

Sha Tin District Council
Minutes of the 6th Meeting of
the Health and Environment Committee in 2018

Date : 8 November 2018 (Thursday)
Time : 2:30 pm
Venue : Sha Tin District Council Conference Room
 4/F, Sha Tin Government Offices

<u>Present</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Time of joining the meeting</u>	<u>Time of leaving the meeting</u>
Mr WONG Yu-hon (Chairman)	DC Member	2:30 pm	6:40 pm
Ms YUE Shin-man (Vice-Chairman)	"	2:30 pm	6:40 pm
Mr HO Hau-cheung, SBS, MH	DC Chairman	2:30 pm	6:40 pm
Mr PANG Cheung-wai, Thomas, SBS, JP	DC Vice-Chairman	4:05 pm	5:32 pm
Mr CHAN Billy Shiu-yeung	DC Member	2:44 pm	6:12 pm
Mr CHAN Kwok-keung, James	"	3:07 pm	4:27 pm
Ms CHAN Man-kuen	"	2:30 pm	6:40 pm
Mr CHAN Nok-hang	"	3:17 pm	5:32 pm
Mr CHENG Tsuk-man	"	2:46 pm	4:58 pm
Mr CHING Cheung-ying, MH	"	2:30 pm	5:28 pm
Mr CHIU Chu-pong, Sunny	"	2:50 pm	6:12 pm
Mr CHIU Man-leong	"	2:30 pm	5:52 pm
Mr HUI Yui-yu, Rick	"	2:30 pm	2:56 pm
Mr LAI Tsz-yan	"	2:30 pm	6:40 pm
Ms LAM Chung-yan	"	2:43 pm	5:14 pm
Mr LEE Chi-wing, Alvin, MH	"	5:22 pm	6:06 pm
Mr LEUNG Ka-fai, Victor	"	2:30 pm	3:56 pm
Mr LI Sai-hung	"	2:35 pm	6:40 pm
Mr LI Sai-wing	"	2:30 pm	3:37 pm
Mr LI Wing-shing, Wilson	"	2:57 pm	6:40 pm
Mr MAK Yun-pui	"	2:46 pm	4:57 pm
Mr MOK Kam-kwai, BBS	"	2:30 pm	5:19 pm
Mr NG Kam-hung	"	2:30 pm	5:36 pm
Ms PONG Scarlett Oi-lan, BBS, JP	"	2:30 pm	5:17 pm
Mr POON Kwok-shan, MH, JP	"	2:30 pm	5:14 pm
Mr TING Tsz-yuen	"	2:30 pm	3:54 pm
Mr TONG Hok-leung	"	2:30 pm	5:51 pm
Ms TSANG So-lai	"	3:15 pm	4:57 pm
Ms TONG Kin-lei	"	2:30 pm	3:37 pm
Mr WAI Hing-cheung	"	2:30 pm	5:47 pm
Mr WONG Fu-sang, Tiger	"	2:30 pm	6:40 pm
Mr WONG Hok-lai	"	2:41 pm	4:43 pm
Mr WONG Ka-wing, MH	"	2:30 pm	6:40 pm
Ms WONG Ping-fan, Iris	"	2:30 pm	6:40 pm
Mr YAU Man-chun	"	2:42 pm	3:53 pm
Mr YIP Wing	"	2:30 pm	6:40 pm
Mr YIU Ka-chun, MH	"	2:30 pm	6:40 pm
Mr YUNG Ming-chau, Michael	"	2:30 pm	6:40 pm
Mr MOK Man-lok, Mannix (Secretary)	Executive Officer (District Council)1 / Sha Tin District Office		

In Attendance

Mr WONG Shek-hay, Sebastian
Ms AU Wai-ha

Mr WU Tak-tong

Mr LI Chi-kwun

Mr LI Ho-yin, Simon

Mr YUEN Chun-kit, Derek

Title

Assistant District Officer (Sha Tin) (2)
Chief Health Inspector 1 /
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
Housing Manager (Tai Po, North & Sha Tin 3) /
Housing Department
Senior Environmental Protection Officer (Regional North) 4 /
Environmental Protection Department
Deputy District Leisure Manager (Sha Tin) 2 /
Leisure and Cultural Services Department
Senior Executive Officer (District Council) /
Sha Tin District Office

In Attendance by Invitation

Mrs KWOK WONG Wing-ki, Vicki, JP
Mr FONG Kin-wa

Dr CHUI Ho-kwong, Samuel

Mr WONG Wai-man, Raymond

Mr WONG Wai-yuen

Mr CHAN Kin-ki

Mr TO King-ho

Mr CHAN Chung-ho, Vincent

Title

Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (2)
Assistant Director (Waste Reduction & Recycling) /
Environmental Protection Department
Assistant Director (Waste Infrastructure Planning) /
Environmental Protection Department
Principal Environmental Protection Officer
(Regional Collaboration) / Environmental Protection Department
Senior Environmental Protection Officer
(Waste Reduction & Recycling) 6 /
Environmental Protection Department
Senior Environmental Protection Officer
(Waste Reduction & Recycling) 7 /
Environmental Protection Department
Senior Environmental Protection Officer
(Food Waste Recycling) 2 /
Environmental Protection Department
Engineer / Customer Services / Drainage Services Department

Absent

Mr SIU Hin-hong

Title

DC Member (Application for leave of absence received)

Action

Welcoming Message

The Chairman welcomed members and representatives of various government departments to attend the sixth meeting of the Health and Environment Committee (HEC) this year. He indicated there were two agenda items to be deliberated from the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) and welcomed the attendance of Mrs Vicki WONG, Deputy Director of EPD, Dr Samuel CHUI, Assistant Director (Waste Infrastructure Planning) and Mr FONG Kin-wa, Assistant Director (Waste Reduction & Recycling) together with representatives of EPD to the meeting.

Application for Leave of Absence

2. The Chairman said that the Secretariat of the Sha Tin District Council (STDC) had received applications for leave of absence in writing from the following members:

Mr Thomas PANG
Mr SIU Hin-hong

Official commitment
Other commitment

3. Members unanimously endorsed the applications for leave of absence submitted by the members above.

Confirmation of the Minutes of the Meeting Held on 13 September 2018
(HEC Minutes 6/2018)

4. The Chairman said that the Secretariat received from a member an amendment before the meeting which was placed on the table before members, and also asked whether there were any other amendments.
5. Mr Michael YUNG indicated that the ‘non-peak hours’ in paragraph 24(d) should be ‘non-operational hours’.
6. Members unanimously confirmed the above minutes.

Matters Arising

Responses of the Relevant Government Departments to Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting
(Paper No. HE 49/2018)

7. The views of Ms Iris WONG were summarised below:
- (a) she said that at the last meeting, the HEC believed that after the opening of the Shek Mun Columbarium, it would definitely affect the normal daily traffic of the residents in the area during the peak time for visiting the cemetery. At present, the Government was not certain about whether the modes of transport used by people from various districts to Shek Mun could be under control, but it was not sufficient just to rely solely on the MTR, given the recent frequent accidents and disorders with MTR. In the reply of the department, she saw that the Transport Department (TD) was unwilling to provide more shuttle bus services during the peak time of visiting the cemetery. She thought that was unacceptable. The recent incident at the Tung Chung Bus Stop was mainly caused by inadequate preparation and consideration. Therefore, she persisted that the Government should arrange shuttle bus services during the two Spring and Autumn cemetery visits to cover the Shek Mun Columbarium for at least two years after its opening before reduction in the number of bus trips could be considered. She was not satisfied that the TD ignored members’ suggestions and hoped that the Chairman could represent members to ask the TD to seriously face up to the requests of members; and
 - (b) the HEC passed another motion at the last meeting to request the Government to construct a covered walkway connecting On Yiu Street, On Muk Street, On Hing Lane with the Shek Mun Columbarium, but the reply from the Architectural Services Department (ArchSD) was too general. Generally speaking, the width of the pedestrian link between On Yiu Street and On Muk Street would not be narrower than the existing one between MTR Tai Po Station and the Tai Po Complex. The section of On Hing Lane was connected with the newly built

pedestrian subway and the columbarium main building, while the pedestrian subway was not constructed yet and was still under planning. She did not understand why the ArchSD said that the construction of the covered walkway would cause reduction in the width of the pedestrian walkway. The response was far-fetched and ignored the results of the deliberations of the HEC. She hoped that the Chairman would seriously deal with this issue and write to the TD to request it to face up to the issue.

