

(Translation)

Minutes of the 4th Meeting of the Housing, Planning and Social Welfare Committee of
Sham Shui Po District Council (7th Term)

Date: 6 August 2024 (Tuesday)

Time: 9:30 a.m.

Venue: Conference Room, Sham Shui Po District Council

Present

Chairman

Mr LAM Ka-fai, Aaron, BBS, JP

Vice-Chairman

Mr LAM Wai-man, Raymond

Members

Mr HO Kwan-chau

Ms WU Wanqiu

Mr LEE Wing-man, MH

Ms WU Sze-wan

Mr CHEUNG Tak-wai

Mr LEUNG Ping-kin

Mr CHAN Wai-ming, BBS, MH, JP

Mr CHAN Kwok-wai, MH

Mr CHAN Lung-kit

Ms CHEN Lihong

Ms CHUM Pik-wa

Ms LAU Pui-yuk, MH

Ms CHUNG Ching-may, MH

Dr PONG Chiu-fai, MH

Co-opted Member

Mr KWOK Chi-wah, Andrew

In attendance

Miss LAI Ho-ting, Ally	Assistant District Officer (Sham Shui Po) 1
Mr KWONG Ka-kuen	Senior Liaison Officer 4, Sham Shui Po District Office
Mr LAI Wing-hong, Mark	Senior Building Surveyor/D2, Buildings Department
Mr CHAN Wai-wa	Senior Housing Manager/Kowloon West and Sai Kung 1, Housing Department
Ms LO Yuen-fun	Senior Housing Manager/Kowloon West and Sai Kung 2, Housing Department
Miss CHOW Mei-yee	Assistant District Social Welfare Officer (Sham Shui Po) 2, Social Welfare Department
Mr LAW Ho-hei, Matthew	Senior Town Planner/Sham Shui Po, Planning Department
Ms HO Chung-yan	Engineer/Kowloon 1, Drainage Services Department
Mr SIU Kin-keung	Engineer/Kowloon (Distribution 2), Water Supplies Department
Mr CHAN Tat-ming, Neil	Principal Tobacco and Alcohol Control Inspector, Tobacco and Alcohol Control Office, Department of Health
Mr LAU Kin Hang	Chief Inspector of Police, Tobacco and Alcohol Control Office, Department of Health
Mr SUEN Sze-ming	Assistant Police Community Relations Officer (Sham Shui Po District), Hong Kong Police Force
Ms WONG Shiu-mei, Joye	Neighbourhood Police Coordinator, Police Community Relations Office (Sham Shui Po District), Hong Kong Police Force

Secretary

Miss CHUNG Keng-chin, Vivian	Executive Officer (District Council) 1, Sham Shui Po District Office
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Opening Remarks

The Chairman welcomed members and representatives of government departments to the 4th meeting of the Housing, Planning and Social Welfare Committee (“HPSWC”) of the 7th term of the Sham Shui Po District Council (“SSPDC”), including co-opted member Mr Andrew KWOK.

Agenda Item 1: Confirmation of Minutes of the 3rd Meeting of the Housing, Planning and Social Welfare Committee

2. Members confirmed the meeting minutes.

Agenda Item 2: Preventive Measures against Suicide in Sham Shui Po District (HPSWC Paper No. 10/2024)

3. A member introduced Paper No. 10/2024.
4. Miss CHOW Mei-yee introduced Response Paper No. 10a/2024.
5. Mr KWONG Ka-kuen responded that: (i) the District Office (“DO”) would actively assist the Social Welfare Department (“SWD”) and non-governmental organisations (“NGOs”) in promoting the importance of “early identification” and “early intervention” of emotional issues to the building management sector and residents in the district, such that timely assistance, advice or services could be provided; (ii) would encourage management companies to refer cases to government departments in the hope of preventing accidents from happening; (iii) would assist in publicity and in encouraging the building management sector to attend mental health training organised by SWD or NGOs, so as to enhance the identification skills of frontline property management personnel for emotional issues; and (iv) would assist in publicity and in encouraging residents in the district to attend talks on relevant topics.
6. The views of members were consolidated as follows: (i) concerned over the issue of suicide in the district and commented that the touch points of support channels were not extensive enough. Hidden elderly, children, and adolescents with suicidal tendencies were unable to receive appropriate assistance, and even elderly centres, schools, and units providing services to them had difficulty in providing them with

