

Tuen Mun District Council Memorandum

Summary of Minutes of the 10th Meeting of the Social Services Committee (2012-2013)

Meeting

The Social Services Committee (SSC) held its 10th meeting on 9 July 2013.

Overcrowding of Hong Chi Morning Hill School and Hong Chi Morning Light School

2. In response to the request of SSC at the last meeting, the Education Bureau (EDB) had gathered information about the lead-time for renovating/ converting vacant school premises and conducting addition works. In general, if the renovation work only involved some non-structural in-house items, it could be completed within a few months. If structural alteration inside the vacant school premises was necessary, a longer time would be required. As for addition works, if the tendering for architectural/ surveying consultants was successful and nothing unexpected came up during the works, it would take about three years to complete the works.

3. A Member considered that the relocation of Hong Chi Morning Hill School or Hong Chi Morning Light School to vacant school premises remained the most effective short-term solution to the problem. However, a Member opined that if the relocation of the special schools to vacant school premises was to be considered, local residents in the vicinity should be consulted and the suitability of the school premises for special schools should be taken into account.

4. After discussion, SSC urged the EDB to adopt short-term measures to address the shortage of space at schools and the Working Group on Education and Youth Services would continue to follow up the matter. Meanwhile, SSC suggested reserving a site in Area 54 for the construction of special schools, and the views concerned would be relayed to the Environment, Hygiene and District Development Committee for follow-up.

Request the Lingnan University to Allow Free Access to the Sports Ground for the Public on Sessional Basis

5. Members' comments on the issue included: the Sports Ground of Lingnan University should be open for public use as it was often left idle; full opening of the sports facilities on campus might not be feasible; the facilities were now open to local organisations and the school authority had fulfilled its promise on the opening of facilities; and the low utilisation rate of the sports facilities at Lingnan University was related to its opening hours and high charges. In addition, several Members expressed regret over Lingnan University's way of reply and considered that it should respond to the District Council's concern in writing or by sending representatives to attend the meeting.

6. After discussion, SSC endorsed to continue the discussion of this agenda item at the next meeting and write to Lingnan University, Council of Lingnan University and the University Grants

Committee to express regret over the University's refusal to attend the meeting and provide written response, and to invite the school again for sending representatives to attend the next SSC meeting.

Request the Social Welfare Department to Study the Extension of the “Home Environment Improvement Scheme for the Elderly”

7. Members' comments on the issue included: it was necessary to extend the “Home Environment Improvement Scheme for the Elderly”; local organisations might not be able to cater for the needs of other elderly as they mainly served their members; it was suggested that if the Social Welfare Department (SWD) launched similar schemes in the future, it should disseminate the relevant information to the elderly living alone through the Housing Department; and it was hoped that the SWD and the Community Care Fund could allocate more resources to serve the elderly and reach out to the elderly in need more proactively.

Calling for Implementation of 15-year Free Education

8. Members' comments on the issue included: with the rising birth rate, the number of families affected by the expensive tuition fees of kindergartens would increase; a timetable for the provision of 15-year free education should therefore be worked out to alleviate parents' financial burden as early as possible; although the introduction of education vouchers could help reduce the burden on parents, the choice of schools was limited; the Government should make long-term investments in education to enhance the quality of the population; in order to understand the demand for free kindergarten education in various districts, it was recommended that the EDB should consult District Councils on the provision of free kindergarten education before getting any initial achievements; when planning the local supply of kindergarten places, the EDB should consider the impact of economic polarisation of “doubly non-permanent resident” families on the demand for school places; privately-run kindergartens tended to transfer the cost to parents; and as it took time for the Administration and the committees concerned to study the provision of free kindergarten education and consult the public, it was hoped that the Administration could explore ways to help grassroots families afford the kindergarten fees during the transition period.

