

Summary of the Minutes of the 6th Meeting of Sha Tin District Council (2009 Session)

The 6th meeting of Sha Tin District Council (STDC) (2009 session) was held on 26 November 2009. The major issues discussed are summarized below:

Visit of Permanent Secretary for Education to STDC

2. Permanent Secretary for Education briefly introduced the work of Education Bureau (EB), the education reform and future work focus.

3. Questions were raised on the promotion of national education, mainland students pursuing study in Hong Kong, the development of education services, the study on students' comprehension, the implementation of small class teaching for both primary and secondary schools, the impact of 334-academic structure, fine tuning the medium of instructions in secondary schools, the space reserved for tertiary institution at the property development above Tai Wai Station, the indecent conduct of teachers and principals, moral education and drug problem of students, pressure on teachers, implementation of electronic teaching, the application of research studies for the implementation of policies, the progress of small class teaching and reducing the number of classes for secondary schools in Sha Tin and the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme.

4. Regarding the promotion of national education, the Permanent Secretary for Education replied that grants were allocated to reinforce the exchange with the Mainland by arranging more tours for students and teachers. Talks on various aspects of the development of China were organized for teachers. A sister-school scheme was implemented to liaise with schools in Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen. He said that Chinese History was not a compulsory subject in the upper secondary but a subject with minimum teaching hours for lower secondary. Another representative of EB replied that three schools in Shenzhen would open primary courses based on Hong Kong syllabus and students could be allocated to secondary schools in Hong Kong. Consideration would also be given on the possibility of extending the courses to secondary school for allowing these students to attend the examination of the new secondary school diploma. He added that apart from enrolling mainland students to the universities in Hong Kong through the Joint University Programmes Admission System, non-local courses for mainland students would also be provided in the future to reinforce the status of Hong Kong as an educational hub. He explained that consensus had been reached with Shenzhen Government to develop the river loop area into a higher education centre.

5. He further said that discussions were held with overseas education authorities on the

recognition of the new Hong Kong Diploma Secondary Education Examination and accreditation had been obtained from Australia. During the implementation of 334-academic structure, various channels for further study were provided, such as Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education and Yijin Project. He clarified that the study on students' comprehension was conducted by an independent international education organization, while the report of Hong Kong Examination Authority only stated the mistakes made by students for assisting schools to improve teaching. Apart from achieving better academic results, he emphasized that a balanced-programme was more important for the all round development of students. Although there was no plan to implement small class teaching in secondary schools at present, resources were allocated for group teaching. For the space reserved at the property development above Tai Wai, he remarked that a self-financed tertiary institution would be established to satisfy the demand in the long run, however, the bureau was willing to discuss the issue with District Council. Regarding the moral and civic education, he said that it was important to reinforce a positive value system for students. As for the indecent acts of teachers and principals, he remarked that the cases would be handled strictly according to the existing mechanism.

6. He added that an ad hoc committee was set up to study the development of electronic teaching and a pilot scheme would be conducted in selected schools. Software would be developed with a central data base to provide teaching material for teachers. For the pressure on teachers, he said that there was a committee responsible for dealing with the problems faced by teachers and recommendations like reducing student to teacher ratio and additional manpower for the 334-academic structure would be implemented. He emphasized that the implementation of any policy would take into consideration of various studies and opinions from the concerned sector. Regarding the situation in Sha Tin, he said that 27 primary schools did implement small class teaching, which was 71% of the total primary schools within the district. Owing to the allocation of resources, a comprehensive review had to be conducted on the proposal of reducing the classes of secondary schools from 5 to 4. He said that the voucher scheme for pre-primary education was aimed at relieving the financial burden of parents. Private kindergartens were free to make decision in joining the voucher scheme. The target of having all kindergarten teachers attained education certificate was to improve teacher quality and those who failed to attain the qualification by 2012 would be handled with flexibility. Lastly, he said that the school drug test in Tai Po District was a pilot scheme and further consultation would be conducted for a wider implementation.

