

Summary of Minutes of Meeting of Islands District Council

Date : 21 October 2013 (Monday)
Time : 2:00 p.m.
Venue : Conference Room, Islands District Council, 14/F., Harbour Building,
38 Pier Road, Central, Hong Kong.

I. **Briefing on Long Term Housing Strategy Consultation Document**

The Under Secretary for Transport and Housing said that he would like to listen to members' opinions of the Long Term Housing Strategy Consultation Document (the Consultation Document). The Consultation Document was prepared by the Long Term Housing Strategy Steering Committee (the Steering Committee) after numerous discussions. A three-month public consultation was being conducted and would end on 2 December. Upon completion of the consultation period, the Steering Committee would collate opinions collected and submit a report to the Government. The Government would take into account of the report and views from all sides to formulate its long term housing strategy and relevant policies. Thus the proposals listed in the Consultation Document were not final conclusions of the Government. Instead, general directions and some options of long term strategy were put forward in the Consultation Document to induce further discussions in the community.

The Vice-chairlady gave the two housing projects in Mui Wo as examples of Islands District Council (IDC)'s support of the Government's housing development. She hoped that the Government's housing programmes would be well co-ordinated with the population structure and that suitable ancillary facilities would be provided. She worried that squeezing high-density residential blocks into the spaces between existing high-rise buildings would cause various problems, such as transportation and stress on community facilities. She said that there was much land in the Islands District which could be used for housing development. She opined that the planning of Tung Chung New Town was less than ideal and lessons should be learnt for future development.

A member agreed with the objectives of the Consultation Document. As currently rents of private flats were high, increase of housing supply should mainly aim at public housing and supplemented by Home Ownership Scheme (HOS).

A member agreed with the general directions set out in the Consultation Document. He also concurred with the 60:40 ratio of public and private housing being proposed for future housing supply. In addition to looking for suitable land for housing, he said that necessary ancillary facilities should also be provided.

A member hoped that the New Territories Small House Policy could be relaxed to allow indigenous residents to build, refurbish or rebuild small houses, which would reduce the demand for public housing.

A member gave his opinions on several housing policies. He said that the under-occupation policy was harassment, as the occupants would not occupy an extra unit and would not affect the supply of housing units either. The overcrowding policy was not satisfactory because successful applicants would mostly be allocated to older housing units in districts other than the one they originally resided in. The “well-off tenants” policy would force offspring to move out, which contradicted the Government’s policy of encouraging the young ones to live with and take care of their parents.

A member said that there were much land resources on Lantau Island, and if transportation was improved, houses could be built in Lantau South, Mui Wo and Tai O. The demand of housing in urban areas could then be eased.

A member said that as a representative of the middle class, he was supportive of the Government’s construction of public housing and development of North East New Territories. However, he had reservation about the demand-management measures of residential properties recently introduced. He believed that the solution of housing problem laid in increasing supply and maintaining its mobility.

A member said that many residents of public housing worried about squeezing high-density residential blocks into the spaces between existing high-rise buildings. Residents of singleton public housing were mostly elderly, low-income and persons in rehabilitation, and would exert pressure on community services. On the other hand, HOS flats were welcome as they would provide opportunity for home ownership.

The Under Secretary for Transport and Housing responded as follows:

- (a) He was appreciative of IDC's support of the general directions and other proposals put forward in the Consultation Document, such as the role played by the Government in public housing, increase in supply of public housing, tending to the housing needs of the grass roots and the 60:40 ratio of public and private housing for future housing supply.
- (b) Many people were reluctant to move to the New Territories because of various factors and there was great difficulty in increasing the supply of public housing in urban areas. If sites for single public housing blocks were identified, scientific methods would be adopted to ensure its suitability in terms of daylighting, air ventilation and transportation, etc. Concrete proposals would be submitted to District Councils for comment. Such projects might have an additional benefit of enhancing community facilities.
- (c) He was appreciative of the members' support of public housing construction on Lantau Island. Tung Chung New Town Extension Study was being conducted while the long term potential of Lantau was also being explored. The Government would welcome more land for housing, but Lantau Island had great conservation value and a balance had to be struck between the two factors.
- (d) The general directions proposed in the Consultation Document included the supply of 470 000 public housing units in the ten years to come, 60:40 ratio of public and private housing, and priority accorded to low-income elderly and families in public housing. Consensus of the community as a whole would have to be achieved in order to adopt a multi-prong approach to increase land supply.
- (e) The Steering Committee opined that the beneficiaries of small houses were mainly indigenous residents. Thus Small House Policy was not included in the Consultation Document.
- (f) As there was a shortage of public housing units, the under-occupation policy, though causing inconvenience to some people, was necessary to ensure the effective deployment of resources. Issues of

under-occupation and overcrowding had to be dealt with, and criteria had been formulated to tackle the problem.

