

COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

**Digest of the 40th Meeting
held on 17 September 2021 at 4:00 p.m.
in Conference Hall C, 2/F, West Wing,
Central Government Offices, Hong Kong**

Present:

Dr the Hon LAM Ching-choi		<i>(Chairman)</i>
Ms CHAN Shin-kwan		
Prof Emily CHAN		
Prof Paul CHU*		
Miss Natalie CHUNG		
Prof Laurence HO		
Ms Grace KWOK*		
Mr Jonathan LEUNG		
Mr LI Sai-lung		
Ms Pamela MAR*		
Mr Simon NG*		
Prof Dennis NG		
Mr Kevin ORR		
Miss Samanta PONG		
Mr TAM Kent-chung*		
Mr Allan WONG		
Prof Jonathan WONG		
Dr Daniel YIP		
Dr Rita YU		
Dr William YU		
Mr Michael WONG	<i>Secretary for Development</i>	
Mr WONG Kam-sing	<i>Secretary for the Environment</i>	
Mr Jack CHAN	<i>Under Secretary for Home Affairs</i>	
Mrs TANG FUNG Shuk-yin	<i>Assistant Director (Estate Management)1, Housing Department</i>	
Mr D C CHEUNG	<i>Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment (Sustainable Development)</i>	<i>(Secretary)</i>

* attended online

In Attendance:

Government Representatives

Environment Bureau

Mrs Millie NG	<i>Permanent Secretary for the Environment(Ag)/ Deputy Secretary for the Environment</i>
Mr Johnson WONG	<i>Senior Environmental Protection Officer (Sustainable Development)</i>
Mr Alvin TAI	<i>Assistant Secretary for the Environment (Sustainable Development)2 (Ag) / Economist (Sustainable Development)</i>
Mr Eric WONG	<i>Assistant Secretary for the Environment (Sustainable Development)2 (Ag) / Assistant Secretary for the Environment (Sustainable Development)1</i>
Ms Lisa CHAU	<i>Town Planner (Sustainable Development)</i>
Ms Mimi LO	<i>Senior Executive Officer (Sustainable Development) 1</i>

Environmental Protection Department

Mr Bruno LUK	<i>Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (Waste Reduction Policy)</i>
Ms Iris LEE	<i>Assistant Director (Waste Management Policy)</i>
Dr Alain LAM	<i>Waste Management Manager</i>
Ms Amy WONG	<i>Senior Administrative Officer (Waste Management Policy Division)1</i>

Programme Director – Hong Kong Productivity Council

Ir Kenny WONG	<i>Deputy General Manager / Principal Consultant</i>
Dr Keith CHOY	<i>Senior Consultant</i>
Ms Emma TANG	<i>Consultant</i>

Public Relations Agency – Adbrownies Group

Ms Karin WONG	<i>Founder / Head of Creative</i>
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Aristo Market Research and Consulting Co. Ltd.

Mr K K CHUNG	<i>Director</i>
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Freedom Communications Limited

Ms Candy CHUI	<i>Director</i>
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Agenda Item 1 – Confirmation of minutes of the last meeting

The Secretariat had not received any proposed amendments and the minutes were taken as confirmed.

Agenda Item 2 - Report on the work of the Education and Publicity Sub-committee

2. Members were briefed on the work of the Education and Publicity Sub-committee (“EPSC”) of the Council for Sustainable Development (“SDC”).

3. The meeting noted that the EPSC was working closely with the Education Bureau and the sustainable development (“SD”) concept had become part of the school curriculum. Feedback from schools on the E-Learning Platform was all positive. The EPSC was also working closely with estate developers to incorporate the SD concept into the management of their properties such as recycling of food waste, etc.

Agenda Item 3 - Public Engagement on Control of Single-use Plastics (SDC Paper No. 03/21)

4. Members were briefed on the preparation work carried out by the Strategy Sub-committee (“SSC”) which included carrying out three focus group meetings with stakeholders from different sectors. Having considered the views of the focus groups, SSC prepared the draft public engagement (“PE”) Document, Views Collection Form (“VCF”) and telephone survey questionnaire. Members were briefed on the PE process as set out in the SDC paper No. 03/21.