suitable services; (ii) commended SWD for providing various mental health support programmes, and suggested that SWD consolidate and simplify the hotlines, service content, and information of all support channels, so that members of the public could seek appropriate assistance through a unified platform; (iii) suggested that SWD strengthen support for individuals with mental illness who had been assessed and remained in the community to ensure that they could receive timely treatment and emotional counselling; (iv) suggested that SWD work with the Hospital Authority's Community Psychiatric Service to follow up on cases of individuals who had history of suicide attempt in order to prevent future suicidal behaviours; (v) enquired about how to identify and reach out to individuals with suicidal tendencies around them, and suggested that SWD proactively identify such individuals and seek to provide them with treatment; (vi) suggested carrying out publicity work through different platforms or channels, such as collaborating with Care Teams or expanding the community connections and publicity network of various service centres through district activities organised by DO; (vii) suggested providing emotional support to residents of buildings affected by suicide incidents; (viii) suggested conducting a questionnaire survey among different stakeholders to understand areas for improvement in the current support services; and (ix) enquired about the number of cases received by NGOs and whether they had sufficient resources and capabilities to handle such cases.

7. Ms CHOW Mei-yee gave a consolidated response: (i) SWD had been promoting its support services and related hotlines through various channels, such as the Department's website containing introductions and contact information of different welfare services. The Department even appointed Hong Kong Shue Yan University to launch the Information Gateway for Carers the year before to provide information on services and resources, etc. for carers. In addition, the Sham Shui Po District Social Welfare Office of SWD had also launched a Facebook page introducing welfare services in the district, with links to the services to facilitate search. In view of the wide range and types of welfare services, the Department would collaborate with different government departments or local organisations to broaden publicity channels; (ii) the Department and service units of NGOs attached great importance to identifying hidden cases, and would by various means such as street counters and door-to-door visits, etc. to get a grasp of the situation in the district as much as possible. They would also focus on providing appropriate intervention for communities with more service needs; (iii) the Department was in communication with DO, in the hope that the District Task Groups under the Department could collaborate with the Care Teams of the district to expand their touch points at different levels and from different perspectives so as to identify more hidden cases; and (iv) the Department conducted

on-going review of the work of the Integrated Community Centre for Mental Wellness and had allocated additional resources early this year to strengthen clinical psychological services, as well as to enhance training for centre staff to help identify more complex cases and improve their skills and abilities in handling the cases. In parallel, online services were also promoted with the aim of expanding the touch points of the services.

8. Mr CHAN Wai-wa gave a consolidated response: (i) the Housing Department (“HD”) attached great importance to the mental well-being of residents and had been collaborating with various NGOs to organise a range of activities to promote mental well-being. At the invitation of SWD, the Department also let frontline staff participate in the “Support for Carers Project”, which provided training to security guards, hoping to identify those in need at an early stage and provide appropriate assistance through daily contact; and (ii) after obtaining the consent of residents, the Department would refer cases in need to SWD and relevant NGOs.

9. The Chairman concluded that members were very concerned about the mental well-being of residents in the district, and DO, SWD, and HD had also responded appropriately to the issue. The Committee urged SWD to consider providing relevant training to Members and their assistants, which would help identify individuals with emotional distress and provide them with appropriate referral services.

10. Ms CHOW Mei-yee gave a supplementary response: the Sham Shui Po District Social Welfare Office of SWD held a briefing session for Members and their assistants early this year to brief them on various welfare services. The Department would conduct review and organise training activities when necessary.

