

(Information Paper)

Progress Report of the 20th Meeting of the Kowloon City District Council

Purpose

This paper aims to report on the major issues discussed at the 20th meeting of the Kowloon City District Council (KCDC) on 18 January 2007.

Meeting the Commissioner of Police

2. Mr TANG King-shing, Commissioner of Police, briefed Members on the four main work objectives adopted by the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) this year. They were:

- (1) Enhancing communications within the HKPF – to further improve internal communications so that the management could better grasp the needs and work situations of front-line police officers, and make arrangements accordingly to relieve pressure on them in the face of ever-increasing workloads and to improve efficiency;
- (2) Strengthening communications between the HKPF and various sectors of the community – the HKPF could no longer carry out their own work solely on its own these days. It needed the cooperation of other government departments, schools, the social welfare sector and local organisations and would, therefore, proactively form partnerships with different sectors;
- (3) Consolidating cooperation with the Mainland and overseas law enforcement agencies – the free flow of information meant that countries around the world had merged into a single whole. In Hong Kong, there was increasing economic exchange between the people of Hong Kong and China. As such, the HKPF had to strengthen its work on intelligence exchange and joint enforcement action with the Mainland and overseas law enforcement agencies; and
- (4) Enhancing training for police officers – with the growth of the society and the public's greater expectations for police services, police officers

had to be more sophisticated in discharging their duties. Therefore, every police officer should be given adequate training and the latest information relating to their job to improve work efficiency and speed up their work. In view of the numerous large-scale activities in celebration of the 10th anniversary of Hong Kong's reunification with China in mid-2007, the HKPF would provide training for front-line police officers to improve their ability in traffic and pedestrian control.

3. On school liaison, Mr TANG said that due to limited resources, the HKPF was not able to deploy more police officers to undertake this work. However, the HKPF would put more emphasis on the "quality" of its services. For instance, it would maintain close contact with schools through the Internet and increase the frequency of visits to schools that required special attention. In addition, the HKPF would enlist the services of retired police officers to assist in the counselling work for students at risk. Since a serious domestic violence incident in Tin Shui Wai, the HKPF had reviewed the procedures for dealing with such cases and worked out a series of improvement measures. The HKPF had put in place a better procedure last year to enhance cooperation with the Social Welfare Department and other government departments. To enable front-line police officers to know better how to deal with such cases, the HKPF would enhance training for them to increase their vigilance. Furthermore, an action checklist was drawn up to identify risky cases. Police officers could then gather information and make assessments systematically and refer risky cases to relevant government departments early for follow-up action. As regards cases requiring police assistance that might involve domestic violence, police officers of the rank of sergeant or above had to review the cases before the handling procedures were completed. To help police officers identify families with repeated domestic violence, the HKPF had set up a database that enabled police officers to check past reported cases based on the address given by people seeking help or information on the people involved. Separately, the HKPF had brought in the concept of "One Family, One Team" to let the same dedicated team to follow up on cases it had investigated previously when new incidents concerning their cases were reported to the police. It

was hoped that the dedicated team, being more familiar with the background of the families concerned, was able to make risk assessment more effectively.

Concern over Peace and Order

4. Members were concerned that while the centre of Whampoa Garden was often thronged with people, the outer areas of Whampoa Garden were seldom visited and might become a crime black spot. Residents were worried that this environmental factor might contribute to a homicide case that had happened in the outer areas several months before. The HKPF said in response that since Whampoa Garden was a private residential estate, the responsibility for general security rested with the security firm of the estate. Nevertheless, the HKPF had deployed police officers to patrol the public areas of Whampoa Garden. Information showed that Whampoa Garden had maintained good law and order in 2006, with crime rate falling by 17.5% compared with 2005. Probably due to the large numbers of shops and food establishments in the district, theft was on the increase. Of all the incidents that had happened in Whampoa Garden, including assault and robbery, only 10% fell into the serious crime category. Crime had not happened at the crime scene mentioned by Members in the past. According to the leads available at present, the homicide was an isolated incident. Members learned that the management office of Whampoa Garden was now planning to improve the lighting at the crime scene to prevent similar incidents from happening again.

“Copyright Protection in the Digital Environment” Consultation Paper

5. Members were briefed by the Intellectual Property Department on the “Copyright Protection in the Digital Environment” Consultation Paper and the far-reaching effects of enhanced copyright protection might have on the dissemination of information, protection of privacy and development of Hong Kong into an Internet hub. Members reflected that in our daily lives it was not easy to tell if downloaded or received files were copyright materials. Sometimes, we could know the details of files received via email only after opening them. Members were concerned that if copyright legislation became too restrictive, people would break the law unwittingly.

