

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 21 January 2011.

Visit of the Director of Home Affairs

Putting in Place a Regulatory Framework for Property Management Industry

2. The Director of Home Affairs shared her views about civil affairs with Members and introduced the main points in the Consultation Paper for “Putting in Place a Regulatory Framework for Property Management Industry”. During the discussion, Members raised the following proposals / opinions for the consideration of the Home Affairs Department (HAD):

- (a) to adopt a multi-tier licensing regime for overseeing property management companies (PMCs) of different sizes;
- (b) to publicise the importance of proper management of buildings and to encourage property owners to employ PMCs;
- (c) to establish an independent statutory body to govern the property management industry;
- (d) to monitor buildings without owners’ corporations and mutual aid committees and to consider subsidizing occupants to engage PMCs as well as inviting professionals to handle maintenance, repairs and management of buildings;
- (e) to allocate more resources to strengthen the training of frontline workers in order to help residents to solve problems related to property management;
- (f) to lower the threshold for the grant of licences so as to prevent the monopoly of large PMCs;
- (g) to explore the possibility of co-operating with non-profit making organisations to co-ordinate property management work in old districts; and
- (h) to regulate the charges of PMCs to ensure that such charges would not be increased on the ground of implementation of new policy.

3. In response, the Director of Home Affairs said that the functions of the regulatory body to be set up would probably include establishing a code of conduct / practice, setting out licensing requirements, dealing with complaints, prescribing penalties for breach of conduct / practice, revoking or suspending licences etc. When establishing the regulatory system, the Government would follow the directive principle to avoid the monopoly of large PMCs so as to allow newcomers to join the industry. The Department would strive to assist owners' corporations to manage their buildings as in the past and to strengthen staff training to enhance the efficiency of frontline workers in providing assistance.

Meeting with the Permanent Secretary for Education

4. Members welcomed the Permanent Secretary for Education to the meeting to briefly introduce the policy of the Education Bureau (EB). During the discussion, Members raised various proposals / opinions for the consideration of the EB:

- (a) to obtain more resources to develop tertiary education so as to ensure that local students would not have less chances of pursuing study in universities due to the shift of focus to the need of mainlanders as well as to invite more world class institutions to establish unique private universities in Hong Kong;
- (b) the youth nowadays were over protected and lacked of education for coping with adversities and the Government should strengthen civic education and to address the problem of youngsters becoming obsessed with the Internet;
- (c) various subjects under the New Senior Secondary Curriculum (NSSC) consisted of project learning and school-based assessment and this posed heavy pressure on teachers and students and thus, it was hoped that the authority would defer the implementation of school-based assessment;
- (d) in view of the undesirable prospect of students with associate degree and their lack of ability to repay loans, it was proposed that top-up degree places for the students should be increased and courses meeting vocational needs should be offered to improve their employment opportunities;
- (e) to apply a flexible adjustment mechanism to the number of students per class according to the change in school-age population so as to prevent a

large amount of teachers from leaving the profession;

- (f) to strengthen the supervision of private tutorial centres particularly those operating at old tenement buildings in order to guarantee the safety of students and the quality of education;
- (g) to tackle the problem of children of Hong Kong returnees not eligible for the CA and the shortage of school places in international schools;
- (h) the EB should allocate more resources to establish schools for ethnic minorities to study;
- (i) to consider the provision of hostels at some public schools to reduce the hardship of cross-boundary students;
- (j) the previous Secondary School Entrance Examination (SSEE) was the best way of allocating school places as it allowed outstanding students to choose schools in other districts and hence, creating chances of moving up the social ladder; and
- (k) it was hoped that the EB would follow up the problem of parents reporting false address to help their children to win places at prestigious schools at POA School Net no. 41 in Kowloon City via district-based allocation.

