

Summary of Minutes of Meeting of Islands District Council

Date : 23 April 2012 (Monday)
Time : 2:00 p.m.
Venue : Conference Room, Islands District Council, 14/F., Harbour Building,
38 Pier Road, Central, Hong Kong.

I. Visit to Islands District Council by the Director of Buildings

The Director of Buildings briefed the meeting of the main duties of the Buildings Department (BD).

A member enquired whether the BD had made arrangements with the Housing Department to re-house occupants who were affected by clearances of illegal rooftop houses and structures in urban areas in the past before actions were conducted. He was concerned about the enforcement arrangements to remove illegal structures of village houses in the New Territories (NT) and the reporting scheme that began on 1 April of the current year. He said that there were countless NT village houses involved and he asked how the Department would re-house those who were affected.

A member said that she had received many enquiries about the definitions of “newly constructed” unauthorized building works (UBWs), “higher potential risk” UBWs and “qualified personnel” for safety inspection of houses. Some were worried that the costs involved would be high.

A member said that some owners on Peng Chau whose houses belonged to the “BD Plans” category had received letters, leaflets and forms from the BD about the reporting scheme. The member asked whether removal orders would be issued if these owners mistakenly reported their UBWs.

A member said that as far as she understood it, the gross floor area of a building would be allowed to increase if there were green features in the building. In Discovery Bay, buildings of certain phases might have already exceeded their gross

floor areas. She enquired whether the BD and the Lands Department were aware of the situation and how they would prevent plot ratio from being exceeded.

The Director of Buildings responded as follows:

- (a) The BD would always liaise with the Housing Department if there were re-housing needs in any clearance actions, regardless of the subject structures being located in urban areas or in the New Territories. The Housing Department would provide assistance to those affected.
- (b) Under the enhanced enforcement strategy against UBWs of NT village houses, structures completed after 28 June 2011 would be considered as “newly constructed”. For structures completed before that date which constituted less serious contravention of the law and imposing lower potential risks, owners could join the reporting scheme, and engaged qualified personnel (TCP-T2 personnel) to verify the compliance of their UBWs with safety standards and submit reports to the authorities. Qualifications of TCP-T2 personnel were listed in the leaflets issued to the NT village house owners.
- (c) The BD had illustrated UBWs with higher or lower potential risks by giving many examples in the leaflets. Those with higher risks would be first round targets. The Department would not take immediate clearance actions against higher risks structures mistakenly reported. The Department would take large scale clearance actions village by village on an orderly basis and would not deal with individual cases in advance.
- (d) To encourage green and innovative architectural designs, some environmental friendly facilities were exempted from gross floor area after 2001. However, there would be an upper limit of gross floor area and restrictions under the Buildings Ordinance, those of outline zoning plan, and land lease. Thus, while there was exemption for some environmental friendly facilities, the gross floor area in any case would not exceed the plot ratio and departments concerned would take appropriate action against any irregularities.

The Vice-chairlady said that most houses in the Islands District were village houses, and some belonged to the “Works Bureau Plans” category which were three to four storeys high. She enquired whether these houses fell within the Mandatory Building Inspection Scheme.

A member asked how the BD would deal with cases that did not belong to the NT village houses which had mistakenly submitted reports of UBWs under the reporting scheme.

A member said that many housing problems emerged in recent years because of policy errors. Many villagers were illiterate and they did not understand the contents of the reporting scheme. They also worried about the costs of building inspection and he thus proposed the provision of an estimated amount for the costs of engaging qualified personnel to verify the safety of houses.

A member said that when illegal structures of village houses in the Islands District first appeared more than a decade before, neither the BD nor the Lands Department would be responsible and tackled the problem squarely. As a result, illegal structures of varying degrees had become the order of the day. She said that the new initiatives were a nuisance to residents.

A member said that he could not understand why new initiatives were implemented at this particular time and he proposed the issue be dealt with by “freezing” the existing problem.

The Director of Buildings further responded as follows:

- (a) Mandatory Building Inspection Scheme aimed at domestic buildings more than 30 years old and more than three storeys. Village houses not more than three storeys were not included.
- (b) For structures that did not belong to the reporting scheme mistakenly reported, the BD would conduct inspection to determine whether there was imminent danger and the case would be handled in accordance with established policies.
- (c) UBWs were illegal and had to be cleared. The BD would take enforcement actions in an orderly manner after determining the

impact of UBWs on safety of the building.

