

Notes of the Seventeenth Meeting of the Eastern District Council

The Seventeenth Meeting of the Eastern District Council (EDC) was held on 3 March 2011 and the major items discussed were summarized as follows:

I. Permanent Secretary of Education to meet Eastern District Council Members

The views expressed by the Councillors were summarized as follows :

- (a) A Councillor pointed out that the Education Bureau put resources centrally into the tertiary education so that the secondary schools were in lack of support and it was difficult for them to uplift the quality of teaching and formed a fault. He hoped that the Bureau would elaborate on the resources it would pay for the secondary schools.
- (b) A Councillor expressed that the front line teachers of the kindergarten had both qualified standard and recognized teacher's qualification but their income was not guaranteed. He opined that a starting salary point should be made for them.
- (c) A number of Councillors expressed consideration should be given to strengthen the education for environmental protection. A Councillor hoped that the government could take into consideration to purchase land with biodiversity for conduct of conservation, such as Nam Sang Wai, so as to provide venue of environmental education for schools.
- (d) A Councillor considered that the pre-primary education voucher scheme should be changed from auxiliary nature and included in the free education system, so as to lessen the living burden of the citizens. In addition, he hoped that the Bureau would look at the problem of vacant school premises.
- (e) A Councillor was concerned about the arrangement for the cross-border school children who had to go to school in Hong Kong from Shenzhen. He pointed out that currently the Shenzhen authority did not recognize the nanny vans which carried the student to school in Hong Kong, thus affecting the hundreds of students who had to cross the border to go to school everyday. He hoped that the authorities could offer assistance.
- (f) A Councillor opined that character, citizen and national should be linked together ring by ring like and advanced level by level so that it could make the children

have a better cognition towards right, duty and obligation. He hoped that the Bureau could improve the curriculum.

- (g) A Councillor stated that Hong Kong had long been lacking national education. He hoped that concrete curriculum could be matched to strengthen the cognition of the youngsters towards the country. In addition, he hoped that the Bureau could reduce the loan interest of the students or exempt appropriately the interest so as to lessen the burden of the student's parents.
- (h) A Councillor pointed that by the policy currently integrated into education, school children with minor mental handicap were arranged to study in regular schools, this would not only affect the teachers, the mode of teaching and students of other classes, but also make the special schools confronted with problem in recruiting new students. He hoped that the Bureau would review such policy.
- (i) A Councillor considered that apart from academic education, there should be the provision of education in the aspects of morality, intellect, athletics, community and aesthetics, therefore he hoped that the Bureau could implement the study of small class teaching and not just the diminution of classes.
- (j) A Councillor was concerned about the assistance offered to the parents. He hoped that arrangement could be made on the internet to release the information such as "Secondary School Profile" for the parents to choose the school they admired.
- (k) Several Councillors put forward a number of enquiries, including was there any contingency plan to deal with people who had moved to the Mainland and would return to Hong Kong once inflation occurred in the Mainland and the big increase of age eligible students; the pre-primary education voucher scheme had caused work pressure on the front line teachers, why not implemented the 15-year free education; why not considered to provide the vacant school premises for use by social welfare organizations and religious bodies; could (the government) liaise with the Shenzhen government so as to set up a parking area in the exit/entry border and study the issue of a proof of study in Hong Kong in order to help those students who had to come to Hong Kong to study by crossing the; with the increasingly ageing population, could the government provide regular college for the seniors so that they could further their study etc after retirement.

II. Director of Water Supplies to meet Eastern District Council Members

The views expressed by the Councillors were summarized as follows :

- (a) Several Councillors reflected the incidents of water pipe bursting which occurred in the Eastern District, including Shaukeiwan area, Lei King Wan, Tai On Street, Hing Man Estate and Siu Sai Wan area. Councillors hoped that the Department was able to solve the problem and seriously review and improve the emergency measures.
- (b) A number of Councillors praised the Department for providing quality remedial service at night for the pipe bursting in areas including North Point, Fortress Hill, Yiu Tung Estate, etc, which could get timely and responsible service.
- (c) A number of Councillors were concerned about the works of renewal of water pipes and reflected that the works at King's Road was delayed again and the works in Quarry Bay had slow progress and affected the flow of people frequenting the shops. Councillors hoped that it could make an accurate estimate of the degree of difficulty of the works as so to provide correct information for the residents and seriously took heed of the safety problem in the course of the works and sped up to complete the works.
- (d) A Councillor reflected that the salt water system of Fung Wah Estate and Hing Wah Estate in Chai Wan were often out of order and the residents had to use fresh water for flushing. He hoped that the Department could solve the problem soonest.
- (e) A Councillor pointed out that if a resident wanted to apply for salt water for flushing purpose, the formality was tedious and moreover the charge for replacing salt water pipes was expensive and the Department was lacking supervision on this, which had increased the burden of the incorporated owners.
- (f) A Councillor stated that in order to support saving water, all the community halls under the management of Eastern District Council had recently completed the replacement of tap and flushing installation by the saving type.
- (g) A number of Councillors agreed that fresh water was a very precious resources on earth. Pipe burst would cause the loss of thousands of cubic metres of fresh

water resulting in the disturbance to residents in addition to the waste of money.

