

**Minutes of the Fifth Meeting of
District Facilities and Works Committee of the
Seventh Term of the Central and Western District Council**

Date : 12 September 2024 (Thursday)
Time : 10:00 am
Venue : Conference Room
14/F, Harbour Building
38 Pier Road, Central, Hong Kong

Present:

Chairman

Mr YIP Wing-shing, SBS, BBS, MH, JP

Vice-chairman

Mr IP Yik-nam, JP

Members

Dr WONG Sin-man, Mandy
Mr NG Yin
Mr LUI Hung-pan
Mr LEE Chi-hang, Sidney, MH
Mr QIU Song-qing, MH
Ms JIN Ling, MH
Mr SHIH Jan Noel
Mr WU Man-hin
Dr ZHANG Zong
Ms CHEUNG Ka-yan
Dr CHAN Kin-keung, Eugene, SBS, BBS, JP
Dr FUNG Kar-leung
Mr YOUNG Chit-on, Jeremy
Mr YEUNG Hoi-wing
Mr YEUNG Hok-ming, MH
Ms CHIU Wah-kuen, MH
Mr LAU Tin-ching
Mr LAW Kam-fai

Co-opted Members

Mr YU Hok-lai
Ms TAM Suet-yan, Sharon

Guests:

Item 3

Mr LAM Kin-fai Senior Structural Engineer/Site Monitoring (B),
Buildings Department
Ms Bella FAN Assistant Director of Estates, The University of Hong
Kong

In Attendance:

Miss TANG Chui-kwan, Constance Acting Senior Executive Officer (District
Council)/Executive Officer I (District Council),
Central and Western District Office
Mr WONG Ka-hei, Daniel Senior Executive Officer (District Management), Central
and Western District Office
Mr WONG Ka-chun, Tommy Executive Officer (District Management)1, Central and
Western District Office
Miss LUK Ka-man, Carmen Executive Officer (District Management)2, Central and
Western District Office
Ms LEE Suk-han Chief Leisure Manager (HKW), Leisure and Cultural
Services Department
Ms LO Man-nin, Patty District Leisure Manager (Central & Western), Leisure
and Cultural Services Department
Ms HUNG Yik-man, Fiona Deputy District Leisure Manager (District Support)
Central & Western, Leisure and Cultural Services
Department
Ms CHAN Suk-ha Senior Librarian (Central & Western), Leisure and
Cultural Services Department
Mr LI Yiu-kwan Librarian (City Hall Public Library) Lending, Leisure and
Cultural Services Department
Mr YUEN Wai-ki Senior Engineer/7(S), Civil Engineering and
Development Department
Mr YEUNG Wai-shing, Wilson Engineer/W1, Drainage Services Department
Mr HO Hon-tung District Engineer/West, Highways Department

Secretary

Mr HO Kai-yin Executive Assistant (District Council)7, Central and
Western District Office

Opening Remarks

The Chairman said that as the quorum was reached, he announced that the fifth meeting of the District Facilities and Works Committee (DFWC) of the Seventh Term of the Central and Western District Council (C&WDC) would begin and welcomed the attendees to the meeting. He welcomed, on behalf of the DFWC, Mr YU Hok-lai and Ms TAM Suet-yan, two Co-opted Members who recently joined this Committee, to the meeting. Their terms of office would

last until 31 December 2025. The Chairman said that in order to identify the attendees, staff of the Secretariat would check the staff cards of every person entering the Conference Room and obtain their respective business cards. Media reporters and assistants to Members should register their real names and mobile phone numbers for the Secretariat’s record. In addition, he suggested that each discussion item should be proceeded in the format of “four-minute question-and-answer inclusive” for a more effective discussion. Representatives present were reminded to deliver speeches and give responses as concise as possible. The Chairman reminded Members to pay attention to and make appropriate declarations of interest where necessary.

Item 1: Confirmation of the minutes of the fourth meeting of District Facilities and Works Committee held on 11 July 2024

(10:01 am)

2. The Chairman said that the Secretariat did not receive before this meeting any suggested amendments of the minutes (draft) of the fourth DFWC meeting. Since Members present did not raise any other suggested amendments regarding the minutes (draft), the Chairman announced that the minutes concerned were confirmed.

Item 2: Chairman’s report

(10:02 am)

3. The Chairman said that there were no items to report.

Discussion Item

Item 3: Concern over alleged non-conformity at the construction site of HKU Pokfield Campus

(C&W DFWC Paper No. 35/2024)

(10:02 am – 10:51 am)

4. The Chairman welcomed representatives of the Buildings Department (BD) and The University of Hong Kong (HKU) to the meeting. He invited the representative of HKU to give a presentation on the Pokfield Campus development.