- (d) It was the responsibility of the owners to ensure the safety of their properties and the Government should not take up the responsibility. The costs of building inspection were determined by market mechanism and the costs should not be too high. The Buildings Department had contacted the trade associations and advised them to publicize their services to make it easier for property owners to engage qualified personnel.
- (e) In the past, the BD would take enforcement action against those UBWs in the NT which posed imminent danger and the newly constructed ones. For existing structures not posing imminent danger, the Department would deal with them in an orderly manner. As new enforcement policy was now in place, the Department would act accordingly.
- (f) Green and amenities facilities would be allowed if they met relevant requirements. Leaflets of the reporting scheme and guidance provided by the Lands Department should be referred to.

II. Public Consultation on Management of Fixed Pitch Hawker Areas

The representative of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) briefed the meeting of the contents of the consultation and welcomed members to give their views.

The Vice-chairlady said that the opinions of the relevant District Councils and operators should be respected. She said that hawkers had their values given proper supervision and management. They could boost local colours and advance the development of the local economy and tourism. She proposed the establishment of sanctioned hawkers' area(s) in the district.

Various members gave their views and supported the idea of establishing sanctioned hawkers' area(s) in the district.

The representative of the FEHD said that the Government adopted an open attitude in the question. If appropriate locations were identified and support was given by local residents, the District Council and the government departments concerned, and that requirements about food safety and environmental hygiene were met, the Department would be pleased to give appropriate assistance.

III. Question on Cheung Chau Typhoon Shelter

The representative of the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) said that the CEDD was responsible for structural maintenance of harbour facilities in Cheung Chau Typhoon Shelter, whereas the Marine Department was responsible for the management and operation of the Typhoon Shelter. The CEDD would conduct an inspection on the facilities in Cheung Chau Typhoon Shelter once every year to ensure that the facilities met the relevant requirements. The breakwater and the two public piers would be examined after each hoisting of typhoon signal no.8 or above. An in-depth structural examination of the Cheung Chau Ferry Pier and public piers would be conducted every three year to ensure safety, and expeditious repairs would be done if necessary. Dredging would be conducted if and when necessary after consultation with the Marine Department.

The representative of the Marine Department said that the Department was responsible for the maintenance of navigational lights of Cheung Chau Ferry Pier and Cheung Chau Typhoon Shelter. The facilities would be examined monthly and expeditious repairs would be done if damages were found. Survey of water depth would be conducted every four years and the last survey was conducted in January 2010 during which no irregularity was found. Two dredging exercises had been conducted since 2005.

A member proposed that examination of navigational lights be conducted more frequently.

A member said that a ferry crashed into a lightless dolphin the previous year and he enquired whether the Marine Department would consider installing a light there.

The representative of the Marine Department replied that there was a lamp post adjacent to the dolphin concerned, and that if there were too many lights, confusion might be caused.

IV. Question on request for 24-hour doctors' service

A member said that 24-hour doctors' service and Accident and Emergency (A&E) services were very important. During typhoons, when there would no doctors' service at Peng Chau Clinic and residents had no means of going to outside hospitals, the problem could be very serious. He was also concerned whether the same situation was faced by other remote areas in the Islands District, and he urged the Hospital Authority to respond and follow up on the issue.

A member said that according to the reply given by the Hospital Authority, the on-duty nurse of the first-aid station in Peng Chau Clinic would arrange the transfer of patients in need to A&E Department of hospitals in the urban areas by police vessel or helicopter. He requested the Hospital Authority to provide a written reply on whether there were any cases of patients being stranded on Peng Chau due to inability of Government Flying Service or of the Police to provide transfer service during the hoisting of typhoon signal no.8 or above in the previous few years.

The representative of the Police briefed the meeting of the relevant directives issued by the Force. The Police vessels would provide emergency services depending on prevailing weather conditions if it was considered safe to do so, and the commander of each vessel would make decisions accordingly.

Another member requested that maternal and child care services on Peng Chau be resumed.