- (h) A Councillor pointed out that recently due to the pipe incident of Marble Road, he telephoned the 24-hour hot line of the Department but he could only listen to the recording message of the Happy Valley incident all the way, then the line ended by itself. He repeated the call again with the same experience. He hoped that the hot line system could be improved.
- (i) A Councillor pointed out that the service reservoir had been used for hanging dry clothes and illegal parking and hoped that the Department could provide a hot line for the citizens to make a report.
- (j) A Councillor hoped that the Department could improve the announcement mechanism for pipe burst incidents, so that District Councillors could help disseminate important message to the residents.
- (k) Councillors put forward a number of enquiries including, how much fresh water had been wasted totally in six hours; how much fresh water was lost in pipe burst incidents and what percentage it accounted for the whole volume of Hong Kong; what channel was used to disseminate the message of saving water to the residents; was there a lowering trend in per capita use of water; what was the wastage rate in the supply system, was there a lowering trend in the past few years, was there any special group to study the pollution of water in the Pearl Delta and East River; was there any emergency measures at time of pipe burst to help the shop-keepers solve the financial loss at the material time; what was the progress of the plumbing replacement, when would all the replacement complete; was there a need to input more resources in order to speed up the repair and maintenance; would the 24-hour enquiry hot line be directly connected to the Customer Service Centre; was there any compensation mechanism for shopkeepers suffering financial loss and residents being forced to use fresh water for flushing resulting from pipe burst.

III. Postmaster General to meet Eastern District Council Members

(EDC Paper No. 1/11)

The views expressed by the Councillors were summarized as follows:

- (a) A number of Councillors expressed satisfaction with the service of the Hongkong

Post (hereinafter known as Post). A Councillor pointed out that different from other government departments, the Post operated on the trading fund and worked positively and progressively with satisfactory performance and gained wide recognition from the citizens.

- (b) A Councillor stated that since the beginning of last year, all post offices changed to the “through train” queuing mode service, but this had caused most citizens who only needed payment service wasted a lot of time queuing. He suggested separating the payment service and the mail delivery service into two queues. A Councillor suggested that enquiry service be handled independently.
- (c) A Councillor hoped that the Post to delete the need for citizens going to the mail delivery centre to collect the postal packet personally.
- (d) A Councillor thanked the Post for arrangement of exempting the District Councillors from paying the Hongkong Post Circular Service, so that they could disseminate their work report and messages to the citizens.
- (e) A Councillor opined that there was a great need for speedpost delivery service in Hong Kong and wondered why the Post did not take into consideration of developing such business, as this could help residents avoid suffering loss after buying subscription tickets and the private company closed down.
- (f) A Councillor reflected that a resident complained about the uniform opening hours of all the post offices, which made the family working couples unable to use the service. She enquired if the time could be adjusted to facilitate those working people and if the opening hours could be advanced earlier.
- (g) A Councillor hoped to learn about the current financial situation of the Post. He agreed that the mode of self-financing operation would cause great pressure, but in a free economy society a greater development space and opportunity could be given to the Post. He hoped that the Post would in future strengthen the international field of vision and the liaison with Mainland China so as to increase the revenue of the Treasury.
- (h) A Councillor hoped that the Post could review the cause of wrong delivery so as to improve the delivery service.
- (i) A Councillor considered that the current mode of operation was very good. He

opined that the Post took absolute advantage over postal delivery. He hoped that the publicity of the “refusing post circulars” labels could be enhanced. In addition, he put forward a number of suggestions, including the strengthen and development of philatelic education, taking part in the sale of maps and government publications, so as to increase income and facilitate the citizens.

- (j) A Councillor reflected that the stamp vending machine at the outside of the post office was often out of order.
- (k) A Councillor hoped that a bigger delivery centre could be added in Chai Wan area. Besides, he pointed out that the Post was unique because there were postboxes on the street and there were postmen employed too and the Post was competitive, but the service was not so good as the private courier service. He hoped that the Post could enhance the service.
- (l) Councillors put forward numerous enquiries, including could the number of post office locations which handled circular service be increased; was the time of delivery each day assigned or be arranged flexibly by the deliverers themselves; could the Post employ the current contract staff for good; could the Post publish commemorative stamps using “Centenary of China’s 1911 Revolution” as the theme; could the Post appropriately upgrade the equipment of the front line staff under the profit condition.

