

COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Education and Publicity Sub-Committee

Paper 05/05

Sustainability Reporting Initiative

Purpose

This paper provides brief background information on a proposed sustainability reporting initiative to be supported by the Council for Sustainable Development (SD) and invites Members' views on the way forward.

Background

2. At previous Education and Publicity Sub-committee (EPSC) meetings, Members have expressed an interest in developing a sustainability report for Hong Kong to measure how far the city has achieved SD in terms of specific social, economic and environmental indicators. The Council for SD expressed support in principle for such an initiative at its meeting in September, 2004. At the EPSC meeting on 19 October 2004, Members agreed to hold a "brainstorming" session on how to take this forward.

3. A number of Members met on 1 December 2004 and concluded that a sustainability report would be worthwhile in terms of promoting public awareness of SD, keeping track of Hong Kong's progress towards sustainability and serving as a benchmarking exercise. Members also reviewed SD Fund applications relating to sustainability reporting and agreed that none appeared to serve the above purposes.

4. At the EPSC meeting on 8 December 2004, Members agreed that a sustainability reporting system could be a useful educational tool as well

as helping achieve the three objectives in paragraph 3 above. Members also discussed a possible framework for a sustainability reporting initiative. This is summarised in paragraphs 5 to 7 below.

Drawing up Sustainability Indicators

5. Members agreed that there was a need to adopt a single set of indicators to avoid confusion to the public, and considered that the CASET tool used by the SDU, together with appropriate elements of the Global Reporting Initiative could provide useful pointers. It was also felt that the indicators could make references to the SD Strategy.

Approach to reporting

6. Members considered the question of whether SD reporting should be done by the Government on a departmental basis, or involve an overview of the whole society. It was agreed that this would be up to the Council to determine, and that it would be necessary to set clear objectives for the Council's consideration.

Implementation

7. Considering the scale of the project, Members noted that substantial resources in terms of financial support and expertise might be required for its implementation. Given that an annual allocation of up to \$2 million had been earmarked from the SD Fund for the Council to carry out tasks in relation to the SD strategy or the EPSC programmes, Members considered that there should be sufficient resources either to engage a consultant to undertake the project or to invite applications under the next SDF funding round.

8. Subsequent to the discussions at previous EPSC meetings, the

Council at its meeting on 18 April 2005 once again confirmed its support for a sustainability reporting exercise which could provide indicators that would help benchmark Hong Kong's sustainability and would also be a useful tool for raising public awareness. It was agreed that this Sub-committee should develop a suitable proposal.

Considerations

9. We suggest that initially an attempt be made to draw up an SD report that would reflect overall conditions in Hong Kong, closely involving the community, so that this would also act as a valuable educational and publicity exercise. If Members agree to this approach, we would further work on the scope and detailed requirements for such an initiative for further consideration.

10. We also propose that a special round of SD Fund applications be invited to seek proposals from universities, business or research organisations or established NGOs to conduct this project.

Further Action

11. Subject to Members' views, a more detailed proposal on this initiative will be drafted for consideration at the next EPSC meeting.

Council Secretariat

May 2005