8. The views of Mr Michael YUNG were summarised below:

- (a) at the last meeting, he expressed his strong dissent with the Water Supplies Department (WSD) regarding the frequent pipe bursts. On 7 November 2018, fresh water pipe burst happened again in Ma On Shan. It was not certain whether this was caused by the diversion works of the pipes in the lower end. The WSD provided a plan of pipes to help members understand the distribution of water pipes and salt water pipes in the district. It was hoped that the WSD could also provide a network plan showing the direction and flow of the water pipes in addition to the plans, so that in case of a pipe burst, it would be easier for members to tell which housing estates and streets would be affected by the burst; and
- (b) the Housing Department (HD) had to build HOS flats earlier and requested the WSD to make arrangements to stop water supply on weekdays which would affect schools and restaurants in the district. After numerous negotiations, the arrangement to cut the water supply was halted and another set of water pipes was built which would shorten the time of water supply suspension. This time, it warranted the interceding of the Legislative Council Members who expressed dissatisfaction with the WSD before the issue was resolved and the overall situation was not satisfactory. He opined that the public works department should communicate more with the people in the district in the handling of project works. Although the matter had been resolved for the time being, it was hoped that the information provided to the WSD would be recorded through the minutes of this meeting, so that they would attend more to the voices of the members in future. It was also hoped that the WSD could give an account later of why the waterworks at the cycling track in Yiu On Estate bursted again on November 7. He wondered whether it was caused by the water pressure resulted from the pipe diversion project.

9. Mr Tiger WONG said that regarding the Shek Mun Columbarium, the departments should examine the traffic conditions, as relying solely on the present shuttle bus services would not be sufficient. Shuttle bus services should be arranged to go to Shek Mun along Ma On Shan Line or even further away like from MTR Diamond Hill Station.

10. Mr CHIU Man-leong said that at the last meeting, members had emphatically requested the departments to deal with the traffic conditions of Shek Mun Columbarium, specifically requesting the arrangement of shuttle bus services and the construction of a cover for the pedestrian walkway. He just did not understand why the departments had not conducted any research but came to the conclusion that it was infeasible, ignoring the comments of the HEC. He hoped that the Chairman would follow up the matter seriously.

11. Ms TUNG Kin-lei said that all of the residents of the Sha Tin District were concerned about the traffic arrangements of the Shek Mun Columbarium. Everyone had foreseen that the traffic in the area would be extremely busy in future and if that was not handled well, it would definitely result in much inconvenience to the public during the Spring and Autumn cemetery visits. Every year in spring and autumn during the two cemetery visits, the Tseung Kwan O Chinese Permanent Cemetery had always been the focus of the media and she did not want the Shek Mun Columbarium to become another such focus. Since members had made the suggestions, she would like to know why without the support of data and only in two months' time, the Transport Department (TD) had come up with the reply to the HEC that it was impossible to make such arrangements. It sounded all too imprudent and he hoped that the TD would seriously consider the provisional motion proposed by the HEC.

12. The Chairman asked the Secretariat to forward the comments of Mr Michael YUNG to the WSD regarding the pipe bursts, and also requested the WSD to provide Mr Michael YUNG with all the other relevant information. Regarding the issue of the Shek Mun Columbarium, he said that if the HEC did not have other comments, he would write in the name of the HEC to the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) to reflect the comments and suggestions of the members, and also asked if there were any objection from members regarding this issue.

13. The Chairman said that he had not received any objection from members regarding the relevant arrangements. He would follow up the matter with the Secretariat after the meeting.

14. Members noted the above paper.

Discussion Items

Construction of Food Waste Pre-treatment Facilities at Sha Tin Sewage Treatment Works for Implementation of Food Waste / Sewage Sludge Anaerobic Co-digestion Trial Scheme
(Paper No. HE 51/2018)

15. The Chairman said that Mrs Vicki WONG, indicated before the meeting that the contents of Paper No. HE 50/2018 and Paper No. HE 51/2018 were similar and hence would be appropriate to combine the two for discussion. He said that if the two were combined for discussion, sufficient time would be given to members for deliberation. He enquired if members would disagree to the combination of the two papers for discussion purpose.

16. The Chairman said that as there were objections from members, he decided to follow the original agenda to discuss the two agenda items separately.

17. Mrs Vicki WONG and Dr Samuel CHUI briefly introduced the contents of the paper.

18. The views of Mr CHIU Man-leung were summarised below:

- (a) he opined that this Scheme was worth supporting. However, as the site was close to Kam Tai Court, he was concerned about the foul odour problem and asked if monitoring points could be set up in the vicinity such as Kam Tai Court to ensure that no foul smell would spread to the residential areas;
- (b) he would like to know how the EPD could ensure that untreated food waste would not have liquid dripping from the food waste onto the floor during

transportation. He asked about the cost of the Scheme, the amount of land resources and the required height of the Scheme. He wondered whether the system would be moved into the cavern, and how long it would take for completion. He also asked in future, whether the system would mainly deal with household or commercial food waste, and how many residential estates would participate in the Scheme; and

- (c) he enquired of the EPD whether there would be subsidies or the subsidies would be raised, so that the residential estates could install food waste processors to pre-treat the food waste, in order to curtail the amount of time in handling food waste.

19. The views of Mr Michael YUNG were summarised below:

- (a) this Scheme was to mix the food waste and the sludge, decompose the material inside in the absence of oxygen, reuse the useful material, and the remaining dregs were to be treated again. According to this handling procedure, it seemed that only the “burning” method could be used. If the food waste and sludge were treated separately, he wanted to know if the food waste could be used for composting, and if so, then the value of the food waste could be increased;
- (b) the Trial Scheme at the Sha Tin Sewage Treatment Works (Sewage Treatment Works) might create a synergistic effect. However, it would only commence operation in 2021 or 2022. After a few years, the sewage plant would need to move into the cavern again. He understood the Drainage Services Department would be prepared to apply to the Legislative Council for funding for the design in this financial year. He wanted to know the budget of the Scheme and whether it was less than 30 million dollars and under the category ‘D Project’. He wanted to know what sort of facilities would be added to the sewage plant, and whether these facilities could be reused in the future after the sewage plant was relocated. In addition, he asked how long the facilities could be used, and also enquired about the proportion of facilities that could no longer be used after relocation, so as to see if it was really cost-effective;
- (c) if the Trial Scheme was not carried out at the cavern sewage treatment plant at this stage, there would not be a huge impact on the flow of traffic. But if the Trial Scheme was expected to be carried out at the cavern sewage treatment plant, the EPD should communicate with the Drainage Services Department to make an assessment of its impact on the local traffic, and to see if there would be pressure on traffic in the district, as the traffic flow at A Kung Kok Street had reached the saturation point in the morning; and
- (d) according to the paper, it was indicated that there would be about 10 to 14 times of commuting by the food waste collection vehicles to and from the sewage plant every day for the purpose of transporting the food waste. As a DC Member of the concerned constituency, he was worried that this type of food waste collection vehicles would emit a foul odour. He enquired of the EPD what measures it would take, such as enhancing the design of the vehicles to reduce the spread of foul odour.