Furthermore, copyright legislation was not quite the same in different places around the world. Thus, legislating on online information might mean that Internet users in Hong Kong would infringe copyright if they received and possessed materials that were legal in the places where they were sent but deemed to be illegal in Hong Kong.

6. As regards the positioning of network service providers, Members were concerned that if the network service providers were to assist the Government in combating illegal uploading and downloading activities, they had to deploy additional staff to monitor the various kinds of activities in their networks, which would affect operating costs to a certain extent. Moreover, Members expressed reservations about the proposal of requiring network service providers to disclose information about their clients without having to go through legal procedures under specified circumstances. Regarding compensation, since it was not easy to determine the value of online materials, it was not practicable to specify the amount or percentage of compensation in the legislation as proposed in the Consultation Paper. Members considered that only with more rulings on such cases could the court set a reasonable compensation level.

Briefing on Hung Hom District Study and Related Public Engagement Programme

7. The Planning Department (PlanD) briefed Members on the “Planning Study on the Harbour and its Waterfront Areas” completed in 2003, which outlined the future development of the Harbour and Hung Hom waterfront areas and formulated a Harbour planning framework. However, with growing public attention given to the development of the Harbour waterfront areas in recent years, and the interpretation given by the Court of Final Appeal to the definition of reclamation under the Protection of Harbour Ordinance in 2004, the PlanD considered it necessary to review the Harbour planning framework in light of social changes. The Hung Hom District Study, which was part of this broader review, aimed to work out comprehensive planning proposals for the Hung Hom waterfront areas and lay down guidelines on the detailed planning and design of these areas. In addition, the study would also

examine how to improve the accessibility of the Hung Hom waterfront areas and their connection with the surrounding areas with a view to assimilating the newly developed areas with the neighbouring waterfront areas and the Hung Hom hinterland. Members welcomed the PlanD's study and hoped that it would widen the public consultation network, so that it could fully grasp the residents' expectations and needs and develop the vacant sites along the Hung Hom waterfront into a promenade for leisure and greening purposes.

Early Enactment of a Fair Competition Law

8. Members were pleased to learn that the Government planned to introduce legislation to promote fair competition and prevent monopoly of market. Members remarked that while Hong Kong had been named the world's freest and the most open economy for many years, it was not uncommon for large local enterprises to use their financial power to deter other competitors to enter and share the market, to the detriment of public interest indirectly. Members urged the Government to enact a cross-industry fair competition law as soon as possible and set up a fair competition committee with investigatory powers, so as to ensure a free and fair business environment for Hong Kong.

Forging Addresses for the Primary One Admission Exercise in September

9. Members were concerned that people living outside this district often asked their friends and relatives living here to apply for change of consumership for their water and electricity bills, so that they could meet the requirements of the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) and have the necessary proof of address to enable their children to apply for schools in School Net No. 41. Their selfish behaviour indirectly caused some local children to have to attend schools outside their residential district. To address this problem, Members suggested that the EMB should instead require the submission of tenancy agreements, mortgage papers or government rates as proof of address. In addition, parents had to provide more than one supporting document for cross-checking, which should also prove that the applicants had resided in the district for some time and not moved in only a short time before. If situation did not improve,

the EMB should consider requiring all applicants to take an oath and punishing parents who forged addresses for making false statement on oath. Separately, the EMB should thoroughly examine and verify all the information provided by the applicants in an attempt to identify suspected cases. Although the Legislative Council had vetoed the proposal to initiate criminal proceedings against parents who forged addresses for getting primary one places, since the situation was not what the EMB had anticipated, Members urged the EMB to revisit the idea of criminalising the practice of forging addresses for school admission.

KCDC's Work on the Promotion of "A Healthy Kowloon City"

10. The KCDC passed a resolution to elect the Chairman of the KCDC the Ex-officio Director of the Association for Building a Healthy Kowloon City Limited and appoint the Vice Chairman of the KCDC and Chairman of the Working Group on International Day of Disabled Persons to the Board of Directors and Executive Committee to engage in practical work. In addition, the KCDC passed a motion to earmark funds for subsidising the Association to promote the healthy city concept in the next financial year.

Kowloon City District Office

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