

# **COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

## **Digest of notes of meeting held on 16 April 2009**

**Date** : 16 April 2009  
**Time** : 11:00 a.m.  
**Venue** : Conference Room, 33/F, Revenue Tower, Wanchai, Hong Kong

**Chairman** : Mr Bernard Chan, GBS, JP

**Members** : Ms Christine Fang, JP  
Mr Michael Lai, MH, JP  
Mr Chan Siu-hung  
Professor Ho Kin-chung, BBS  
Professor Lam Kin-che, SBS, JP  
Mrs Miranda Leung  
Mr Victor Li  
Dr Lo Wai-kwok, MH, JP  
Professor Poon Chi-sun  
Mr Sin Chung-kai, SBS, JP  
Mr Tai Hay-lap, BBS, JP  
Ms Iris Tam, JP  
Dr Andrew Thomson  
Professor Wong Siu-lun, SBS, JP  
Mr Edward Yau, Secretary for the Environment  
Mrs Carrie Lam, Secretary for Development  
Ms Florence Hui, Under Secretary for Home Affairs  
Ms Ada Fung, Deputy Director of Housing (Development & Construction), Transport and Housing Bureau

**Apologies** : Mr Benjamin Hung

**In attendance** : Ms Anissa Wong, Permanent Secretary for the Environment  
Mr Roy Tang, Deputy Secretary for the Environment  
Mr Eric Chan, Administrative Assistant to Secretary for the Environment

Mr Wang Yuen, Senior Environmental Protection Officer  
(Sustainable Development)

Ms Vivian Tsang, Senior Town Planner (Sustainable  
Development)

Mr Damian Chan, Assistant Secretary (Sustainable  
Development)<sup>1</sup>

Ms Elisa Leung, Assistant Secretary (Sustainable Development)<sup>2</sup>

Ms Paulina Pun, Town Planner (Sustainable Development)

*In attendance for agenda item 3 only*

Professor Bernard Lim, Convenor of the Support Group on  
Building Design to Foster a Quality and Sustainable Built  
Environment

Mr Edward To, Principal Assistant Secretary (Planning &  
Lands)<sup>3</sup>, Development Bureau (DEVB)

Mr S W Hui, Assistant Director of Buildings/Support,  
Buildings Department

Mr Daniel Fong, Assistant Secretary (Building)<sup>1</sup>, DEVB

Miss Katharine Choi, Principal Assistant Secretary for the  
Environment (Energy), Environment Bureau (ENB)

Ms Elanna Tam, Business Environment Council (BEC)

Ms Brenda Fung, BEC

Professor Peter Yuen, Hong Kong Polytechnic University (Poly  
U)

Dr KK Yuen, Poly U

**Secretary** : Ms Jennifer Chan, Principal Assistant Secretary (Sustainable  
Development)

**Item 1 – Matters arising from the minutes of last meeting (24 February 2009)**

The draft minutes of the last meeting had been confirmed by circulation and a non-attributable digest of proceedings would be posted on the website of the Sustainable Development Division (SDD) for public information.

Members noted that the Administration would give a presentation to the Council on 24 April on the initial findings and recommendations of the consultant for the Air Quality Objectives review and to listen to Members' views.

**Item 2 – Operation of the Council and its public engagement process (Paper No. 04/09)**

The Chairman thanked Ms Christine Fang and Mr Michael Lai for agreeing to be the Chairs of the Strategy Sub-Committee (SSC) and the Education and Publicity Sub-Committee (EPSC) respectively at his invitation.

On the role/operation of the Council and its public engagement process, Members had the following views/comments/responses –

- It was suggested and agreed that Members would be provided with information on the progress of other countries or cities' sustainable development (SD) pursuits for reference.
- Some suggested for the Council to consider opening up its meetings to the public for enhanced transparency. It was agreed that the Council could discuss whether and how its meetings might be opened up to the public in due course.
- The Council had hitherto adopted an incremental approach in developing the overall SD strategy by implementing public engagement process in priority areas identified. The Chairs of the two Sub-committees would assist with identifying the SD priority areas and the work programme of the Council for the new term.
- ENB would continue to keep the Chief Executive and the Chief Secretary

for Administration informed of the Council's deliberation on SD from time to time.

- In relation to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to be held in Copenhagen later in the year, it was suggested and agreed that the Government would brief the Council on actions on climate change in later meetings.