20. The views of Mr LI Sai-hung were summarised below:

- (a) he did not doubt the competence of the government to handle the food waste but its determination. Earlier the EPD had already launched a trial scheme in Sun Chui Estate with promising response but was not pursued any further. He would like to know whether this Trial Scheme would also stop half way through. The EPD said that it would first try out for the standalone buildings or village-typed houses. He enquired whether the EPD had a schedule showing how the trial scheme would be extended to other residential estates in future; and
- (b) he enquired whether the EPD's Trial Scheme meant to recycle food waste through the FEHD, as residents of standalone buildings or village-typed houses would send the refuse to the FEHD's refuse collection point. If the EPD was effective in education about recycling waste, why the public would still regard the 3-coloured waste separation bins as some kind of garbage bins.

21. The views of Mr CHENG Tsuk-man were summarised below:

- (a) the Municipal Solid Waste Charging Scheme (MSWC) would be implemented in 2020. It was the appropriate time for the Government to introduce the food waste recycling trial scheme in order to help reduce the household expenses of the MSWC. The recycling of food waste for commercial establishments and restaurants should not be difficult for them but would present a problem for the public. He understood that there were now residential estates applying to the EPD for funds to handle food waste, which was by itself a very delicate process, requiring bins with covers for storage which hopefully would stifle the foul odour from spreading and causing nuisance. If the Government was to pursue recycling, he wanted to know how it would connect with the residents. He asked whether staff would be sent over to collect food waste every day. If it could not be carried out on a daily basis, the residents might be deterred from supporting the Scheme;
- (b) he asked the EPD whether the residential estates could still apply for funds for composting after the launch of this Trial Scheme. In addition, the MSWC might involve a lot of problems in the future. He asked what plans the Government had in this regard; and
- (c) he enquired of the EPD about the design of the recycle bins and whether the public would smell the bad odour after pouring the food waste into it.

22. The views of Ms Iris WONG were summarised below:

- (a) there had been talks in the past years regarding food waste recycling and she was pleased to see that the EPD had taken the initiative to launch the Trial Scheme. She was concerned about the point of recycling and would like to know if there was any specific plan as such, how many residential estates would be expected to join and whether the industrial and commercial concerns would also follow suit. This Scheme involved the locations of setting up of collection points. For example, if a collection point was to be set up at Kings Wing Plaza in Shek Mun, then who would decide where to collect and who would co-ordinate. When the Scheme was to be implemented, all the households and businesses would need to

consider how to align with the central collection location, time and the means. He asked how to prevent the creation and spreading of the foul odour when the food waste was poured into the recycling vehicle; and

- (b) food waste recycling involved educating the public on how to start separation from home. She was worried that the public would cause hygiene and bad odour problems when using collection bins of different colours improperly. At present, the handling of the 3-coloured waste separation bins was not satisfactory. If this Trial Scheme was to be implemented, she would like to know what role the EPD would play in education. She also asked when the review would be conducted after the implementation of the Trial Scheme. She wondered whether the EPD would hold regular meetings with the stakeholders participating in this Scheme.

23. The views of Mr WONG Ka-wing were summarised below:

- (a) he welcomed the Government's launch of a food waste Trial Scheme. According to the government's statistics, domestic food waste accounted for more than 30% of the total waste. If food waste could be effectively handled, it would definitely help save money for the public. This Trial Scheme appeared to be different from the traditional method of recycling food waste;
- (b) the food waste processors had existed for a long time, but it was mandatory to separate the food waste properly first. Some food wastes could not be put into the food waste processor, and the machine could turn the food waste into fertilizer after decomposing the organic substances. He enquired whether this food waste, sewage sludge anaerobic co-digestion method was capable of handling any kind of food waste. The public put the food waste into the recycling bins to wait for the recycling contractors of the EPD to collect them which was quite a long process. He wondered whether the EPD had any means to reduce the foul odour generated in the course of this process;
- (c) his residential estate was drafting a proposal and hoped to apply for funding for the purchase of food waste processors. The residential estate would educate residents on how to separate their food waste. They would also prepare a sealed bag and then put the whole bag into the food waste processor. The whole process would not produce any bad odour. He hoped that the EPD could explain the arrangements for recycling in the context of the Trial Scheme;
- (d) he enquired of the EPD how it would provide incentives to the public to enable the public to support the Scheme and hand over the food waste to the collection point. He hoped that there would be sufficient deliberation by the EPD in the relevant publicity and education; and
- (e) he would like to know the specific implementation date of the Trial Scheme in Sha Tin. He also hoped that after the successful trial run in Sha Tin, it would be extended to the whole territory. He suggested that the EPD should set up a community group in Sha Tin District to invite stakeholders such as owners' corporations (OCs), estate management companies and District Council Members to share their experience. These stakeholders would know the needs of the residents and would be helpful in the implementation of the Trial Scheme.

24. The views of Mr NG Kam-hung were summarised below:

- (a) according to the documents, the amount of food waste generated everyday was about 3 600 tonnes per day, but the Trial Scheme could only handle 800 tonnes. He wanted to know how the remaining food waste would be handled. The Sandy Ridge and Shek Kong Recycling Centres were still in their infancy and he enquired why they were not being considered to increase their throughput;
- (b) he wanted to know how many buildings in Sha Tin had been involved in the Domestic Food Waste Recycling Trial Scheme and whether the Scheme was for domestic or non-domestic food waste. He asked if there were not many buildings, how the EPD could sustain the Trial Scheme, and also how much the expenditure of the Environmental Protection Fund of the EPD in Sha Tin District was;
- (c) the sewage treatment works would be moved into the cavern about ten years later. He enquired of the EPD what plans would follow after the completion of the Trial Scheme; and
- (d) he had participated in the coastal clean-up campaign and recently, he saw bags of food waste floating in the sea. He did not want to see the sea degrading into a recycling point for food waste in future.

25. Ms Scarlett PONG said generally speaking, she supported this Scheme. She enquired whether the food waste recycling rate after enhancement was sufficient to meet the demand in terms of food waste handling capacity. In 2014, there were 3 600 tonnes of food waste per day, but less than 1% of which was recycled. In November 2015, the audit report stated that even the recycling centre with the highest throughput, namely the Kowloon Bay food waste treatment facilities, only handled about 1.37 tonnes of food waste. The processing capacity of the Siu Ho Wan Food Waste Recovery Centre which was commissioned in 2017 was not sufficient. Soon the food waste recycling centre in Tai Po would commence operation in 2019. She would like to know how the EPD could improve the recycling rate of food waste, and whether the EPD had set a target and when these recycling centres could collect enough food waste. She also asked about the amount of investment in the Trial Scheme, and how much energy could be generated after the food waste was recycled.

26. The views of Ms CHAN Man-kuen were summarised below:

- (a) she opined that it was good that the Scheme could help alleviate the burden of the public upon commission of the waste charging scheme. She was concerned about how the process could be rationalised during implementation of the Scheme. The Scheme was piloted in Sha Tin District. She would like to know specifically where the collection point was located. In addition, the collection of food waste was a burden on the residential estates, which might require more manpower and resources. She asked what incentives the EPD would provide in order to motivate more residential estates to participate in the Scheme; and
- (b) currently, the recycling rate of the 3-coloured waste separation bins was not satisfactory. The residents were actively involved but the vehicles were not able to collect the waste in time. As there would be a significant time span between the time when the public abandoned the food waste and the time it was collected

by the EPD, this long treatment process would cause foul smell, which would have adverse impact on the residents. She would like to know how the EPD would minimise such impact.

27. Mr PUN Kwok-shan opined that the conception of the EPD was ideal, but he could not perceive how other departments could collaborate to make it work. He was pleased to see that the rural area and villages were included into the Scheme. However, the current refuse collection points of the FEHD were not ideal, lacking both space and being far too outdated. For example, the refuse collection point at Tin Sam Village was only about 13.5 square metres in area. It could only accommodate a small number of refuse bins. As a result, the 3-coloured waste separation bins needed to be put elsewhere. If other departments could not collaborate well, it would be difficult to make the Scheme work well.

