

(Translation)

**Minutes of the Third Meeting of the
Social Welfare Committee (2024) of the
Kwai Tsing District Council**

Date: 18 June 2024

Time: 2:30 p.m. – 3:48 p.m.

Venue: Kwai Tsing District Office (“K&T DO”) Conference Room

<u>Present</u>	<u>Time of Arrival</u>	<u>Time of Departure</u>
Ms CHAN On-ni (Vice Chairman)	Start of Meeting	End of Meeting
Ms WANG Chung-wing	Start of Meeting	End of Meeting
Mr NG Yam-fung Benny	Start of Meeting	End of Meeting
Mr LEE Wai-lok	Start of Meeting	End of Meeting
Mr CHOW Kim-ho	Start of Meeting	End of Meeting
Miss CHAU Kit-ying	Start of Meeting	End of Meeting
Ms LAM Ying-wai	Start of Meeting	End of Meeting
Ms LAM Chui-ling, MH, JP	Start of Meeting	End of Meeting
Mr TSUI Hiu-kit	Start of Meeting	End of Meeting
Ms LEUNG Kar-ming, MH	Start of Meeting	End of Meeting
Miss MOK Yee-ki	Start of Meeting	End of Meeting
Ms GUO Huimin	Start of Meeting	End of Meeting
Ms Miranda CHAN Oi-yi	Start of Meeting	End of Meeting
Mr PANG Yap-ming	Start of Meeting	End of Meeting
Mr AU Chi-fai	Start of Meeting	End of Meeting
Ms CHENG Lam	Start of Meeting	End of Meeting
Miss LO Yuen-ting, MH	Start of Meeting	End of Meeting

Standing Representatives of Departments and Institutions

Ms YUEN Mo-kuen, Monita	Assistant District Social Welfare Officer (Tsuen Wan/ Kwai Tsing) ³ , Social Welfare Department
Ms LIN Shui-ngor, Miranda	Senior School Development Officer (Kwai Tsing) ³ , Education Bureau
Mr TSANG Kin-hang, Gary	Labour Officer (Workplace Consultation Promotion) ² , Labour Department

Representatives of Departments and Institutions Attending by Invitation

Mr LAM Ka-yan, Leo Social Work Officer 2 (Planning and Coordinating), Tsuen Wan and Kwai Tsing District, Social Welfare Department

Secretary

Miss LEUNG Man-sin, Kammy Executive Assistant (Kwai Tsing) District Council (5), Kwai Tsing District Office

Absentee

Miss CHU Lai-ling, MH (Chairman) (Absent with apologies)

Opening Remarks

The Vice Chairman welcomed Members and representatives of government departments to the third meeting of the Social Welfare Committee (“SWC”) (2024) of the Kwai Tsing District Council (“K&T DC”).

2. Members unanimously endorsed the application for absence by Miss CHU Lai-ling. Ms CHAN On-ni, the Vice Chairman, would preside at the meeting.

Confirmation of Minutes of the 2nd Meeting (2024) held on 16 April 2024

3. Members endorsed the minutes unanimously.

Discussion Items

Social Welfare Department Tsuen Wan and Kwai Tsing District Social Welfare Office Business Plan 2024-25

(Proposed by Social Welfare Department)
(SWC Paper No. 5/D/2024)

4. Assistant District Social Welfare Officer (Tsuen Wan/ Kwai Tsing)³, Social Welfare Department (“SWD”) introduced Tsuen Wan and Kwai Tsing District Social Welfare Office Business Plan 2024-25.
5. Members discussed the aforesaid matter, and pointed out that according to the Chief Executive’s 2022 Policy Address, we had “to create opportunities for our children

to develop and flourish, as well as nurture a new generation of young people with an affection for our country and for Hong Kong and equipped with global perspectives, and who would contribute to the country and the city”. Members suggested that in planning youth services, SWD should not only cultivate positive thinking of young people at individual level, but also help them learn taking responsibility for the country and local society.

6. Assistant District Social Welfare Officer (Tsuen Wan/ Kwai Tsing)³, SWD, stated that she would relay Members’ suggestions to relevant working groups.

