

COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Operation of the Council and its Public Engagement Process

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the operation of the Council for Sustainable Development (the Council) and its public engagement process.

Council for Sustainable Development

2. The Council was appointed by the Chief Executive (CE) in March 2003 to promote sustainable development (SD) in Hong Kong. It comprises people with experience and expertise in the environmental, social and business sectors (the three pillars of SD) together with senior government officials. The Council's terms of reference and current membership are at **Annex A**.

3. The Council has established two Sub-committees to support its work on the strategy and education fronts respectively. Terms of reference of the two Sub-committees are attached at **Annexes B and C** respectively. The Strategy Sub-Committee (SSC) focuses on public engagement with a view to building a SD strategy for Hong Kong. The Education and Publicity Sub-Committee (EPSC) advises on the disbursement of SD Fund to support community initiatives, and promotes SD and sustainability practices through outreach endeavours targeting schools and the general community. Both Sub-committees are made up of Council members and co-opted members.

The Council's public engagement model

4. As the involvement of stakeholders is a key element of sustainability, the Council has designed and implemented a bottom-up, open, inclusive and stakeholder-led engagement model to harness public opinions on key sustainability issues, with a view to building an overall SD strategy for Hong Kong. The Council's engagement process comprises the following five stages –

I. Identifying the priority area

- For the first engagement process, the official members of the Council were invited to propose priority areas for consideration of the Council. The three priority areas of solid waste management, renewable energy and urban living space were discussed and agreed by the Council.
- The priority areas for the second and third engagement process (i.e. the population policy and air quality) had stemmed from a public stakeholder forum held in July 2005 to invite views on new Priority Areas for the SD Strategy for Hong Kong.

II. Preparing a document to invite public responses (the "Invitation for Response" (IR) document)

- Presenting information and ideas on how to address the relevant issues, the IR document will form the basis for wider public consultation.
- It has been the practice to form a stakeholder-led Support Group (SG) to lead the preparation of the IR document and plan the public engagement events.

III. Directly involving the wider community

- The public involvement stage commences with the launch of the IR document and encompasses a series of

engagement events and channels. During the past engagement exercises, stakeholders were involved in discussion of various sustainability issues through launching ceremony, forums, regional workshops, events organised by partner organisations, announcements of public interest (API), roving exhibitions, dedicated websites and strategy summit.

IV. Reporting on the community's response and putting forward recommendations

- The Council, with the assistance of SSC and SG, will review and report on the community feedback. Points of consensus, as well as areas where there are conflicting views, will be highlighted. The Council will then provide its advice and recommendations on the way forward in its report to the Government having regard to the engagement findings.

V. Government to act

- The Government, having taken into consideration the Council's advice, will formally respond to the Council's report and set out its views and actions to be taken.

5. The Council's public engagement process involves a great variety of stakeholders. Besides the professional, interests and/or pressure groups relevant to the issues for engagement, other stakeholders from the wider community – including those from the Council's partner organisations lined up for each engagement process, non government organisations, schools, businesses, district organisations as well as individual members of the public – will participate.

6. By providing different stakeholders with the relevant information and engaging them in discussion with one another over public forums, the Council's public engagement process can help the community better understand the issues in question, the views of different

sectors of the community on the issues and the pros and cons of the possible choices, etc. so that views are given on an informed basis and the chances for achieving consensus will be better. The public views that would emerge from such an open and participatory process conducted by the Council would likely be more balanced vis-à-vis those of the vested interests, and the outcome more credible and representative to lend support to the Government for making the necessary changes/policy tools.

7. The Council has so far conducted three rounds of engagement process (or “engagement exercises”) addressing five key sustainability issues, namely the first one on **solid waste management, renewable energy and urban living space** in 2004; the second one on **population policy** in 2006; and the third one on **air quality** in 2007. More details on the above engagement exercises are at **Annex D**.

8. In light of rising public concern on the quality of our built environment, the Council in collaboration with the Government (Development Bureau and Environment Bureau) will launch a new (the fourth) round of engagement process on measures to foster a quality and sustainable built environment. The progress of the preparations for the engagement process is reported under Paper No. 05/09.

Council Secretariat
April 2009

Council for Sustainable Development

Terms of reference

- (a) To advise the Government on the priority areas it should address in promoting sustainable development;
- (b) To advise on the preparation of a sustainable development strategy for Hong Kong that will integrate economic, social and environmental perspectives;
- (c) To facilitate community participation in the promotion of sustainable development in Hong Kong through various means, including the award of grants from the Sustainable Development Fund; and
- (d) To promote public awareness and understanding of the principles of sustainable development.

Membership *(from 1 March 2009 to 28 February 2011)*

- Mr Bernard Charnwut CHAN, GBS, JP (Chairman)
- Mr CHAN Siu-hung
- Ms Christine FANG Meng-sang, JP
- Professor HO Kin-chung, BBS
- Mr Benjamin HUNG Pi-cheng
- Mr Michael LAI Kam-cheung, MH, JP
- Professor LAM Kin-che, SBS, JP
- Mrs Miranda LEUNG CHAN Che-ming
- Mr Victor LI Tzar-kuoi
- 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 Siu-ying, JP
- Dr Andrew Lee THOMSON
- Professor Stephen WONG Siu-lun, SBS, JP
- Secretary for the Environment *
- Secretary for Transport and Housing*
- Secretary for Development*
- Secretary for Home Affairs*

* or Permanent Secretary

Strategy Sub-Committee

Terms of reference

- (a) To assist the Council for Sustainable Development with the formulation of a Sustainable Development Strategy for Hong Kong;
- (b) To engage stakeholders and the community and implement a consultation programme as agreed by the Council for Sustainable Development with a view to ensuring that the Sustainable Development Strategy is inclusive and widely accepted by the community; and
- (c) To report regularly to the Council for Sustainable Development on progress with the formulation of the Sustainable Development Strategy.

