

(Translation)

Islands District Council
Minutes of Meeting of
Tourism, Agriculture, Fisheries and Environmental Hygiene Committee

Date : 30 September 2019 (Monday)
Time : 2:00 p.m.
Venue : Islands District Council Conference Room,
14/F, Harbour Building, 38 Pier Road, Central, Hong Kong.

Present

Ms LEE Kwai-chun (Chairman)
Ms FU Hiu-lam, Sammi (Vice-Chairman)
Mr CHOW Yuk-tong, SBS
Mr YU Hon-kwan, Randy, JP
Mr YUNG Chi-ming, BBS
Mr CHAN Lin-wai
Mr WONG Hon-kuen, Ken
Mr WONG Man-hon
Mr HO Chun-fai
Mr HO Siu-kei
Ms WONG Chau-ping
Ms YU Lai-fan
Ms YUNG Wing-sheung, Amy
Mr KWONG Koon-wan
Mr KWOK Ping, Eric
Ms TSANG Sau-ho, Josephine
Mr KWONG Kwok-kam, BH, JP
Mr WONG King-chuen
Mr ON Man-sang

In Attendance

Dr CHOW Ka-wai, Mary	Senior Veterinary Officer (Animal Management) Development, Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
Dr KOON Ka-kei, Cathy	Veterinary Officer (Animal Management) Development1, Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

In Attendance

Mr AU Sheung-man, Benjamin	Assistant District Officer (Islands)1, Islands District Office
Ms LEUNG Tin-yee, Christy	Assistant District Officer (Islands)2, Islands District Office
Mr LI Ming-yau	Senior Inspector of Works, Islands District Office
Mr KAO Hsi-chiang	(Acting) District Environmental Hygiene Superintendent (Islands), Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Mr KWOK Chi-hang	Administrative Assistant/Lands (District Lands Office, Islands), Lands Department
Ms LEE Yuk-yin	Assistant Police Community Relations Officer (Marine Port District), Hong Kong Police Force
Ms SIN Kai-wai, Marie	Senior Transport Officer/Islands 2, Transport Department
Mr LI Kim-man	Senior Environment Protection Officer (Regional South)5, Environmental Protection Department
Mr CHOW Man-lung, Andrew	Engineer/Hong Kong (Distribution 6), Water Supplies Department
Mr IP Ka-lok, Kelvin	Conservation Officer/1 (Lantau), Civil Engineering and Development Department
Mr WU Tip-ming, Wilson	Senior Field Officer (Agricultural Extension), Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
Ms Sonja CHAN	Representative, New World First Ferry Services Limited

Secretary

Ms TANG Yuen-shan, Serena	Executive Officer (District Council)2, Islands District Office
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Absent with Apology

Mr CHOW Ho-ding, Holden	
Mr NG Man-kit	
Mr TANG Wing-kai, Ricky	Fisheries Officer (Enforcement) 1, Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
Mr YAU Siu-sang	Lantau District Police Community Relations Team Community Liaison Officer, Hong Kong Police Force
Ms Sarah CHOW	Representative, Hong Kong Tourism Board
Mr Benny CHAN	Representative, New Lantao Bus Co., (1973) Ltd.

Welcome remarks

The Chairman welcomed representatives of government departments and organisations as well as Members to the meeting, and introduced the following representatives of government departments who attended the meeting:

- (a) Mr KAO Hsi-chiang, (Acting) District Environmental Hygiene Superintendent (Islands) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) who stood in for Miss Winsy LAI;
- (b) Ms LEE Yuk-yin, Assistant Police Community Relations Officer (Marine Port District) of the Hong Kong Police Force who stood in for Mr LEONG Seong-iam

Sammy;

(c) Mr WU Tip-ming, Wilson, Senior Field Officer (Agricultural Extension) of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) who stood in for Ms Rachel HUI; and

(d) Mr IP Ka-lok, Kelvin, Conservation Officer/1 (Lantau) of the Civil Engineering and Development Department who stood in for Miss Pauline TONG.

2. Members noted that Mr Holden CHOW, Mr NG Man-kit, Mr Ricky TANG, Mr YAU Siu-sang, Ms Sarah CHOW, Representative of the Hong Kong Tourism Board and Mr Benny CHAN, Representative of New Lantau Bus Co., (1973) Ltd. were unable to attend the meeting due to other commitments.

I. Confirmation of minutes of the meeting held on 29.7.2019

3. The captioned minutes were confirmed unanimously.

II. Question on “Trap-Neuter-Return” Trial Programme for Stray Dogs
(Paper TAFEHC 44/2019)

4. The Chairman welcomed Dr CHOW Ka-wai, Mary, Senior Veterinary Officer (Animal Management) Development and Dr KOON Ka-kei, Cathy, Veterinary Officer (Animal Management) Development 1 of AFCD to the meeting to respond to the question.

