclables at refuse collection points operated by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department. As for those exclusive residential districts, he indicated that the property management companies concerned would be required to provide proper handling of separated recyclable when the relevant legislation came into effect in 2024.

13. A Member held the view that the Government should step up community recycling support such as through setting up “Small-scale Recycling Stores” in public rental housing (PRH) estates. Mr Bruno Luk indicated that recycling bins had already been provided in all PRH estates and EPD intended to implement mandatory waste separation and recyclables collection in PRH estates. Subject to

the availability of funding, Mr Luk aspired that more “Small-scale Recycling Stores” would be set up in PRH estates. In response to another Member’s question on the additional funding of \$62 million mentioned in the 2023-24 Budget Speech, Mr Luk clarified that the sum was for enhancing food waste recycling in 2023-24 and assured that EPD would exercise financial prudence in taking forward waste management initiatives. For example, EPD would liaise with the Housing Department to set up more small-scale Recycling Stores in PRHs at lower rental costs.

14. While appreciative of the idea of providing rewards to encourage community recycling through the GREEN@COMMUNITY network, a Member reminded that the redemption gifts should fit the needs of the recipients to avoid the generation of more waste in the end. Mr Bruno Luk thanked the Member for her suggestion and said that he expected the public might prefer redeeming DBs upon the implementation of MSW charging, which would be practical and useful for most people.

15. To strengthen support for recycling work at community events, a Member suggested that EPD should provide a designated hotline to community event organisers. Mr Bruno Luk remarked that EPD had prepared a waste reduction guidebook with tips for enhancing environmental performance of large-scale events for the organisers. He added that EPD could liaise with the District Councils to EPD explore more ways to facilitate waste recycling work at community events.

Support for Trades

16. A Member sought clarifications on the responsibilities among the property management companies, cleansing contractors and tenants for the procurement or distribution of DBs in shopping malls or commercial buildings. He suggested that the Government should provide guidance on the implementation arrangements to the relevant trades. Mr Bruno Luk shared with Members that for new tender invitations for the provision of cleansing services for Government premises, tenderers would be invited to include additional cost items arising from the implementation of MSW charging, such as the the procurement, storage and distribution of DBs, in their price proposals. He suggested that the commercial sector could draw reference from the contract terms of Government cleansing contracts, which had been uploaded onto the MSW charging thematic website.

17. A Member pointed out that shops and companies might try to compress their garbage to minimise waste disposal cost upon the implementation of MSW charging. As the trades were concerned about the potential extra cost for replacing the DBs if they were damaged during the compression process, the Member asked if slightly damaged DBs could still be used for waste disposal purpose. Mr Bruno Luk responded that under the ordinance, garbage should be properly wrapped inside an intact DB. He indicated that regular sampling and testing of DBs were specified under the DBs production contracts to ensure the strength and durability of DBs could fully comply with the technical specifications. He assured Members that the quality of the DBs would not be neglected.

18. A Member suggested that the Government should provide incentives such as exemption of storage space for food waste from the gross floor area as restaurants usually had insufficient space to store food waste within their premises. The Member further suggested that EPD should share the positive feedback already collected in order to solicit more support from the relevant trades.

19. Sharing his work experiences, a Member indicated that competitions and award schemes would help encourage waste reduction, separation and recycling at source. Another Member suggested that the Government should give recognitions to organisations and corporations demonstrating good efforts in environmental protection. Mr Bruno Luk shared with Members that EPD had presented awards to those electrical and electronic equipment suppliers who had actively reduced the use of plastic in packaging as well as other parties who had supported EPD's one-stop reliable recycling service GREEN@COLLECT during the GREEN@COMMUNITY recycling month in November 2022. He remarked that EPD would continue to reward those responsible corporations in the hope that more companies would join the cause of environmental protection.

20. Addressing a Member's enquiry on EPD's effort to brief and support small enterprises without their own cleansing contractors, Ms Theresa Wu advised that EPD had been conducting a series of operational briefings and specialised trainings for stakeholders from various sectors and trade associations, such as hotel and catering trades, property management and cleansing trades, Federation of Hong Kong Industries and other trades associations to introduce to them the latest development of MSW charging and listen to their concerns. Best Practice Guides for eight different trades and sectors and promotional materials had also been

prepared and uploaded to the MSW charging thematic website. Another Member reminded the importance of the validity of information in the guidelines and suggested the inclusion of the version or issue date in the guidelines to avoid confusion. Mr Bruno Luk agreed with the Member's suggestion and said that EPD EPD would incorporate such details in the future.