28. The views of Mr CHING Cheung-ying were summarised below:

- (a) from the user's perspective, he had discussed with the residents and management companies on how to conveniently take the food waste to the recycling site. If the process was too complicated, the public would be unwilling to do so. He asked whether the EPD could subsidise the residential estates to allocate sealed bags to residents for use, followed by discussions with the management office to centralise the collection of food waste in one place for recycling so that the Scheme could be effectively implemented; and
- (b) the EPD should consider how to offer incentives to the public. Apart from the incentives, convenience was equally important to motivate the public to put the food waste in the recycling collection point.

29. The views of Mr WAI Hing-cheung were summarised below:

- (a) most of the housing estates in his constituency were private housing estates. Residents were more conscious of the issue of protecting the environment. More than a decade ago, the residents had already asked him to bring the issue of food waste recycling to the Council. At that time, he once criticised the EPD for the work done in the recycling of food waste even though it had achieved some results in the promoting of the 3-coloured waste separation bins. Although the relevant scheme would now be implemented, they appeared to be a bit late;
- (b) to promote the whole Trial Scheme, the EPD had to consider how to attract participation by the people and avoid all the considerations that would make the the public had a low incentive to do so. He supported plans like environmentally friendly waste reduction and waste recycling, but the authorities should consider what other measures should be taken to maximise the impact. Take the current 3-coloured waste separation bins as an example. In the past, there were not many people supporting the idea, and now that the number of people participating had increased, other problems had arisen. The small capacity 3-coloured waste separation bins resulted in dumping of refuse beside the 3-coloured waste separation bins which not only affected the environmental hygiene, but also required additional manpower to clean up the housing estates which would incur additional expenses, this would make the public feel that they had to pay more for supporting environmental protection;

- (c) in recent years, the rodent problem in private housing estates had become more serious than before. This might be attributed by the increase in the number of restaurants. At the same time, it was also worrying that the problem would be even more serious after the implementation of the recycling of food waste scheme. In addition, residents of the residential estates had complained that the District Lands Office, Sha Tin (DLO/ST) had stated that no items could be placed in public places in the housing estates because of breach of the land lease. He had discussed with the staff of the DLO/ST and pointed out that if this was the case, there would be problems with placing rubbish bins in public places or for residents to have owners' meetings in public places. The 3-coloured waste separation bins of the EPD or the food waste recycling facilities to be installed in the future would also cause problems. He asked the government departments to communicate with each other, streamline the processes and inform members how to deal with them accordingly; and
- (d) in education, many people from Mainland China were staying in Sha Tin Town Centre and many of them would simply litter the stairs. The EPD needed to consider how to educate these people.

30. Ms LAM Chung-yan said that, she was aware that the Government hoped to further promote the recycling of food waste. However, the Scheme was only experimental in nature. She would like to know whether there would be a review in the medium term and when the effectiveness of the Scheme would be reviewed. The EPD said that there would be about 10 to 14 times of food waste collection vehicles commuting to and from the sewage treatment works every day. She asked if the number would be increased in that regard in future. She also asked how much food waste could be collected in the process. If the public was actively involved, whether the EPD would consider providing additional resources in future. In addition, members of the public might not be able to cope with the handling of domestic food waste. So, she wondered whether the EPD had any plans in educating the public.

31. The views of the Chairman were summarised below:

- (a) the daily food waste was 200 tonnes. The participation rate of some housing estates could reach 20% and it seemed that the food waste of Sha Tin District could be handled for the time being. In some areas, there might be no food waste disposal facilities. The EPD should consider that during implementation of the waste charging scheme in future, some housing estates might consider that the EPD was prejudicial with some housing estates and only helped some of them to handle food waste;
- (b) he would like to know whether the EPD would consider commissioning private companies to assist in food waste collection. He enquired about the annual operating costs of the Trial Scheme and whether the EPD would consider giving support to the industry, residential estates or non-profit making organisations in participation of the recycling of food waste;
- (c) the EPD had said that it would invite District Council Members to discuss the arrangements with stakeholders. He would like to know when that would be handled, and also whether other issues such as the waste charging scheme would be discussed at that meeting apart from food waste recycling;

- (d) he asked whether the EPD would also consider how to prevent the public from putting rubbish other than food waste in the recycling bins in respect of the design of the recycling bins; and
- (e) he asked members to take note that Mr Thomas PANG had already returned to the conference room.

32. The responses of Mrs Vicki WONG were summarised below:

- (a) members were concerned about the recycling rate of food waste in Hong Kong. With reference to international experience, there were many prerequisites for successful handling of food waste. The EPD had been planning to support residential estates and public housing estates in the processing of food waste. However, such processing capacity of the food waste tended to be limited and it would require a lot of space for composting. Therefore, in the long run, Hong Kong needed more organic resource recycling centres (recycling centres), converting waste into energy. In terms of performance and effectiveness, for example, in the first phase of the recycling centre, 200 tonnes of food waste could be processed per day, and the electricity generated could support about 3 000 families. In the second phase of the recycling centre in Sandy Ridge, it could handle 300 tonnes of food waste after completion and could support the electricity demand of 5 000 families;
- (b) Hong Kong had very limited land resources. Hence it was difficult to obtain more land for the construction of the remaining recycling centres in a short period of time, and every project was complicated. In view of this, the Government hoped to speed up the overall efficiency and effectiveness of handling food waste by maximising the capacities of the existing sewage treatment works. Sludge and food waste were treated in a similar way by using anaerobic digestion technology, but the food waste needed to be pretreated before it could be delivered to the sewage treatment works for treatment with the sludge. The construction of food waste pretreatment facilities was relatively faster than the recycling centres;
- (c) the organic resource recycling centre that was now under planning would be expected to handle up to 500 tonnes of food waste in 2022/23, plus another 100 tonnes of food waste to be processed under the Food Waste/Sewage Sludge Anaerobic Co-digestion Trial Scheme in the sewage treatment works at Tai Po and Sha Tin. In terms of statistics, the amount of food waste processed was still relatively small when compared with the daily amount of food waste generated, and it was indeed imperative to speed up the work. According to experience of foreign countries, even with good associated facilities and legislation, the recycling rate of food waste was only about 50%. It was because food waste contained a lot of water, and some of the food waste mixed with domestic waste, and thus causing difficulty to recycling;

- (d) as regards the possibility of expanding the capacity of handling the current amount of food waste by the existing recycling centres, it all depended on individual cases as each of the centres had its own constraints, like land and traffic restrictions. As to whether the processing capacity of the Shek Kong Recycling Centre could be increased, the EPD was currently in the research stage;
- (e) the separation of food waste at source was a complicated process. Therefore, the EPD also agreed that education needed to be strengthened and enhanced in this respect in future. The EPD would arrange good outreaching services for housing estates, owners' corporations and property management companies to explain to the public how to do separation and recycling. In addition, the EPD would also invite environmental organisations to assist in publicity and education where necessary. In future, it was hoped that there would be different platforms to gauge the opinions of various stakeholders in how to do a good job in recycling food waste. Currently, if the recycling centres noticed that there were too many impurities in the food waste, they would refuse to accept them for processing;
- (f) the EPD would initially focus on the industrial and commercial food waste. On the one hand, it would study how to conduct large-scale collection of food waste in future; on the other hand, it would launch a trial scheme of handling domestic food waste with the objective of finding the best possible solution, for example, it would consider using the sealed bags as suggested by members. After the smooth operation of the first and second phases of the Recycling Centres, the EPD would consider setting aside a small amount of space for the treatment of domestic food waste. It would also give priority to the collection and processing of food waste in residential estates which had experience in the recycling of food waste previously;
- (g) in the past, the amount of food waste recovered was insufficient because the public did not have much incentive to separate the food waste and neither were the recyclers. Therefore, the Waste Disposal (Charging for Municipal Solid Waste) (Amendment) Bill 2018 was very significant, and such was the leading impetus to drive all measures of waste reduction. After the implementation of the regulations in future, with economic incentives, the desire to reduce waste in all perspectives would increase. In addition, the EPD would subsidise the cost of transportation of the food waste for the recyclers through the Recycling Fund, hoping to drive the development of the recycling industry; and
- (h) the domestic food waste collection and recycling trial scheme were intended to cover different places, including private residential estates, public housing estates and domestic premises in rural areas. The EPD hoped to launch and implement this Trial Scheme in the Sha Tin District which contained different types of housing estates in order to find the best solution.