5. Mr KWONG Koon-wan briefly introduced the question.

6. Dr Cathy KOON gave a briefing with the aid of PowerPoint presentation and responded as follows:

(a) AFCD implemented a three-year “Trap-Neuter-Return” trial programme for stray dogs between January 2015 and January 2018 in Cheung Chau South with the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) acting as the Programme Co-ordinator. Despite the end of the trial period, the department continues to monitor the change in number of dogs in the trial site.

(b) AFCD commissioned Ecosystems Limited (the consultant) to assess the effectiveness of the trial programme. The department aimed to achieve an average

of 10% annual decrease in the stray dog population during the trial period at the trial site and a 27.1% decrease in three years after the commencement of the programme. Nevertheless, the result showed that there was only a 14% decrease in the stray dog population over the three-year period, hence, the target was not met. With regards to the number of complaints associated with stray dogs in the Cheung Chau South trial site, 19 complaints were received before the programme commencement between February 2014 and January 2015. During the implementation period, 39 complaints were received between February 2015 and January 2016, 27 complaints between February 2016 and January 2017 and 26 complaints between February 2017 and January 2018; Seven and three complaints were received between February 2018 and January 2019 and February and August 2019 respectively after the completion of the trial programme. Result suggested that there was no direct relationship between the number of stray dog complaints and the trial programme.

- (c) During the trial programme between February 2015 and August 2019, 133 stray dogs were caught by SPCA within the trial site. Among which, 65 dogs were neutered and returned, whereas 2 adult dogs and 54 puppies were rehomed.
- (d) To expand the trial programme in covering other parts of Cheung Chau, AFCD is required to conduct initial assessment at the proposed new sites through inspecting the site environment and assessing the number of stray dogs in order to evaluate whether the proposed sites are suitable for implementing the trial programme. It is also required to commission an animal welfare organisation (AWO) to co-ordinate the programme. Currently, SPCA has expressed interest to continue in assisting the programme. In addition, consultation on the trial programme has to be conducted with the relevant District Council (DC) and community to solicit support for introducing legislative amendments for implementation of the programme at the new locations.
- (e) Attempts had been made in 2013 to include Cheung Chau North into the trial programme but the proposal was objected by the vast majority of the public at that time. Therefore, only Cheung Chau South was included in the captioned programme. According to the data, stray dog-related complaints were mostly received from the central and northern parts of Cheung Chau which was believed to be associated with the comparatively larger residential population in the areas. The department will maintain close liaison and collaboration with SPCA in collecting more data to assess the feasibility of expanding the trial programme to other locations.

7. Mr KWONG Koon-wan expressed his views as follows:

- (a) The department mentioned that the decrease in the number of stray dogs in the trial site was less than the target of 27.1% after the implementation of the programme. Yet, the total number of stray dogs in the area is heading towards a declining trend. He opined that neutered dogs are less aggressive which can reduce the number of dog bite incidents effectively.
- (b) He disagreed that there was no direct relationship between the number of stray dog complaints and the trial programme. He pointed out that the number of complaints received in 2018 and 2019 was significantly less than that in 2015. Difficulties were encountered by the department in 2015 when conducting local consultations. Some members of the public opined that stray dogs should not be returned back to their original habitat after captured, whereas animal lovers suggested that they should be treated in a more humane manner. In this respect, no consensus could be reached between the two sides. He proposed that the department should progressively expand the trial programme by cautiously identifying new potential sites. Assessment on the environmental assessment at the proposed sites can then be made, followed by local consultations.

8. Ms Josephine TSANG mentioned that several years ago, SPCA arranged volunteers to visit Peng Chau to perform dog neutering. The neutered dogs were then released back to their original habitat. Local stakeholders held different views with some agreed and some did not, thus consultation is necessary. She considered that dogs should have the right for survival and supported the “Trap-Neuter-Return” programme. If no effective measures was taken by the Government, dogs would continue to reproduce, affecting the members of the public. Apart from Cheung Chau, she opined that the department should conduct consultation in other areas of Islands District (such as Peng Chau) so that the trial programme can also be implemented.

9. Mr Eric KWOK expressed his views as follows:

- (a) He supported the implementation of the trial programme by AFCD. He explained that Hong Kong is a civilised society. People have increasingly valued more on animals’ right to live in recent years. He agreed that the programme should be expanded to cover other areas of Islands District.
- (b) He enquired about the missing 12 stray dogs caught under the previous trial programme.

- (c) He reckoned that the department's report had not clearly explained the reason of not achieving the target in the Cheung Chau South trial site. It was hoping that the consultant can provide suggestions for improvement.