IV. Briefing on Competition Bill

(EDC Paper No. 2/11)

The views expressed by the Councillors were summarized as follows:

- (a) A Councillor considered that the consultative documents of the bill were easy to understand but the legal provisions were after all difficult to understand, therefore he hoped that the Bureau could hold consultative meetings for the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) so as to introduce the bill in simple terms so that the SMEs could sufficiently understand the bill in a way to clear their doubts and resistance. The code of practice suggested in the bill was applicable to all enterprises, no matter big or small scale. He considered that those big enterprises with outstanding financial resources must stand in good stead, therefore if the bill was enforced uniformly it would affect the SMEs which account for the main economic activities of Hong Kong.

- (b) A Councillor expressed his strong support of the bill. He expressed special concern over the collusion of buildings for tender (commonly known as restricted tender) as most part of the maintenance works had to employ consultant company to provide service and the company who made the tender mostly had relation with the consultant company.
- (c) A Councillor pointed out that the bill allowed the enterprise in the course of investigation to pay ten million dollars to end the investigation, this was unfair to the small enterprise.
- (d) A Councillor considered that the Competition Bill should be passed as soon as possible. He opined that the disadvantages brought about by monopoly should also be explained and that concern should also be paid to the problem of the SMEs failing to cope with those big and presuming enterprises. He hoped that the publicity of the contents of the bill should be strengthened in simple and understandable terms.
- (e) A Councillor was concerned about the scruples of the SMEs, as the big enterprises were financially good and had sufficient legal support and had also accumulated sufficient coping skill. He considered that at the present time there was not any pinpoint need to make legislation and hoped that there could be set a buffer or trial period so as to put forward appropriate amendment.
- (f) A Councillor expressed that whether the package to the confirmation of competition law was complete and good should be considered. He agreed that the supervision of the monopolized behavior of the consortium or international consortium was not at all easy, but it was still not clear whether the Bureau would be authorized with the power of supervision and investigation. He agreed to the introduction of the Competition Bill so as to prevent monopolized behavior.
- (g) A Councillor agreed that the aim of passing the bill was good but it would not benefit the humble citizens. He suggested that the element of anti-monopoly should be added in the competition law and the monopolist when occupying 25% to 30% of the market should be forced to subdivide the business.
- (h) A Councillor pointed out that the scale of “prohibited behaviors” listed in the bill was very extensive. He took the example of the market shops, when the same family owned several shops, the marking of the price of the goods would be the

same due to the cost and rent. Thus the mode of trading had already fallen within the scope of prohibited behaviors. He enquired if the SMEs would be exempted so as to set their heart at ease in the operation of business.

- (i) Councillors put forward a number of enquiries, including how to optimize the trial system, so as to fairly handle the uneven financial situation between the consortium and the SMEs; when the SMEs needed to put up a litigation, they would not be eligible for application of legal assistance as their assets were too much for the means test, so if more measures could be introduced to lessen the worries of the SMEs; the SMEs did not have enough financial power to put up a litigation against the consortium, so was there any measure to provide assistance for the SMEs; the bank interest rate was also set according to the bargain of the bankers' association, so if this could be included in the list of collusive price fixing.

V. Discussion on arrangement for photo-taking, audio- or video-recording during meetings

(EDC Paper No. 17/11)

The views expressed by the Councillors were summarized as follows:

- (a) Councillors generally supported that in the course of meetings, the visitors sitting in except the media, shall not take photograph, conduct audio- or video-recording.
- (b) A Councillor opined that the media was duty-bound to take photo or videotape, but other visitors sitting in, without informing the Council, conduct photo-taking or video-recording whether it would cause disturbance or not, was a sign of disrespect to the Council and the Councillors. A number of Councillors agreed to his opinion. A Councillor opined otherwise that this would affect the proceeding of the meeting.
- (c) A Councillor suggested that a designated area be assigned to the media for photo-taking and the issue of reporter's ID cards to them for convenience of management and identification.
- (d) A Councillor pointed out that since the Council was of an open nature, the citizens could already listen to the sound recording on internet, and when sitting in, they could also eyewitness the facial appearance and demeanour of the members of the

meeting. And since the arrangement of each District Council could not be exactly the same as one another, he considered that why not referred to the arrangement of permission to take photo and video-recording. However, he opined that whatever the case was, the visitors sitting in must be requested to enroll first to make clear which organization they belonged to, their identity and the purpose of photo-taking and that those sections or parts which would be released in the future should not have been reedited.