5. The Permanent Secretary for Education in reply said that a situational approach should be adopted in educating students to cope with adversities and thus, the EB decided to implement project learning throughout academic years. She was glad to know that Members expressed support to the aim of implementing the 3-3-4 curriculum and the NSSC. As to the view that the system would impose additional pressure to teachers and students, she said only 12 subjects involved project learning and the schools could design the curriculum on their own having regard to the ability of teachers and students. On the proposal of offering courses meeting vocational needs, she emphasized that the goal of tertiary education was not to prepare students for employment but to elevate their humanistic quality. The EB was studying the possibility of increasing top-up degree places at the third or fourth years of study in universities for students with associate degree and at the same time conducting consultation on bettering the Non-means-tested Loan Scheme and the Financial Assistance Scheme for Post-secondary Students. The decrease in school-age population drew much attention of the EB, but as the school would be reluctant to increase the teacher-student ratio once it was lowered, the EB would seek a better solution. Regarding the supervision of private tutorial centres and piano companies, the Secretary hoped that there were enough staff to carry out the work but meanwhile,

it would be difficult to do the inspection one by one, and yet parents could report suspected cases of illegal operation to the Consumer Council and the media. Besides, she clarified that children of Hong Kong returnees were eligible for the Central Allocation (CA) and the EB was considering to give economic incentives to help create more places at international schools. The Secretary was of the view that the minorities studying at local schools would have more chances to learn the Chinese language and thus, better integrate into local communities. As regards the opinion of the SSEE being the best system of places allocation, she said the Government abolished the examination with a view to reducing the pressure of primary school pupils and it would not be appropriate to reintroduce the system again. Lastly, the EB would seriously combat the problem of reporting the false address for the CA. Besides requiring parents to make a declaration on the primary one application form, verification would be carried out and the place allocated withdrawn if false report of address was proved.

Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme (Batch II)

Revitalisation of Stone Houses

6. The revitalisation of Stone Houses, a project item of the Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme (Batch II), was undertaken by Wing Kwong So-care Company Limited (WKSCL) as selected, with an estimated cost of HK\$30.8 million. The representative from WKSCL introduced the main points of the project at the meeting:

- (a) the project aimed at restoring the old look of the Stone Houses and revitalising the site of “Ho Ka Yuen”; new design and green elements would be blended into the project to achieve the objective of conservation;
- (b) a café was built with nostalgia as the theme and a Labyrinth was constructed at the open space outside; board games and catering would be provided in the café and various courses would be organised at the multi-purpose activity room for fun and leisure for the youth;
- (c) it was planned to create 11 full-time and at least 6 part-time jobs; the visitors in the first year was estimated to be 55,000, the second year 73,000 and the third year 85,000; and
- (d) the Stone Houses would be formally opened in 2013 in view of the progress of works; the Government would finance approximately

HK\$2.33 million in the first two years and a fiscal balance would be achieved in the third year.

7. Upon discussion, Members expressed concern about the positioning of the project and were anxious that the revenue of the café alone would not be sufficient to offset the expenditure. So they advised the WKSCL to review the market strategy. Members also observed that Sung Wong Toi and Hau Wong Temple were in the proximity of the Stone Houses and thus, they urged the Development Bureau (DB) to consider linking up the historic relics in hopes of strengthening the heritage conservation with the “point-line-plane” approach.

8. The representative from the DB stressed that when selecting a non-profit making organisation as the co-organiser, the key factors of consideration included the conservation programme and the operation plan, plus the scale and the operational efficiency of the organisation. To ensure the smooth running of the project according to the proposed plan and the financial stability of the organisation, the EB would also exercise close supervision by studying regularly the financial statements and the five-year plan as well as making frequent visits to monitor its daily operation. In adopting the “point-line-plane” approach for conservation, WKSCL proposed to set up a tourist service centre at the Stone Houses to inform tourists various points of interest in Kowloon City to facilitate conservation at peripheral area. Upon hearing the information provided by the DB and WKSCL, Members raised no objection to the project but they requested the representatives to deliberate their suggestions with a view to enhancing the plan for the benefit of residents in Kowloon City.

Kowloon City District Office
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