5. Representative of HKU said that located opposite to Pokfield Road Bus Terminus, the project site was an extension of the Main Campus and the Centennial Campus of HKU. The entire development was divided into three phases: the new academic building for the Faculty of Business and Economics and a multi-purpose sports centre in phase one, residence for staff and visitors in phase two, as well as a teaching and conference centre in phase three. At

present, piling and formation works at the site were in progress and the three student halls of HKU located on the same lot as the site were still in operation. The site was adjacent to Caritas Mok Cheung Sui Kun Community Centre and St Charles School, as well as University Heights and other residential developments at Pokfield Road. As the media and the public were concerned about the operational irregularities at the site, she would like to take the opportunity of this meeting to explain the on-site safety inspection system implemented by the university where it would, at the statutory level, assign suitable technical staff for periodic inspections at the site. Any irregularities identified would be recorded at the site and these records would be readily available for scrutiny by the government departments and other project staff. Also, the Site Monitoring Section of the BD and other relevant departments would conduct site inspections as and when necessary. At the works level, HKU Estates Office, HKU Resident Clerk of Works and HKU Safety Office would monitor the site together. In addition to having daily site inspections, the consultant team comprised of architects, structural engineers, resident engineers and resident clerks of works would also conduct weekly safety inspections. Should any issues with a particularly high risk be identified, a safety adjustment plan would be formulated. Furthermore, the consultant team, HKU Estates Office and HKU Safety Office would deploy its staff to conduct a safety inspection every month. As regards the operational mode, a safety plan would be formulated by the university based on the needs of the site prior to commencement of the works, which would be approved by the consultant team and HKU Safety Office, as well as adjusted in accordance with the work progress. Meanwhile, daily inspections would be conducted to ensure that safety standards of the site were executed in accordance with the formulated plan and the relevant statutory requirements. Apart from daily site inspections, she added that weekly inspections would also be carried out at the statutory level. If irregularities were identified, immediate consideration would be given as to whether they would constitute a serious safety issue. Should there be an imminent danger, the contractor would be notified under the highest standard and a Non-conformity and Rectification Report (hereinafter referred to as "Form B") would be issued. In the absence of an immediate danger, a site memorandum would be issued as a reminder for the contractor to rectify the irregularities. In the event where the contractor failed to rectify the irregularities in a timely manner upon issuance of a site memorandum, the monitoring staff would also issue a Form B where necessary or even report the situation concerned to the BD. Since the commencement of the project, the university had all along maintained close liaison with the community, such as issuing quarterly project notices, releasing the latest news on its website, as well as organising meetings to brief the community on the progress of the project and future works on a regular or a need basis. From July to August this year, the project team held meetings with University Heights, Academic Terrace, St Charles School, Our Lady of the Rosary Church, Caritas Mok Cheung Sui Kun Community Centre and HKU Jockey Club Student Village II to brief them on the latest progress of the project and listen to their views. She said in summary that three major irregularities had been identified at the site, and that the university had all along followed up on the relevant situation with the contractor. Two of the irregularities were related to the excavation of slopes with a gradient of greater than 30 degrees, which had been detected by the university prior to media coverage. A site memorandum had also been issued as a reminder for the contractor to adjust the gradient. The rectification works had been underway and were expected to be completed in October this year. The remaining irregularity involved discrepancies between the construction procedures of the bored piles and the plan. The university had already requested the site contractor to put on hold the relevant work procedures

and a revised plan had been submitted to the BD for approval.

6. A Member said that as this was a large-scale project in the district and the site was close to the neighbourhood, he was concerned about the safety of the project and whether this would pose any risks to nearby residential units. Noting several contraventions of the project, he enquired about the details of inspections conducted by the BD regarding the works, whether any issues had been identified and how they had been dealt with. He would like to know whether HKU was aware of the issues at an early stage, the reasons for taking some time to deal with them, as well as measures to avoid re-occurrence of these site contraventions in the long run.

7. Representative of the BD replied that the department had received reports from the public in July this year who claimed that there were irregularities with the slopes. After deploying its staff for inspection, the department was aware that the project team had issued a Form B to the contractor regarding the irregularities and had requested the contractor to make improvements and rectifications. The department identified upon assessment that while the gradient of the slopes exceeded the requirements in the plan, they did not have any immediate impact on the safety of the nearby environment and the site itself. Besides, the department inspected the buildings nearby and checked the monitoring spots, during which no irregularities were detected. The department understood that the HKU team had followed up on the discrepancies in accordance with the Code of Practice for Site Supervision and was aware of the residents' concern about the incident. Therefore, the department would step up inspections by having surprise checks at the site. For the time being, the department was of the view that the mechanism adopted by HKU was effective, and that it was not uncommon for individual discrepancies to exist at a site. The department believed that the professionals concerned could deal with the discrepancies at the site in accordance with the mechanism and monitor the site. Meanwhile, the department would continue to monitor the site and the condition of the surrounding buildings.