A member said that in inclement weather conditions, transfer by air or by sea would be very unlikely and thus he requested the Hospital Authority to give a detailed response on how to provide emergency services to Peng Chau when weather conditions were poor.

V. Question on provision of mains water supply for Cheung Sha Lan and Nim Shue Wan Village

The Assistant District Officer (ADO) said that upon receiving the request for mains water supply from villagers of the Cheung Sha Lan and Nim Shue Wan in 2006, the Islands District Office had immediately referred the request to the Water Supplies Department (WSD) for following up. The District Office had then kept in contact with the villagers and had held meetings and on-site visits on the case.

The representative of the WSD responded as follows:

- (a) The Department had considered the possibility of providing mains water supply to Cheung Sha Lan and Nim Shue Wan from the existing water supply system of North Lantau or Mui Wo, but there was a very long distance from either system. Extension of the systems would be very costly and not cost-effective. At present the two villages used water from reservoir and the hillside and the facilities were maintained by the District Office. The Department proposed that the District Office should improve the facilities.
- (b) Generally speaking, the FEHD would monitor the quality of water used by villagers at remote locations based on the technical supports provided by Government Laboratory, the Department of Health and the WSD. The FEHD would usually collect water samples from the stream at Cheung Sha Lan once every three months. The samples would then be passed onto the WSD to conduct chemical and physical tests, and also onto the Government Laboratory to conduct chemical tests and analyses. The FEHD would also collect samples and passed them onto the Department of Health to conduct bacteria tests. And the results would be filed and followed up by the FEHD. Test results of the recent years showed that the water of the Cheung Sha Lan Stream could be used as drinking water after proper purifying and boiling.
- (c) After taking into consideration of the cost-effectiveness of the project and that the two villages had nearby water sources for use, the WSD at present did not have any plan to provide mains water supply to the

two villages. However, the Department would conduct regular reviews and when new projects should emerge, the issue would be studied once again.

A member asked whether the WSD would provide guidelines to villagers on how to purify water. He was critical of the extension of water supply to Kau Shat Wan Government Explosives Depot but not to the two villages at issue. He also queried why the Government had not extended the water supply system of Peng Chau to Nim Shue Wan years before.

The representative of the WSD said that the water supply system of Kau Shat Wan was inadequate to supply water to Nim Shue Wan, and mains water supply could only be provided from the system of Mui Wo. He said that drinking water would be good enough to be consumed after boiling. However, if the water became murky, then precipitation and boiling had to be conducted to render it drinkable. Reports of the most recent three years showed that the quality of the drinking water of Nim Shue Wan was stable.

Member gave their opinions as below:

- (a) A member was critical of the Government in its planning concerning water supply to Discovery Bay. She hoped that in the future, the Government would take into consideration the need of a whole area rather than requests of a developer.
- (b) A member used the analogy of laying telephone lines to illustrate that the WSD should fulfill the responsibility of providing mains water supply to the two villages.
- (c) A member was not satisfied with the reply given by the WSD and said that the Department should not reject the request on the basis that the cost of the project was high. He had reservation about the Department's reply that water was good enough for consumption after precipitation and boiling.
- (d) Another member hoped that the WSD would reconsider the request, and would not view the issue only from the point of view of cost-effectiveness.

- (e) A member was concerned about the water quality and its effects on health.
- (f) A member proposed the installation of pumps to supply water from Kau Shat Wan.

The representative of the WSD responded that the proposal of installation of pumps had been considered but as the water pipes were relatively small and the distance was rather long and thus it could not be done.

Member further gave their opinions as below:

- (a) A member hoped that the WSD would reconsider the request of providing water supply from Kau Shat Wan.
- (b) A member concurred with the idea of studying the history of case and the establishment of a working group to deal with the issue.

Another representative of the WSD said that the Department would consider the issue of water supply from an established set of principles. Apart from cost effectiveness, the size of the population and the safety of drinking water, etc. would also be taken into consideration. At present, there were two systems of water supply on Lantau Island, one in the north and the other in the south at Mui Wo. In accordance to the stipulations of the land lease of Discovery Bay, the Department would not provide water supply to the area. He clarified that the water pipes mentioned by members in the discussions were all privately laid. He reiterated that the WSD would regularly review water supply situation of various villages, and if and when necessary, would re-deploy its resources to conduct prioritized works.

