

Progress Report of the 24th Meeting of the Kowloon City District Council

Purpose

This paper aims to report on the major issues discussed at the 24th meeting of the Kowloon City District Council (KCDC) on 6 September 2007.

Green Paper on Constitutional Development

2. While all KCDC Members agreed that the aim of Hong Kong's constitutional development was the implementation of "dual universal suffrage", they were divided over whether the Chief Executive (CE) and all members of the Legislative Council (LegCo) should be elected by universal suffrage in 2012. Some Members considered that since the Central Government so far had not explicitly rejected the proposal of implementing "dual universal suffrage" in 2012, the Hong Kong Government should draw up a timetable as soon as possible with a view to implementing "dual universal suffrage" in 2012. However, many other Members opined that the Government should not push through constitutional arrangements rashly because they were of extreme importance to Hong Kong. In addition, arrangements for the CE election and the LegCo election should not be bound together lest alternative options would be limited. Members further remarked that simple goals should be achieved first before the more difficult ones in constitutional development, which meant that the CE should first be elected by universal suffrage not later than 2017 based on the two premises of gradual and orderly progress and balanced participation. Only after the Government had gained experience from the universal suffrage for the CE election and perfected the relevant arrangements should universal suffrage for the LegCo election be implemented.

Progress of the Hung Hom District Study and Briefing on Stage 2 Public Engagement Programme

3. Members said that although some proposals in the Hung Hom District Study needed further consideration, on the whole, the Government had found the right direction. Proposals for building a new Urban Park and a waterfront plaza and setting aside more land for commercial offices, hotels and alfresco dining in Hung Hom would strike the right balance between residents' requests for more green areas and the need to boost commercial activity and sustainable development in the whole district.

Meeting the Director of Health

4. The Director of Health (D of Health) briefed Members on the organisation and work of the Department of Health (DH) and explained in detail its dental services, the work of the Centre for Health Protection and DH's work objectives for 2007. These included tobacco control, communicable disease control, amending the International Health Regulations, preventing the outbreak of influenza, regulating medical equipment, and promoting organ donation and healthy eating. Members put forward a number of proposals to the D of Health, including allocating more resources to provide dental services for the elderly, setting up a woman health centre, enabling more people to enjoy free influenza vaccine, and deploying additional staff to the Tobacco Control Office for inspection work. Other Members further suggested that the DH should tighten the regulation of beauty parlours and make reference to the US practice of taking administrative measures to ban unhealthy food (popularly known as "junk food") in schools to improve teenagers' health.

Grave Concern over Substantial Fare Increases by the Star Ferry Company Limited

5. While Members understood that the Star Ferry Company Limited (Star Ferry) had to increase fares due to operational losses in successive years, they were appalled at the enormous fare increase of 23%. Members requested the Star Ferry to consider other options for increasing revenues, for instance, renting out vacant land at the pier and introducing concessionary fares for bus-ferry feeder services to attract more residents to use the services when travelling to Hong Kong Island. The Transport Department said in response that before a rational decision was made, it would carefully assess and balance factors such as the operational costs and revenues of the Star Ferry, estimates of changes in returns, performance of other similar ferry services, public acceptability for fare increase and measures adopted by the Star Ferry to earn more incomes and cut down expenditures.

Kowloon City District Office
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