8. Representative of HKU replied that the number or frequency of inspections had been formulated by the university. The university pledged to abide by the inspection mechanism and ensure that the inspections conducted by the works contractor or the consultant team would be more effective as far as possible. With a consistent increase in the number of monitoring staff from two when the works commenced to seven at the beginning of this year, she believed that the daily inspections at the site could be carried out effectively. Furthermore, many members of the public or management offices of the buildings nearby would inform the university of their observations from time to time, through which the university would be aware of the impact of the site on the surrounding environment. Also, the university had meetings with them to discuss and follow up on their views. It would continue to improve its efforts in monitoring the site and pay attention to the needs of the local community, with a view to keeping up its efforts in site management.

9. A Member pursued the matter by enquiring whether the BD had carried out a site inspection prior to media coverage of the issue and whether any issues had been identified.

10. Representative of the BD replied that the department had identified the issue at the site

in July this year and was aware that HKU had followed up on it in accordance with the mechanism, such as the issuance of a site memorandum to the contractor. The department also assessed that the relevant discrepancies had not posed any immediate danger. As it was not uncommon for discrepancies to exist at a site, the site's professional team would continue to follow up on the matter. If a serious issue was identified, they would need to notify the BD.

11. A Member said that as the site had extensive boundaries and was very close to the neighbourhood, many residents expressed that the works would have a great impact on them, and that they were concerned about the safety of the construction works at the site. As the BD learned about the incident only after receiving residents' complaints, he cast doubts on the effectiveness of HKU's monitoring mechanism. He believed that the incident was of a serious nature and could not be resolved by merely issuing a site memorandum to the contractor. He enquired about the sequence of events of the incident and asked whether the effectiveness of the monitoring mechanism would be reviewed. He suggested that HKU should adopt suitable measures to restore residents' confidence and asked whether the completion date of the project would be affected by the incident.

12. Representative of the BD replied that a notification mechanism had been established by the department where the professionals could report any serious incidents at the site by designated emails, and that the HKU team had maintained close liaison with the department. The discrepancies between the construction procedures of the foundation and the approved plan were related to the planning arrangements of the contractor. While it did not pose any obvious danger to the site or the nearby buildings, these inconsistencies were still unsatisfactory. Although there were no serious safety implications, the contractor put on hold the relevant works immediately, whereas HKU also asked the contractor to comply with the approved plan prior to the resumption of works. Through issuing a site memorandum to the contractor, HKU could prevent the incident from being unresolved and the contractor or suitable personnel from various disciplines could follow up on the matter based on the records.

13. Representative of HKU replied that the university had issued more than 40 site memoranda to the contractor. She stressed that both the contractor and HKU were responsible for monitoring the work progress, and that the contractor had not put aside any individual issues for a long time. Nevertheless, as some issues did occur repeatedly at different times in various locations, the university had to issue site memoranda to remind the contractor from time to time. She believed that the mechanism where communication was maintained with the contractor by virtue of a site memorandum was feasible, whereas the contractor also took follow-up actions and dealt with the issues accordingly. Instead of failing to carry out the works in accordance with the plan completely, she said that the contractor only made some errors in individual processes. She added that the contractor had commissioned a new secondary contractor to carry out the bored piling works in June this year. At that time, it was already detected by the university that procedures adopted by the secondary contractor in preparation for the works appeared to be inconsistent with the approved plan. Hence, a warning was instituted immediately, and a site memorandum was issued on 2 July this year. She said that HKU would monitor the project in a stringent manner and had all along maintained close liaison with the site contractor and engineers. Despite irregularities at the site, the consultant team and HKU Estates Office would strive to monitor the progress and safety at the site. She said in summary

that the project was expected to be completed in three phases after 2025.

14. A Member enquired about the role of the consultant in the incident, whether the written warnings issued had a deterrent effect and how it would play its part to monitor the works. She hoped that the relevant departments could properly explain the situation to the public, thereby easing their minds on the effectiveness of the safety and monitoring measures. As it was stated in the news that the contractor, Paul Y. Engineering Group Limited (PYEG), had been in financial difficulties, she asked whether the company had undertaken other government construction projects, and if so, how the government would deal with them. As the non-payment of wages to workers would have a negative impact on people's livelihood, she asked whether the department would put the incident on record and factor it in when engaging contractors in the future.

15. Representative of the BD replied that the department was aware of the grave concern of the public about the project. The department would increase the frequency of surprise site inspections.

