

Sha Tin District Council
Minutes of the 4th Meeting of
the Development, Housing, Environment and Health Committee in 2022

Date : 20 September 2022 (Tuesday)
Time : 2:30 pm
Venue : Sha Tin District Office Conference Room 441
 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 CHOW Hiu-laam, Felix (Chairman)	DC Member	2:30 pm	4:00 pm
Mr MAK Yun-pui, Chris	DC Chairman	2:30 pm	3:06 pm
Mr SIN Cheuk-nam	DC Vice-Chairman	2:30 pm	4:00 pm
Mr CHENG Chung-hang	DC Member	2:46 pm	4:00 pm
Mr CHUNG Lai-him, Johnny	”	2:30 pm	4:00 pm
Mr WAI Hing-cheung	”	2:30 pm	4:00 pm
Ms CHOW Man-kwan, Mandy (Secretary)	Executive Officer (District Council)3, Sha Tin District Office		

<u>In Attendance</u>	<u>Title</u>
Mr SHIU Kan-yun, Roy	Assistant District Officer (Sha Tin)1 (Atg), Sha Tin District Office
Mr HO Kin-nam, David	Executive Officer I (District Council)1, Sha Tin District Office
Ms CHAN Yuen-chi, Jess	Housing Manager/Tai Po, North and Shatin 3, Housing Department
Mr YEUNG Wai-dor	Administrative Assistant/Lands, District Lands Office, Sha Tin
Ms YICK Hong-nien, Hannah	Senior Town Planner/Shatin, Planning Department
Mr CHAN Ka-kui	District Environmental Hygiene Superintendent (Sha Tin), Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
Mr KAO Hsi-chiang	Chief Health Inspector (Sha Tin)3, Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
Ms CHAN Hoi-wing	Engineer/New Territories East (Distribution 1), Water Supplies Department
Ms WONG Pui-wan, Cecilia	Senior Environmental Protection Officer (Regional North)4, Environmental Protection Department
Ms MAN Pui-shan, Erica	Deputy District Leisure Manager (Sha Tin)2, Leisure and Cultural Services Department

<u>In Attendance by Invitation</u>	<u>Title</u>
Mr POON Wan-fung, Maxwell	Engineer/Technical Support 5, Water Supplies Department
Mr CHOI Hoi-chuen	Assistant Inspector/Technical Support (7)3, Water Supplies Department
Mr MOK Ka-kei, Simpson	Valuer (Rural Properties and Tenancy Services Division), Rating and Valuation Department

Absent

Mr HUI Lap-san

Dr LAM Kong-kwan

Mr MOK Kam-kwai, BBS

Title

DC Member

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(Application for leave of absence received)

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(”)

Action**Welcome Message**

The Chairman welcomed members and representatives of government departments to the meeting of the Development, Housing, Environment and Health Committee (DHEHC).

Applications for Leave of Absence

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

Mr HUI Lap-san

Dr LAM Kong-kwan

Mr MOK Kam-kwai

Illness

Official commitment

”

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

Election of Vice-Chairman of the Committee

4. The Chairman said that the office of DHEHC Vice-Chairman of the STDC would become vacant on 18 January 2022. According to Orders 34(4) and 4(2) of the Sha Tin District Council Standing Orders (Standing Orders), if the office of Vice-Chairman was vacant, the Chairman of the DHEHC must preside at the meeting held for the purpose of electing the Vice-Chairman. The election would be conducted in accordance with the procedures set out in paragraphs 5-7 and 9-14 of Appendix II (Procedure for the Election of District Council Chairman and Vice Chairman) to the Standing Orders. The Secretariat had distributed the nomination form and election procedure for the DHEHC Vice-Chairman to all members on 9 September this year. The nomination for the DHEHC Vice-Chairman closed at 1:30 pm today.

