

**Summary of the Minutes of
the 5th Meeting of Sha Tin District Council (2008 Session)**

The 5th meeting of Sha Tin District Council (2008 session) was held on 29 May 2008. The major issues discussed are summarised below:

Confirmation of the Minutes of the 4th Meeting held on 20 March 2008

2. The Council endorsed the minutes of the 4th meeting.

Visit of Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation

3. Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation remarked that the progress of handling the nuisances caused by monkeys, boars and wild dogs in Sha Tin would be briefly reported. She said that the work of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) mainly included the management of country parks, facilitation of agricultural and fisheries production and quarantine work for imported animals and local farms. She added that this year AFCD would be responsible for the quarantine of horses for the Olympic Equestrian Events.

4. Assistant Director (Acting) of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation briefly introduced the work of the five branches, namely Agriculture, Fisheries, Inspection and Quarantine, Country and Marine Parks, as well as Conservation. In particular, the Conservation Branch was responsible for handling the nuisances caused by monkeys in Sha Tin. He said that measures like sterilization, setting up traps to catch monkeys and seminars on handling monkeys for estate office staff in Sha Tin Districts had been arranged.

5. Most of the members were concerned about the nuisances caused by monkeys and stray cats and dogs and considered that the existing measures, such as putting up traps and sterilization, were insufficient. They said that AFCD could not respond swiftly to complaints. Some members suggested the department to review the existing protection policy and increase manpower to deal with the problem. A member recommended AFCD to move monkeys and wild dogs to an outlying island and develop the islands as scenic spots. A member requested the department to improve the communication with DC members in dealing with the nuisances. Moreover, some members asked about the testing of soil and water quality of farms, the use of vacant land for organic farms, measures to protect endangered species and

prohibit illegal fishing, as well as inspection for imported eggs. A member worried that the growth of Mikania on both sides of Tolo Highway would pose a threat to the natural plantation. Some members requested AFCD to improve the safety of trails in Ma On Shan and the lighting system of Ma On Shan Country Park.

6. Director of AFCD replied that the department was considering outsourcing the work of catching monkeys and the number of monkey underwent sterilization had increased a lot last year. Food would be provided in the habitat of monkeys to prevent them from seeking food outside. Measures like educating the public and seminars for estate office staff would also be strengthened to tackle the problem. She said that the department would improve the communication channel with DC members and staff would be deployed to the scene upon receiving complaint. As for abandoned dogs, she said that if the dog owner did not collect the dog, adoption would be arranged. Regarding the growth of Mikania, she remarked that the work of clearing Mikania would be reinforced within the department's administered area and guidelines had been provided to deal with Mikania grown on private land. Advice would also be given to other departments in handling Mikania. As for premium vegetables from mainland China, only those farms that adopted recognized horticultural practice would be selected as suppliers. The safety inspection of local and imported food was conducted by Food and Environmental Hygiene Department. She added that premium agriculture and fish produce had a big market in Hong Kong and members were welcomed to assist in its promotion. She said that the department would consider reinforcing the conservation work for unique geological features in country and marine parks and would improve the facilities of country parks. For the use of vacant land, she explained that if the land was a designated farmland, it could be applied for the use of farming, otherwise application should be submitted to the Lands Department. She further said that the existing legislation already protected the endangered species and prohibited illegal fishing.

Food and Health Bureau – Healthcare Reform Consultation Document

7. Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food said that the consultation period for Healthcare Reform was from 31 March to 13 June and a special website had been set up to collect public opinion. Food and Health Bureau would analysis the opinion collected after the consultation period. He expected that the second stage document with more detailed recommendations would be released next spring.

8. Deputy Secretary for Food and Health said that owing to the ageing of

population and drastic increase in medical expenditure, there was an urgent need to reform the healthcare system. The healthcare reform was to reinforce the healthcare service for general public, encourage public-private partnership in healthcare sector, develop an electronic database of patient records and strengthen the public healthcare safety net. He further introduced six financial options, namely social health insurance, out-of-pocket payments, medical savings, voluntary health insurance, mandatory health insurance and personal healthcare reserve. He said that this consultation mainly set out the pros and cons of each option and sought comments from the public.