16. Representative of HKU replied that the university would keep up with its efforts in monitoring the situation, issue site memoranda and maintain close liaison with the BD in accordance with the requirements of the Buildings Ordinance. Also, there was a mechanism for the university to report the situation at the site to the BD. The university understood that there might be public perception where the contractor had failed to rectify the situation despite repeated advice, therefore it took the initiative to liaise with the management offices of various housing estates nearby on the same day and explained the situation to the public. She was of the view that the public was satisfied with the university's explanations, and that their confidence in the university had been restored. She also believed that the public had all along been aware of the university's efforts in monitoring the project and dealing with the issues. She reiterated that the university would keep up with its efforts in monitoring the works and safety, as well as to continue to work with the PYEG to complete the project together. The university would provide assistance to the PYEG and hoped that it would properly complete the remaining works as soon as possible.

17. A Member said that recent news related to HKU was not positive at all. In particular, issues affecting people's livelihood had occurred, which were not beneficial to the community as a whole. He hoped that the university could take an active approach by briefing the C&WDC on the solutions of the incident, so that Members could better explain the matter to residents.

18. Representative of the BD expressed his gratitude towards Members' views and said that the department would maintain close liaison with HKU.

19. Representative of HKU replied that the university would consider approaches to further step up communication with the public and carry out enhanced site supervision.

20. A Member asked whether there was any mechanism in the existing legislation whereby project managers would be required to report the situation to the BD or other government

departments for follow-up should they detect any irregularities at the site. She suggested that HKU should disclose the details of the incident to the public on its website, so as to enhance transparency and help clear doubts of the public. She asked whether the relevant government departments would consider stepping up law enforcement actions against contraventions where works were not carried out in accordance with the approved plans. She also enquired about the approaches to ensure that the remaining rectification works could be carried out in full compliance with the legislation, and that all safety issues could be resolved.

21. Representative of the BD replied that current rectification works were carried out in accordance with the plan. If the works were carried out based on the plan, there would not be any adverse impacts on the buildings structures at the site and the nearby environment. Any person, including a professional or a registered contractor, who damaged a surrounding building structure, caused danger or injured any person whilst carrying out the works might be in contravention of the Buildings Ordinance. Besides, any person who carried out the works with significant deviations from a plan might be in breach of the Buildings Ordinance. He also said that should the HKU team identify any serious contraventions at the site, it would notify the BD and the department would follow-up on the matter.

22. Representative of HKU replied that in response to the concerns of the media or the public about the incident, the university had made a special update on its website and provided information in the format of “Questions and Answers”. The university had all along regularly monitored the works at the site on a daily basis and would immediately assess whether any hazards existed within the entire site.

23. A Member said that some Members present belonged to the HKU Pokfield Campus Concern Group (the Concern Group), and that quite a number of residents of University Heights and Academic Terrace had actively contacted them to express their concerns about the incident. While the Concern Group had maintained close liaison with HKU, it was unfortunate to still witness a considerable number of issues. As many residents had all along requested assistance from the current-term C&WDC, he hoped that the government department or HKU could keep in touch with the C&WDC and relay messages to the public through Members.

24. The Vice-chairman said that in the light of the massive scale of the project and the concerns raised in the community, it was suggested that the topic be made a standing item of the DFWC, and that the representative of HKU be invited to attend the meeting on a regular basis, so as to give an account of the latest progress and safety conditions of the project, as well as to explain whether there were other matters requiring attention or situations requiring communication with residents.

25. The Chairman said that all Members were in favour of making the topic a standing item of the DFWC and announced that it would be discussed in every other meeting. As no more Members had indicated their intention to speak, the Chairman announced that the discussion would come to a close.

Information Items

Item 4: Report on the usage of the public libraries in the Central and Western District by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department

(C&W DFWC Paper No. 34/2024)

(10:51 am)

26. The Chairman said that the paper had been submitted by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) and asked Members to note the paper concerned.

Item 5: Report on the management of recreational and sports facilities in the Central and Western District by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department

(C&W DFWC Paper No. 37/2024)

(10:51 am)

27. The Chairman said that the paper had been submitted by the LCSD and asked Members to note the paper concerned.

Item 6: Latest progress of the improvement to water supply systems in Kennedy Town (P.W.P. No. 9200WC)

(C&W DFWC Paper No. 36/2024)

(10:52 am)

28. The Chairman said that the paper had been submitted by the Water Supplies Department and asked Members to note the paper concerned.

Item 7: Any other business

(10:52 am)

29. The Chairman said that there were no other business.

Item 8: Date of the next meeting

(10:52 am)

30. The Chairman said that the next meeting would be held on 14 November 2024. The paper submission deadline for government departments would be 30 October 2024.

31. The meeting ended at 10:52 am.

The minutes were confirmed on 28 November 2024

Chairman: Mr YIP Wing-shing, SBS, BBS, MH, JP

Secretary: Mr HO Kai-yin

Central and Western District Council Secretariat
November 2024