33. The responses of Dr Samuel CHUI were summarised below:

- (a) in terms of pre-treatment facilities, the recycling vehicles would enter a building, and then there would be equipment to send the food waste to the pile grinder whereby the plastic bags and iron would be separated, and the food waste would

be pretreated and then flow into the anaerobic digestion tank. The food waste sludge anaerobic co-digestion was popular in the world because the sewage itself had many bacteria. The food waste could provide food for the bacteria. After mixing, it produced a synergistic effect. The process produced biogas and could be used for power generation. Taking the first phase of the recycling centre as an example, the electricity generated per 200 tonnes of food waste could support 3 000 households. It was currently planned to handle 50 tonnes of food waste, generating enough electricity for 700 households;

- (b) the environment of the plant was entirely sealed and airtight with air handling facilities. In terms of machinery, there were mainly two units, including pile grinders and sedimentation tanks, which could be used after the relocation. In addition, there would be some consumables such as pollution treatment facilities;
- (c) in terms of cost, it would be controlled within a budget of \$30 million, including pre-study work, which was designed with reference to the opinions of consultants in the past and the knowledge of the EPD;
- (d) regarding the vehicles, the food waste would be fed in from the side or behind the vehicles. When a vehicle arrived at the recycling plant, it would deliver the food waste at the rear position, and the whole vehicle would be sealed. The EPD planned to send vehicles to collect food waste every day. At present, it was considered that plastic bags would be used to contain food waste. The relevant arrangements could be discussed in future;
- (e) the Sha Tin Sewage Treatment Works was expected to move into the caverns from 2029 to 2030. The Pilot Scheme would be completed by 2029. At present, other sewage treatment plants such as Yuen Long and Tai Po Sewage Treatment Works would try to introduce anaerobic co-digestion technology. The EPD had not considered whether it would carry out pre-treatment in the cavern for the time being, but would not rule out the possibility of this arrangement in the future;
- (f) if a recycling centre was to be constructed, a minimum of 2 hectares of land would be required. If the anaerobic co-digestion method was to be used, half of the land could be used together with the sewage plant to save money, electricity and land space; and
- (g) the EPD would set up an odour monitoring point. In respect of transportation, there would only be 10 to 14 times of commuting by vehicles per day, and the vehicles would not enter or exit during the peak hours, but would enter from the sewage treatment works road instead.

34. The Chairman asked the EPD to provide Mr NG Kam-hung with the information that he requested after the meeting. He said that there was no need to vote on the paper, and announced the end of this agenda item.

Outreaching Service and Pilot Scheme on Central Collection of Waste Plastics
(Paper No HE 50/2018)

35. Mrs Vicki WONG, Mr FONG Kin-wa and Mr Raymond WONG, Principal Environmental Protection Officer (Regional Collaboration) of the EPD, briefly introduced the paper.

36. The views of Mr CHING Cheung-ying were summarised below:

- (a) in principle, he supported the EPD's scheme but had reservations about plastic recycling. He asked whether the scheme represented cancelling the arrangement of collecting waste plastics in brown recycling bins, or the scheme was to be included in the 3-coloured waste separation bins arrangement. In Sun Tin Wai Estate and also in the housing estate where he lived, he saw cleaners dumping the waste plastics collected in brown recycling bin into garbage bin. He hoped that waste plastics collected in the scheme would really be recycled; and
- (b) he understood that the profit of recycling plastics was limited. He therefore enquired how the EPD would provide assistance to such recycling industries so that the collected waste could be recycled. He was very concerned about how the EPD could ensure that the commitment of the public in recycling would not be wasted. The EPD should clearly inform the public how these plastics would be handled effectively.

37. The views of Mr NG Kam-hung were summarised below:

- (a) the EPD said that there was a total of 150 residential estates/buildings participating in the programme on Source Separation of Domestic Waste, accounting for about 90% of the total population in the district. However, the EPD also stated that some places were not equipped with recycling facilities and it sounded a bit contradictory;
- (b) the EPD mentioned that plastic bottles would no longer be recycled in the Mainland and the EPD would break the waste plastics into tiny pieces after collecting them. He asked how the EPD would handle the shredded plastics;
- (c) he asked how many plastic bottles the EPD had recovered over the past few years. The EPD stated that it expected to recover 250 tonnes. He asked what other plans the EPD had drawn up for recycling other types of plastics. He would help clean the coast when he had spare time and what he picked up most was plastic bottle. He saw recycling bins in Sai Kung were fully stuffed with recycled materials in less than an hour; and
- (d) he hoped that the EPD would specifically explain how to implement recycling. Once he was doing coastal cleaning work in Stanley, he saw a nonprofit organisation recovering plastic bottles. The EPD would dispatch its staff to collect plastic bottles sometimes but it was understaffed. He definitely agreed with the EPD's deployment of the pilot scheme as a means of recycling. However, in spite of its vision, the EPD could not achieve good results. He took the case of glass bottles recycling as an example, one residential estate wished to

add one more recycling bin to handle the glass bottles but its efforts were of no avail. It showed that the EPD did not have sufficient support for residential estates.

38. Mr TONG Hok-leung said that waste plastics had become a serious problem in Hong Kong. In 2016, the amount of plastics disposed of was about 780 000 tonnes. However, the amount of waste plastics collected from households in the district in 2017 was about 250 tonnes, many of which would end up in the landfills as there were no recycling contractors, and the Mainland had also tightened the controls on recycling. The Pilot Scheme was well-intended, as the Government took the initiative to recycle plastics when there was nothing in the market to do the same. A bit late as it might appear now, he still wished to see some benign impact of the Scheme. He also hoped that the EPD could explain in details the cost involved in the Scheme, and ways of monitoring and supervising the contractors and the effectiveness of the project, etc.

39. The views of Mr Michael YUNG were summarised below:

- (a) a plastic bottle comprised three parts, namely, the 'brand label', the cap of the bottle and the body of the bottle, all of which contained various types of materials. Since the commencement of the Operation Green Fence in the Mainland, there was literally no outlet for the plastic bottles of Hong Kong, hence the Pilot Scheme was a belated blessing as such. Before the launch of the Scheme, the recycling contractors of the FEHD had to dump the plastic bottles into landfills after collecting the waste plastics, owing to the lack of a suitable means of recycling them. He enquired about the Pilot Scheme whether the waste plastics collected would also end up in landfills. He also wanted to know how to effectively handle the waste plastics;
- (b) according to the EPD's paper, waste plastics collected had to be sorted and preliminarily separated during the handling process. This process could not be done by machines and had to be done in a wide outdoor area. He would like to know if there really was sufficient land supply to support the recycling contractors;
- (c) in his constituency, there were private residential estates with very small refuse stores. The public rental housing estate Yan On Estate was only eight years old, and it was not predicted that recycling had to be done on each floor. He enquired the EPD how to guide residents to separate waste on their floors. If source separation could not be done properly, then the overall impact of the whole Pilot Scheme would not be as effective as it was planned. Currently there was still no concrete plan on the implementation of scheme of solid waste charging by weight. All the government had done so far was replacing the garbage bins on the streets with smaller opening ones. The government still had not come up with plans on back-up and recycling improvement. Therefore, he opined that it would not be a success; and
- (d) land had always been the major constraint of the recycling industry in Hong Kong and the EPD needed to make realistic considerations and assessment of the situation. There was insufficient land supply in Hong Kong in general and even recycling paper mills had to be closed. The plastic bottles were large in volume, and the costs of recycling would be much higher than its actual value. It also

explained the high recycling rate of iron and metal because of their high actual value. At present, polyfoam boxes were the biggest problem. The problem was particularly acute at markets as they were light in weight and broke up easily. In addition, there was no reserved space for recycling in buildings. Apart from the cost, recycling, separation, as well as logistics, were also factors that had to be considered. The recycled plastics were disposed of at landfills due to the lack of an outlet.