Request the Social Welfare Department to Follow up and Report in Detail the Tragic Incident related to Family Carer occurred in Kwai Fong Estate on 13 May, and Provide the Latest Data related to the Services Supporting the Carers and Persons with Intellectual Disabilities in Kwai Tsing District

(Proposed by Mr NG Yam-fung Benny, Miss CHU Lai-ling, MH, Ms LEUNG Kar-ming, MH, Miss LO Yuen-ting, MH, Ms LAM Chui-ling, MH, JP, Mr TSUI Hiu-kit, Ms CHENG Lam, Ms WANG Chung-wing, Ms LAM Ying-wai, Ms Miranda CHAN Oi-yi, Miss MOK Yee-ki, Mr CHOW Kim-ho and Ms GUO Huimin)
(SWC Paper Nos. 6/D/2024 and 6a/D/2024 (Revised))

7. Members discussed the aforesaid matter, and put forth enquiries and opinions as follows:

- (i) Enquired whether SWD regularly sought information from operators of hostels on the enrolment position and vacancies, as well as day care centres on the latest status of service places;
- (ii) Thanked SWD for maintaining proactive communication with K&T DC members, as well as providing timely and appropriate assistance by arranging for SWD officers and several social workers from Hong Kong Family Welfare Society (“HKFWS”) to set up a street counter to provide the public with professional advice and answer enquiries on 18 May. Members hoped for more opportunities to co-operate with SWD (such as setting up street counters) in the future, so as to strengthen communication with the needy;
- (iii) SWD had purchased a total of 5 properties under the “Purchase of Premises for the Provision of Welfare Facilities” initiative to establish facilities such

as support centres and resource centres. Members enquired whether SWD would purchase premises for use as selective placement centres or hostels. They also enquired whether corresponding District Council (“DC”) members or local organisations could recommend suitable premises to SWD for its follow-up and purchase negotiations with Government Property Agency (“GPA”) to accelerate premises purchase process;

- (iv) Many mothers or working females had reported that child care services in Kwai Tsing District were insufficient, especially on Saturdays and Sundays, with only individual service units providing limited child care service places. Therefore, Members recommended that SWD subsidise more child care service institutions. In addition, the Government should promote social welfare services in a more innovative and flexible manner. SWD could make reference to other places for their social services and experience in regard of carer, so as to strengthen and improve social service development. Taking Taiwan as an example, carers could pass those who had been under their care to other volunteers for care after participating in 2-day long volunteer services with certain institutions; and
- (v) Many families in Kwai Fong Estate have a demand for residential care services for persons with intellectual disabilities. Carers in the district had enquired of Members about the subsequent arrangements for persons with intellectual disabilities whose carers passed away while waiting for residential care services. Members enquired of SWD whether such persons still had to continue waiting for hostel places. They also enquired whether SWD would handle individual cases in special ways or provide assistance, where needed, to persons with intellectual disabilities lacking self-care abilities during their wait for hostel places. If the Department could flexibly handle individual cases on their individual merits, publicity should be enhanced for alleviating the concerns of carers.

8. Assistant District Social Welfare Officer (Tsuen Wan/ Kwai Tsing)³, SWD, responded as follows:

- (i) SWD was very concerned about the incident and was deeply saddened by the deaths of the two persons involved. The cases followed up by SWD social workers were not related to the two deceased. After the incident, the social workers of the district’s Integrated Family Service Centre immediately

contacted the family members concerned and offered appropriate assistance according to their welfare needs. In addition, Kwai Chung District Support Centre of Evangelical Lutheran Church Social Service - Hong Kong set up a street counter in Kwai Fong Estate from 14 to 17 May 2024 to publicise information to the residents on services for persons with disabilities and carers, as well as to answer relevant enquiries. On 18 May 2024, SWD set up a street counter with some K&T DC members and their affiliated organisations, as well as the Kwai Chung (South) Integrated Family Service Centre of HKFWS, to answer public enquiries. SWD thanked the DC members and organisations for their assistance and co-operation in jointly publicising information about carer services. SWD also hoped to continue collaborating with the DC, District Services and Community Care Teams and other local organisations in various aspects in the future, so as to support both the carers and the needy in the district;