Labour and Welfare Bureau and Labour Department – Briefing on Minimum Wage Bill

7. Assistant Commissioner for Labour briefly introduced the paper on Minimum Wage

Bill.

8. Some members asked about the measure to protect the employment of the underprivileged, the progress of the survey on minimum wage and formulating the minimum wage according to different trades and sectors.

9. Assistant Commissioner for Labour replied that the survey on minimum wage was expected to complete by the first quarter of 2010 which would be submitted to the Provisional Minimum Wage Commission for consideration. He emphasized that the Administration was very concerned with the effect of minimum wage on the underprivileged and would ensure a sensible balance between forestalling excessively low wages and minimizing the loss of low-paid jobs while sustaining Hong Kong's economic growth and competitiveness. However, the effect could only be assessed after the implementation of minimum wage. He said that the minimum wage would be applicable to different trades and sectors. He also explained that the assessment on the production ability was specially arranged for the physically handicapped after taking into consideration of their disability. He added that Labour Department would provide various kinds of employment service for job seekers, such as Youth Pre-employment Training Programme cum Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme and the Employment Programme for the Middle-aged.

Visit of Legislative Council Member, Hon. IP Kwok-him to STDC

10. Hon. IP Kwok-him reported his work in the Legislative Council (Legco), including legislation formulation, budget approval and monitoring the Government. He added that efforts had been made with the chairman of 18 District Councils to strive for more resources for district councilors.

11. Questions were raised by members on drug problem, fringe benefits of district councilors, difficulties encountered by district improvement works, lacking of assistance from Legco members in solving the traffic problem in Sha Tin and reviewing the operation of District Council after expanding its function.

12. Hon. IP Kwok-him replied that the problem encountered by district improvement works would be followed up with Home Affairs Department (HAD). He said that district issues and requests referred by District Councilors to the Legco were handled by a subcommittee under the Legco. Regarding the honorarium and allowances of district councilors, he said that both Home Affairs Bureau and HAD were informed and a study was carrying out by the Independent Commission on Remuneration for Members of the District Councils. He agreed that interdepartmental cooperation was required to handle youth drug problem and would reflect members' view to SB.

Confirmation of the Minutes of the 5th Meeting held on 24 September 2009

13. The Council endorsed the minutes of the above meeting.

Revised Estimates of STDC as at 17 November 2009

Financial Account of STDC as at 17 November 2009

14. The Council noted the above papers.

Reports of District Facilities Management Committee, Culture, Sports & Community Development Committee, Development and Housing Committee, Education and Welfare Committee, Health and Environment Committee and Finance and General Affairs Committee

15. The Council noted the above reports.

Report of Traffic and Transport Committee

16. The Council endorsed the appointment of Ms. WONG Ping-fan as co-opted member of the Traffic and Transport Committee.

Question put forward by Ms. WONG Mo-tai on Sha Tin District Youth Drug Abuse Problem

17. Ms. WONG further asked about the number of drug dealer in Ma On Shan and the participation rate of students and parents in the School Drug Test Pilot Scheme in Tai Po.

18. Representative of Security Bureau (SB) replied that 52 briefings were held in Tai Po in the past one month for parents and students whom were required to return a consent letter on 16 November. Therefore, the exact figure would only be available after receiving the consent letters. Another representative of SB added that a study on the pilot scheme would be conducted to improve the scheme for the possibility of a wider implementation. Representative of Hong Kong Police Force replied that from January to 30 October 2009, 60 drug cases were handled by the police in Ma On Shan and 15 of them were drug trafficking.

19. A member remarked that individual school intended to join the pilot scheme could apply for grants from the Beat Drugs Fund. She added that a television drama produced by Television Broadcasts Limited, as commissioned by the Narcotics Division of SB and the

Action Committee Against Narcotics, would be broadcasted in mid December to disseminate anti-drug message.

Report of the District Management Committee

20. The Council noted the above report.

Next Meeting

21. The next meeting would be held at 2:30 p.m. on 21 January 2010.