40. The views of Mr LI Sai-hung were summarised below:

- (a) he said a resident wanted to put his bag of plastic bottles into a recycling bin, however, the resident was told by a cleaner that the plastic bottles would be sent to the landfills. He, by coincidence, ended up working with the 'Sha Tin Community Green Station' in recycling work, both of them wished to provide a viable outlet for plastic bottles. Even though the EPD placed emphasis on education, but all along the handling and deployment of the 3-coloured waste separation bins was not ideal, because other wastes were mixed with the waste plastics recycled;
- (b) under the Pilot Scheme, the waste plastics would be shredded into pellets. He enquired the EPD regarding the volume of waste plastics that had been dumped in the landfill and he also wanted to know how this Pilot Scheme would benefit environmental hygiene; and
- (c) the main purpose of the Pilot Scheme was to recycle plastic bottles. He enquired whether it was mainly for the recycling of bottles code 1 and 2. He also enquired whether the contractor of the Pilot Scheme would play the role of an intermediary.

41. The views of Mr Billy CHAN were summarised below:

- (a) he pointed out that the launch of the Scheme was good but was a bit late. The 3-coloured waste separation bins were introduced in 2005 but many people did not know that they had to remove the "label" on the bottles and the caps and clean them before they could be recycled. This showed that the EPD had not done enough to educate the public. He enquired the EPD how they would enhance education;
- (b) during the passage of typhoon 'Mangkhut' in Hong Kong, someone picked up a plastic bottle of twenty years old. He wanted to know how the Pilot Scheme would complement the 3-coloured waste separation bins and how the recycled plastics would be handled. He also participated in the 'Sha Tin Community Green Station' project. In fact, a lot of residents were eager to take things there for recycling. But the supporting facilities of the EPD were insufficient and even the cleaning workers said that the recycled stuffs would be taken to the landfills. According to the papers, the rate of recycling was about 14% only, which was obviously disappointing;
- (c) the EPD said that starting from next year, the government canteens would abandon the use of disposable tableware. He asked why this policy was not implemented immediately, whether it was because the canteens had stockpiled

voluminous disposable appliances; and

- (d) he suggested that the EPD could use some simpler methods to enhance the incentives for cleaners to recycle, such as stamp collection. The residential estate of Mr. WONG Ka-wing had won many awards previously. He thought that the EPD should ask him regarding ways of attracting residents to practice recycling of plastic bottles.

42. The views of Mr WONG Ka-wing were summarised below:

- (a) the Programme on Source Separation of Domestic Waste was launched in 2005 and his residential estate had participated for thirteen years and won many accolades. It had also held many activities to promote environmental protection. After thirteen years of education, many residents would put the plastic bottles into the recycling bins after proper treatment. However, residents were just disappointed with the results of recycling as it was not known where the plastic bottles ended up with. If residents knew clearly about the outlets of plastic bottles, he believed that would be more desirable; and
- (b) he queried whether it was a bit late for the EPD to launch the Pilot Scheme after 13 years. Everyone understood that the most critical factor of plastic bottles recycling was transportation cost. He said that the plastic bottles should be shredded right away at the residential estates to reduce the transportation costs in order to attract recycling contractors to collect them. A similar machine had been installed at the petrol station in his housing estate. If the government wanted to support the recycling scheme, it should set up machines in each of the housing estates before arranging for recycling. In the Mainland, plastic bottles could now be shredded during recycling and he hoped that the EPD would draw on the experiences of other places more often.

43. The views of Mr WAI Hing-cheung were summarised below:

- (a) during the discussion about Sewage Sludge Anaerobic Co-digestion Trial Scheme, he had already pointed out that from the past experience, the volume of 3-coloured waste separation bins could not accommodate recycled wastes. He pointed out that one bin was definitely inadequate and it would be full within half a day during holidays. This was encouraging on one hand as it showed that many people supported recycling. But on the other hand, it indicated that more people used plastic bottles and they believed that plastic bottles could be recycled, while such was not the case. In some residential estates or villages, recycled plastic bottles were not collected, while others were sent to the landfills. He enquired the EPD whether they had more specific means of restricting the use of plastic bottles; and
- (b) he wondered whether there was still room for the market to handle recycled plastic bottles, and if so, then why only one recycling company was allowed to operate in each district. The recycling of glass bottles should also be promoted in residential estates. However, the recycling took a long time. It could be dangerous to discard glass bottles everywhere. If there was only one recycling company, the results might not be significant and the EPD needed to be aware of that.

44. The views of Mr YIU Ka-chun were summarised below:

- (a) the overall objective of the various recycling projects was to reduce the pressure on landfills. The government would soon introduce the Municipal Solid Waste Charging scheme in the future. In fact, the most important consideration for the public was convenience. However, many representatives of the government departments today introduced food waste treatment and plastics recycling with the goal of reducing waste. Regardless of the details of the tendering arrangements, recyclables had to be transported to a central collection point for processing; and
- (b) after the passage of typhoon ‘Mangkhut’, it was understood that the handling of trees were complicated in Hong Kong. However, in the Mainland, shredding and transportation could be done at the same time. If machines could be installed in each district to shred the recyclables, transportation costs could be reduced and the scheme could be improved. He hoped that the EPD would seriously consider it.

45. The views of Mr Wilson LI were summarised below:

- (a) food waste and waste plastics accounted for a significant proportion of wastes in Hong Kong, and there were several operational problems that had to be resolved. First of all, it was necessary to clarify the role of the 3-coloured waste separation bins. The 3-coloured waste separation bins were always full and the ones in his constituency was an example. He thanked the FEHD for placing an extra bin for collecting plastic bottles and increasing the frequency of collections. However, due to the heavy flow of people, the bins were still full. The public of Hong Kong understood the importance of recycling; however, the ancillary facilities were not in tune. If the EPD could draw up plans from the perspective of the public, the work of environmental protection should have a better result; and
- (b) he had made efforts to learn where the plastic bottles would end up with after being recycled. Some residential estates said that they were collected by recycling contractors, while some said that recyclers only dumped the plastic bottles. He enquired how the EPD would supervise recycling and also hoped that the EPD could clearly explain to the public the difficulties faced by the recycling industry in the past ten years or so. He also hoped that the EPD would explain the latest recycling situation of waste paper and waste plastics.

46. The views of the Chairman were summarised below:

- (a) normally the people would get the message, that it was necessary to separate waste plastics before recycling, for example the “Sha Tin Community Green Station” would place six different recycling bags at different locations in Sha Tin, each of which collected different type of plastics, so that the plastics could be made into raw materials more easily. The major objective of the Scheme was to shred the plastics and he enquired which type of plastics was the focus of the Scheme. After the launch of the Scheme, people would no longer need to separate waste plastics before recycling; and

- (b) although the EPD indicated that on-site handling might cause inconvenience to residents, he opined that in view of advanced technology, the EPD could embrace new technologies and subsidise residential estates that were interested in adopting new technologies. If the results turned out to be good, the technology should be widely promoted.