Agenda Item 3: Request for a 24-hour Public Access to the Long Span Footbridge (HPSWC Paper No. 11/2024)

11. A member introduced Paper No. 11/2024.

12. Mr CHAN Wai-wa introduced Response Paper No. 11a/2024.

13. The views of members were consolidated as follows: (i) thanked HD for reviewing the opening hours of the long span footbridge; (ii) enquired whether the

Department had received any complaints about crowd gathering, light pollution, and noise pollution that would lead to concerns over the proposal, and stated that since the opening of the footbridge, Members had never received any such complaints, but had only received requests from residents for round-the-clock access to the footbridge, and thus hoped that the Department would positively respond; (iii) statistics had shown that residents who took the last bus could not make it to use the footbridge for access, and using the footbridge for access could save 3.5 hours of commuting time per month; (iv) opined that residents detouring via the secluded Hing Wah Street West in the late night might pose safety concerns; (v) suggested that the Department conduct a pilot exercise or gradually extend the opening hours of the footbridge to coincide with the arrival time of the last bus; (vi) suggested that the Department consider installing sensor lights on the footbridge to minimise the impact of light sources on nearby residents; (vii) considered that with security guards stationed on the footbridge, there should be less chance of crowd gathering; (viii) enquired about the schedule for reviewing the opening hours of the footbridge and by what means residents were consulted; and (ix) suggested that the Department consider the need for residents of nearby large housing estates to use the footbridge for access and count the pedestrian flow after midnight.

14. Mr CHAN Wai-wa gave a consolidated response: (i) noted the concerns of members regarding the opening hours of the footbridge and the demands of residents, and would take them into consideration accordingly; and (ii) HD kept an open mind towards the opening hours of the footbridge and would solicit residents' opinions by means of a questionnaire survey for an overall review.

15. The Chairman concluded that members understood that the 24-hour access to the footbridge might cause issues such as crowd gathering, light pollution, and noise pollution. That said, taking into account the further population intake in the community, the actual usage of the footbridge might differ from HD's initial assessment. A member shared statistical data indicating that using the footbridge for access could shorten the walking distance and save time. Therefore, the Committee hoped that the Department would review the opening hours of the footbridge and conduct a pilot exercise or solicit residents' opinions by means of a questionnaire survey.

16. A member supplemented: (i) hoped that the Department would collect pedestrian flow data after midnight; and (ii) suggested making reference to the 24-hour operation mode of the footbridge at Shui Chuen O Estate.

17. Mr CHAN Wai-wa gave a supplementary response: HD kept an open mind towards the opening hours of the footbridge and would conduct a review. The estate office would subsequently be requested to follow up on the matter and further communication would be made with members.

Agenda Item 4: Request for a Prompt Solution to Sewage Backflow in Hoi Lai Estate (HPSWC Paper No. 12/2024)

18. A member introduced Paper No. 12/2024.

19. Mr CHAN Wai-wa introduced Response Paper No. 12a/2024.

20. The views of members were consolidated as follows: (i) thanked HD for completing some of the pipeline improvement works, and hoped that the remaining works would commence as soon as possible; (ii) enquired whether it was possible to expedite the installation of check valves for affected units to alleviate the impact on residents' daily lives since the works would take time; (iii) hoped that the Department would conduct long-term monitoring in Hoi Lai Estate to prevent the recurrence of sewage backflow; also suggested conducting comprehensive and regular pipe inspections in older housing estates as a long-term solution; (iv) enquired about the schedule of improvement works to be commenced in the third quarter and their impact on residents; (v) enquired whether the installation of check valves would involve works on the external walls; and (vi) suggested that the Department solicit public opinion at different stages of the improvement works to understand its effectiveness.