Request for Enhancement of Regulation on the Rise of Textbook Price

9. Members' comments on the issue included: although the EDB had implemented a number of measures, textbook prices were not suppressed effectively, thus putting a heavy burden on parents; it was hoped that the EDB could explore further measures to solve the problem; frequent revision of textbooks was unnecessary and there were too many supplementary exercises which aimed at squeezing parents for profiteering, the Administration should strengthen its control and promote textbook recycling and electronic teaching materials; when exploring measures, the Administration had to consider that electronic teaching materials might cause damage to eyes; it was considered that publishers should be required to list out the amendments in each revision; schools were recommended to make photocopies of the amendments for distribution to students without breaching the law; textbooks should be selected by schools and school sponsoring bodies should not choose revised textbooks; and the EDB should encourage schools to seek parents' views on textbook selection and conduct parent opinion polls to review the effectiveness of various

measures.

Invitation to Participate and Assist in the Preliminary Selection of the Tuen Mun "Short Films Contest for the Youth"

10. After discussion, SSC agreed to participate in the assessment for the preliminary selection of the Short Films Contest for the Youth and nominated Mr TSANG Hin-hong to take part in the activity on behalf of SSC.

New Territories West Cluster 2013/14 annual plan

11. Members gave their views on the annual plan of the New Territories West Cluster (NTWC), including the allocation of healthcare resources and manpower, services provided by Tuen Mun Hospital, ancillary transport facilities for Pok Oi Hospital, out-patient services and evening out-patient services, service outsourcing, cross-cluster specialist out-patient services, accident and emergency services provided by NTWC, spa facilities, haemodialysis services and the development of public-private partnership programmes in healthcare.

Work Reports by the Working Groups under the Social Services Committee

(a) Working Group on Medical and Rehabilitation Services

12. The convenor supplemented that the Working Group and some SSC Members had inspected the mortuary services of Tuen Mun Hospital on the morning of 21 June. The Working Group would continue to follow up the matter and report its progress.

(b) Working Group on Social Care

13. The convenor supplemented that among the 11 local organisations invited, only the Hong Kong Young Women's Christian Association Jockey Club Tuen Mun Integrated Social Service Centre was interested in organising activities with the Working Group under the Funding Scheme for Women's Development. After discussion, SSC agreed that the Working Group would co-organise the activities with the aforesaid organisation.

14. A Member considered that soccer training courses should fall within the purview of the Steering Group on Leisure and Sports Development under the District Facilities Management Committee. The Working Group on Community Care should optimise the use of resources, avoid organising activities similar to those held by other groups, and establish a clear positioning to serve the disadvantaged. In response, the convenor said that the Working Group had received a joint letter from parents for the continued organisation of soccer training courses. Furthermore, a Member said that for the sake of continuity, the Working Group should continue to organise soccer training courses so that training for participants would not be interrupted. After discussion, SSC agreed that the Working Group should continue to follow up the arrangements for soccer training courses.

(c) Working Group on Education and Youth Services

15. SSC noted the report of the Working Group.

Report by the Tuen Mun District School Development Section of the Education Bureau

16. Members' comments on the report of the EDB included: concern over EDB's failure to provide information about cross-boundary kindergarten coaches to Hong Kong parents living in the Mainland; the Administration was urged to issue Closed Road Permits for entering the Shenzhen Bay Control Point to school buses as soon as possible and give priority to school bus applications made in the name of schools; it was recommended that arrangement be made by the EDB for students who could not take school buses of their schools to take school buses of other schools; the drastic increase of the fares of cross-boundary school coaches that went through the Shenzhen Bay Control Point last year had put a heavy burden on parents; and concern over the saturation of overall traffic flow at the Shenzhen Bay Control Point might affect the immigration clearance arrangements for cross-boundary students in the future.

Report by the Social Welfare Department

17. SSC noted the report of the SWD.

18. Mr YIM Tin-sang reported that he had resigned from the Coordinating Committee on Rehabilitation Services of the SWD. In this connection, the Chairman invited Members who were interested in joining the Committee to contact the Secretariat.

Report on Crime Figures in the Tuen Mun District

19. Members noted the report of the Police Force.

A Letter from Elderly Welfare Group

20. After discussion, SSC endorsed that the Working Group on Community Care should follow up the letter from the aforesaid organisation. SSC also considered inviting the organisation to meet the Working Group which would then report the matter to SSC.

Tuen Mun District Council Secretariat

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