The meeting decided to set up a working group to follow up on the issue.

VI. Question on request to allow public to use SkyPier

A representative of the Hong Kong Airport Authority (Airport Authority) said that the SkyPier was built to provide fast boat services for passengers travelling between Hong Kong, the Pearl River Delta and Macau. The pier was located inside

the restricted area and there were no customs and immigration clearance facilities. The Airport Authority was responsible for the management of the pier in accordance with the Security Deed agreed with the Government. The berthing of the pier in day time was close to its maximum capacity. If the pier was to open to non-transit passengers, extension would be necessary to enhance its capacity, which would require substantial amount of capital and two to three years of study, design and construction. The Airport Authority at present did not have any plan to implement such a project. The Hong Kong-Zhuhua-Macao Bridge, which would be equipped with proper customs and immigration clearance facilities, would be completed in 2016. The landing point and boundary facilities would be very close to Hong Kong International Airport. Passengers landing from the bridge would find the airport, sightseeing attractions on Lantau Island and Tung Chung easily accessible.

The ADO said that the District Office had conducted consultations twice on Airport Authority's plan to build a permanent pier on Lot No.1 of Chek Lap Kok. According to the information provided by District Lands Office/Islands, the pier as planned by the Airport Authority was to be used mainly for the shipping services of cross boundary passengers between the Pearl River Delta and Hong Kong International Airport.

A member said that it was reported on television that despite trip frequencies were close to maximum capacity, the number of passengers were around 20% of the capacity. He said that it was a wastage of resources and the SkyPier should be open to the public.

The representative of the Airport Authority reiterated that berthing of SkyPier was close to its maximum capacity and that the pier had to be managed in accordance with Security Deed and thus co-operation of other government departments would be needed.

Members gave their opinions as below:

- (a) A member had reservation about the reply given by the Airport Authority. He said that if the pier was open to the public, residents of New Territories West and Lantau would be able to use the facilities and better use of resources would be effected. If the proposal was accepted, the economy of the area near the landing point would be boosted, resulting in a win-win situation.

- (b) The Vice-chairlady said that commuters determined their choices mainly by how convenient and necessary the means of transportation were. The Hong Kong-Zhuhua-Macao Bridge would be open to the public only four years later. She hoped that the Airport Authority would reconsider the proposal from the angles of environmental protection, providing convenience for passengers and enhancing tourism development in nearby areas.
- (c) A member said that the Islands District Council had provided positive feedback when being consulted on the proposal of the third runway. He hoped that Airport Authority would reciprocate in kind on the present issue. He enquired whether relevant government departments had been consulted in the provision of customs and immigration clearance facilities, and whether they supported the proposal.
- (d) A member supported the proposal and he said that the real reasons for Airport Authority's turning down the proposal was the inadequate numbers of passengers at the two piers of Tuen Mun and Tsimshatsui.
- (e) A member enquired whether it was the Airport Authority or the government's final decision on whether or not to open SkyPier and set up customs and immigration clearance facilities. And if it was the Government's decision, then which department's decision it would be.
- (f) A member said that eight years had passed since the proposal was first raised and there was a need for opening the SkyPier.

The representative of the Airport Authority responded as follows:

- (a) Relevant government departments had been contacted on the establishment of the facilities and they supported the proposal. The proposal was temporarily suspended because of the conclusion made in 2008-09 after a review was conducted. The Airport Authority would relate members' opinions to the Government.

- (b) The Airport Authority had all along maintained close contact with the Government on the development of the airport and its ancillary facilities. As far as she understood it, the Government had told the Legislative Council that the other two cross-boundary piers still had the capacity to handle future demands, thus it would not build a third piers using public funds.