- (g) Hong Kong was not the only place where demand-management measures of residential properties were introduced. The measures were effective in cooling the exuberant market. The Government would consider the withdrawal of measures or lessening their impact when time was right.

With regard to enhancing community facilities, a member hoped that the pledge of the construction of Tung Chung West railway station would be fulfilled. He hoped the Under Secretary would refer the request for construction of an indoor stadium in Tung Chung West to relevant departments, and that the decision of not handing over newly constructed commercial facilities to the Link would be formally publicized.

A member hoped that the Government would not shift the political pressure sustained and problems faced by the community as a whole to the middle class. He asked what objective criteria the Government would adopt in determining normal market situation had been restored, and that time was right for demand-management measures of residential properties to be withdrawn.

The Vice-chairlady supported the construction of railway stations in Tung Chung East and Tung Chung West. The project of Tung Chung West railway station should be separated from the Tung Chung New Town Extension Study, so that works for the former could begin earlier to tie in with development of the area. She gave example to illustrate that government procedures would take time, and urged for efficiency in housing construction by convening inter-departmental meetings and establishing steering committees.

The Under Secretary for Transport and Housing further responded as follows:

- (a) With reference to the construction of Tung Chung West railway station, the authorities were aware that the demand for transportation would increase in tandem with growth of population. The Consultant's report on Tung Chung West railway extension was nearing completion. Taking into account contents of the report and opinions collected in Stage 2 Public Engagement for Tung Chung New Town Extension

Study, the Government would hopefully publicize relevant decisions in 2014.

- (b) The Government would, where feasible, carry out administrative and planning procedures concurrently. However, some external factors, such as shortage of labour of the construction industry, were beyond government control. In cases where the District Council(s) concerned would give more suggestions, more time for consultation and communication would be needed for smooth implementation of works.
- (c) The Government would take various factors into account, such as external and local economic conditions and analyses, in determining whether and when demand-management measures should be withdrawn. The authorities opined that it was not the right time currently for these measures to be withdrawn.
- (d) The consultation period would end on 2 December. Members' opinions were welcome.

II. Poverty Line and Strategy for Poverty Alleviation

The Director (SD), Chief Secretary for Administration's Private Office, briefed the meeting of the composition of the Commission on Poverty, the functions of the poverty line and how it was set, analysis of the poverty situation, the direction of poverty alleviation and policies, etc.

A member was concerned about the problem of working poverty. He enquired whether present studies and analyses would be able to determine causes of working poverty, so that solutions could be found. If working-poor households would not be able to lift themselves out of poverty, then the Government's encouragement of employment would not be a thorough solution. He supported the provision on a long term basis of some assistance schemes of the Community Care Fund, and asked if the Fund would roll out new schemes to assist the working-poor households.

A member was concerned about students of underprivileged households. He said that the Government should formulate corresponding social welfare policies once the poverty line was set. Special attention should be paid to students of working-poor households, and he proposed the Community Care Fund to provide special assistance

schemes for this target group in particular. He opined that school lunch subsidy should also be issued to students who brought their own lunch.

Another member said that the poverty line would define poverty quite generally, but would not be able to reflect regional differences. In the case of Tung Chung, for example, the costly transportation fees and higher commodity prices would reduce the purchasing power of residents. He thus enquired how the authorities would address that issue. He proposed the provision of direct subsidy to low income families and asked if there were any concrete measures to assist the working-poor households. He said that the existing Mandatory Provident Fund system was not adequate to provide for needs in life in retirement, and enquired what were the Government's direction and strategy in that regard.

A member enquired about the total sum of funds allocated by the Community Care Fund thus far, its current balance and administrative fees of measures adopted.

