

Major Discussion Items of the 3rd Meeting of the Kowloon City District Council

Purpose

This paper aims to report on the major issues discussed at the 3rd meeting of the Kowloon City District Council (KCDC) on 27 March 2008.

Meeting with the Director of Fire Services

2. The Director of Fire Services gave an account of the change in the work and service of the Fire Services Department (FSD) in the past two decades when attending the meeting of the KCDC. Despite limited resources, the FSD had continuously upgraded the quality of service by making a flexible use of resources and “doing more with less”. The Director also revealed in the meeting the problems encountered when salvaging the sunken Ukraine supply vessel and the latest progress of the work. Members expressed appreciation for the efficiency of the FSD in providing rescue and emergency services. They further commended the efforts of the department in “doing more with less” as well as bringing in new concepts of serving the community to keep abreast of time.

Approved Hung Hom Outline Zoning Plan

3. Members welcomed the proposed amendments introduced by the Planning Department (PlanD) which specified the height restriction for buildings in sites with different land use in the district so as to materialize the policy of erecting low-rise buildings along the seafront with building height ascending towards inland area to display a stepped height profile. A number of Members added that residents within the district still had opinions on the proposed height of buildings and it was hoped that the PD could take into consideration the public opinion and further lower the maximum height restriction for buildings. However, a Member voiced out his worries about the strong request of the vested interests for restricting the permissible development height of buildings in the district because the restriction would reduce the incentives of the developer to purchase aged buildings for redevelopment. In the end, property owners in the lower strata could only place their hope on reconstruction by the Urban Renewal Authority. This would be detrimental to the overall development of local community.

4. The PlanD explained that the building height, which was the minimum computed on the basis of the plot ratio of the site, was set after seeking the advice of

the Architectural Services Department, with the aim of ensuring the enjoyment of a maximum of plot ratio by property owners in case of land development in future. The request of Members could spark criticisms from property owners, who would claim that the Government deprived them of private development rights. For the existing building which created the wall effect, a special plan was made. Only a low-rise building could be erected in future redevelopment to eliminate the effect.

Concern over the Abuse of the Protection of Wages on Insolvency Fund

5. Members noted that a spate of incidents involving closure of restaurants had taken place recently with the restaurant owners failing to discharge their obligations on wage payment. Some even absconded after fraudulently making out dishonoured cheques to their employees. Consequently, the Protection of Wages on Insolvency Fund had to pay the wages in arrears to the employees for these employers. Members proposed that, to deter restaurant owners from employing such practices, the Government should plug legal loopholes and impose heavier punishment. Also, the police should actively follow up the suspected cases of fraud so as to bring unlawful elements to justice.

Insufficient School Places for Children of Ethnic Minority Groups in the District

6. Members were aware that there were only more than ten schools in Hong Kong operating for children of ethnic minorities. As school places were insufficient to meet the demand, this indirectly caused the children to study in schools in other districts. The Education Bureau (EdB) expressed that continuous support was given to the schools which mainly enrolled non-local students in order to strengthen the education for non-Chinese speaking students. The EdB also worked hard to provide support to these schools in the hope that with accumulated professional experience, the schools could become pillars in the field and would share with other schools for non-Chinese speaking students their experience through the support network established. The EdB would consider the distribution of the schools to ensure that the needs of non-Chinese speaking students in all districts would be satisfied. Moreover, it was planned that the number of these schools would be increased to 25 in the next two years.

Development of Digital Terrestrial Television Broadcast

7. Members were informed of the plan of the Government to develop digital terrestrial television broadcasting. As digital broadcasting reception required of partial modification of the communal aerial system of a building and the purchase of set-top

boxes, Members urged the Government to consider subsidizing low income families once the decision of terminating analogue broadcasting was made so as to ensure a smooth transition to a new era of digital broadcasting. In addition, Members said that quite a number of engineering companies misled owners' corporations into replacing the whole rather than part of the aerial system while carrying out modification work for buildings. It was hoped that the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau would follow up suspected fraud cases.

Kowloon City District Council Secretariat

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