VII. Question on youth problem in Tung Chung

The representative of the Hong Kong Police gave some figures related to youth crimes in the Tung Chung area from 2009 to 2011 and he believed there were continuous improvements. A breakdown statistics of crimes committed by youths in the area were given. The Police adopted a three-pronged approach to tackle youth crime in Tung Chung, namely prevention, enforcement actions, plus education and counselling. He gave a brief introduction as follows:

- (a) Prevention: school liaison officers would assist in organizing various crime prevention activities and targets included students from primary five to secondary two. In 2012, the Police would enhance co-operation with the local community and other government departments to strengthen support for the youths.
- (b) Enforcement actions: Primary targets would be groups which made use of youth to commit crimes. Intelligence would be made good use of to tackle crime and prevent these groups from expanding. Apart from patrolling of police constables, plain clothes detectives and officers from anti-triad units and special duties would also conduct targeted patrols during long school holidays. Active enforcement actions and investigation would be carried out to prevent youth crimes.
- (c) Education and counselling: Targets included youths who had never committed crimes and those of high-risks groups. The latter were youths who had been cautioned under the Police Superintendent Discretion Scheme, victims and witnesses of crime cases, runaway youths and those who had been involved in bullying in schools. In

2011, the Police co-operated with the Social Welfare Department (SWD) to refer high-risks youth to outreaching and social welfare services. Activities were jointly held with agencies to guide youths away from crimes.

- (d) Under this multi-pronged approach, figures of youth committing crimes in Tung Chung had lowered. The Police would continue to work with the SWD and other agencies to tackle youth crimes and review would be regularly conducted.

The representative of the SWD said that there were at present seven youth programmes in Tung Chung area funded by the Department. Additional resources had been provided to increase the manpower of school social workers by 20%. One more outreaching team would be established for Tung Chung area in the current year.

A member was appreciative of the decline in youth crime figures. He drew relevant departments' attention to the age group between 10 to 13 and youths of South Asian origins. The latter faced special difficulties in education and learning and some other problems.

A member said that workloads of school social workers were very heavy and he proposed that administrative duties be handled by other staff.

The Vice-chairlady hoped that there would be better co-ordination between outreaching teams in Tung Chung.

The representative of the SWD said that the management of schools had the autonomy to deploy the extra 20% of manpower newly added. The two existing outreaching teams in Tung Chung belonged to two different organizations and that might be the source of the existing communication problems. The SWD would make better use of the additional resources and consult with the agencies concerned to tackle the problems. At present, the Department would refer and follow up cases in accordance with the residential address of the subject youths.

The representative of the Police said that they were aware of the distribution and changes of youth population in Tung Chung, and they also understood problems faced by youths of the minorities. The Police had adopted appropriate strategies to tackle the problems. Liaison assistants of South Asian origins were hired to facilitate

better communication with respective ethnic groups. In response to a member's mentioning youth problem in Fu Tung Estate, he said that the Police had stepped up patrolling the area. However, youths sometimes moved to other locations rather rapidly. The Police would not tolerate any nuisance behaviour and would continue to deal with the issue.

VIII. Question on setting up a municipal market in Tung Chung

The representative of the FEHD responded to the enquiry as follows:

- (a) Many factors had to be taken into consideration in the construction of a municipal market, such as the number of local population and its composition, local ancillary facilities, nearby market facilities and the number of stores selling vegetables, fresh and frozen fish and meat and retailed food in the district and how they were located. The operation ability of the market in the long run had to be taken into account as well, because such a project would involve the use of public funds.
- (b) The aim of establishing municipal markets was mainly for relocating street hawkers so as to improve sanitation, and to provide venue for buying fresh food for nearby communities. They were not built for the purpose of controlling prices of commodities. In fact, prices of commodities were affected by a number of factors.
- (c) Stall operators set prices on their own according to factors of supply and demand, and the FEHD played only the role of property owners. Based on experience, the Department opined that the operational ability of new markets would be largely compromised if there were many similar facilities in nearby areas.
- (d) The population of Tung Chung was around 80 000. There were many food stalls and supermarkets and the Government did not have any plan to build a new market in Tung Chung at this stage. The FEHD would time and again review the situation.

- (e) According to a consumer price report of the Consumer Council published on 25 November 2010, prices of commodities sold in municipal markets might not be as cheap as some might think.

A member said that rents of the LINK's shops were too high, and that was the main cause of high prices of commodities in Tung Chung. He enquired whether the authorities would initiate a plan to build a new market based on the population planning criteria. He was doubtful of the decision of not building a new market years before as the LINK might not have come into existence then. As times had changed, he thus demanded a review of the situation.

The representative of the FEHD said that the member's opinion would be referred to the planning section of the Department.