The Director (SD), Chief Secretary for Administration's Private Office, responded as follows:

- (a) The Community Care Fund had the function of plugging gaps in the existing system, and it also served as a more flexible and faster channel of assistance. The Fund played an exploratory role in many schemes. The Government would lodge assistance programmes on a long term basis, if similar and prior pilot schemes had been found successful by the Fund. The Government had provided a \$5 billion provision at the Fund's inception. In 2013, another \$15 billion was allocated to it. As at August of the current year, the balance of the Community Care Fund was \$20.9 billion.
- (b) Since its establishment, the Community Care Fund had rolled out 24 assistance schemes, 18 before the setting up of the Commission on Poverty, and 6 schemes after. The Fund required that administrative cost of each scheme did not exceed 5% of its commitment.
- (c) The Community Care Fund would provide a one-off assistance to low income families who were not on Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA). The Government had reservation about provision

of rent allowance for concern of lowering supply and increase in rent level.

- (d) The Government was planning to provide School Lunch Subsidy on a long term basis. Existing practice of providing lunch was effective and there was worry that cash allowance might not directly benefit students as intended. One of the new assistance schemes was that allowance issued under the School Textbook Assistance Scheme would be increased to \$500 or \$1,000.
- (e) Statistics revealed that most working-poor households engaged in low-skilled work and there were many dependent family members. The statutory minimum wage protection thus could not prevent their living below the poverty line. The Commission on Poverty was currently studying measures to assist these households and suggestions would be welcome. The principles of providing assistance were that these families were not on CSSA, that they aimed to be self-reliant, that there was/were working family member(s), and that any assistance would not disincentivize them from gainful employment. Assistance would also be provided to children and youngsters in their study and growth, so as to reduce inter-generational poverty.
- (f) The usefulness of poverty line as an analytical tool had its limitations. For example, it did not take into account the household's expenditure and disposable income. Thus the Government would be mindful of these factors in its formulation of policies. The Government and the Community Care Fund would be flexible in determining the income ceiling of each scheme with due regard to its objectives, expected results and target groups.
- (g) There were a great number of elderly people living below the poverty line, making the issue of retirement protection much more worrying. The Commission on Poverty had commissioned studies about social security and retirement protection, and results were expected to come out in the middle of the coming year. After the setting of poverty line, the Commission on Poverty would continue to monitor changes in data collected, and would collect more data about disabled persons and minority ethnic groups, for example, for future analysis and discussion.

- (h) Housing assistance was an important poverty alleviation measure. Consultation was being conducted by the Long Term Housing Steering Committee.

A member said that the 5% administrative cost of assistance schemes was reasonable. However, he said that funds approved by the Community Care Fund were limited and that better use of the fund should be made.

The Director responded that part of the Fund would be invested on its behalf by Hong Kong Monetary Authority, and gains thus acquired would be used on various schemes. The Fund was currently running 24 schemes and the amount of commitment in total was more than \$2.9 billion. Some commitments in money terms and the number of their beneficiary were relatively large. More schemes would be rolled out to provide appropriate assistance to those in need.

A member enquired whether relevant information about the usage of the Fund could be obtained from the internet.

The Director said that the Commission on Poverty had published a pamphlet containing details of the 24 schemes mentioned, and the contents were accessible on the Commission's website.

III. Strengthen the Collaboration between Women's Commission and District Councils

Representatives of the Women's Commission briefed the meeting of the Commission's work, the contents of Funding Scheme For Women's Development and Capacity Building Mileage Programme.

A member said that the Islands District Women's Development Program, jointly organized by IDC and various organizations, was successfully held in the previous year. The program would be held again in the current year with targets such as achieving better understanding of oneself, building self-confidence, enhancing communication skills and mental and physical health, and learning the importance of a balanced diet.

The Vice-chairlady said that the IDC was supportive of Funding Scheme For Women's Development and a working group had been set up to organize activities.

The IDC had also allocated funds for the purpose. She raised concern about the term “Gender Mainstreaming” in Chinese.

A representative was appreciative of IDC’s allocating fund to boost Funding Scheme For Women’s Development. The Commission encouraged District Councils to make use of local resources and networks to organize programmes for women’s development. Reasons for adopting the current Chinese version of the term “Gender Mainstreaming” were explained to the meeting. It was adopted mainly to maintain consistency with usage in Mainland China, Taiwan and by the United Nations.