5. By the end of the nomination period, the Secretariat had not received any nomination form for DHEHC Vice-Chairman. Since there were no candidates, the Chairman announced that the office of DHEHC Vice-Chairman would be temporarily vacant and the election of Vice-Chairman would be held at the next DHEHC meeting.

6. Mr Chris MAK said that if there were no candidates for the election of the Vice-Chairman of the Committee, he suggested that the agenda item be omitted in the future, and that the relevant provisions in the Standing Orders should be revised when necessary.

7. Mr David HO, Executive Officer I (District Council)1 of the Sha Tin District Office (STDO), said that the current procedure for the election of the Vice-Chairman of the Committee at the meeting was in line with the Standing Orders. The Secretariat took note of the views of members and would conduct relevant reviews, communicate with members on the revision of the Standing Orders in a timely manner, and steadily take forward the revision when necessary.

Confirmation of Minutes

Minutes of the Meeting Held on 19 July 2022 (DHEHC Minutes 3/2022)

8. Members unanimously endorsed the above minutes of meeting.

Matters Arising

Responses of Government Departments to Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting (Paper No. DHEH 35/2022)

9. Members unanimously endorsed the paper above.

Questions

Question to be Raised by Mr WAI Hing-cheung on Safety of Power Supply in Sha Tin District (Paper No. DHEH 36/2022)

10. The Chairman pointed out that the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) as well as CLP Power Hong Kong Limited (CLP) invited had indicated to the Secretariat that they could not attend the meeting, and the Secretariat could forward the questions and views of members to the relevant units. In addition, he opined that the question raised was in line with the terms of reference of the DHEHC and also related to the well-being of the public, and expressed regret that the relevant units failed to attend the meeting. He hoped that the EMSD and CLP would send representatives to attend the meeting to allay the doubts of residents of Sha Tin District.

11. Mr Chris MAK was of the view that CLP failed to attend the meeting as it had a guilty conscience and lacked the courage to face the public. Only a written reply was provided. He requested the Secretariat to invite the EMSD and CLP to attend the next meeting to communicate directly with members.

12. Mr WAI Hing-cheung said that he had raised a question about the Tai Wai overhead power cable pylon at a meeting of the then Health and Environment Committee in 2012. In addition, as a power cable accident had occurred in Yuen Long District earlier, residents of Sha Tin District were more concerned about the safety of power supply in the residential area. That was why he put forward this question. He believed that the relevant units should attend the meeting and respond to questions from members. He invited relevant representatives to attend the next meeting.

13. Ms Mandy CHOW, Executive Officer (District Council)3 of the STDO, said that the Secretariat had been in contact with the EMSD and CLP prior to the meeting, and would continue to reflect the views of members to the relevant units after the meeting.

14. The Chairman requested the Secretariat to convey the views of members to the relevant units. The Committee unanimously agreed to include this question in the agenda of future meetings.

Question to be Raised by Mr CHUNG Lai-him, Johnny on Overcharging for Water by Landlords of Subdivided Units in Sha Tin District
(Paper No. DHEH 37/2022)

15. The views of Mr Johnny CHUNG were summarised as follows:

- (a) he appreciated the detailed replies from the Water Supplies Department (WSD) and the Rating and Valuation Department (RVD);
- (b) he would like to know whether the tenants had other ways to solve the problem if the landlords were not willing to install separate water meters for the subdivided units;
- (c) he wanted to know the reason why the informants refused to testify in court. In addition, he would like to know how the WSD would protect informants from reprisals;
- (d) he would like to know the considerations of the RVD in the site selection for hanging publicity banners; and
- (e) he expressed his support for the publicity work of the RVD, and suggested that the Department should strengthen the promotion of relevant ordinances in places with potential subdivided units.

16. Mr SIN Cheuk-nam would like to know whether the relevant ordinances would apply to subdivided units within village houses.