21. Mr CHAN Wai-wai gave a consolidated response: (i) explained the difference between sewage backflow and only white foam emerging from floor drains. If it was sewage backflow, sewage or foul matter would gush out from the toilet or floor drains, and the main cause was drain blockage; if what emerged from floor drains was just white foam, one of the causes was that a certain number of residents were using washing machines and other appliances at the same time during peak periods, and the large amount of foam generated was not timely discharged. HD had carried out manhole improvement works in phases, and no more foam was found emerging from the locations where the works had been completed; (ii) the Department would take into account the views of Members and would enquire of the residents about the effectiveness of the improvement works upon completion; (iii) in the event of sewage backflow, residents could contact the estate office, and the Department would deploy

staff to inspect the conditions of the pipes. If necessary and where feasible, check valves would be installed; and (iv) the improvement works scheduled in the third quarter would commence in August to September this year, and colleagues from the estate office would be invited to inform Members of the progress of the works in due course.

22. The Chairman concluded that members opined that drainage problems such as sewage backflow in Hoi Lai Estate had had a negative impact on residents' health and living environment. It was suggested that the Department install check valves for the affected units as soon as possible. Members could also refer relevant issues raised by members of the public to the estate office.

Agenda Item 5: Proposal to Intensify Efforts against Illicit Cigarette Activities in Public Rental Housing in Sham Shui Po (HPSWC Paper No. 13/2024)

23. A member introduced Paper No. 13/2024.

24. Mr Neil CHAN introduced Response Paper No. 13b/2024.

25. Ms LO Yuen-fun introduced Response Paper No. 13c/2024.

26. Mr SUEN Sze-ming introduced Response Paper No. 13d/2024.

27. The views of members were consolidated as follows: (i) thanked various departments for their efforts in cracking down on illicit cigarettes in the past; (ii) opined that the current practice of putting entrance passwords into residents' mailboxes was prone to leakage of the code, and enquired whether HD had conducted opinion surveys on the implementation of the Octopus card access control system in housing estates; (iii) suggested that a notification mechanism be established between departments to facilitate information exchange and joint law enforcement, as many illicit cigarette activities involved residents of public housing estates who could quickly flee back to their units during departmental inspections, resulting in ineffective law enforcement; (iv) enquired whether there were channels available for members of the public to make reports, such as mobile applications or hotlines, and hoped that the departments would strengthen collaboration and establish faster and simpler reporting and enforcement mechanisms; (v) reported that some teenagers and even elderly people had distributed

illicit cigarette leaflets, and suggested that the Department strengthen publicity and education for residents, and raise their awareness of reporting; (vi) required various departments to pay more attention to the situation when food delivery couriers also distributed illicit cigarette leaflets midway; (vii) enquired about the prosecution figures for buying and selling illicit cigarettes in public housing estates; (viii) hoped that HD would keep up the efforts to ensure building security and pay special attention to strangers entering and leaving buildings of housing estates; (ix) suggested that relevant departments carry out decoy operations or joint law enforcement actions based on the contact information and traces left on the leaflets; (x) enquired about the penalties for buying and selling illicit cigarettes and distribution of illicit cigarette leaflets, and suggested that relevant departments review and raise the penalties to increase deterrence; (xi) the illicit cigarette activities in public housing estates had intensified after the increase in tobacco duty, and the situation of distributing illicit cigarette leaflets door-to-door was still serious, let alone other promotional flyers of online gambling platforms and shopping; (xii) suggested that HD consider installing mobile surveillance camera systems in the corridors of each floor to enhance the deterrent effect and provide evidence to facilitate law enforcement by the police; (xiii) suggested upgrading hardware (such as installing mobile surveillance camera systems) and strengthening night patrols against distribution of such leaflets in the small hours; (xiv) suggested that HD make reference to the management practices and models of public housing estates in different regions, and the Tobacco and Alcohol Control Office (“TACO”) could also draw reference from the practices of public housing estates in other regions in combatting illicit cigarettes to tackle the issue in local housing estates in a more effective manner; (xv) opined that the number of successful prosecutions instituted by TACO was relatively low, and the effectiveness of its crackdown on illicit cigarettes was not significant. It was hoped that the departments could come up with innovative solutions; (xvi) enquired about the number of cases referred to the Hong Kong Customs for follow-up actions; (xvii) reported that promotional leaflets were scattered around the units from time to time, and enquired about the corresponding cleaning work of HD; and (xviii) enquired about the number of public housing units that had been recovered due to the sale of illicit cigarettes, and suggested that HD strengthen publicity to increase deterrence.