IV. Matters arising from last meeting - Question on broadband Internet service in Islands District

A representative of Office of the Communications Authority (OFCA) said that:

- The market for fixed network operators (FNOs) had been fully open since 1 January 2003 and the Government did not set an upper limit for the number of licenses to be issued. Currently there were five FNOs in Hong Kong, which could install network to meet their clients’ demand according to their market strategy. Fees they charged for their services were business decisions which did not subject to prior approval of the Communications Authority (CA).
- When it came to provision of service by FNOs at a certain place, the OFCA at best could provide convenience in installation of network as the market had been fully open. Issues such as network coverage and technology to be used were business decisions. Whether optical fibre would be used in services was also a business decision.
- Currently, there was no legislation regulating the amount of fees charged for installation of network services. Licensees could determine the fees they charged in response to market dynamics and demand of clients.
- PCCW’s provision of 6 to 8M fixed network service in ADSL format on Cheung Chau was a business decision not subjected to CA’s regulation. Currently, there were wireless broadband or home network

with speed up to 100GB per second. With reference to transmission of X-ray film of St. John Hospital, PCCW had provided faster commercial broadband services for Cheung Chau. Thus St. John Hospital could contact PCCW for more information.

A representative of OFCA said that some complaints against PCCW were received in 2011 to 2012. They alleged that PCCW substantially increased its service charges at places where it was the only FNO, and that it levied different prices in different areas for its services, and that it had abused its dominant position in the market. Taking into consideration the changes in prices of broadband services market in the period, the potential competition from other FNOs, and the feasibility of substitution of fixed network by wireless service, the CA concluded that PCCW's pricing for its broadband services had not breached Telecommunications Ordinance. Another representative of OFCA supplemented on complaints against PCCW and CA's conclusion as follows:

- Section 7L of Telecommunications Ordinance prohibited a licensee in a dominant position in a telecommunications market to abuse its dominant position. He quoted that "A licensee is in a dominant position when, in the opinion of the Authority, it is able to act without significant competitive restraint from its competitors and customers." In reviewing the relevant cases, the CA noticed that the market for FNOs had been fully open and currently there were five service providers. There were no systematic barriers to prevent competitors from entering the market. Upon considering the number of service providers, their respective market shares, the coverage of broadband services and the factor of barriers to competition, the OFCA opined that PCCW was not in a dominant position in a telecommunications market, and thus Clause 7L of Telecommunications Ordinance was not applicable.
- The CA noticed that it was business decisions for other service providers not to provide services in a certain area, and it was not a result of anti-competitive conduct on the part of PCCW. PCCW levied a higher price for its services not only at places where it was the only service provider, but at places where there were other competitors as well. In addition, other FNOs had also increased their service charges, which reflected that the rise of fees was a market trend. As such, the complaint against PCCW that it had abused its dominant market

position and that it had levied too high a service charge did not substantiate.

- Section 7N of Telecommunications Ordinance prohibited a licensee in a dominant position in a telecommunications market to commit discriminatory conduct. The prohibition provision applied if in the opinion of the CA such discrimination had the purpose or effect of preventing or substantially restricting competition in a telecommunications market. In “Guidelines issued under Section 6D(1) relating to Provisions in the Telecommunications Ordinance” in general issued in 2011, it was pointed out that “Price discrimination in itself should not be harmful to the competitive process or to consumers. It can in fact contribute to increased consumer welfare in terms of allocative efficiency, as the level of output is normally higher than that under uniform pricing.” With regards the complaints received, the CA did not find the pricing strategy of PCCW had the effect of preventing or substantially restricting competition in the market. As such, the complaint against PCCW with regard to price discrimination in a breach of Section 7N of Telecommunications Ordinance did not substantiate.

A member said that the OFCA used business decision as an excuse to harbour the FNOs. The exorbitant Cable TV installation fees for Cheung Chau residents had affected the younger generation in learning as well as their upward social mobility. He also disagreed with the conclusion that PCCW did not commit price discrimination and anti-competitive conduct, and that it had not abused its dominant position in market.

A member said that the Government should ensure, when licenses were issued, that equal services would be provided throughout Hong Kong. He proposed that the Government should take into account the need of remote areas when licenses were renewed. He criticized the proposal to use wireless broadband service in lieu of fixed network, as their receptions were incomparable. He said that schools on Cheung Chau had to pay a much higher fee for broadband services, compared with schools in Kowloon, and the practice was unfair.