### **Item 3 – Preparations for the Engagement Process on Fostering a Quality and Sustainable Built Environment (Paper No. 05/09)**

Members noted the background to the public engagement exercise, including such issues as “inflated buildings” and the “wall-building” effect of the built environment which had caused much public concern in recent years. It was time the community had a thorough discussion and gave their considered views in facilitating the Government's consideration of the way forward.

The meeting noted that an alternative title of the engagement process had been proposed, with a view to more clearly reflecting the focus of the scope on building design – which would not cover such wider areas so as not to overlap with the efforts already ongoing on the respective fronts – for Members' comments. The Administration had an open mind on the options set out in the Invitation for Response (IR) document. Whilst DEVB's paper to the LegCo Panel on Development in December 2008 had set out some policy options, the Government had no pre-conceived views and looked forward to engaging the public in a thorough discussion.

As regards the trade-offs, the meeting noted that while it was difficult to put in the economic cost in the IR document, the Administration would bear in mind the cost to society when considering the public engagement findings and recommendation of the Council.

The meeting also noted that the Support Group (SG) which comprised also some members of the Council had met thrice to discuss the scope of the public engagement and the draft IR documents and pamphlet-cum-questionnaire (questionnaire) for engaging the public. The

documents were targeted at the public and not just professionals to solicit their response.

Members were briefed on and discussed the latest draft IR document by the Programme Director, and the latest draft questionnaire by the Independent Reporting Agency. In summary, the following views/comments/responses were made –

- The questionnaire was too lengthy. It was important that the questionnaire should be able to fairly present views on both sides to the respondent.
- There should also be discussions on options other than gross floor area (GFA) concessions both in the IR document and the questionnaire.
- The questionnaire did not seem to cater for responses of institutional and group respondents.
- Although the title of engagement exercise had been changed to better reflect the scope of the exercise, the subject of building design actually involved many more issues including noise impact than just “inflated buildings”. Such issues like how to construct buildings in a green way and noise problem should also be included.
- The questionnaire was too complicated for the general public to give meaningful answers. The proposed measures might lead to an increase in the price of housing and the public should be asked on their willingness to pay.
- The current public engagement exercise was an important yet difficult task. It was important to spell out the trade-offs clearly in the questionnaire.
- There should be more detailed discussion and education before surveying the public views.
- The documents gave the wrong impression that GFA concessions was the major factor contributing to building height and bulk but in fact it was the building code. Doing away with GFA concessions was not a good solution. When developers used prefabricated materials or other environment-friendly construction methods, they should be granted GFA concessions.
- The exercise might be divided into two parts, with the first part aiming to

ask people on the concept of good sustainable built environment and the second part to deal with how to achieve it through building design.

- We should think out of the box and not be constrained by history and that GFA concessions was just one but not the only policy options possible.
- The introduction of the GFA concessions for green features back in 2002 was done through the issuing of Practice Notes without the benefit of a conscious and thorough debate by the community.
- The public could be consulted on whether they wanted such features as building separation and greenery, and if so, the provision of green features could be required by regulation/made mandatory instead of through granting GFA concessions.
- The IR document always served as a proxy for public engagement as in previous engagement exercises of the Council and could never be exhaustive.

The meeting agreed that the current public engagement should stay focused and a number of issues, including whether the exercise should be divided into two parts, would be further worked on. The Programme Director would further work on the draft IR document having regard to Members' comments and provide a revised version for Members' consideration. A pilot test could be arranged as suggested by a Member to try out the questionnaire. Members were invited to join the SG's working meetings.

It was also agreed that without delaying the public engagement, the IR document could be revised to set out the broad scope while stating that the public engagement, instead of tackling all issues at the same time which would be unmanageable, would focus on a few areas as with the Council's previous public engagement exercises.

The meeting noted that the Chairman would further discuss with the two Sub-committee Chairs, the SG Convenor and the consultants and revert to Members afterwards on the launch date of the public engagement.

#### **Item 4 – Education and publicity programmes and initiatives (Paper 06/09)**

Members were briefed on Paper 06/09 and noted that EPSC would further discuss the proposed activities and make reports to the Council in due course. Members were also invited to let the Secretariat know any comments they might have on the EPSC proposals.

#### **Item 5 – Any other business**

Members noted that now and then the Secretariat received invitations to Council Members to various functions including seminars and conferences as well as information such as newsletters from major organizations and the Secretariat would help screen such incoming information for consideration by Members.

#### **Item 6 – Date of next meeting**

Members noted that the next two meetings of the Council were tentatively scheduled in early July and late October respectively and the Secretariat would confirm with Members nearer the time.

Secretariat  
Council for Sustainable Development