9. Most of them supported public-private partnership, the interchange of electronic database of patient records and the importance of preventive medical care. Some members pointed out that the existing medical insurance scheme lacked a monitoring system, resulting in the wastage of medical resources. A member said that the public was complaining about the need to pay for expensive medicines. Another member asked about the details of the increase in medical expenditure to 17% and the personal start-up capital for the reform. They said that the government should secure a good security system for the electronic database and beware of the rising cost of private sector while implementing the partnership. Some members said that mandatory health insurance and personal healthcare reserve seemed to be more suitable for the situation of Hong Kong. A member said that the reform was unfair to the middle class and the government was gradually reducing its commitment on healthcare service. Suggestions were made to request the government to set up a fund to subsidize the medical expenditure, and to review Hospital Authority (HA)'s arrangement of opening senior positions at the expense of junior positions. Members also proposed the Government to carry out a comprehensive review on the long-term development strategy on healthcare service. A member remarked that financial strategy of the economy was important for the reform and the existing public healthcare system also had its own merits. Another member said that HA should review its use of resources and suggested the government to develop the market of medical care service. A member asked the government to be the insurer in order to monitor the operation of the insurance company.

10. Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food replied that the financial commitment of Government in healthcare service would be increasing. The medical expenditure would be increased from 15% to 17% in 2011 to 2012 and 50 billion would be taken from the reserve for implementing the reform. He said that the existing problem of the public healthcare system was caused by the reform during the 70's and 80's when

HA was set up to provide quality service, with more people using public service instead of the private one, resulting in the imbalance development of the private and public sector. He explained that the reform would provide more choice and protection to the middle class, while the overall protection given to the general public would not be reduced. He remarked that the government did not want to increase tax to support the increasing medical expenditure. He further said that a comprehensive insurance system need to be well monitored and should be implemented in a mandatory manner. For those with medical insurance, he said that the government would provide transitional arrangement to allow existing scheme to converge to the future one. He said that the interchange of electronic database in the HA had been started since 1995 and considered that feasible to extend to the private sector. He expected that the database would be developed into a web-based system with safe and comprehensive security measure. He explained that HA already adopted measures for efficient use of resources, including the reduction in the number of Director. Moreover, the Bureau did request HA to report the operating cost to the government and had been monitoring the operating effectiveness of HA. He added that prevention care was also a main direction in the reform and more details would be given in the next consultation stage. He clarified that the government did not have preference for any option and the consultation was to seek comment from the public.

11. The Council endorsed the following provisional motion of Mr. WONG Chak-piu with 23 in favour and 11 abstentions:

“Along with the ageing of population in Hong Kong, the healthcare system of Hong Kong is heavily stressed and burdened. Sha Tin District Council supports the direction of Government in the “Healthcare Reform Consultation Document”, enabling the sustainable development of the quality healthcare service of Hong Kong. This Council requests the Government to remain as the main financial support of the healthcare system and protect all social classes during the implementation of reform, especially the needs and rights of the grassroots.”

Response of Government Departments and Relevant Organizations to Matters Discussed in Last Meeting

12. The Council noted the above paper.

Financial Account of STDC (as at 20 May 2008)

2007/2008 STDC Final Account

13. The Council endorsed the above paper.

2008/2009 STDC Revised Estimates

14. The Council endorsed the recommendation of approving an additional funding of \$400,000 for the District Facilities Management Committee.

Progress Reports of District Facilities Management Committee, Culture, Sports & Community Development Committee, Development and Housing Committee, Education and Welfare Committee, Health and Environment Committee, Traffic and Transport Committee and Finance and General Affairs Committee

15. The Council noted the reports of the above committees.

Funding Application for Recreational and Sports Programme in Sha Tin from July to October 2008 of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department

16. The Council endorsed the above funding application.

Report of the District Management Committee

17. A member pointed out that the bicycle parking space at Exit A of Tai Wai Station would cause nuisance to residents at Man Lai Court and Pristine Villa and also affect the outlook of the station. Sha Tin District Officer replied that Sha Tin District Office was now identifying another suitable place with the Transport Department.

Next Meeting

18. The next meeting would be held at 2:30 p.m. on 24 July 2008.