IX. Question on proposals related to Management of Municipal Solid Waste in Hong Kong

The Chairman said that the Environment Bureau and the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) were not able to send representatives to attend the meeting but had provided written responses. The Chairman agreed to distribute copies of an email provided by residents of Islands District to members at the meeting.

The member who raised the enquires were disappointed with the Bureau and EPD's failing to send representatives to attend the meeting. She was not satisfied with the Secretariat's failure to relay her motion to other members and she was critical of the manner in which the matter was handled. She requested the Chairman to use his discretionary power to allow her to move her motion at the meeting.

The Chairman said that according to the Standing Orders of the Islands District Council (IDCSO), a motion would not be discussed at a meeting unless it was seconded. The IDC all along had been following up on the issue and had never supported the proposal raised by the Government. The Secretariat did not have the obligation to look for a member to second a motion on anyone's behalf. A motion would be discussed at the meeting if it fulfilled the relevant requirements of the IDCSO. None of the twenty members of the IDC supported the implementation of the Government's plan and a working group had been set up to deal with the issue.

The member said that she had raised some questions at the meeting of the working group, but the EPD had failed to provide any answers to her questions. She said that the Chairman had the responsibility to follow up on the matter. She said that the Chairman had the discretionary power to allow an impromptu motion to be moved at a meeting and there were two such precedents in the last term of the IDC.

The Chairman reiterated that the motion could not be discussed because it was not seconded and he did not agree with the saying that the Secretariat had mishandled the matter.

A member said that members had expressed their dissent of the construction of the incinerator at Shek Kwu Chau ever since the proposal was raised in 2008. He said that according to a newspaper report, a member accused other members of the IDC selling out the residents by agreeing to the construction of the incinerator. The accusation was not fair for him, as he had never sold out the residents.

The member clarified that she had only attended an English programme of RTHK, and she had not directed any newspaper to make such a report.

A member said that the matter should be dealt with fairly, squarely and openly, and those in the minority should follow the decision made by the council as a whole. The matter would not be solved simply by moving a motion and its handling by a working group should be a much better way to follow up. The requirement of moving / seconding a motion as stipulated in IDCSO should be observed.

A member said that members' stands on the matter had been recorded in the minutes of a meeting held on 14 April, 2008 and those of another meeting held in 2010.

A member was critical of the distribution of the email dispatched by "A group of Islands District residents" to members at the meeting.

A member clarified once again that she had not coerced anyone to second her motion. She said that her stand on the issue had been consistent all along. She said that the setting up of a working group was not incongruent with moving a motion and the two matters could be done at the same time.

The Chairman said that the Secretariat distributed the email upon his consent and that he would be mindful in the future.

A member said that there were more ways than one in objecting to the proposal and he agreed with handling the matter through the working group.

A member said that the general public of Cheung Chau and the Rural Committee had demonstrated their opposition on many occasions and she hoped that residents would not be misled to believe that they had been sold out.

A member was doubtful of who in fact “A group of Islands District residents” were. He hoped that people would not take stand on moral high grounds and criticize others.

The Chairman said that the issue should be dealt with through the working group and that he would follow up on the unanswered questions raised by the member.

X. Question on provision of barrier-free facilities for access from Fu Tung Estate to Shun Tung Road bus stop

The representative of the Transport Department said that there were two ways to arrive at the bus-stop at issue from Fu Tung Estate. The first was through a pedestrian passageway and the other was through a staircase. The Department did not have any plan to install a lift at the location.

A member did not concur with the answer given by the Department. He pointed out that walking up the pedestrian passageway was very laborious for the elderly and the handicapped. If the proposal of a lift was not possible, he requested building a road by the side of the staircase.

The representative of the Transport Department said that the installation of lift would involve considerations such as land use, use of construction resources, future maintenance and operational costs. The Department would conduct on-site inspection to study the proposal of building a road by the side of the staircase.

XI. Question on mobile library services in Discovery Bay

The representative of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department explained that the mobile library van had a traffic accident on 31 December 2011 and repair was thus needed. Unfortunately it coincided with the Lunar New Year and the repair took a longer time than it usually would. It was only an isolated incident, and the Department would review the situation time and again to ensure regular services would be maintained.