Education and Publicity Sub-Committee

Terms of reference

- (a) To advise on a continuous education and publicity programme to promote public awareness and understanding of the concept and practice of sustainable development;
- (b) To foster partnerships with stakeholders in the community on initiatives aimed at promoting public awareness of and community participation in sustainable development; and
- (c) To advise on the disbursement of grants from the Sustainable Development Fund in accordance with the funding criteria determined by the Council for Sustainable Development.

Past Engagement Exercises of the Council

First engagement exercise

- The “pilot” engagement process focused on three pilot areas: **solid waste management, renewable energy and urban living space**. An IR document “Making Choices For Our Future” was prepared and launched to provide information, share with the community some of the problems that we face and offer some possible scenarios and options for the future.
- In May 2005 the Government acted on the Council’s findings and recommendations arising from the first engagement exercise and published the First Sustainable Development Strategy for Hong Kong, setting out the strategic directions and a plan of actions in respect of the three pilot areas. For instance, it established targets for reducing municipal solid waste, set goals for the increased use of renewable energy and included such objectives as taking account of stakeholder concerns about protecting the natural environment and cultural character of rural areas in planning future development in the New Territories.
- Following up on this Strategy, the Environmental Protection Department published “A Policy Framework for the Management of Municipal Solid Waste”, which set out a comprehensive strategy with targets and timetables for municipal solid waste management in Hong Kong for the ten years from 2005 to 2014.

Second engagement exercise

- In June 2006 the Council kicked off the public engagement process on **population policy** with the issue of the IR document “Enhancing the Population Potential for a Sustainable Future”.
- Public views were sought on various aspects and issues including quality of life, family and social needs, ageing and retirement, and nurturing, attraction and retention of talent.

- The Council produced a range of recommendations having regard to the public views received and submitted its report to the Government in June 2007. In its response issued in December 2007, the Government accepted all the principles and targets made in the Council's report. A high level steering committee chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration was formed to better plan and co-ordinate efforts on population policy.
- Examples of the Council's recommendations included more open space and recreational provisions and more arts and culture development to enhance the quality of life; financial incentives and other support to promote parenthood; continued enhancement of current re-training programmes and talent admission schemes to cultivate quality manpower for Hong Kong; and the promotion of healthy and active ageing.

Third engagement exercise

- The Council launched the engagement process on **better air quality** with the IR document "Clean Air – Clear Choices" in June 2007. People's views were gathered on what actions to take during high air pollution days, electronic road pricing and demand side management (energy saving) in the engagement exercise.
- The mass launch event attracted an attendance of some 2,800 stakeholders and members of the public. During the engagement process, the Council organised on its own or jointly with partner organisations seminars, briefings and forum¹. With the participation of about 6,000 stakeholders, these events successfully reached out to various sectors of the community and engaged them in dialogues on the air quality issues concerned.
- Over 80,000 responses from the public were received, in the form of completed questionnaires (in hard copy or online) and written submissions in various forms ranging from short messages or

¹ There were a mass launch ceremony, three thematic engagement sessions, 46 roving exhibitions, 25 engagement events co-organised with partner organisations, 14 briefings for executives/members of professional/advisory bodies or corporations and an Air Summit.

commentary to full reports through post, fax or e-mail.

- The Council submitted a report to the Government in February 2008. It recommended, among other things –
 - (a) adopting a colour-coded system to denote “high air pollution” days, and on “red alert” days discouraging activities that generate air pollutants such as driving of private vehicles and use of non-essential electrical and diesel equipment in certain zones;
 - (b) adopting road pricing in congested areas in Hong Kong as soon as possible to form part of Hong Kong’s overall transport strategy;
 - (c) exploring cleaner fuel options like LPG for light goods and passenger vehicles, building more pedestrianised areas and close roads in congested locations, and reducing the number of unused or half-used bus routes during certain hours of the day;
 - (d) introducing policies to mandate the use of low sulphur diesel for marine transport as well as catering, construction and port industries; and
 - (e) putting in place incentives for electricity companies to work with consumer groups and supply less environmentally damaging power with requisite rewards.
- In October 2008, the Government issued its response to the Council’s report on the engagement findings and recommendations on the way forward. It fully agrees with the Council that a holistic and comprehensive approach is required to combat air pollution. To this end, the Government is reviewing Hong Kong’s Air Quality Objectives (AQOs) and developing a long-term air quality management strategy to help protect the health of the public from the effect of air pollution.

- The consultant commissioned by the Government for the AQOs review would recommend a set of new AQOs and a comprehensive air quality management strategy for its attainment, taking account of such factors as the practicability and achievability of the new AQOs. The public would be consulted on the package of proposed recommendations of the AQO review in 2009. The Administration would seek the Council's views on the consultant's initial recommendations on 24 April 2009, before a full scale public consultation would be launched in 2009 in finalising the AQOs and the long term air quality management strategy.