

## **Progress Report of the 9th Meeting of the Kowloon City District Council**

### **Purpose**

This paper aims to report on the major issues discussed at the 9th meeting of the Kowloon City District Council (KCDC) on 17 March 2005.

### **The Fourth Report of the Constitutional Development Task Force**

2. The Secretary for Constitutional Affairs (SCA) attended the meeting and briefed Members on the Fourth Report of the Constitutional Development Task Force. The Report summarised the views and proposals of members of the community on the methods for electing the Chief Executive in 2007 and for forming the Legislative Council in 2008. SCA noted Members' views on the Report.

### **Land Formation Works for the Proposed Primary School on Inverness Road**

3. The Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) consulted the KCDC on the land formation works on a site on Inverness Road. Under the current plan, a school building would be constructed on the site to accommodate old schools which had to be relocated, or demolished or bisessional schools which would convert to whole-day schooling. Members asked whether the works would cause noise and air pollution or traffic impacts to the schools nearby. They were also concerned that building new schools in the district would aggravate the problem of under-enrolment in primary schools, thus putting more primary schools at risk of closure. In addition, Members opined that since there were as yet no comprehensive development plans for the area around Inverness Road, it was not inadvisable to develop a particular site into school premises under such uncertain circumstances. They worried that the learning environment in schools would be seriously affected if large-scale development works were carried out in the vicinity during school hours.

4. The KCDC, therefore, did not agree to the EMB's plan to construct a new school building on the Inverness Road site. The KCDC suggested that the EMB collect more information and submit another paper with more details of the proposal for Members' reconsideration. In addition, the KCDC requested the Planning Department (PlanD) and the Lands Department (LandsD) to discuss with it the land use planning for the area around Inverness Road, and to explain why the site was designated for no other uses than school premises.

## **Subsidiary Legislation under the Dangerous Goods Ordinance – Legislative Process**

5. The Fire Services Department (FSD) briefed Members on the Dangerous Goods (Amendment) Bill (the Bill). The FSD pointed out that the existing Dangerous Goods Ordinance (the Ordinance) dated back to as early as 1956, and since enormous social changes had taken place over the past 50 years, some provisions had become obsolete or lagged behind the international standards. As such, the Government had proposed amendments to the Ordinance, which were modelled on the International Maritime Dangerous Goods Code. The Bill took into account the fact that there were only 400 specified categories of dangerous goods in Hong Kong, far less than the 2200 categories specified in the international standards. Furthermore, the Bill also catered for the need to regulate road transportation of dangerous goods other than those in Class I, II and V as evidenced in the cyanide-spilling incident on Tai Po Road.

6. Members were pleased that the proposed amendments would bring Hong Kong's standards in line with the international ones and would help combat the illegal storage and sale of fuel oil in residential areas. Members urged that after the Ordinance was amended and penalties increased, the Government should step up law enforcement in order to have the desired deterrent effect.

## **Maps Must Show Clear Directions**

7. Members remarked that early this year when a local resident had an accident on the Fat Kwong Street jogging and fitness trail in Kowloon City, the rescue operation was delayed since no one present at the scene could report the exact location. Members urged the LandsD to consider the inclusion of named places in its maps. The LandsD explained that as long as a particular place had a nameplate at the actual site, it would be included in their database for mapping purposes. The Kowloon City District Office (KCDO) said that the KCDC had arranged earlier to set up directional signs on the trail concerned. The installation works were due to complete by April this year, and the LandsD would be notified in due course.

8. With a view to giving names to places in remote areas, KCDC Members would carry out inspections in their respective constituencies and submit a list of named places to the KCDO. It was hoped that, with the assistance of the property owners or the departments concerned, directional signs could be provided in those places, so that people seeking help could report their exact locations according to the information on the signs.

### **Vice Offences Suspected in Thai Restaurants and Concern over the Problem of Gambling in the District**

9. Members suspected that gigolo service was provided in a few Thai lounges in the district and this might affect the image of other law-abiding Thai restaurants. In addition, gambling was rampant in the park at the junction of To Kwa Wan Road and Chi Kiang Street. Members suspected that those illegal activities were controlled by someone behind the scenes, and urged the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) to step up patrol and take enforcement actions.