- (ii) All mentally or physically handicapped applicants for residential service have to undergo the Standardised Assessment for Residential Services for Persons with Disabilities first. Applicants assessed to have residential service needs will be registered on the list for Central Referral System for Rehabilitation Services to waitlist for the services they need. Social workers will also evaluate the needs of the applicants and help them apply for priority allocation of residential places. Regarding Members' recommendation, SWD would remind service units in the district to publicise the mechanism for priority allocation of residential places to applicants and carers in need. Besides, if Members were concerned about the enrolment position and vacancies of individual hostels for persons with disabilities, they could provide relevant information after the meeting so as to facilitate the Department's understanding and follow-up actions;
- (iii) The Government would continue to increase the quotas for day training and residential services. Siu Lam Integrated Rehabilitation Services Complex came into full operation in the first quarter of 2024, and offered 75 residential places for moderately mentally handicapped persons as well as 400 residential places for severely mentally handicapped persons, so as to reduce the waiting time for relevant services and strengthen support for persons with disabilities and their families/carers;
- (iv) The progress of "purchase of welfare premises" is subject to the availability

of suitable properties in the market and relevant considerations, including the availability of suitable fire safety and barrier-free access facilities in the premises, whether their size and location meet the operational requirements, the prices offered by owners and the compatibility of the surrounding land uses with welfare uses. For that time being, SWD and GPA were continuing to identify and purchase suitable properties for the provision of more welfare facilities;

- (v) In addition to “purchase of welfare premises”, SWD would also identify suitable sites or premises in different types of development projects to provide more welfare facilities, so as to cater for the needs of the community. For Kwai Tsing District, the Government had incorporated land sale conditions in the land sale project on Lai Kong Street, Kwai Chung, requiring private developer to build government-designated welfare facilities, where a 50-place hostel for severely mentally handicapped persons and a 50-place selective placement centre would be set up to further increase the quotas of related services in response to community demand; and
- (vi) Regarding Members’ recommendation that child care services and services for carers in the district should be strengthened in a more innovative and flexible manner, SWD would relay the it to relevant working groups for consideration.

The Impact of Declining Birth Rate to the Students and Educational Establishments in Kwai Tsing District

(Proposed by Ms LAM Chui-ling, MH, JP, Mr CHOW Kim-ho, Miss CHU Lai-ling, MH, Ms Miranda CHAN Oi-yi, Ms CHENG Lam, Ms LAM Ying-wai, Ms GUO Huimin, Mr NG Yam-fung Benny, Ms CHAN On-ni, Miss MOK Yee-ki and Mr TSUI Hiu-kit)

(SWC Paper Nos. 7/D/2024 and 7a/D/2024)

9. Members discussed the aforesaid matter, and put forth enquiries and opinions as follows:

- (i) Enquired which two aided primary schools would suspend the admission of Primary One students starting from the 2024/25 school year and change to operate Primary One classes with private funding in the 2024/25 school

year. Members also enquired whether the Education Bureau (“EDB”) was aware that the aided primary schools had decided to suspend the admission of Primary One pupils, and whether the arrangements adhered to procedural norms;

- (ii) There are many non-Chinese speaking (“NCS”) students in Kwai Tsing District. Primary and secondary schools and kindergartens in the district face challenges and difficulties in promoting integrated education. Some of the schools even require support from the Government. Thus, Members recommended that EDB model upon the “School-based After School Care Service Scheme” and implement a pilot scheme for optimising class structure based on district needs for voluntary participation from the schools in the district. Participating schools would be allowed to adjust the number of students in classes having regard to actual circumstances in the course of the scheme. In addition, the number of NCS students in Kwai Tsing District has been increasing. Not only the implementation of small class teaching can help improve education quality, but also provide more appropriate support and assistance to NCS students. Members recommended that the Bureau adjust education policies having regard to social changes and actual needs, so as to utilise social resources more effectively;
- (iii) Several enquiries about NSC students had been received. Among which, a new Vietnamese immigrant parent would like to enrol his/her child in a primary school in Kwai Tsing District. However, the child’s English proficiency was average, and the parent was worried that enrolling in an English primary school might put pressure on the child as well as on the teachers. Members enquired whether EDB could offer advice or support services to the aforesaid NCS student;
- (iv) Enquired when the data on the closure of schools provided by EDB was up to. It was known that one kindergarten and one child care centre in Kwai Tsing District had ceased operation. Besides, whole-day schooling can not only harness the advantages of flexibility and diversity, but also alleviate the serious shortage of child care services and unleash greater female labour force. Therefore, Members recommended that EDB consider converting all kindergartens into whole-day operation. Meanwhile, as the subsidies for half-day and whole-day kindergartens

differed, Members hoped that EDB could provide more subsidies for whole-day kindergartens; and