47. The responses of Mrs Vicki WONG were summarised below:

- (a) she noted that members were all very concerned about wastes recycling. Reduction at source was currently the international trend and it also needed to be complemented by policies like levy on garbage, with a view to encouraging the public to produce less waste with economic incentive. All along, metal and paper had been the more valuable recycled products and there was no big problem with the outlets as such. Until recently the Mainland had raised the standard of the quality of recycled paper which had caused some worries about the recycling outlet. But as at the present moment, there had been very little cases where the quality of the recycled paper did not comply with the requirements of the Mainland;
- (b) all along, the recycling rate of waste plastics had not been high. As waste plastics were generally larger in size which would incur higher transportation costs, coupled with the lesser motivation in recycling, the EPD had stressed on the importance of proper separation and clean condition of waste plastics, to reduce the workload on subsequent sorting procedures in order to increase their recycling value. The EPD also encouraged the public to focus on the recycling of plastic bottles. As regards other types of waste plastics, people could hand them over after proper separation to the “Community Green Stations” for proper handling;
- (c) the EPD had conducted a market research and the result showed that the local recycling market had sufficient capacity to handle the local waste plastics. The only limitation was the lack of a way to collect clean waste plastics cost-effectively. The EPD had a holistic plan regarding the recycling of waste plastics, starting from encouraging the public to buy less bottled water or use less disposable plastics to achieve reduction at source. At the same time, the government would also consider enacting laws restricting the use of disposable plastics and would also take the initiative to gradually reduce the use of disposable plastics and tableware in its canteens and eateries;
- (d) in spite of the initiative to reduce waste at source, society would still produce plastic bottles. Therefore, the EPD would also launch the Producer Responsibility Scheme, with a view that plastic bottles of beverages would be handled in accordance with the recycling principle. Based on the experience of overseas countries, the recycling rate of plastic bottles of beverages could go up to as much as 80% or above, after the implementation of the Producer Responsibility Scheme;
- (e) in the past, the public did not have confidence in the recycling of waste plastics because they did not know the outlet for such recycled products. After the implementation of the new control system on recycled materials in the Mainland, there was still a way out for waste plastics after proper treatment. For example,

the waste plastics could be processed as small pellets, namely, a kind of valuable raw materials, there would be outlets all over the world including the Mainland. The current plan to introduce free collection and processing of non-commercial and non-industrial waste plastics was precisely for the purpose of transforming waste plastics into raw materials or recycled products, instead of being dumped at the landfills. This was precisely for rebuilding the public confidence in the recycling system;

- (f) this Scheme would encompass all sorts of plastic bottles. The contractors of the Scheme would mainly collect from the 3-coloured waste separation bins in the residential estates, and to increase such recollection points where necessary. The EPD had also proposed to set up a community platform to discuss specific cooperation arrangements and details with all the relevant stakeholders. It was envisaged that after the implementation of the municipal solid waste charges scheme in future, the public would pay more attention to the reduction of waste at source. The Secretary for the Environment had also set up the “Steering Group on the Modification of Recycling and Refuse Collection Facilities in Public Places”, to discuss with all parties regarding the design, role and quantity of the 3-coloured waste separation bins. There was still no valid reason to replace the 3-coloured waste separation bins for the moment;
- (g) currently there were different stakeholders in society, including property management companies, cleaning workers, and also those people who were pleased to participate in the recycling system. The contractors of the Scheme needed to complement with different stakeholders in order to establish a network. The EPD was aware that the chain of the network was sometimes broken, and believed that the system could be improved with economic incentives;
- (h) at present, the local contractors in recycling waste plastics were competent to handle the recycling. However, owing to cost effectiveness, the market development had been hampered. The proposed collection service could hopefully fill the gap and rationalise the entire recycling process with financial support; and
- (i) regarding the on-site handling of waste plastics for efficiency improvement, the EPD reminded members to note that, on-site handling might bring nuisance to residents and therefore should be considered carefully.

48. The responses of Mr FONG Kin-wa were summarised below:

- (a) the recycling rate of different types of waste plastics were different. Plastics bottles had had a better outlet because they were relatively larger in quantity and were made by a single material. After deliberation with the industry, the EPD understood that the challenges lied with the small volume recycled and the high costs of transportation. Hence the government had established a Recycling Fund of as much as \$1 billion, and also augmented the subsidy to the recycling industry. The Recycling Fund would also subsidise recycling contractors for the use of new technologies;

- (b) as some types of waste plastics in the market were relatively low-value; therefore, there was the need for the government to intervene and to fund the process of recycling and the handling of non-industrial and non-commercial waste plastics. To recycling contractors, the volume was critical because otherwise it would not be sufficient to cover the cost of operation of the machineries. During the formulation of the Scheme, the EPD would focus on ensuring that the successful bidders would turn the waste plastics collected into raw materials or other products as far as possible, and even if it was not possible to recycle all the waste plastics, they had to minimise the loss;
- (c) the EPD understood from the industry that more incentives had to be provided for cleaning workers, and therefore suitable incentives would be added when formulating the tender contract in future. This Scheme placed a lot of emphasis on supervision and regulation, and the EPD would collect different sorts of information and data in order to supervise the recycling process of the contractors, hence rebuilding the confidence of the people in the recycling system. In addition, the solid waste charging scheme would soon be implemented by the government in order to provide more incentives for people to recycle;
- (d) the separation of waste plastics could be performed manually and automatically, with the available technology at present. It was believed that the capacity of the local market could handle such demands;
- (e) it was also equally important to enhance education. The EPD would send outreaching teams to housing estates and residential estates for on-site publicity and education. In addition, the residential estates might also request the contractors of the Scheme to increase the number of collections according to actual needs;
- (f) the territory-wide recycling rate of waste plastics was about 14%, which was disappointing. Therefore the EPD launched the Pilot Scheme. In future, the EPD would also consider launching the Producer Responsibility Scheme to enhance the public's confidence in the recycling system, with a view that the recycling volume would be increased. By drawing experience from the results of the Pilot Schemes in various districts, including the Sha Tin District, the EPD hoped that the service could be gradually extended to the other districts; and
- (g) land lots in the EcoPark of the EPD were now available for tendering by the recycling industry and the rent in the EcoPark was relatively more competitive compared with the market. As the recycling industry was an important link in the whole chain, the EPD would continue to provide all sorts of support to the industry via various means.

49. The Chairman thanked the explanations of the EPD and declared the end of related discussion.

Questions

Questions to be Raised by Mr LAI Tsz-yan on Collection of Sewage Charge
(Paper No. HE 52/2018)

50. The views of Mr LAI Tsz-yan were summarised below:

- (a) he said that he had received an enquiry from a villager a few months ago, asking why he only received any notice from the Drainage Services Department (DSD) for the collection of sewage charges until after a period of time. He asked when the DSD discovered that it had not collected sewage charges, how often it was reviewed, and why it did not collect until after a period of time;
- (b) the DSD's documents indicated that the villagers should know whether their premises had been connected to public sewers. It was the responsibility of the government to collect sewage charges. Villagers generally would not go into details to find out why when they received a bill without sewage charge. He queried the DSD opined that villagers had to take the initiative to remind the DSD to collect sewage charges every time. He agreed with the views of Mr HO Hau-cheung that this could be regarded maladministration of the DSD; and
- (c) the current situation was that the charges of some villages needed to be collected and some needed not. He thought that the DSD should have a uniform approach to deal with this problem.