21. A Member shared with the meeting that seagoing vessels of the international transport logistics trade and cruise ships were disposing of a large amount of waste, particularly plastic containers which could be up to millions in number, in Hong Kong. The Member urged that the Government should take appropriate actions to ensure the proper disposal of waste by such vessels. Mr Bruno Luk responded that EPD would liaise with the Marine Department and ocean-going vessel operators to EPD follow up on the issue.

Producer Responsibilities Scheme

22. A Member enquired whether excessive packaging of imported products was regulated under the Product Eco-responsibility Ordinance (the Ordinance). Mr Bruno Luk advised that EPD would draw reference from other economies and explore appropriate measures to tackle the problem of excessive packaging.

23. A Member took the view that EPD should make reference to the take-back policies of other places where producers were required to collect and recycle their products at the end of the product life cycle. In response to the Member's suggestion of promoting the use of refill packaging, Mr Bruno Luk explained that refill pouches usually contained a layer of aluminum foil which made recycling difficult. He said that EPD would examine the feasibility to impose control on the materials used for the locally produced refill packaging.

24. Noting that some members of the public were unaware of the PRS on Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WPRS), a Member suggested that EPD should strengthen publicity for the Scheme. Mr Bruno Luk responded that there had been ongoing promotion of WPRS and EPD would incorporate the relevant information in the mobile application "Waste Less" in the future. Apart from the above, EPD would also solicit the assistance of property management companies to put up notices of the hotline number of WPRS in housing estates.

25. A Member expressed that the Government should take into account the short product life span and high repairing cost when devising producer responsibility policies and measures. Mr Bruno Luk responded that it would be difficult to impose control on the durability and maintenance cost of imported electrical appliances. Having said that, Mr Luk remarked that the waste regulated electrical equipment collected by the community recycling network and WEEE•PARK would be repaired as far as possible to extend their second life; if repairing was not possible, proper recycling would be ensured.

Retired EV Batteries

26. A Member opined that EPD should put in place a PRS to regulate the disposal of retired EV batteries. Mr Bruno Luk advised that EPD was liaising with the trade and relevant stakeholders such as EV suppliers and recyclers with the aim of introducing a bill for PRS on retired EV batteries to the Legislative Council in 2024. Mr Luk indicated that the policy objectives were to extend the second life of EV batteries and ensure their proper treatment when they could not be used further.

27. A Member suggested that the Government should liaise with the Mainland, especially the Greater Bay Area, to identify an effective arrangement to optimise EV batteries recycling activities in the region as the costs involved were very high. Mr Bruno Luk responded that EPD would explore the possibility to carry out part of the recycling processes of retired EV batteries in the Mainland as it might not be cost effective to establish such a full scale recycling facility in Hong Kong given the limited amount of local waste batteries.

Evaluation of Effectiveness

28. In response to a Member's enquiry, Mr Bruno Luk advised that during the first two months of the implementation of the enhanced PSB charging scheme, the number of PSB given out by supermarket chains had significantly dropped by 60% and the number of flat-topped bags by 80%.

29. A Member was concerned with the increase in MSW disposal rate in 2021 as compared with that in 2011 despite the various waste management measures implemented over the years. Mr Bruno Luk replied that the increase could be attributed to the resumption in economic activities in 2021 after COVID-19.

Having said that, he pointed out that the recycling rate had increased to 31% in 2021. Addressing another Member's enquiry on the bacterial or chemical impact of the large quantity of masks disposed of at the landfill during COVID-19, Mr Luk replied that there was no study in the specific area. Since the masks were small and lightweight, he anticipated that there was no significant impact on the spaces of landfill.

Conclusion

30. The Chairman thanked EPD for their detailed presentation and said that Members were appreciative of EPD's efforts and the progress made in waste management. He remarked that EPD should continue to strengthen publicity and public education to solicit the support of the general public in waste reduction and recycling.

Item 3 : Any other business

31. The Chairman suggested that EPD should report the progress of various EPD waste management initiatives regularly, say the next one in the first half of 2024 so that Members might provide their views on the matter timely.

32. There was no other business for discussion at the meeting.

Item 4 : Date of next meeting

33. Members will be advised on the date and agenda for the next meeting in due course.

34. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:13 p.m.

**Waste Management Subcommittee Secretariat
October 2023**