- (e) A Councillor opined that since the public could personally come to the District Council to sit in the meeting and could also download the audio-recording of the meeting from the internet, this could already satisfy their right of privacy, therefore there was no need to make the video-recording by themselves. In addition, he pointed out that the Council was difficult to avoid the section of film videotaped by the visitor sitting in being interpreted out of context in future when released, this could thus give pressure to the Councillor who wanted to speak his mind freely, but he pointed out that in order to support the freedom of press, it was a must to give permission for video-recording, therefore he suggested that an area of one metre from the wall on the passage of the conference room between the entrance and the exit be assigned as the area for photo-taking.
- (f) After discussion, Councillors agreed to add the following provision in the District Council Standing Orders :

M ADMISSION OF THE PUBLIC TO MEETINGS

- 49. (5) All persons sitting in the meetings of the District Council shall not, in the course of the meeting, take photographs, make audio- or video-recording. The media is an exception, but they must conduct the photo-taking, audio- or video-recording under the condition of not affecting the proceeding of the meeting and after they have enrolled.

VI. Discussion of The 2011-2012 Budget

The views expressed by the Councillors were summarized as follows :

- (a) A number of Councillors supported the amended Budget.
- (b) A Councillor expressed that the whole contents of the original budget was comprehensive, covering wide areas and giving more explanation of the

advantages of the six industries. But under the condition of good economic performance, stable finance, ample surplus and strict inflation, the budget did not provide sufficient relieving measures for the middle class and the grass-roots. He considered that any plan could not be comprehensive and the budget should not be totally rejected only because some measures of the plan could not meet the expectation of the citizens. He opined that the amended budget was still inadequate, because the citizens who had not lived in Hong Kong for seven years and those who had not reached the age of 18 could not be benefited and the government did not respond to the request for recalling the Home Ownership Scheme either.

- (c) A Councillor reflected the inadequacy of the budget especially the care for the grass-roots. He agreed that all plans could not be comprehensive and there was room for review too.
- (d) A Councillor considered that it would be more suitable for the current social situation by no longer injecting into the MPF accounts, as it could not give immediate benefit to the citizens and solve the citizens' difficulty. He hoped that the government could consider some measures to look after those citizens who could have originally benefited from the injection into the MPF accounts but now were not awarded the giving out of six thousand dollars.
- (e) A Councillor pointed out that the original budget had a stable finance and a correct approach and could reinforce the financial power of Hong Kong to cope with contingency. The series of measures put forward of course would not satisfy all citizens especially the middle class. The current amendment could return the surplus of the government to the citizens. She supported using the public fund properly so as to let the citizens live peacefully and work happily and there was also a need to get prepared for rainy days.
- (f) A Councillor opined that the current budget had caused great reverberation mainly because the government had not put forward any pinpoint strategy to help the citizens cope with inflation. He pointed out that due to the linkage rate, most industries relied on imported food, the factors of living in flats and buildings had caused the rise of inflation and the pressure and burden of the citizens were great and he could do nothing about that, therefore he hoped that in future the government should make a long-term review in order to make measures against inflation so that citizens would not be affected by inflation and live a better life.

- (g) A Councillor did not agree to the injection into the MPF accounts because the civil servants and persons without the account could not be benefited at all. Furthermore, the opening of the account needed 8.3% of the amount as charges and the inflation for each year was 4% and together with the 1 to 2% of management fee, the current injection of 6,000 dollars would possibly just have several hundred dollars left behind at the retirement age. He was also not satisfied with the measure of giving out 6,000 dollars after amendment, because it was not fair to the middle class by giving away those money earned hard by the tax-payers. He agreed with the increase of healthcare expenditure and suggested providing healthcare grants for the middle class. On the other hand, although the value of the healthcare vouchers was increased to 500 dollars, some citizens reflected that they could not be benefited as the doctors they consulted had not joined the plan. He requested the government to consider amending the mode of releasing the healthcare vouchers.
- (h) A Councillor pointed out that the inflation of Hong Kong was imported from foreign countries, Hong Kong did not have enough coping plans for that. Although he considered that it would be acceptable for the giving out of 6000 dollars, not all the citizens at or over the age of 18 should be benefited. The focus should be placed on recalling the HOS, speeding up the building of public housing estates, creating job opportunity, supplementing health care, only these could help the citizens solve the problem and what was most important was the proper use of public fund. He hoped that the government could in future improve the depth of consultation, analytical ability and how to respond to the community.

Eastern District Council Secretariat
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