51. The views of Mr Michael YUNG were summarised below:

- (a) he understood that this was a problem arising from the Village Sewerage Scheme. At the beginning of the Scheme, there were cases of wrong sewage charges or omissions. The sewage charges were collected through the bills issued by the Water Supplies Department. He enquired about the communication mechanism between the two departments for the verification of the connection of sewers in villages;
- (b) he opined that it was an mistake of the DSD. He enquired whether there would be refund together with interests for cases of sewage charges wrongly charged;
- (c) the reply to the paper stated that sewage charges had to be recovered from Wong Uk Village and A Kung Kok Fishermen Village in the Sha Tin District. There were about 50 villages in Sha Tin. He hoped that the DSD would provide additional information regarding the number of cases of wrong sewage charges in different years, the amount of refund and whether interest was included after the meeting. He remembered that there had been wrong charges more than a decade ago and why it would still happen now;
- (d) in some 50 villages in Sha Tin, apart from some remote villages such as the Mui Tsz Lam Tsuen, he asked which villages had already had sewers connected and enquired about the coverage rate. For example, in Tai Shui Hang Village, sewers had been connected in many places. However, some small house were not connected to the public sewers owing to various reasons and had to connect to septic tanks. He would like to know under these circumstances what the

DSD could do to increase the coverage rate of the sewer network; and

- (e) the DSD replied that if the relevant villages had already been connected with the public sewers, the DSD would remove the whole village from the list of non-sewers connected in the system. He hoped that the DSD would clarify whether this was true. He did not understand why the DSD did not have a record of the ArchSD. He agreed with Mr HO Hau-cheung that if the problem was not resolved, the public should file a complaint with the Office of the Ombudsman.

52. The views of Mr HO Hau-cheung were summarised below:

- (a) the DSD stressed that it was the responsibility of the villagers to pay the sewage charges. However, the villagers were not shunning the payment, instead, they did not receive the notice to pay such fees, until the DSD issued collection notices to them for payment. There were cases of overcharged sewage charges where refund was required. He opined that strictly speaking, it was a case of maladministration of the EPD. He wanted to know on an average basis the amount to be collected and how much each household had to pay. At present, in the Sha Tin District, how many such cases there were where it was necessary to collect and repay overcharged sewage charges. If such information was not available at present, he hoped that the EPD would provide it after the meeting;
- (b) regarding this incident, whether the DSD had communicated with the Rural Committee, and he enquired about their comments; and
- (c) the Village Sewerage Scheme was led by the EPD. He enquired which villages had already completed the works and which ones still had not. The EPD should have a record about that. When the villagers discussed with the EPD whether the relevant works should proceed, they should have been reminded by the EPD to know the responsibilities after the connection, such as the need to pay sewage charges. If the EPD failed to do so, strictly speaking, this could be regarded as a negligence of duty. Currently it became necessary for other departments to find out whether the villages had been connected to the public sewers and it appeared that there was insufficient coordination between the departments. If the problem was not rectified in the most timely manner, the public might need to complain to the Office of the Ombudsman.

53. The Chairman said that after the sewage treatment works, the DSD would require the villagers within the relevant scope to connect the sewers into the main sewer system and then report to the DSD accordingly. He wanted to know how the DSD could ascertain whether the villagers had used the public sewers and also whether the villagers had reported to the DSD after the completion of the sewage works. He wondered if this happened because of communication problems between the departments and whether the DSD needed to review the current mechanism.

54. The responses of Mr Vincent CHAN, Engineer / Customer Services of the DSD were summarised below:

- (a) recently two villages in Sha Tin were subject to the sewage charges, namely the Wong Uk Village and the A Kung Kok Fishermen Village. Both villages were connected to the public sewers when they moved to the present site. As they

were not covered by the EPD's Village Sewerage Scheme, the DSD did not have records showing that the two villages were connected to the public sewers. In 2015, the DSD conducted verification at the non-sewers connected villages according to the record. The DSD did not charge the villagers for sewage until it was confirmed that the sewage was discharged into public sewers. The DSD would collect the accumulated sewage charges from the date of the opening of the account in accordance with the Sewage Services Ordinance. If the user had opened an account for more than 6 years, the DSD would only charge the user for a maximum of six years of sewage discharge fee in accordance with the Limitation Ordinance;

- (b) if the villagers had not been charged for sewage charges in the past, after ascertaining that the premises had already had sewers connected, the DSD would issue a letter to the villagers to explain the need to collect sewage charges. If some villagers failed to pay the charges in one go due to economic problems, the DSD would help arrange the villagers to pay by installments;
- (c) when some villagers suggested that their premises had not been connected to the public sewers but might have paid more sewage charges in the past, the DSD, upon receipt of the application, would send staff to the villagers' premises to check that their premises whether they were not connected to public sewers. If such a case was confirmed, refund would be arranged as soon as possible. If the premise was found to have access to a public sewer but failed to pay sewage charges, the DSD would levy the relevant charges in accordance with the Sewage Services Ordinance and the Limitation Ordinance;
- (d) the sewage charges were collected through the invoice issued by the WSD. When the user opened an account with the WSD, the computer system would identify whether the water supply address had been connected to the public sewers to determine whether a sewage charge was needed. However, there were very few users who upon registration of the account entered the address in a format which was different from the data in the computer system, so the identification system could not correctly distinguish them;
- (e) there was no time limit for refunds, after verifying that the villagers' premises had not been connected to the public sewers, the extra sewage charges paid by the villagers would be refunded in full, but the legislations had not endowed the DSD with the power to refund the interest at issue;
- (f) in villages covered by the Village Sewerage scheme, after the public sewers were completed, the EPD would notify the villagers to connect the sewers of their premises to the public sewers. Upon completion of the connection, the villagers had to submit information to the EPD, including the connection date and the water account number. The EPD would notify the DSD in due course. The DSD would send staff to the villages for inspection and at the same time, the sewage charges from the date of the connection would be collected on the basis of the information submitted by the villagers to the EPD. The Wong Uk Village and the A Kung Kok Fishermen Village were not part of the Village Sewerage Scheme;

- (g) when the DSD received the notice from the EPD that the premises had been connected with the public sewers, they would update the records of the relevant computer systems and start collecting the sewage charges from the date of the connection provided by the villagers to the EPD;
- (h) regarding the coverage rate of sewers, the DSD had no such information on sewage coverage as the Village Sewerage Scheme fell under the remit of the EPD;
- (i) regarding the collection of sewage charges in Wong Uk Village, 23 houses and 69 accounts were involved. The charge ranged from \$10.9 to \$6,197.3, with an average of about \$2,200 per household. Three accounts had been arranged for payment by installments. As these issues were individual village cases, the DSD had not specifically consulted the Rural Committee; and
- (j) according to the records of the DSD, currently there were more than 30 villages in the Sha Tin District which had not been connected to public sewers. The DSD would review the records of the computer system on a semi-annual basis.

55. The responses of Mr LI Chi-kwun, Senior Environmental Protection Officer (Regional North) 4 of the EPD were summarised below:

- (a) he said that there was no detailed information on the sewage disposal works in the village. He remembered that about 20 to 30 villages in the Sha Tin District had completed the connection to sewage works and about 30 were waiting for the connection; and
- (b) according to the scheme, the DSD and the EPD would explain to the villagers before the commencement of works. The contractor would notify the EPD when the works were completed. The EPD would then send staff to the village to explain the scheme to village representatives and villagers regarding what the villagers would need to do for the connection to the public sewers and that they would be charged for the sewage charges after that. Villagers would inform the EPD of the completion of connection and the EPD would send staff to conduct inspections accordingly. The EPD would then give the information to the DSD upon confirmation of proper connection. Therefore, mistakes were uncommon under the scheme of connection to sewers, unless villagers did not notify the EPD after connection, which would result in time gap. As for Wong Uk Village, it was not under the EPD's Village Sewerage scheme.

Information Item

Report of Working Groups
(Paper No. HE 53/2018)

56. Members noted the above paper.

Information Papers

Statistical Overview of Sha Tin District Environmental Hygiene Service (as at 30 September 2018)

(Paper No. HE 54/2018)

57. Members noted the above paper.

Date of Next Meeting

58. The next meeting was scheduled to be held at 2:30 pm on 10 January 2019 (Thursday).

59. The meeting was adjourned at 6:40 pm.

Sha Tin District Council Secretariat
STDC 13/15/40

January 2019