

**(Information Paper)**

**Progress Report of the 18th Meeting of  
the Kowloon City District Council**

**Purpose**

This paper aims to report on the major issues discussed at the 18th meeting of the Kowloon City District Council (KCDC) on 21 September 2006.

**Concern over the Illegal Activities in Places of Entertainment and the Proposed Gender Bender Shows in To Kwa Wan Area**

2. Given that some law-breakers let youngsters hide and traffic in drugs in places of entertainment, Members suggested that the Government should severely punish the operators of those places of entertainment that broke the law, or even revoke their liquor and operating licences. Separately, upon learning that some businessmen planned to renovate the old theatre at Sun Shing Centre for the purpose of operating gender bender shows there, Members were worried that the shows would cause traffic congestion in the area and corrupt public morals. They urged the Government to exercise caution when considering applications for using the place to hold gender bender shows.

3. In response, the police said that staff were deployed to conduct surprise inspections of places of entertainment in the district from time to time. From early 2006 up to the date of the meeting, no youngsters had been arrested in connection with drug trafficking. Although the situation was not serious, the police would continue their effort to ensure that these places would not turn into a hotbed of crimes. As regards the gender bender shows, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department said that it had not received any application so far and undertook to consult the relevant government departments upon receiving such applications.

**Telephone Booking Service at General Out-patient Clinics in Kowloon**

4. Members were pleased to learn that the Central Kowloon Hospital Cluster was to unveil the telephone booking service at general out-patient clinics at 3:00 p.m.

on 7 November 2006. However, since the elderly might not know how to make appointments using touch-tone phones, Members suggested that the Hospital Authority should step up publicity of the telephone booking procedure and consider setting up manned telephone lines under the telephone booking system to help the elderly with the booking or make appointments on their behalf.

**Strongly Condemning the Media for Covering News by Means of Clandestine Photographing or Video-shooting**

5. Members were outraged at the Easyfinder magazine's shameless publication of photographs of an artist changing clothes and reaping profits unscrupulously by reprinting the issue again and again. In addition, the lenient sentence handed down by the magistracy came as a surprise to Members. In this connection, Members hoped that the Government would take firm action against media companies which committed such offences repeatedly and that the court would mete out heavier sentences to bring into full play the deterrent effect of the relevant provisions of the Control of Obscene and Indecent Articles Ordinance. Furthermore, Members called upon the Government to enact legislation on covert surveillance as recommended by the Law Reform Commission in its report. The Television and Entertainment Licensing Authority (TELA) told the meeting that since the publisher of the magazine did not accept the Obscene Articles Tribunal's (OAT) classification of the issue of the magazine in question as a Class II article (indecent), the OAT was conducting a full hearing of the case. As such, prosecution would not be initiated against the publisher for the time being. The TELA deemed it inappropriate to comment on the severity or leniency of the sentence received by the publisher at the present stage before the case closed.

**Against the Government's Tolerance of the Continued Use of Such Wording as "Low Tar" or "Ultra Low Tar" by the Tobacco Industry**

6. Members remarked that for the good of public health, the Government should not compromise and let the tobacco industry continue to use such misleading phrases as "low tar" or "ultra low tar". The Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

explained that while prohibiting the use of such phrases by businessmen did not necessarily constitute deprivation of property without compensation under Article 105 of the Basic Law, it still carried a significant risk of contravening the Article for unlawful deprivation of property, which might even lead to lawsuits. In addition, Hong Kong had to fulfill its legal obligation in relation to international intellectual property rights. Having weighted the pros and cons, the Government had decided to amend the draft legislation to stipulate that the use of such phrases by the tobacco industry in relation to future products should be prohibited, while for existing products, explanatory notes should be provided on the cigarette packets or vending machines.

#### **Concern over the Imposition of Minimum Deposit Charges by Banks**

7. While Members considered it inappropriate for the Government to interfere in the fee charging policies of banks, they hoped the Hong Kong Monetary Authority would appeal to the banks to take into account the low-income groups when setting charges. In addition, Members requested that minimum deposit charges be waived for non-profit organisations.

#### **More Resources to Family Support Services to Address Domestic Violence**

8. To avoid a repeat of the domestic violence case that had happened at Oi Man Estate several months before, in which the person seeking help had been unable to reach the social worker due to an overflow of messages on the phone, Members suggested that the Government should increase the manpower of the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and the SWD should take the initiative to improve its services. In response, the SWD remarked that addressing family crises had all along been one of its top priorities. Moreover, the Government had allocated additional resources to strengthen work on publicity, education, outreaching services, support and prevention on different levels. With regard to seeking help by phone, those who were unable to reach the social worker assigned to them could use the voice mail service to leave a message. In addition, the SWD's helplines would be directed to the 24-hour hotline of the Charitas Family Crisis Support Centre outside the duty hours of social workers.

The SWD was currently upgrading the telephone system, streamlining the telephone-answering process and enhancing the information available to callers. It was hoped that with these improvements, social workers manning the helplines would be able to concentrate on dealing with callers in need of counselling services and consequently shorten the waiting time for callers to receive help.

### **“Shunning Social Contact” Becoming a Trend**

9. Members were aware that with an increasing number of people immersing themselves in the multifarious activities on the Internet, such as game-playing, gambling and online chatting, numerous social problems had arisen. To nip the problems in the bud, Members suggested that the Government should clamp down on sex and gambling websites, while schools and parents should play their parts in helping the next generation live a normal social life and avoid excessive participation in Internet activities. The Police said in response that due to the regional nature of legal jurisdiction, it did not have the authority to take enforcement action against any websites engaging in illegal activities if they were outside the jurisdiction of Hong Kong and it could only pass on the information to the countries concerned through the International Criminal Police Organisation for follow-up action. The SWD added that in addition to the various services provided by its units designed to ensure the healthy growth from early childhood to adolescence of the next generation, it had strengthened counselling support for students “shunning social contact” at home and the “non-engaged youths”. Furthermore, school social workers would track the progress of students who had skipped classes for a long period of time, while outreaching social workers would try a different tack to intervene and offer assistance, such as organising online game competitions and reaching out to youngsters indulging in cyber activities at Internet bars. Meanwhile, the Education and Manpower Bureau had improved the counselling teacher-to-class ratio and injected more funds to schools for counselling purposes. Last but not least, personal growth education was incorporated into the school curriculum to inculcate in students the correct values of life.

### **Ways to Monitor the Safety of Petrol Filling Stations**

10. Members noted the way in which the Fire Services Department monitored the safety standards of petrol filling stations through licensing and the safety measures that these stations were required to adopt in storing and supplying petrol.

### **The Government Urged to Closely Monitor the Expenditure of the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority**

11. Members noted that the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) was an independent and self-financing statutory body whose annual income and expenditure account had to be submitted to the Government and the Legislative Council for inspection. Although it proved to be untrue that the HKEAA had lavished public money on decorating its offices extravagantly, as claimed by some media reports, Members still hoped that the HKEAA would strictly follow the financial principle of keeping expenditure within income and reduce examination fees for students if there was any surplus.

### **Concern over Hong Kong's Environment**

12. Members discussed various proposals for improving Hong Kong's environment at the meeting. These included improving air quality, reducing waste, intensifying greening efforts and building modern environmental-friendly refuse incineration plants and multi-storey vehicle repair workshops. Members were informed by the Environmental Protection Department of the current work undertaken by the Government in the respective areas. In view of the fact that this agenda item involved a wide range of subjects, Members agreed to submit papers on individual items for in-depth discussion at committee meetings if necessary.

Kowloon City District Office

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