XII. Question on “through-train” secondary and primary school building programme in Discovery Bay

The representative of the Education Bureau responded to the enquiry as below:

- (a) The Bureau understood that the IDC and residents were concerned about the progress of establishing a school in N4a area of Discovery Bay. The Bureau had maintained contact with members of the District Council and residents all along. It would closely monitor the supply and demand of school places and review the school building programme.
- (b) The objective of existing policy was to maintain adequate supply of public primary and secondary school places in an area.
- (c) According to the review conducted in 2011 and early 2012, supply of public primary places in the Islands District was stable and that of secondary school places very adequate.
- (d) The two schools in the same school net at issue together provided 100 school places in each of the past three years. Figures of 2011 showed that there were seventy applicants for school places and thus supply was adequate.
- (e) Parents would take into consideration a number of factors in choosing school for their children. The Bureau would respect the parents' right in choosing schools regardless of its locations.

- (f) The Bureau reiterated that school building programme had to tie in with future population development of the area concerned, and thus existing supply and demand and sustainability would be taken into consideration. The Bureau would conduct review regularly and would implement school building programme at appropriate times.

A member said that the Bureau was not answering the enquiry she raised. She reiterated that she would like to have figures about school children travelling outside their own districts for schooling. She further said that the waiting list for places of international schools was very long and that not every family could afford the expensive fees. She enquired how the Education Bureau would alleviate the pressure faced by parents of the Discovery Bay area.

The representative of Education Bureau said that the Bureau did not have figures of Discovery Bay school children travelling outside the area for schooling. He said that he had explained previously that planning and supply of school places were conducted on a whole-area basis, and that there were adequate supply in the Islands District. Parents would choose schools for a number of reasons and that would result in school children travelling outside their own area for schooling. The Bureau would respect parents' right in choosing schools of their own choice.

A member said that Islands District was unique and travelling between islands was very difficult, and thus to view various islands as one single district was impractical. She said that existing policy was inflexible, especially when applied to the Islands District. The Government decided to build a school in 2000, but there was still no progress twelve years later and no data was provided.

A member said that it was unreasonable that the various islands were all grouped into one single area. He said that school children should go to schools in their own area and that the Bureau should be mindful of avoiding school children travelling far for schooling when it planned the school net system.

A member proposed the re-establishment of New Territories Heng Yee Kuk Southern District Secondary School.

A member said that Holy Family School on Peng Chau should be included in the Central and Western District school net.

A member worried that establishing a school in Discovery Bay might reduce the number of students in Tung Chung. He requested the Bureau to take a holistic view of the two areas in conducting planning.

XIII. Question on collision of Cheung Chau ferry

The member who raised the enquiry hoped that the Transport Department and Marine Department would conduct review the soonest possible to ensure the safety of passengers.

The representative of the Transport Department said that the two departments were very concerned of the performance of the New World First Ferry Services Limited (First Ferry). The Transport Department had reminded the company to pay particular attention to safety at sea. In case of accidents, Emergency Transport Co-ordination Centre should be notified as soon as possible so that arrangements could be made to facilitate passengers arriving at their destination. The Department would continue to monitor the performance of First Ferry and other ferry services providers.

The representative of Marine Department said that the Department was responsible for investigation of accidents at sea. The Department was very concerned that three incidents occurred within a short period of time. Notice had been issued in respect of the first accident so that the industry would be aware of and could learn from the incident. Assessment had been made on the second accident and improvement measures had been proposed to the company. Investigation had begun with respect to the third accident. The Department would prioritize the investigation of the accident that occurred in October of the previous year and the one in April of the current year. Reports of investigation would be publicized once internal assessment was completed.

When the causes of accidents would be determined, recommendations would be made to the company to take follow-up actions and make improvements.

In response to a member's enquiry, the representative of Marine Department said that the report of the investigation of the first accident was expected to be completed in early June this year.