A member proposed that amendments be made to Telecommunications Ordinance, or clauses be added at renewal of licensees.

V. Question on requesting the Government to set up a bazaar in Tung Chung in the pattern of “Tin Sau Bazaar”

The Assistant District Officer (ADO) said that the responses of the Home Affairs Bureau and the Islands District Office (ISDO) were as follows:

- (a) Upon receiving the proposal of a “Cooked food market in Tung Chung” in February of the current year, the ISDO had immediately followed up on the matter with Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD). The FEHD opined that there were sufficient retailed facilities and restaurants in Tung Chung, and some would remain open until eleven o’clock in the evening or into the early morning. Thus the Department had reservation about the proposal of a night market or food market.
- (b) At a recent Signature Project Scheme meeting of IDC, the ISDO had already pointed out questions pertaining to management, maintenance and sustainability, and that certain prerequisites would be necessary for the implementation of the proposal, which included (i) a venue which could attract clients and people flow, and (ii) a suitable non-profit-making organization to contract the responsibility of operation, management, maintenance and cleansing etc., for the market.
- (c) If the project proponent was able to identify a suitable venue, secure the support of the District Council and meet requirements in respect of food safety and environmental hygiene, and if there was a non-profit-making organization with the ability and adequate resources to manage and operate the market, then the relevant policy bureaux and departments would be open to the proposal, and might consider providing appropriate assistance in the matter.

The representative of the FEHD said that the Department would maintain its current policy of not issuing new cooked food hawker licenses, to ensure public hygiene and food safety. It was open to the proposal of setting up a market in Tung Chung. The market could be run by a social enterprise to provide stalls for hawkers to sell cheap goods. It could also provide job opportunities for the underprivileged. In considering the proposal, the issue of sustainability should be studied. If the venue would gain support of the District Council, and that its operation would meet

requirements in food safety, and that it would not affect environmental hygiene, the FEHD could assist in its application for license.

A member said that as a district councilor, he understood the need of residents. He believed that the proposal would be beneficial to the area's development. However, if he himself was to approach interested organization(s) and yet after tendering another operator was chosen, he was not sure whether the matter was conducted in a correct way. He opined that the Government should identify an appropriate venue and stipulate certain conditions for interested organization(s) or operator(s) to trial run the market. He further asked how the project should be implemented.

A member said that it was very difficult to run a market, and that "Tin Sau Bazaar" was a failure. If the project was profitable, there would be investors. In that case, the Government only needed to provide assistance without providing subsidy. He disagreed with the proposal of social enterprise running the market, as government subsidy would be needed for the first two years of operation. Past experience abounded with failures of social enterprises. He said that market forces should determine whether the project should be implemented or otherwise.

The District Officer said that there were two crucial points to the proposal. The first was a suitable venue. If the venue was not suitable, there would not be adequate people flow or nuisance would be created. The second was a keen and able operator to implement the project. If it was left to the Government to approach and encourage organizations to operate the market, the organization might be mistaken that it was assisting the Government to implement the project. The District Office was open to the proposal. If there was a suitable venue and if there was an interested organization, then departments concerned would be willing to assist. If it was entirely left to the Government to implement the project, the District Office would have reservation.

The member who raised the proposal said that he was willing to implement the project and approach organization(s) with the ability to operate the market. He proposed that one third or one quarter of a piece of land behind North Lantau Hospital and the Fire Station be used for the market. He enquired the next step to be taken if there was a suitable venue and an operator.

The District Officer said that if a concrete proposal was provided, relevant departments would be asked to assist in following up.

VI. Motion on urging the Government to build an indoor stadium and community hall in Tung Chung West

The representative of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) said that the Department provided sports stadiums in the entire Islands District in accordance with planning guidelines. Based on existing standard, the prevailing population of the district should be provided with three stadiums. The Department had provided five already, including the one at Man Tung Road in Tung Chung. The Man Tung Road Stadium was specially built in response to the rapid increase in population in Tung Chung during that period. The Department would closely monitor the changes in population in Tung Chung with regard to provision of sports stadiums.

