

Progress Report of the 23rd Meeting of the Kowloon City District Council

Purpose

This paper aims to report on the major issues discussed at the 23rd meeting of the Kowloon City District Council (KCDC) on 19 July 2007.

Work of the Hong Kong Observatory

2. The Director of the Hong Kong Observatory (D of HKO) told the meeting that the HKO planned to build a temperature monitoring station in the vicinity of the Lok Fu Fresh Water Service Reservoir, and it was striving to retain the weather stations at the fire station of the former Kai Tak Airport and at the end of the runway. The D of HKO added that the Tropical Cyclone Warning System would introduce new measures in 2007, which required that the HKO make reference to the data provided by the anemometer stations in various locations across the territory. If half or over half of the anemometer stations recorded or expected to record a certain wind speed that would be sustained, the HKO would issue the appropriate tropical cyclone warning signals depending on the circumstances. The HKO would also inform the public of localised areas vulnerable to strong winds through radio and television broadcasts.

3. Members expressed their views on the issue of global warming, the impacts of city planning on the environment and the correlation between air temperature and diseases. Members were divided on the HKO's proposal of retaining the weather stations at the former Kai Tak Airport. While some Members were concerned that data collected by the stations would be affected by the operation of the heliport and cruise terminal proposed to be built at the airport runway, others in support of retaining the stations suggested that the stations, in addition to its weather observation function, should be developed into a scenic spot for the pleasure of local residents and tourists alike.

Meeting the Secretary for Home Affairs

4. Members reflected their views to the Secretary for Home Affairs on a variety of issues. These included the absence of community halls in the district, clubs violating licensing conditions by blatantly entertaining non-members, inadequate support for social enterprises from the Government, and the provision of outdoor multi-purpose exercise equipment following the examples of the Mainland and Macau. As regards territory-wide issues, Members urged the Government to consider devolving the authority of the former Urban Council to District Councils (DCs) and abolishing the appointed seats of the DCs. On the promotion of national education, Members suggested that “hard sell” tactics should be avoided and the social networks built up by the District Offices be fully utilised. In addition, owners’ corporations and mutual aid committees should also be mobilised to produce more remarkable results.

Clinical Services in Kowloon City District

5. While some Members called upon the authorities to consider constructing a polyclinic in Kowloon City District, others suggested building a Chinese medicine clinic in the district, adding that if the request could not be met within a short time, the authorities should consider using public money to subsidise the Chinese medicine clinical services of the Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU) so that people at the grassroots level could use the services at low cost. The Hospital Authority (HA) said in response that although the setting up of polyclinics in individual districts would ease the pressure on hospitals, it had difficulty allocating resources for the operation of polyclinics due to limited resources and, therefore, had to further examine the proposal. Under the current plan, the HA would continue to look for a suitable location for a Chinese medicine clinic in Kowloon City District. Since the proposal of subsidising the Chinese medicine clinic of the HKBU did not fall within the ambit of the HA, it would convey the proposal to the Government for consideration.

Consultation Paper on the Proposed Project Scope of the Kai Tak Runway Park

6. The Leisure and Cultural Services Department told Members that an aviation-themed park with an area of 8.54 hectares was proposed to be built at the end

of the former runway. The park would provide such facilities as a large multi-purpose amphitheatre, children's playground, seaside promenade and cycling track. To hold laser extravaganzas at night, the park would also be provided with laser and optical fibre equipment. While Members supported the proposals, they opined that too many facilities would only spoil the beauty of the park and instead suggested that part of the facilities should be combined. In addition, to create a leisurely atmosphere which would enable both tourists and local residents to enjoy the scenic harbour view, facilities such as the cycling track that did not match well with the surroundings should not be built.

Proposed Fixed Penalty System for Smoking Offences

7. The Food and Health Bureau (FHB) briefed Members on the proposals for a fixed penalty system for smoking offences, which included information on penalty levels, enforcement procedures and the powers given to the enforcement departments. The FHB was preparing the drafting of the legislation with a view to introducing the bill to the Legislative Council in late 2007 or early 2008. While Members welcomed the fixed penalty system, they urged the relevant government departments to step up publicity of the locations of the designated smoking areas, aiming particularly at foreign visitors to warn them against smoking in non-designated areas.

Concern over the Unscrupulous Sales Tactics for Telecommunications Services and Subscription Television

8. Members remarked that the existing legislation was inadequate to prohibit salespeople from touting for business by deception. Currently, the police would view such complaints as commercial disputes and advise the parties concerned and the service providers to settle the disputes themselves. Unfortunately, even if people were deceived into using the services, they had to overcome innumerable difficulties before they could terminate the contracts with the service providers. In response, the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau said that the Television and Entertainment Licensing Authority had contacted the subscription television company against which many people had complained recently and learned that the company

had provided additional channels for terminating contracts on its website. It was believed that the situation would improve. With regard to the suggestion that Section 7M of the Telecommunications Ordinance should be extended to cover subscription television services, the Government pledged to give it consideration when the legislation was later reviewed. Since legislative amendment took considerable time, the authorities would initiate the “Consumer Dispute Adjudication Scheme” first to deal with disputes over telecommunications service contracts and would consider extending the scheme to subscription television services in future.

Custodian Fees for Mandatory Provident Fund Too High

9. Members pointed out that it had been six years since the Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) Scheme was introduced and the money accumulated was enormous. They were concerned that since most approved MPF trustees charged exorbitant management fees, the accrued benefits of employees would be directly eroded and the retirement protection effect of the MPF substantially reduced. As such, Members considered that opening up the market and introducing more competition into the sector would prove to be an effective market force to bring the fees down to a reasonable level. Furthermore, they suggested that employees should have the right to choose their own MPF trustees and the trustees should roll out simple deposit funds and provide more options for the consumer. The Mandatory Provident Fund Authority (MPFA) said in response that it was studying the feasibility of allowing employees to choose their own MPF trustees as proposed by Members. Its initial plan was to enable employees to transfer their accrued benefits to other MPF trustees once a year. Meanwhile, the MPFA was consulting the industry on the proposals and preliminary options were expected in late 2007.

Kowloon City District Office
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