28. Mr Neil CHAN gave a consolidated response: (i) members of the public could make reports by email or through the 1823 hotline; (ii) TACO was responsible for enforcement against breaches of regulations on tobacco advertising, such as distributing tobacco promotional flyers in housing estates. According to the law, offenders would be liable to a maximum fine of HK\$50,000 upon summary conviction,

and to a further daily fine of HK\$1,500 for continuing offences. Among the 14 individuals who had been successfully prosecuted in the past, the maximum fine for a single case was HK\$8,000; and (iii) as for the suggestion of decoy operation, there was no unified operational guideline for joint actions between TACO and the Hong Kong Customs.

29. Ms LO Yuen-fun gave a consolidated response: (i) HD had a punishment mechanism in place for illegal possession or sale of illicit cigarettes. If the head of household used his public housing unit for illegal purposes such as possession or sale of illicit cigarettes, he would be deemed to have breached the tenancy terms upon conviction and might have his tenancy terminated. If the head of household knowingly allowed or failed to prevent the use of his unit for illegal purposes by recognised family members listed in the tenancy, the tenancy would also be terminated. If it was proven that the head of household had no knowledge of the situation, 15 points would be deducted under the Marking Scheme for Estate Management Enforcement. If 16 valid points being deducted had been accrued within two years, the relevant tenancy would be terminated; (ii) the 5 000 public housing units previously recovered by the Department were involved in breaches of tenancy agreement or housing policies, including furnishing false information, abuse of public housing units, and engaging in illegal activities using the units; (iii) the Department and the Hong Kong Customs had established a regular notification mechanism. If there was any convicted case in which a public housing unit was found to be used for the sale or possession of illicit cigarettes, the Hong Kong Customs would notify the Department's headquarters through a memo, and the estate office would obtain case details from the court for follow-up actions after receiving the notification from the headquarters; (iv) the Housing Authority ("HA") had also experimented with smart card access control systems in three newly completed public housing estates in the past, but most residents still preferred to use passwords to access their buildings. HA would try out the use of an access control system compatible with smart cards and mobile applications in a newly completed public housing estate this year, and would consider whether to expand further based on the effectiveness of the trial; and (v) the Department had reservations about the effectiveness of installing surveillance cameras in the corridors of public housing estates. Due to the multi-storey design of public housing buildings, cameras had limited angles to capture images at the same time. Moreover, the cameras were not equipped with recognition functions that additional manpower might need to be arranged for such work. Therefore, it was believed that strengthening patrols or tasking TACO to conduct investigation according to the traces left on the leaflets would be more effective.

30. Mr SUEN Sze-ming responded: the police would maintain close collaboration with the Hong Kong Customs and relevant departments to curb illegal activities such as the sale of illicit cigarettes and distribution of illicit cigarette leaflets.

