

(Information Paper)

**Progress Report of the 17th Meeting and the 4th Special Meeting of
the Kowloon City District Council**

Purpose

This paper aims to report on the major issues discussed at the 17th meeting and the 4th special meeting of the Kowloon City District Council (KCDC) on 20 July 2006 and 4 August 2006 respectively.

Building “A Healthy Kowloon City”

2. Members noted the paper entitled “A Healthy Kowloon City” submitted by the Department of Health (DH), which outlined proposals to carry out the Health City Project in Kowloon City District. Under the proposals, a limited company mainly comprised of local residents would be set up and registered as a non-profit organisation to promote the concept of healthy city in the community. Members said that they would consider the DH’s proposals and look for ways of implementation that best suited the local conditions in due course.

Hospital Authority’s Annual Plan 2006-07

3. Members were briefed on the work plan of the Central Kowloon Hospital Cluster under the Hospital Authority (HA) for this year. Many Members took the opportunity to express their views to the HA’s representatives on the charging of fees for public health services.

Proposals to Set up a “Culture Bureau” by the HKSAR Government

4. Members expressed the view that while in the long term the HKSAR Government should set up a culture bureau tasked with promoting culture in Hong Kong, in the meantime it should consider renaming the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB), which currently also dealt with cultural affairs among other responsibilities, the Home Affairs and Culture Bureau to raise Hong Kong’s cultural literacy. In response, representatives of the HAB admitted that the Government had not set up an independent culture bureau, but a Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs was designated mainly to co-ordinate cultural policies. Moreover, the ratio of resource allocation to

cultural development in Hong Kong was more or less the same as in other advanced countries. The Government would continue to provide a favourable environment conducive to the promotion and enrichment of arts and culture in Hong Kong.

Interdepartmental Efforts to Tackle On-street Clothes Collection Cages

5. Members welcomed the Government's interdepartmental efforts to take decisive enforcement actions to remove on-street clothes collection cages by invoking the authority conferred by the Summary Offences Ordinance. Upon learning that government departments had taken concerted actions to clamp down on illegal collection cages in the district, Members urged the departments concerned to closely monitor the situation and carry out clearance operations if necessary. To bolster their support for the recycling activities of non-profit organisations and raise the environmental awareness of recycling, Members would continue to work with the Kowloon City District Office to identify more suitable off-street places for non-profit organisations to place "Community Used Clothes Recycling Banks".

Early Construction of New Columbariums and Increasing CSSA Burial Grants

6. To address the current shortage of columbarium niches, Members called upon the Government to identify new sites for columbariums as soon as possible and improve the design of columbarium parks to draw more people to use them. Furthermore, Members considered the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) burial grants given by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) to CSSA families to be too meagre and hoped that the grants could be increased appropriately to enable such families to organise decent funerals for the deceased. Representatives of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) remarked that various measures would be put in place to boost the supply of columbarium niches. In the short term, additional niches would be built on vacated ground of the existing columbariums, whereas in the long term more columbariums would be constructed and their design improved to hold more niches. The FEHD would also consider introducing a time limit for newly-allotted columbarium niches, requiring that a niche be vacated after the expiry of its placement period and the ashes be scattered in the

columbarium park unless an extension was granted. Representatives of the SWD told Members that the upper limit for burial grants was adjusted from year to year according to the Consumer Price Index (A). In the previous year, 49 burial grant applications had been processed by the SWD, but not a single recipient had complained that the grants had not been sufficient. The SWD, therefore, believed that the grants were enough to cover the necessary burial expenses.