- (v) Among the government expenditure of over \$100 billion on education, \$24.6 billion and \$31.6 billion were related to primary and secondary schools respectively, while only \$3.7 billion was earmarked for special education services, and only \$5.8 billion was allocated for pre-primary education. Moreover, due to the decrease in the number of children, the expenditure on pre-primary education for the 2024/25 school year would be further reduced. The Government should allocate more resources for pre-primary education to improve school premises and learning environments, as well as to increase student subsidies. Meanwhile, as Members noticed that fewer than 10 pupils had been admitted to some kindergartens in Kwai Tsing District, they were worried that there would be more kindergartens in Kwai Tsing District cease to operate due to severe shortage of pupils. Members hoped that the Bureau could follow up the issue and provide more long-term support, so as to assist educational institutions in facing the operational problems caused by the severe shortage of pupils in the district.

10. Senior School Development Officer (Kwai Tsing)³, EDB, responded as follows:

- (i) The Government has all along been devoting substantial resources in education, with a view to providing quality education. In 2023-24, the Government devoted over \$100 billion in education, thereby continuously enhancing the quality of school education and promoting the holistic development of students;
- (ii) After considering actual circumstances and needs with various stakeholders, the school-sponsoring body of an aided primary school in Kwai Tsing District had applied to EDB for suspending the admission of Primary One pupils from the 2024/25 school year onwards. Besides, a primary school operated Primary One classes in the form of private funding during the 2024/25 school year. Thus far, EDB had not received any application from the kindergartens as well as primary and secondary schools in Kwai Tsing District for new school registration or extension of school premises, nor did it receive any notification for cessation of operation. However, there may be cases where kindergartens are closed due to various factors

(such as profitability and tenancy issues) every year. Relevant school-sponsoring bodies may have to complete administrative procedures before submitting notifications for cessation to EDB. Therefore, discrepancies may exist between the figures furnished by the Bureau in its responses and the actual figures;

- (iii) In fact, all kindergartens are privately operated. The features and advantages of the kindergarten sector are flexibility and diversity. Kindergartens are flexibly operated and can quickly respond to social changes and the demands of parents. Given the diverse nature of the kindergarten sector, the Bureau has to allow kindergartens making flexible arrangements for assisting such schools, with different backgrounds, to develop sustainably. In terms of operation mode, kindergartens can flexibly deploy space to operate half-day classes, whole-day classes or both to address the demands of parents. If kindergarten operators are interested in operating whole-day classes, they may apply to the corresponding District School Development Sections/Joint Offices for Kindergartens and Child Care Centres of EDB in accordance with the existing application procedures and legislation, as well as the requirements such as those stipulated under the Operation Manual for Pre-Primary Institutions and the Kindergarten Education Curriculum Guide;
- (iv) The Government has implemented the Kindergarten Education Scheme (“the Scheme”) since the 2017/18 school year, thereby significantly increasing annual educational resources and providing various support for schools. For example, in March 2023, a one-off “Grant for Promotion of Chinese Art and Culture” was given to participating kindergartens. The grant further supported kindergarten pupils to learn about Chinese culture from an early age, cultivate their sense of national identity, as well as enhance their senses of belonging to, pride of and affection for the country. Also, the Government has provided a recurrent Kindergarten Activity Grant for participating kindergartens, so as to encourage them to organise more experiential learning activities outside classrooms. As for the enhancement of teachers’ professional development, EBD has offered a recurrent Relief Grant for Appointment of Kindergarten Supply Teachers to all participating kindergartens every school year starting from the 2023/24 school year, so that the schools may hire supply teachers;