31. The views of members were consolidated as follows: (i) hoped that various government departments could adopt an innovative mindset to vigorously combat the sale and promotion of illicit cigarettes, and conduct interdepartmental joint operations to tackle the problem as soon as possible, thereby minimising the negative impact on residents, and demonstrating to the public the Government's determination to curb illicit cigarettes; (ii) urged HD to actively address the issue of illicit cigarettes in public housing estates under its management, and act as a coordinator to facilitate and coordinate interdepartmental collaboration, such as decoy operations, etc. through the existing notification mechanism; (iii) suggested that the Department mount more high-profile joint law enforcement actions at black spots of illicit cigarette sale in housing estates; (iv) suggested making reference to the surveillance camera systems of private housing estates and that of different modes in the Mainland, and installing mobile surveillance camera systems in housing estates where distribution of illicit cigarette leaflets was more rampant as a short-term measure to deter and warn off lawbreakers; (v) advised HD to only deploy staff to view the footages upon receipt of complaints or reports from residents in order to save manpower; (vi) opined that the current penalty level for distribution of illicit cigarette leaflets was too low; (vii) suggested that HD conduct public opinion consultation on the use of Octopus card access control system in all public housing estates in Hong Kong; and (viii) enquired whether HD would establish a dedicated inspection team to conduct inspections at specific periods in order to stringently combat the distribution of illicit cigarette leaflets and plug security loopholes arising from the unmanned posts while security personnel were away for handling the issue of illicit cigarette leaflets.

32. Mr Neil CHAN gave a consolidated response: (i) due to the strict procedures and potential legal implications of decoy operation, TACO would not consider it for the time being; (ii) TACO would exchange information and conduct joint operations with the Hong Kong Customs. The Hong Kong Customs was responsible for tackling the smuggling of tobacco products, while TACO was responsible for preventing the distribution of illicit cigarette leaflets. The two departments each performed their respective duties and collaborated with each other. Over the past few months, TACO had received 92 cases of distributing illegal tobacco advertisements in Un Chau Estate, of which about 62% were referred by the Hong Kong Customs, illustrating the seamless collaboration between the two departments; (iii) TACO would conduct cyber

patrols and successfully removed approximately 100 tobacco advertisements each month. Adjustments to the allocation of resources between on-site inspections and cyber patrols might be considered later; and (iv) TACO conducted plainclothes inspections from time to time in Sham Shui Po district to enhance law enforcement effectiveness. It had also participated in multiple joint operations with the Hong Kong Police Force and the Hong Kong Customs. Between January and May this year, TACO had conducted a total of 28 inspections in multiple housing estates in the district such as Un Chau Estate, Shek Kip Mei Estate, and So Uk Estate. Such work would continue and appropriate measures would be taken in the local area to curb the rampant distribution of illegal tobacco advertisements.

33. Ms LO Yuen-fun gave a consolidated response: HD had just referred approximately 50 cases of distributing illicit cigarette leaflets to the Hong Kong Customs between February and July. Inspection of, and prosecution against illicit cigarette activities and distribution of illicit cigarette leaflets were within the scope of duties and powers of the Customs and TACO. If relevant departments needed to take control actions in public housing estates, the Department would cooperate.

34. Mr SUEN Sze-ming responded: the police noted the active illicit cigarette activities and the views of various Members. They would relay the matters to the Hong Kong Customs and relevant departments and maintain close collaboration with them to curb illicit cigarette activities.

35. The Chairman concluded that members had raised different views on the severity of the problem of illicit cigarettes, pointing out that illicit cigarette activities had intensified after the increase in tobacco duty, and the rampant promotion of illicit cigarettes by lawbreakers had also posed a challenge to government departments. It was hoped that various government departments and Members would join hands to curb illicit cigarette activities in housing estates in the district and strengthen publicity and education. It was also suggested that HD remind residents that it was also a criminal offence to be in possession of illicit cigarettes.

Agenda Item 6: Information on Planning Applications of Sham Shui Po District (HPSWC Paper No. 14/2024)

36. Mr Matthew LAW introduced Paper 14/2024.

37. The Chairman concluded: members noted the relevant report.

Agenda Item 7: Any Other Business

38. Members did not raise any other business.

Agenda Item 8: Date of Next Meeting

39. The next meeting would be held at 9:30 a.m. on 10 October 2024 (Thursday).

40. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 11:34 a.m.

District Council Secretariat

Sham Shui Po District Council

August 2024