

COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Public Engagement on Control of Single-use Plastics

Purpose

This paper updates Members on the progress and work plan of the Council for Sustainable Development (“SDC”)’s public engagement (“PE”) on Control of Single-use Plastics, and seeks Members’ endorsement of the draft PE document at **Annex A**.

Background and Progress

2. At the last meeting on 22 April 2021, Members agreed to conduct a PE on Control of Single-use Plastics. After the meeting, the Strategy Sub-committee (“SSC”) took forward the planning and implementation of the PE exercise. The membership of the SSC is at **Annex B**.

3. The SSC held a meeting on 15 June 2021 to deliberate on the subject and agreed on a work plan. With the assistance of a Programme Director (“PD”) appointed (i.e. Hong Kong Productivity Council), the SSC held three focus group meetings with stakeholders from various sectors including retail and wholesale, delivery, logistic and e-commerce sectors; food outlets and pre-packaged food sectors; medical and health; chambers of commerce; recycling trade and suppliers for alternative materials; professional organisations; academics; green groups; and non-governmental organisations (“NGOs”). Nearly 70 participants from 61 organisations attended the focus group meetings.

4. Having considered the views of the focus groups, the PD has prepared a draft document for the public interaction phase of the PE. The latest draft at **Annex A** has incorporated comments of the SSC at its meeting on 10 September 2021. The key points deliberated at the SSC meeting are as follows –

- (a) The PE shall gather public opinion on what and how non-essential and / or hard-to-recycle single-use plastic items to be controlled and the priority. The detailed implementation arrangement of relevant control measures will then be further considered by the Government based on the SDC's recommendations having regard to the outcome of the PE.
- (b) The PE shall provide a platform for gathering public opinion on specific options to enhance the present Plastic Shopping Bag (PSB) Charging Scheme.
- (c) It is also important to raise environmental awareness among different stakeholders, including the business sector, consumers and young people, through the PE.
- (d) A two-pronged approach of public views collection would be adopted. Those who have basic understanding on the topic and are interested to express their views could answer the more in-depth questions in the views collection form (VCF). Meanwhile, telephone survey would ask easy-to-understand questions, which could allow us to gauge the views of the general public.
- (e) Some of the presentation and expressions in the VCF and the questions of telephone survey can be fine-tuned so that people can understand the questions more easily.

5. At the aforesaid meeting, the SSC considered that the passage of the bill on municipal solid waste charging would bring Hong Kong's waste management into a new era. With the common drive to minimise waste generation, the community would be more willing to make changes in their living and call for waste reduction at source.

The Public Engagement Document

6. The draft PE document consists of six chapters. The first chapter introduces key definitions and common single-use plastic items. This chapter also explains how single-use plastics can be harmful to the environment, which brings out the importance of introducing suitable control on these items.

7. The second chapter focuses on the problem of waste plastics in Hong Kong so as to help the public understand the urgent need to act now and reduce our reliance on single-use plastics in daily lives. The chapter also outlines some past initiatives and future targets / visions of the Government in the management of waste plastics.

8. The third chapter illustrates the objectives of the PE exercise, which include gathering public opinion on controlling non-essential and / or hard-to-recycle single-use plastic items, and ways to nurture a green lifestyle. This chapter also highlights that waste prevention should be the most preferred option to reduce our reliance on single-use plastics.

9. The fourth chapter analyses characteristics of various single-use plastic items with a view to facilitating the public's consideration of the suitable control approach for each of the items. Furthermore, control measures adopted by other places are quoted for reference. This chapter also invites the public to comment on the proposed enhancement options for the PSB Charging Scheme, in particular, the scope of exemption and the charging level.

10. The fifth chapter provides green lifestyle tips to the public. It also provides background information on various emerging "green products" in the market, say, degradable products or products that claim to contain recycled content, and how such products are being managed in other places. This chapter aims at educating the public in choosing green products, and the views collected will not only facilitate policy formulation, but also drive businesses to adopt more plastic-free measures like the use of simple packaging or packaging with recycled content.

11. The last chapter is a summary of key issues outlined in previous

chapters. The public engagement process, a list of Supporting Organisations and the VCF are included at Annexes.

12. A leaflet (**Annex C**) has also been produced to help the public grasp the key messages at ease.

The Public Interaction Phase

13. The SSC's plan is to release the PE document and launch a three-month public interaction phase through a press conference on 30 September 2021. During this phase, town hall meetings will be held to collect views extensively and directly from the public and relevant stakeholders. We will also meet a wide range of organisations and stakeholders, including retail and wholesale sector, hospitality sector, medical and health care sector, chambers of commerce, relevant trades and advisory bodies as well as green groups, youth groups, elderly groups and NGOs to collect their views.

14. Publicity will also be conducted through the networks of about 120 Supporting Organisations (listed at Annex II of the draft PE document).

15. Various publicity activities will be organised, including producing a TV and a Radio Announcements in the Public Interest ("API"), posters and promotional videos; developing a dedicated website for the public to browse relevant information, including the PE document, and give their views; promoting via social media (e.g. Big Waster's Facebook and Instagram as listed out in **Annex D**); placing advertisements via various media channels (e.g. newspapers, MTR stations and in-train of MTR and bus stops); and distributing online publicity materials through over 500 secondary and primary schools, around 120 Supporting Organisations, over 100 Community Halls and 33 Recycling Stations and Stores of GREEN@COMMUNITY (the community recycling network managed by the Environmental Protection Department) to raise public awareness of this PE.

16. Following the public interaction phase, the PD will help the SSC analyse all the views collected. The SSC will draft the findings and recommendations to be included in the report to the Government and

submit the draft report to the SDC for consideration. The timeframe for the remainder of the PE process is as follows:

Milestones	Activities
30 September 2021	Release of PE document and launch of public interaction phase
30 September to 29 December 2021	Various public interaction and publicity activities
January to March 2022	Analyse findings, formulate recommendations and prepare draft report
March 2022	Finalise and release report

Advice Sought

17. Members are invited to note the progress and work plan of the PE, and endorse the draft PE document for release at the public interaction phase.

**Secretariat
Council for Sustainable Development
September 2021**