Member gave their opinions as follows:

- (a) A member proposed that investigation should be expeditiously done and that the investigation of three incidents should be combined into one. He proposed that members of the District Council should be informed expeditiously in case of accidents so that they could provide assistance to those in need.
- (b) A member was critical of the responses of the First Ferry in emergency. He said that its frontline staff used indecent language to respond to passengers in the third incident. He opined that the series of accidents reflected negatively on the quality of the company's management. There was a lack of crisis awareness and response mechanism. He demanded that government departments concerned should follow up with the management of the company.
- (c) A member proposed that there might be a shortage of staff and that the company might have difficulties in recruitment.
- (d) A member said that the company had not been able to learn from experience and as a result accidents happened one after another. The Marine Department should follow up with the management of the company.
- (e) A member said that registration work of passengers conducted after the third accident was very chaotic, and she opined that the work should be done by the First Ferry to avoid duplication of effort.
- (f) The Vice-chairlady said that after the first accident occurred, the management or the communications department of the First Ferry had failed to be present at the scene to handle enquiries from the mass media. The Transport Department and Marine Department should be concerned with the manner of handling public relations on the part of the company. She was critical of the company's failing to maintain contact with members of the District Council. She said that crisis management and follow-up work of the company were

unprofessional and impolite. It failed to pay due respect to the District Council and relevant government departments.

- (g) The Chairman said that the Transport Department and Marine Department should request First Ferry to conduct review on matters and opinions raised by members and make improvements.

The representative of the Transport Department said that if staff did use indecent language, it was unacceptable. Issues of crisis management and navigation safety would be followed up with the Marine Department and the First Ferry. When an accident occurred, the company had to notify the Emergency Transport Co-ordination Centre the soonest possible so that arrangements could be made to minimize effects on service and to assist passengers not affected to arrive at their destinations. The Transport Department would request the First Ferry to strengthen its dissemination of information and to maintain close contact with relevant members of the District Council and the relevant rural committees.

Another representative of the Marine Department said that as far as they understood it, the First Ferry had adequate staff to operate ferries and that the company had no difficulties in recruitment. The company had hired a retired master to conduct a review on its crisis management mechanism. The Marine Department would review the emergency responses measures with the First Ferry, including dissemination of information and public relations.

A member expressed his appreciation of work done by the Police, the Fire Services Department, Cheung Chau Hospital and the District Office in the first accident.

A member proposed that an emergency drill be conducted by the supervising departments and the First Ferry, so as to familiarize staff with the procedures.

XIV. Draft Po Toi Islands Development Permission Area Plan No. DPA/I-PTI/1

The Chairman said that the Lamma Island (South) Rural Committee had handed in its written submission to the Planning Department.

Members gave their opinions and raised enquiries as follows:

- (a) A member said that nearly 99% of the land in the area was of non-designated use, and that would have much influence on tourism. She hoped the authorities would be mindful of the vast amount of private land on the island in conducting their planning. Ancillary facilities would be needed if development was to be carried out and a balance should be achieved between development and conservation. She hoped that the authorities would publicize the overall planning of Lamma Island and Po Toi Islands as soon as possible.
- (b) The Vice-chairlady said that she would like to know more about the incident of people clearing plants and putting in place concrete blocks, as mentioned in the paper.
- (c) The Chairman said that as far as he understood it, a developer bought a piece of land on the island. He cleared some vegetation and put in place some concrete blocks so as to conduct surveying. In response to some media coverage that the land would be used as columbarium, he had already made clarification. He said that it would be unfair to land owners if private land was to be included into zones where development and usage would be restricted. He urged the authorities to be mindful of the needs of residents of the island, and to put aside an adequate amount of land for building small houses. He requested the Planning Department to refer to the written submission handed in by the Lamma Island (South) Rural Committee.
- (d) A member asked the Planning Department to clarify the differences between land ownership and land use.

The representative of the Planning Department responded as follows:

- (a) Land ownership and land use were two different matters. The authorities introduced planning restrictions in accordance with the authorization of the Town Planning Ordinance, but that would not affect land ownership.

- (b) The area plan at issue was prepared because actions of clearance of vegetation and laying of concrete blocks, which were discovered at the beginning of the year, had negative effects on the environment. Po Toi Islands had ecological values and thus there was a need to prepare the plan. In accordance with the stipulations of the Town Planning Ordinance, the current plan was of transitional nature, and was to be replaced by outline zoning plan in three years' time. The District Council, the relevant rural committees and the local people would be consulted in due course.
- (c) After the promulgation of the area plan, unauthorized development or land use would be subject to restriction. However, the Planning Department would respect land ownership and land owners could submit applications for development under existing mechanism.

Islands District Council Secretariat

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