Kai Tak Planning Review – Preliminary Outline Development Plan

7. Members welcomed the Planning Department's (PlanD) proposals to build a cruise terminal, a stadium complex and open space facilities in the Kai Tak area. As regards the lowering of plot ratio which would reduce the population to 86 500, Members were concerned that, judging from this development parameter, the population size was not large enough to sustain economic development in the area, let alone stimulating economic activities of the peripheral districts. Members also discussed in detail how to address effectively the pollution problem at the Kai Tak Approach Channel (KTAC) of the Kai Tak Nullah. They expressed reservations about the use of bioremediation treatment to alleviate pollution at KTAC and worries that the creation of a 600m opening at the northern end of the ex-runway would cause pollutants to spread to the areas around To Kwa Wan. With a view to resolving the long-standing pollution problem of the Kai Tak Nullah once and for all, Members called upon the PlanD to consider reclaiming the KTAC. Furthermore, to prevent the Kai Tak development from being hampered on account of a ruling of the Court of Final Appeal on the Protection of the Harbour Ordinance, Members proposed to seek judicial review to let the court decide whether the Kai Tak Nullah was deemed to be part of the Victoria Harbour.

The Government Urged to Rigorously Regulate “Study Tours”

8. Members expressed concern over the lesser protection enjoyed by study tours held by educational and voluntary organisations than other ordinary travel tours. They urged the Government to require that all organisations which held study tours be registered as travel agents so as to be covered by the Travel Industry Compensation Fund. In response, the Economic Development and Labour Bureau (EDLB) explained

that it was not the intent of the Travel Agents Ordinance to regulate those organisations that did not have travel tours as their core business or operate such tours commercially. At present, many study tours were organised by local universities or secondary schools in conjunction with overseas educational institutions to enable local students to benefit from the facilities and quality teaching of these overseas institutions through study and exchange programmes during school holidays. As such, the EDLB did not consider it appropriate to adopt an across-the-board approach to the issue by requiring that all organisations which held study tours apply for Travel Agents Licences or that study tours be organised by travel agents. To safeguard consumers' rights, the Government encouraged parents to acquire more information about the organisations' experience and ability in holding study tours before making applications for their children. They were also encouraged to take out travel insurance for their children according to their own needs.

Safeguarding Health through Regulating Radio Wave Radiation

9. Members reflected some complaints from the residents of two residential blocks in the district about their deteriorating health caused by radiation emitted from a nearby mobile phone base station. In response, the Office of the Telecommunications Authority (OFTA) remarked that mobile phone operators had to apply to the OFTA before they could install mobile phone base stations. To protect the public from potential hazards, the OFTA would permit the operators to bring the base stations into use only if the non-ionizing radiation levels of these base stations met the international safety standards. OFTA staff would also be deployed to inspect mobile phone base stations located at various places in Hong Kong to monitor the non-ionizing radiation levels. The OFTA undertook to follow up on the residents' complaints reflected by Members.

Regulating the Selling Tactics of Sales Persons

10. Many Members said that there were indications that sales persons for mobile phone, subscription television and broadband services cajoled credulous people into using their companies' services by using selling tactics tantamount to fraud. The OFTA told the meeting that a report entitled "The Mis-selling Practices of Fixed-line Services to Consumers in Hong Kong" had been published early last year, detailing nine best practice benchmarks to be satisfied by operators. Since the publishing of these benchmarks, the number of complaints received by the OFTA about similar mis-selling practices had decreased substantially. Meanwhile, The Consumer Council would take active steps to promote consumer rights through, for instance, TV announcements to educate the elderly not to sign telecommunications

service contracts hastily. Talks would also be organised to alert the public to potential consumer frauds.

Supporting Three-year Free Early Childhood Education

11. Members suggested that the Government extend free education to cover pre-primary schooling in a bid to raise the standards of early childhood education and the quality of our next generation. Representatives of the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) indicated that currently the Government was proactively reviewing its pre-primary schooling policy and widely consulting the stakeholders. At the present stage, the EMB kept an open mind to Members' suggestion that pre-primary schooling be fully subsidised.

Enhancing Self-Reliance Through District Partnership Programme

12. Members were briefed on the contents of the District Partnership Programme and noted that the deadline for application was by the end of August this year.

Kowloon City District Office

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