5. Members had the following views on the PE:

Collection of Views

- (a) Enquired whether the VCF was to be sent to targeted persons for completion and if there would be some background introduction to the public before collecting their views;
- (b) Expressed concern on the actual operation as some of the terms in the VCF were rather technical and might be difficult for the public to understand. Suggested providing photos with description to illustrate clearly to the respondents the types of plastics being referred to in the VCF; and
- (c) Shared that most of the public's misunderstanding towards environmental policies stemmed from misleading media reports or commentaries and further suggested that the SDC could also collect views from environmental journalists and reporters, green groups and non-governmental organisations in order to anticipate public's responses and minimise negative impacts on the outcome.

PE Document and Pamphlet

- (a) Agreed that the PE Document was carefully written and contained a lot of information which was good for educating students on the concept of environmental protection in the school context. Nevertheless, for members of the public, some terms might be too complicated. Enquired whether two versions of the PE Documents could be prepared, with the current one for schools and another one in plain language for the general public;
- (b) Suggested for health and hygiene purpose especially under the current pandemic, the part of "What should we do?" in Chapter 3 might include encouraging people to bring their own tableware;
- (c) Agreed that the discussion on the control of single-use plastics should be inseparable from other environmental issues, especially the

problem of global warming. Suggested adding more realistic and impactful images in the PE Document in order to catch the attention of the public on this topic;

- (d) Suggested briefly elaborating on three points only in the pamphlet, i.e. current situation of Hong Kong's waste plastics, proposed recommendations to tackle the problem and collection of views;
- (e) Appreciated the design of pamphlet and agreed that using impactful and compelling images presenting the harmful impacts of waste plastics would be the most effective way in relaying the severity behind waste plastics problem; and
- (f) Suggested using more infographics rather than words in the pamphlet, and use photos for illustrating different types of single-use plastics so that the public could easily understand.

Announcement in the Public Interest (“API”)

- (a) Raised that the API contractor might consider presenting a key image that could match with and better reflect the negative impact to the environment brought by single-use plastics;
- (b) Considered that the focus should be on the problem of over-packaging by the supermarkets or manufacturers since the message of “Bring Your Own Bag” was not new to the public;
- (c) Expressed concern about the possible adverse reaction from the public as it appeared in the API that consumers, rather than the manufacturers or logistics sector, were to be blamed for the problem of over-packaging;
- (d) Appreciated that the API was upbeat and able to prompt the audience for immediate action; and

- (e) Opined that the voice of the Big Waster in the Chinese API could be more heroic. The idea of using sea turtle in the API to better bring out the message of this topic was supported.

Scope and Objective of PE

- (a) Noted that the Government had recently conducted two public consultations on the issue of waste plastics (including disposable plastic tableware and plastic beverage containers), and asked if there would be any synergy or connection between the consultations and the upcoming PE so as to give the public a full picture of the Government's strategy on controlling single-use plastics;
- (b) Enquired whether the Government would come up with a holistic programme on controlling waste plastics after the completion of this PE. If so, this PE provided a good opportunity to demonstrate the Government's determination to protect the environment and manage various kinds of waste plastics no matter how inconspicuous they might seem, such as plastic stemmed cotton-buds or stirrers;
- (c) Agreed that the current PE was the last piece of the puzzle to show the Government's commitment in resolving the problem of waste plastics and remind people not to under-estimate the threat that small and unobtrusive waste items in our daily lives might bring;
- (d) Commented that unlike the earlier public consultation on regulating disposable plastic tableware that set out specific control proposals, this PE's approach was a bit different and a wide range of items were covered. The PE would be helpful in reflecting major concerns of the public on different plastic items;
- (e) Agreed that it was important to show the commitment and determination of the Government in doing something right for environmental protection even this might meet with negative responses from some stakeholders; and

- (f) Stated that different people might relate to different things when they thought of single-use plastics. Even though it was said that the control might focus on those items that were “non-essential” and “hard-to-recycle”, there were a lot of items that fall under these two categories. Hence, when seeking views from the public, we might focus on those items that were used extensively and more controversial.