10. Mr Ken WONG expressed his views as follows:

- (a) Stray dogs caused disturbances to residents on Peng Chau. At present, AFCD would arrange staff to catch stray dogs upon receipt of complaints. Yet, such practice has been criticised by dog lovers, putting the department in a difficult dilemma. He realised that SPCA intended to perform neutering on stray dogs in Peng Chau and had contacted the department but received no reply.
- (b) He pointed out that culling stray dogs served little effect on the management. In the past, many people strongly opposed stray dog neutering. As a result, there are currently dozens of stray dogs roaming in Tung Wan. He considered that the "Trap-Neuter-Return" programme could effectively stop the stray dogs from reproducing. With natural death, the number of stray dogs will eventually be reduced.
- (c) He understood that the department faced great pressure. Apart from the difficulties in catching stray dogs, staff might have to be scolded by the public. He pointed out that the number of stray dogs on Peng Chau had reached 40 to 50. It was learnt that some dog lovers would capture stray dogs and bring them to SPCA for neutering. Any expense raised was bore by the dog lovers. As such, he urged the department to seriously consider implementing the programme in Peng Chau and other areas of Islands District in order to solve the stray dog problem.

11. Mr YUNG Chi-ming expressed his views as follows:

- (a) He has expressed support for the trial programme since 2013. There were currently many stray dogs in Cheung Chau North. Knowing that the department has been receiving complaints related to local residents being chased by dogs, he proposed to expand the programme further to cover Cheung Chau North.
- (b) It was known that some dogs, particularly stray dogs, suffered from skin diseases, ulceration at their back and limbs and parasite infection. He enquired whether the department would provide medical treatment to prevent them from infecting other dogs after returning to their habitat.
- (c) A number of stray dogs always roamed around Tai Kwai Wan and Cheung Chau

Beach Road and chased passers-by. He urged the department to re-introduce the programme to avoid on-going reproduction of the dogs.

12. Dr Cathy KOON referred to Mr KWOK's enquiry about the whereabouts of the remaining 12 stray dogs and said that according to the department's record, seven dogs were found dead due to natural causes and five were suffered from serious illness which were euthanised by SPCA.

13. Dr Mary CHOW gave a consolidated response as follows:

- (a) Regarding Members' proposal of implementing the "Trap-Neuter-Return" trial programme in different areas, if any AWO recognizes certain location with overpopulation of stray dogs and considers necessary to implement the programme thereat, the AWO can propose such location to the department for discussion. After assessing the environment at the location and the condition of stray dogs, the department would conduct public consultation in collaboration with the AWO concerned. Subject to the support from the local residents, the department would make amendments to the legislation for implementing the programme.
- (b) The failure to achieve the target was attributed to variable geographic and environmental factors such as the dog count, prevailing weather condition and attitude of dog keepers. These would significantly affect the effectiveness of the programme.

14. Mr KWONG Koon-wan expressed his views as follows:

- (a) He was aware that the department was open-minded about the trial locations and that the effectiveness of the programme would be affected by various factors, such as whether the residents understood the purpose of the programme. As such, he proposed that the department should carry out education or publicity to the residents.
- (b) Stray dogs were fed in the vicinity of residential areas, attracting congregation of dogs for food. This posed difficulty to AFCD officers in fulfilling their duties as it was no easy task to urge the feeders not to feed dogs at areas outside the trial site or advise them to feed at the Sai Wan Cemetery, within the trial location. Nearby residents would be affected when the stray dogs were used to searching for food outside the trial site. The trial programme should not be implemented in densely populated areas.

- (c) As for how to stop or educate stray dog feeders, he recalled the time when he conducted district visit for education and publicity activities years ago, AFCD officers indicated that they were scolded by stray dog feeders. Although FEHD provided assistance to clear the food up when stray dogs were found to be fed, the subject dogs might come back again for food causing hygiene problem. He proposed that when someone was found feeding stray dogs on street, which led to hygiene problem or gathering of stray dogs around the nearby residential areas, the department should take up prosecution action.

15. Mr HO Chun-fai expressed his views as follows:

- (a) He enquired, when processing adoption applications, whether the department would check the number of dogs kept by the applicant, and whether the applicant would be considered unsuitable to adopt more dogs if he/she has already been keeping several dogs. Some residents reflected to him that some domestic helpers allowed the 8-10 dogs under their charge to foul everywhere. This caused serious hygiene problem as people might accidentally step on the droppings on their way to work and school.
- (b) He said that stray dog problem exists in every district. It was hoping that the department would address the problem. Stray dogs are smelly and their hair would fall into the sewers, causing odour. He urged AFCD to take follow-up action as soon as possible.