17. Mr Simpson MOK, Valuer (Rural Properties and Tenancy Services Division) of the RVD, gave a consolidated response as follows:

- (a) he said that the Government displayed relevant publicity materials at different places for the public and landlords to understand the ordinance relating to tenancy control, and for the tenants to know their rights. Regarding the suggested locations of publicity banners in Sha Tin District put forward at the meeting, the Department would have a discussion on the issue with the District Service Team responsible for making the relevant arrangements; and
- (b) he pointed out that the ordinance relating to tenancy control on subdivided units did not cover New Territories exempted houses, while village houses in the New Territories in general were New Territories exempted houses, so the relevant tenancies of subdivided units (if any) were not regulated by the ordinance relating to tenancy control on subdivided units.

18. Mr Maxwell POON, Engineer/Technical Support 5 of the WSD, gave a consolidated response as follows:

- (a) he said that the landlords could be refusing to install water meters for their subdivided units due to a lack of full understanding of the “Pilot Scheme for Installation of Separate Water Meters for Subdivided Units”. The WSD would learn about the situation from the landlords and explain the details of the pilot scheme to them; and

- (b) he said that the Department's Prosecution Unit would submit after the meeting supplementary information on following up tenants' refusal to testify in court.

19. The Chairman requested the WSD to submit additional information on members' questions after the meeting, and announced the end of the agenda item.

Question to be Raised by Mr CHOW Hiu-laam, Felix on Rodent Infestation in Sha Tin District
(Paper No. DHEH 38/2022)

20. The views of the Chairman were summarised as follows:

- (a) he wanted to know whether the three survey locations in Sha Tin District could accurately reflect the actual situation of rodent infestation;
- (b) he would like to know the feasibility, effectiveness and sustainability of the overnight rodent control teams of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) and the application of various anti-rodent technologies in Sha Tin District; and
- (c) he would like to know how the FEHD assessed the effectiveness of rodent control work carried out outside the survey locations (such as rural areas, back alleys, restaurants, etc.).

21. Mr CHAN Ka-kui, District Environmental Hygiene Superintendent (Sha Tin) of the FEHD, gave a consolidated response as follows:

- (a) he said that the Department would choose to carry out Rodent Infestation Surveys in representative places with high pedestrian flow to detect the range of movement and activity level of rodents at the locations concerned, so as to deploy manpower to carry out anti-rodent work more effectively in Sha Tin District;
- (b) he said that an overnight rodent control team, led by experienced retirees of the FEHD, had been set up in Sha Tin District since July this year to carry out prevention and control work at black spots in the district (such as back alleys) and places where rodent traps could not be placed due to high pedestrian flow in the daytime. The preliminary data showed that more live rodents were captured at night and in the early morning than in the daytime. The Department would continue to closely monitor the effectiveness of the work concerned and use different strategies to improve the efficiency of capturing live rodents;
- (c) he said that new rodent control methods would be introduced on a trial basis in Wan Chai District, and the Department would widely extend the relevant rodent control methods to other places, including Sha Tin District, having regard to the results and where resources permitted;
- (d) he said that the FEHD would monitor the situation of rodent infestation at different locations based on the number of complaints received and the public opinions obtained during inspections in the district; and

- (e) he said that the Department would continue to improve environmental hygiene through dealing with the three fundamental survival conditions of rodents, namely “food”, “harbourage” and “passages”, which was about eliminating rodents’ food sources and hiding places as well as blocking their dispersal routes, so as to control the problem of rodent infestation.

22. The views of Mr WAI Hing-cheung were summarised as follows:

- (a) he would like to know more about the effectiveness of the overnight rodent control team mentioned in the annex to the paper, and the Department’s indicators for assessing the work concerned;
- (b) he said that there were many folk methods of catching rodents and would like to know whether the FEHD would consider adopting these methods; and
- (c) he thanked the FEHD for accompanying him to inspect the car park of Shatin Centre earlier to understand the situation of rodent infestation there. He would like to know whether the FEHD would provide training to organisations or management companies responsible for environmental hygiene and rodent control to improve the anti-rodent knowledge and skills of their front-line staff.