The ADO said that the District Office understood the desire for a community hall in Tung Chung West. In considering the proposal for new halls, the Government would take into account factors such as population, local characteristics and availability of similar facilities in the area, etc. The utilization rate of Tung Chung Community Hall was around 70% currently. Adequate land for community facilities would be set aside in the Tung Chung New Town Extension Study being conducted. The District Office would closely monitor the situation in the area and review the need of a new hall if necessary.

A member said that the aim of the moving the motion was to urge the Government to consider setting up an indoor stadium and community hall in Tung Chung West. He hoped that members would support the motion so that the Government would take Tung Chung West into account in relevant consideration in future.

The Vice-chairlady supported the motion as there was no indoor community facility in Yat Tung Estate at present. Traveling to the town centre would incur cost to the grassroots.

Another member supported the motion as recreational facilities in Tung Chung were not adequate, the old town area in particular.

A member supported the motion as there would be other development projects in Tung Chung in the future.

A member said that most existing facilities were situated in Tung Chung North and the town centre, and that a piece of land was already available for the purpose being discussed. He thus supported the motion.

The Chairman asked the members to vote by show of hands. Eighteen members supported the motion. There was no abstention and no objection.

VII. Question on termination of “Discovery Bay-Mui Wo” ferry service &

VIII. Question on ferry services of Outlying Islands

The representative of the Transport Department said that the license of “Discovery Bay-Mui Wo” ferry service was scheduled to expire on 9 August 2013. The operator had told the Department at the beginning of the current year that upon the expiry of the current license, it did not intend to renew it. The Department then followed the usual practice of inviting expression of interest from the industry. However, no response had been received. The Department then discussed with the current operator, which agreed to extend its operation to 9 November. Meanwhile, the Department discussed with parties concerned to explore alternatives but came up with none. The Department engaged in another discussion with the operator which agreed to extend its service further to 9 February 2014.

The representative of the Marine Department said that the Department was conducting discussion with the industry on the following five safety measures: (1) all passenger vessels carrying more than one hundred passengers had to have an emergency response plan; (2) all life-jackets had to have the vessel’s registration number on them; (3) vessels equipped with watertight door had to install an alarm buzzer with it; (4) all passenger vessels carrying more than one hundred passengers had to have a crew member on duty responsible for lookout; and (5) the minimum number of crew members would be determined by the performance of a drill. The above measures above had not been implemented yet.

A member said that “Discovery Bay-Mui Wo” ferry route lacked financial viability all along. She queried whether safety measures for large vessels were applicable to kaitos. She was not satisfied with the manner with which the Marine Department dealt with the matter. She said that the difficulties faced by the operator were increase in cost and the measures to be implemented by the Marine Department. She hoped that the Department would reach an agreement with the industry soon. She also criticized the lack of subsidy for operators of small ferries and kaitos.

The representative of the Transport Department explained that subsidies were provided for major ferry operators because their routes provided services to populous areas. The Department was aware of the request for government subsidy made by operator of the “Discovery Bay-Mui Wo” ferry service as a result of the new measures to be adopted by the Marine Department. The Department would continue to conduct discussion with the operator.

The representative of the Marine Department said that proposals would be discussed with the industry before decisions were made.

A member urged for a successful resolution of the issue, as interest of the community was at stake.

A member said that the new measures were unilateral wishes of the Marine Department and no adequate discussion had been conducted with the industry. Any suspension of service would bring harm to residents. Subsidies provided so far served only to maintain existing service, not to bring improvements, and problems faced by residents and the industry remained.

A member pointed out that the requirement of installing the Automatic Identification System on vessels would be problematic and costly for small scale operators. Kaito service was very important for residents of remote places and he urged the Transport Department and the Marine Department to provide assistance so that operators would be able to survive.

A member proposed that another set of regulations be adopted for kaitos and that a one-off subsidy be provided for their operators. He urged for expeditious solution for the issue as the three-month period would expire very soon.

A member pointed out that the “Discovery Bay-Central” ferry route was the second highest in terms of number of passengers, but no subsidy had been provided for the route. She stressed the importance of the “Discovery Bay-Mui Wo” ferry route to the students. In addition, a large number of tourists (including Discovery Bay residents) went to Mui Wo on holidays, which contributed to the prosperity of the local economy. The termination of the ferry route, therefore, would not only cause inconvenience to the residents, but would also affect Mui Wo’s economy.