16. Mr Ken WONG concurred with Mr KWONG Koon-wan and opined that there is need to amend the legislation. He said that some people improperly disposed the containers after feeding cats on Peng Chau; feed leftover was left at the pier and harbourfront, attracting rodents. He proposed the department should penalize the unauthorised feeders so as to prevent hygiene from deteriorating.

17. The Chairman said that penalties are in place and the question was how to enforce the penalties.

18. Dr Mary CHOW gave a consolidated response as follows:

- (a) AFCD has increased resources and stepped up efforts in educating members of the public on no illegal feeding of wild animals and birds lest it would affect the health of the animals and surrounding environment in recent years.
- (b) The environmental hygiene legislation is enforced by FEHD. She reckoned that

combating illegal feeding which affects residences by legislative means would create enforcement difficulties. She opined that environmental hygiene problem and illegal feeding should be addressed by enhancing public education.

- (c) For the number of dogs being kept in Hong Kong, dog keepers are only required to apply for a dog license by law. There is no restriction on the number of dogs that one could keep. Education effort is required to advise dog keepers to take care of their dogs in a responsible and considerable manner so as not to affect other people.

19. The Chairman enquired how the department would handle stray dogs with skin diseases.

20. Dr Mary CHOW said that SPCA and the Society for Abandoned Animals are the Programme Co-ordinators of the programme. If sick animals are caught, the two societies will follow up on the medical treatment and send them back to their original habitat after they are cured.

21. The Chairman enquired whether the department can follow the condition of every stray dog.

22. Dr Mary CHOW said that since stray dogs used to roam around and would stay in many habitats, it is not easy to catch them. At the initial stage of the programme, the department has set the target of catching 80% of dogs within a specified period of six months. The department noticed that despite the two programme coordinators had tried their effort in catching the dogs within a short time period for administering birth control measures, the “80%” target could only be achieved after 10 months. In view of this, the department could not commit to be able to follow the condition of each stray dog, but would make every effort to do so.

III. Progress report on DC-funded District Minor Works Projects (Paper TAFEHC 45/2019)

23. The Chairman welcomed Mr LI Ming-yau, Senior Inspector of Works of the Islands District Office (IsDO) to the meeting to present the paper.

24. Mr LI Ming-yau briefly presented the paper.

25. Members endorsed the paper and noted the contents of IsDO’s report.

IV. Report by Working Group

(i) Tourism, Agriculture, Fisheries and Environmental Hygiene Committee Activities Working Group

26. The Chairman said that the report of the Working Group (refer to Reference 1 for details) had been distributed to Members for perusal by fax or by email before the meeting. Members were welcome to give comments.

27. Members had no comment and endorsed the above working group report.

(ii) Islands Healthy City and Age-friendly Community Working Group

28. Mr Randy YU said that the report of the Working Group (refer to Reference 2 for details) had been distributed to Members for perusal by fax or by email before the meeting. Members were welcome to give comments.

29. Mr Randy YU briefly presented the work progress and supplementary information. At the meeting on 18 September, representatives of the Hong Kong Jockey Club and Lingnan University reported the following: result of Phase 3 district-based programmes of the Jockey Club Age-friendly City Project, follow-up on the World Health Organisation (WHO) Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities (WHO Network) activities, results of the 2018 year-end study and implementation of the three-year district action plans. Upon discussion, working group members agreed that Tung Chung Care Project, which was co-organised by Islands Healthy City and Age-friendly Community Working Group (IHCAC Working Group) and Tung Chung Safe and Healthy City (TCSHC), be submitted to the WHO Network as a project undertaken by Islands District.

30. Upon discussion, working group members agreed that proposed updates on WHO action plans and draft work schedule be discussed by IHCAC Working Group of the new term of DC.

31. Mr Randy YU asked members to comment on the report.

32. The Chairman said that regarding the proposal of submitting Tung Chung Care Project, which was co-organised by IHCAC Working Group and TCSHC, to the WHO Network as a project of Islands District, she asked whether any Member needed to make declaration of interests. No declaration of interests was made by Members at the meeting.

33. Members had no comment and endorsed the above working group report. Members noted and agreed that Tung Chung Care Project co-organised by IHCAC Working Group and TCSHC be submitted to the WHO Network as a project of Islands District, and that the proposed updates on WHO action plans and draft work schedule be discussed by IHCAC Working Group of the new term of DC.

V. Any Other Business

34. There was no other business.

VI. Date of Next Meeting

35. The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m. The Director of Home Affairs announced a notice in the Gazette that DC would suspend operation from 4 October 2019 until 31 December 2019 for the sixth-term DC ordinary election. During the suspension, meetings of DC and its committees and working groups as well as activities and programmes organised or co-organised had to be suspended. As such, meetings of this committee and its working groups originally scheduled after 4 October 2019 would be cancelled.

-End-