Others

- (a) Pointed out that the control of single-use plastics was a popular topic around the globe and the majority of people in the society would support it and want to see the outcome of this PE as soon as practicable. Suggested the Government to expedite the process of policy formulation process based on the findings of the PE; and
 - (b) Suggested that the Government could provide practical guidelines to the retail sector and step up public education.
6. The meeting noted the following response:
- (a) Responded that there would be multi-channels to collect views on the questions of VCF including various stakeholders’ meetings and forums. The VCF would also be uploaded on the PE dedicated website and posted on social media platforms for the public to fill in;
 - (b) Agreed that it could help the readers by inserting photos or pictures for better illustration of the technical terms in the VCF;
 - (c) Explained that the PE Document served an educational purpose and it was expected that the respondents would have read the PE Document before answering the VCF. Based on the experience of the last PE, the general public would usually read the pamphlet while stakeholders would pore over the PE Document during the PE sessions before filling in VCFs;

- (d) Reassured Members that before finalising the Chinese version, difficult terms would be removed. The jargons in the VCF would be also explained in the PE Document and at briefings;
- (e) Agreed it was important to promote sustainable values like protecting the environment and reducing the use of single-use plastic products;
- (f) Agreed that the follow-up promotion after PE was also very important. For instance, the E-Learning Platform on Climate Change had been included as part of the curriculum for senior secondary students. The Platform would require students to complete worksheets, enable them to play interactive games and go through multi-media resources and reference materials etc. to broaden and intensify their knowledge;
- (g) Responded that the Government was committed to tackling the challenge posed by the excessive use of plastics in a holistic and progressive manner, and hence had invited the SDC to look into the control of single-use plastics. To avoid confusion, the Programme Director (“PD”) had set out in the PE Document that items covered in the public consultations on plastic beverage containers and disposable plastic tableware would not be the focus of the present PE;
- (h) Responded that, with the passage of the Waste Disposal (Charging for Municipal Solid Waste) (Amendment) Bill 2018, it was expected that the public would be more motivated to reduce and recycle waste plastics. Two consultations were held recently on the proposed control measures on plastic beverage containers and disposable plastic tableware. The present PE aimed to complete the picture by allowing the public and different sectors of society to take part in mapping out the control of single-use plastics together;
- (i) Supplemented that handling waste problem was imperative to combating climate change which was a crucial worldwide issue. Mainland and other major economies in the world had promulgated and rolled out roadmaps or legislation on handling or regulating

waste plastics by phases. The main objective of the proposed PE on “control of single-use plastics” would align with the Government’s policy on decarbonisation and combating climate change;

- (j) Explained that trade-led initiatives could also drive behavioural change. Hence, other than collecting public views, a key message to be delivered via the PE was that everyone had a role to play in the battle against waste plastics. With trade-led measures to be put in place first, the public would be more willing to accept changes in the use of single-use plastics when relevant legislation was implemented;
- (k) Responded that impactful images could be incorporated in the PE Document;
- (l) Responded that taking the category of health and personal protective equipment as an example, given that the items were essential for health reason, it was not advisable to go into details during the PE discussion;
- (m) That being said, explained that in view of the massive use of health and personal protective equipment plastic items by the public, it was worth mentioning them in the PE Document. As for the other categories such as toiletries distributed by hotels, shopping bags etc. which were stakeholder-specific, it was envisaged that there would be more focused discussion with relevant stakeholders of these items;
- (n) Concluded that while noting the comments of Members and room for improvement in the API, it was considered appropriate to defer it to the Secretariat to handle; and
- (o) Remarked that this PE would be challenging as it dealt with a wide range of single-use plastic items. Hence, it would be desirable to simplify the VCF as far as possible to help the public in filling them.

7. The meeting concluded that comments raised would be consolidated by the PD for suitably revising the PE Document, pamphlet and API. Members

were also encouraged to actively participate in the PE events to listen to the views of the public / stakeholders after the launch of the public interaction phase on 30 September.

Agenda Item 4 – Any other business

8. There was no other business raised.

Agenda Item 5 – Date of the next meeting

9. The Secretary would confirm the date of the next meeting nearer the time.

**Secretariat
Council for Sustainable Development**