A member said that it had already been pointed out at the residents’ meeting

held on 6 October that the standby plan of the Transport Department had not taken into account the actual situation. If students affected were to travel by land, the already heavy road traffic of Discovery Bay would be even more busy, and chaos might be resulted. The cost of land transport would be as high as \$100 per day, compared with \$12 by ferry. The time spent by land travel would be very long. The plan of transferring to another ship at Peng Chau would cause worry to parents. He thus said that the standby plan of the Transport Department was not feasible. Only three months were left before the termination of service. He worried that if service did discontinue, the traffic between Mui Wo and Discovery Bay would not be maintained, and students and residents of both places and shops of Mui Wo would be greatly affected. He thus urged the Transport Department to provide an emergency plan.

A member pointed out the discrepancies of providing subsidies to major ferry route operators and none for kaito operators.

The Chairman urged the departments concerned to arrive at a consensus the earliest possible, so that residents' daily life would not be disrupted.

IX. Updates on North Lantau Hospital

A member said that the number of users of Accident & Emergency (A&E) service had been on the increase after the inception of service. He also enquired whether the "special night clinic service" had been cancelled, and whether the number of quota for general out-patient service for North Lantau Hospital be increased, and whether service would be provided on Sundays and/or public holidays.

A member requested the Hospital Authority's attendance of the District Council meetings on a regular basis, so as to keep the meeting abreast of the most updates of the Hospital. He further requested for the schedule of implementation of 16-hour A&E services. He said that the passage from Chui Kwan Drive to the Hospital was too narrow for wheelchair users, and the problem was compounded by the growth of tree branches onto the pavements. He further enquired about the routes to hospital to be taken for urgent A&E patients from remote villages, and urged that discussions be conducted with relevant rural committees if necessary.

A representative of the Hospital Authority responded as follows:

(a) North Lantau Hospital would continue to provide the "special night

clinic service” until 16-hour A&E service was implemented. The utilization rate for “special night clinic service” was very high from 6 pm to 10 pm. However, there were often only a few patients from 10 pm to 12 midnight. The Hospital was planning for the implementation of 16-hour A&E service, and hopefully it would be materialized in January 2014 at the earliest, and the “special night clinic service” would then be cancelled.

- (b) There was a great demand for general out-patient service across the territory, Islands District included. The headquarters of the Hospital Authority would be responsible for overall co-ordination and it would enhance service if and when resources and manpower were available.
- (c) The issue of wheelchair users encountering difficulty while approaching from Chui Kwan Drive would be dealt with.
- (d) Where land transport was available, A&E patients would usually be taken to North Lantau Hospital or first-aid stations at Mui Wo or Tai O. For marine transportation, most patients would be taken to hospitals on Hong Kong Island.

Commenting on a recent case of a Tai O patient being transported to Chek Lap Kok helipad, then to North Lantau Hospital, and finally to Princess Margaret Hospital, a member said that the transportation was convoluted. He also enquired whether the night service of Tai O Jockey Club Clinic would be affected after the opening of North Lantau Hospital.

The representative of the Hospital Authority said that as far as he understood it, Tai O patients transported by helicopter would normally be transferred to Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital or Queen Mary Hospital. As the flying conditions of the day at issue were not satisfactory, the convoluted transfer mentioned above was made and it was an isolated incident. Tai O first-aid station would remain operative around the clock after the opening of North Lantau Hospital.

The Acting Chairlady was appreciative of the services provided by North Lantau Hospital and the Social Welfare Department.

X. Proposed Amendments to the approved Mui Wo Fringe Outline Zoning Plan No. S/I-MWF/8

Members noted the contents of the paper.

XI. Marine Port District Action Plan 2013(Interim Report)

A member was appreciative of the Police's handling of a wounding case on Cheung Chau which occurred on 9 October, and enquired how it was so successfully handled.

The representative of the Hong Kong Police Force said that the Department had all along deployed manpower strategically, so as to achieve maximum efficiency. Apart from manpower already available on the island, tactical units and marine police could also provide assistance if and when necessary. Plain clothes personnel patrolled the island in addition to uniformed police. Upon receiving the report of the case, the police immediately swung into action and close contact was simultaneously maintained with local members of the District Council and residents. As a result, arrest was swiftly made and the news of arrest was immediately dispatched to ease concern of residents.

Islands District Council Secretariat
December 2013