23. The views of Mr CHENG Chung-hang were summarised as follows:

- (a) he wanted to learn the details of the new rodent control methods;
- (b) he said that rodents had a short reproductive cycle and a high fertility rate. He was concerned about the effectiveness of the Department’s rodent prevention strategy focusing on capture, and wanted to know whether the Department would consider neutering rodents; and
- (c) he said that rodent infestation in some village houses was serious and suggested that the FEHD could regularly distribute leaflets to village leaders, village representatives or village offices, and could also hold rodent prevention and control seminars in the villages.

24. Mr CHAN Ka-kui gave a consolidated response as follows:

- (a) he said that the FEHD would review the number of live rodents captured every week and assess the effectiveness of the actions and strategies in a timely manner;
- (b) he said that the FEHD mainly adopted the anti-rodent methods of placing poisoned rodent bait, rodent cages and rodent traps etc., while some folk methods of rodent catching were less effective and inhumane. For example, live rodents captured by glue traps might struggle and be frightened, causing them to discharge urine and other excreta due to excessive fear, which could spread bacteria. Therefore, the Department did not recommend using glue traps for rodent control; and
- (c) he said that specialised rodent control companies in the market had professional knowledge of rodent catching. In addition, the FEHD would provide rodent

control knowledge to relevant personnel in private buildings. Interested housing estates and management companies could contact the Department to arrange for rodent prevention seminars. As some villages were without management offices, the difficulty of carrying out publicity work by the Department might increase. The FEHD would strengthen education as needed. The public could also visit the website of the FEHD to learn the correct procedures for handling dead rodents.

25. Mr KAO Hsi-chiang, Chief Health Inspector (Sha Tin)³ of the FEHD, said that in view of the high reproductive rate of rodents and considering that Hong Kong was a compact place, the FEHD focused on rodent trapping and disinfection as timely and important strategies for rodent prevention. In addition, the Department had adopted new rodent control methods, including the application of thermal camera monitoring systems in back alleys to track rodents and evaluate the number of them, and would clear and block the rodent hiding places and passages in back alleys to more effectively and comprehensively assess the situation of rodent infestation. The FEHD would also continue to test poisoned bait having flavours of food, T-shaped rodent bait boxes, mixed-bait snap trap that could hold multiple kinds of food at the same time, and apply new technologies on the market to improve the efficiency of anti-rodent work.

26. The Chairman requested the FEHD to take note of the views of members and announced the end of the agenda item.

Question to be Raised by Mr CHENG Chung-hang on Keeping of Service Dogs (Including Guide Dogs and Companion Dogs) by Public Rental Housing Tenants in Sha Tin District
(Paper No. DHEH 39/2022)

27. The views of Mr CHENG Chung-hang were summarised as follows:

- (a) he would like to know the discretionary considerations of the Housing Department (HD) in reviewing individual cases of companion dogs weighing more than 20 kilograms;
- (b) he believed that the weight of dogs was not directly related to environmental hygiene and noise, and said that the HD could provide advice to owners on relevant matters. In addition, he would like to know the reason why companion dogs were subject to a weight limit in the regulations concerned; and
- (c) regarding the cases involving public rental housing (PRH) tenants applying to keep companion dogs, he hoped that the HD could handle such cases in a more “humane” manner.

28. The Chairman said that the public’s perception of keeping dogs might change over time. He hoped that the HD would review the regulations in a timely manner and deal with the cases concerned flexibly.