(Post-meeting note: EDB enhanced the “Grant for Promotion of Chinese Art and Culture” in March 2024, including an increment of the subsidy amount and an extension of the deployment period. Starting from the 2021/22 school year, the Bureau has provided systematic learning programmes of a longer duration for experienced teachers, senior teachers or teachers who aspire for senior posts. It has also provided supply teacher grants for participating kindergartens and one-off “Professional Capacity Enhancement Grants” for those schools. In March 2024, the Bureau enhanced the grants by increasing the grant amounts, expanding the grant scopes and extending the grant deployment periods, with a view to further upgrading teachers’ abilities and promoting their professional development. Besides, the Bureau provided One-off Grants on Parent Education for participating kindergartens in the 2021/22 school year, in order to encourage them to offer and organise structured parent education programmes, establish parent-teacher associations, as well as set up a designated webpage “Resources for Parents” on their school websites or optimise such a webpage from the 2021/22 school year to the 2025/26 school year.)

- (v) As for the improvement of kindergarten environments and administration, EDB has provided subsidies to help improve the ventilation of school premises and digitalise school administration to enhance efficiency. EDB has been encouraging kindergartens to further improve school premises environments through relocation. Therefore, the Relocation Grant for Kindergartens would be regularised from the 2024/25 school year onwards, so as to further encourage kindergartens in districts with aging populations to relocate to new development areas, as well as kindergartens at rented private school premises to relocate to school premises of lower rent or government-owned school premises. Such relocations would not only improve school environments or satisfy the needs of new development areas, but also alleviate the problem of surplus school places in certain districts;

(Post-meeting note: EDB encouraged school-sponsoring bodies that operated multiple kindergartens to consider consolidating the schools under their sponsorship.)

- (vi) Schools are places where group learning takes place. Schools must maintain an appropriate number of students and provide students with good teaching environments and opportunities for group learning, so as to meet their students' diverse learning and holistic development needs. To ensure the proper use of public money, EDB has all along been determining the approved number of classes at each grade based on the actual number of students at that grade in a school. The Bureau has always been providing additional resources, professional support and teacher training for schools in order to cater for students with special educational needs ("SEN"). Also, the Bureau has always been offering pertinent support to facilitate the early adaptation of NCS students and newly arrived students to the local education system. Therefore, it would be inappropriate to change the grade structure of primary schools in Kwai Tsing District solely based on the number of NCS students, newly-arrived students and SEN students;
- (vii) EDB has been committed to assisting newly arrived children (including newly arrived NCS children) in adapting to the learning environment in Hong Kong and integrating into the community. The Bureau has provided them with support services. Such services include a 6-month full-time Initiation Programme organised by local schools, which helps newly arrived children not only adapt to the local society and education system as soon as possible, but also cultivate personal development before enrolling in suitable mainstream schools. If newly arrived children choose to directly enrol in mainstream schools, they can also attend a 60-hour Induction Programme offered by non-governmental organisations after school. The programme covers language education, learning skills, personal growth and development as well as social adaptation; and

(Post-meeting note: EDB has been providing NCS students with all-encompassing learning support from pre-primary to secondary levels through diverse strategies, including curriculum development, learning and teaching resources, teacher training, professional support, additional funding, parent education and support for

parents, in order to help them master Chinese and integrate into the community.)

- (viii) As for the impact of the declining birth rate on kindergartens as well as primary and secondary schools, EDB would continue to monitor the situation and maintain contact with the industry, so as to understand the needs of schools and provide appropriate support. Regarding Members' recommendations on: (1) the Bureau's full support for the conversion of all kindergartens from half-day operation to whole-day operation in the long run, and (2) the Bureau's modelling upon the "School-based After School Care Service Scheme" for implementing another pilot scheme in Kwai Tsing District to reduce the number of students in each class, so as to effectively cater for needy NCS students, newly arrived students and SEN students, the Bureau would relay them to relevant sections in due course.

Any Other Business

11. There was no other business.

Date of Next Meeting

12. The next meeting was scheduled to be held on 20 August 2024 (Tuesday).

Kwai Tsing District Council Secretariat
August 2024