10. The HKPF said in response that they had made surprise visits to the Thai lounges in question at different times of the day and, together with the Immigration Department, inspected the lounges to check whether illegal immigrants / residents were employed. No one was arrested in the inspections. From their observations, the persons in control of those lounges only provided venues for customers to carry out ordinary social activities. There was no evidence so far to show that those lounges had been engaging in any illegal practices. The HKPF would keep a close watch on those lounges and send undercover policemen disguised as customers to observe how they did business there.

11. The HKPF had taken enforcement actions in the park concerned and arrested a few suspects. They believed the gang behind the gambling activities had been rooted out, but they would continue to pay close attention to illegal gambling in the park through regular inspections. The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) undertook to consider Members' suggestion that, to follow the successful example at Hoi Sham Park, closed-circuit television monitors should be installed in the park in question to deter illegal gamblers.

### **Land Use of the Former Site of the Valley Road Estate**

12. Members pointed out that the former site of the Valley Road Estate in Ho Man Tin, which had originally been planned for redevelopment, would no longer be used for constructing public housing or Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) estates. Instead, the site would be put on the Application List for land sale and sold to developers by auction. Since there were many public housing estates aged over 30 to 40 years in the district, if the site was sold to private developers, no government land would be available to build public housing estates for local rehousing of tenants affected by redevelopment. Therefore, Members requested that the site be retained for the development of public housing or HOS estates.

13. The PlanD remarked that the site was zoned for Residential (Group A) use, which meant it could be used for the development of private residential properties or public housing / HOS estates. The LandsD added that the site would be leased out on short term tenancy to raise public revenues before a specific use was decided on. The Housing Department (HD) explained that apart from the public housing estate redevelopment projects in Shek Kip Mei and Wong Chuk Hang, the Housing Authority (HA) currently had no such redevelopment plans for Kowloon City and other districts. The final decision on the land use of the site would rest with the Housing, Planning and Lands Bureau.

#### **Humid Weather Poses a Threat to Us**

14. Residents reflected that humid weather had caused household electrical appliances to malfunction or even catch fire. As a precaution, Members suggested that the Government step up publicity and take appropriate measures to regulate electrical appliances before the next wet season. The Hong Kong Observatory said that, in principle, it was feasible to send out alert messages on weather report programmes, reminding the public to take necessary precautions. However, since the airtime for weather reports was rather short, detailed instructions could not be given. Therefore, Members' proposal had to be considered further before it could be implemented. The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) said that Safety Guidelines for Household Electrical Appliances had been drawn up for manufacturers' reference in accordance with the requirements laid down by the International Electronics Committee and the safety codes of other countries, particularly those in the subtropical region. The EMSD was still investigating the accidents caused by malfunctioning electrical appliances.

#### **Immediate Measures Required to Address the Problem of Poverty and Setting Up a Working Group on Poverty under the KCDC**

15. Members pointed out that the disparity between the rich and the poor had become more serious in recent years. According to the census figures by constituencies for 2001, the wealth gap in some aging communities such as Hung Hom and To Kwa Wan could not be taken lightly. To improve the livelihood of the poor, Members suggested that a working group on poverty be set up under the KCDC to coordinate manpower and resources in district anti-poverty efforts through their network within the district.

16. Having been briefed by the Social Welfare Department and the EMB on

various government services currently available to the vulnerable group, Members were satisfied with the basic assistance provided by the Government for those who could not support themselves. Since the newly-established Combat Poverty Committee was still exploring the issue, there were as yet no clear anti-poverty policies or programmes which could serve as a reference point for the KCDC. Members agreed that since there was no urgency to set up a working group on poverty, they would revisit the matter in future KCDC meetings after the Combat Poverty Committee released more relevant information.

**Kowloon City District Office**

**April 2005**