29. Ms Jess CHAN, Housing Manager/Tai Po, North and Shatin 3 of the HD, gave a consolidated response as follows:

- (a) she said that the Subsidised Housing Committee of the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) implemented the Temporary Permission Rule to allow tenants to

continue to keep small dogs that had been kept in public housing flats before 1 August 2003 until the natural death of such dogs. This arrangement was a one-off measure, and no application would be accepted thereafter;

- (b) she pointed out that the Dangerous Dogs Regulation (Cap. 167D) determined that the weight of large dogs was 20 kilograms or more, and the provisions did not apply to the guide dogs applied for by PRH tenants. Under the principle of not causing nuisance, the HA would grant discretionary approval for tenants with the need of keeping dogs as mental support as recommended by medical practitioners or psychologists to apply to keep companion dogs. If a companion dog approved by the Department had grown to 20 kilograms or more, the HD would review the case and consider whether to continue to allow the keeping of the dog according to individual circumstances;
- (c) she pointed out that there was a PRH tenant in Sha Tin District who was keeping a companion dog weighing more than 20 kilograms;
- (d) she said that the policy of public housing allocation aimed to provide accommodation for people with actual needs to meet their housing needs. Due to the limited space in public housing estates and the dense population, residents were very concerned about environmental hygiene. Keeping dogs and other animals could affect environmental hygiene, and there were often conflicts between neighbours due to dog keeping. Therefore, the pet keeping policy formulated by the HA had to be based on the overall interests and wishes of all tenants as well as good management. The Department had to strike a balance between the need to take into account the wishes of PRH tenants to enjoy a clean, hygienic, peaceful and safe living environment, and the right of some tenants to keep dogs due to special needs or health reasons. On the premise of community inclusion, the current relevant policies could respect the rights and feelings of both parties; and
- (e) she thanked and took note of the views of members and said that the Department would consider each case flexibly.

30. The Chairman announced the end of the agenda item.

Information Papers

Statistical Overview of Sha Tin District Environmental Hygiene Service (as at 31 July 2022)
(Paper No. DHEH 40/2022)

Population of Public Housing Estates and Private Sector Participation Scheme Courts in Sha Tin
(Paper No. DHEH 41/2022)

31. The Chairman suggested to combine the discussion of “Statistical Overview of Sha Tin District Environmental Hygiene Service (as at 31 July 2022)” and “Population of Public Housing Estates and Private Sector Participation Scheme Courts in Sha Tin”.

32. Members unanimously agreed to the suggestion above.

33. Mr SIN Cheuk-nam would like to know the reason why Paper No. DHEH 40/2022 only showed the data of illegal extension of business by shops in Tai Wai.

34. The Chairman said that the problem of illegal extension of business by shops in Shek Mun was serious. He would like to know how the FEHD could improve the problem. In addition, he was concerned about the FEHD's resources, law enforcement methods and effectiveness of penalty in dealing with the problem of shopfront extension, and hoped that the Department could continue to explore different ways to solve the problems from the roots.

35. Mr CHENG Chung-hang would like to know whether the FEHD had any new methods targeting the problem of unauthorised posting of publicity materials and shopfront extension, so as to improve the relevant situations more effectively.

36. Mr WAI Hing-cheung said that some shops outside Tai Wai Railway Station had seriously violated the regulations by extending their businesses. He hoped that the FEHD could pay close attention to and crack down on the issues concerned.

37. Mr CHAN Ka-kui gave a consolidated response as follows:

- (a) he said that the shop in Shek Mun mentioned by a member was opened at the end of April this year. The FEHD would include in the paper for the next meeting the data on the illegal extension of business at the location concerned for reference. In addition, he said that the FEHD would strengthen law enforcement at the location concerned in October this year, and the Department would continue to deploy manpower to deal with violations at the locations concerned in Shek Mun and Tai Wai; and
- (b) he said that in accordance with the powers conferred by laws, the Department would now enforce the law with a fixed penalty.

38. Member noted the above papers.

Date of Next Meeting

39. The next meeting was scheduled to be held at 2:30 pm on 15 November 2022 (Tuesday).

40. The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 pm.

Sha Tin District Council Secretariat
STDC 13/15/60

November 2022