

Summary of Minutes of the 12th Meeting of Tuen Mun District Council
(2012-2015)

Meeting

The Tuen Mun District Council (“TMDC”) held its 12th meeting on 3 September 2013.

Meeting between Director of Leisure and Cultural Services and Tuen Mun District Councillors

2. Mrs Betty FUNG, Director of Leisure and Cultural Services (“DLCS”) attended TMDC’s meeting and briefed Members on the Department’s work in Tuen Mun with highlights on: (a) major recreation, sports and cultural facilities as well as public libraries in Tuen Mun; (b) works projects; (c) district minor works programmes; (d) major initiatives for 2013-2014; (e) assessment of historic buildings; and (f) survey of intangible cultural heritage.

3. Comments and enquiries made by several Members about the Department’s work in the district included: (a) it was hoped that when designing the new pet garden in Lam Tei, the Department could be aware of the materials used for making benches to prevent the dogs from getting hurt; (b) it was suggested that the Department should consider building new libraries in the district instead of just renovating the existing ones; (c) it was urged that the Department should purchase more mobile libraries to facilitate residents’ access to the services; (d) it was suggested that the Department should strengthen the promotion and publicity of e-reading; (e) it was requested that the Department should report to DC on the follow-ups to the construction of the skateboard ground and two mini-soccer pitches at Tuen Mun Area 17 as well as the progress of the construction of the sports ground at Tuen Mun Area 16; (f) it was hoped that the Department could provide more facilities for sports training; (g) it was suggested that the Department should organise more arts and cultural programmes of high-quality in the New Territories to enhance the development of arts and culture in Tuen Mun and Yuen Long districts; (h) it was urged that the Department should coordinate with DC before formulating the annual programme plan to strike a balance among demands of different parties; (i) it was hoped that the Department could improve the local public toilet facilities with reference to the designs of those at the “Wishing Tree” in Tai Po and in the tourist district of Lantau Island; (j) it was suggested that the Department should provide more lockers at the beaches, and

improve and increase the bathing and shower facilities at the beaches; (k) it was requested that the Department should provide the sale of the Public Swimming Pool Monthly Ticket at the booking offices of public swimming pools; (m) it was suggested that the Department should implement the development plan for the monuments related to China's 1911 Revolution near Hung Lau as soon as possible; and (n) it was suggested that the free admission to leisure and cultural facilities should be arranged on a one-day-per-month basis to encourage the public to exercise more frequently. DLCS gave detailed response.

Request the Government to Optimise Land Use

4. The representative of the Government Property Agency ("GPA") said that the management of government properties was the function and main work area of GPA. He pointed out that though the issue of the use of land resources involved purviews of other government departments, GPA had approached the relevant departments to enquire about the information on the government properties/government land mentioned in the discussion paper on the issue and by Members at the last meeting. He then briefed DC on the government properties/government land concerned which included: (a) the Perowne Barracks; (b) the old District Office; (c) the quarters of the Castle Peak Hospital; (d) the basement of the Tuen Mun Government Offices ("TMGO"); (e) the Tuen Mun Ferry Terminal; (f) the permanent spectator stand of the Joint User Complex and Wholesale Fish Market in Tuen Mun Area 44; (g) the private properties at Tuen Mun Parklane Square leased by the Social Welfare Department ("SWD") and Labour Department; and (h) the former quarters of the Water Supplies Department.

5. Comments and enquiries made by several Members about the issue included: (a) it was requested that the Department should, as soon as possible, decide the future uses of the three primary schools (including the Church of Christ in China Kei Leung Primary School) in Tuen Mun which had ceased operation due to the introduction of the "closing schools" policy as well as those of the village schools which had been left vacant for a long time; (b) it was suggested that the Government should provide DC members with vacant sites in their constituencies to facilitate their setting up of offices; (c) it was suggested that the Government should optimise the use of the basement of TMGO which had been left vacant for a long time, and that GPA should follow up on the matter as the site was under its management; (d) it was requested that the Department should provide data on the vacancy rates of the doctors' and nurses' quarters of Tuen Mun Hospital located near Affluence Garden as well as the staff

quarters of Castle Peak Hospital; and (e) it was urged that the Department should upload the list of vacant properties to its website to increase the transparency.

6. The representative of SWD responded that the Department had planned to convert the Church of Christ in China Kei Leung Primary School into a social service facility where elderly and rehabilitation services would be provided. In addition, a district consultation on the plan was being carried out by the Department and Members would be briefed on the plan at the next meeting of the Social Services Committee.

7. The representative of GPA remarked that, in general, the Government would accommodate bureaux/departments in suitable government properties to minimise rental expenditure and ensure the security of tenancy. However, individual departments would consider accommodating their offices in leased private properties according to the circumstances and service needs. In addition, if tenancies were not renewed upon expiry, GPA would, having regard to the operation and service needs of the departments concerned, identify suitable sites in the district for them as long as there was local demand for their services. On the other hand, heads of departments would report to GPA on the utilisation of properties under their management for review and project their demands on properties for the next five years on annual basis with a view to facilitating GPA's consideration of factors like cost-effectiveness and availability of the sites concerned. If properties under management of individual departments were found vacant, GPA would identify suitable government department users according to the area, location and building regulations of such sites. However, if the departments concerned considered the properties not suitable, they would be let through public tender for optimal utilisation. He also pointed out that though the issue of the basement of TMGO had been discussed ten years ago, GPA remained open to new alteration proposals and would consider every view which could facilitate the optimal use of the basement.

8. The first submitter of the paper opined that it should be for GPA to provide the ways to optimise the use of the basement of TMGO and relevant alteration proposals. That said, he suggested that the Government could consider allocating the site to the post office to avoid wasting public money on the leasing of private flats in Rose Dale Garden. The representative of GPA responded that the Department would actively consider the alteration proposals from the aspects of technical issues, cost-effectiveness, possible impact on other users, etc.

9. The Chairman asked the representative of GPA to consider the views of Members and provide written supplementary information to DC after the meeting.

Request the Government to Provide More Resources to Members of District Councils

10. The representative of the Home Affairs Department (“HAD”) said that in order to keep pace with the times and address the needs of DC members and residents at community level, the Government would review DC members’ honorarium, allowance and the operating expenses reimbursement regularly and introduce improvement measures accordingly. The review of this term had commenced and it was hoped that applications regarding the recommendations would be made to the Panel on Home Affairs and the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council (“LegCo”) within this year. For the enhancement of the functions and roles of DCs, she remarked that the Government had made significant improvement in three areas since 2008: (a) community involvement programmes; (b) district minor works; and (c) district facilities. Moreover, in early 2013, the Chief Executive announced in the Policy Address that a one-off allocation of \$100 million would be earmarked for each district to carry out signature projects. In addition, HAD would hold the Summit on District Administration this year with a view to further strengthening the work of district administration.

11. The first submitter of the paper said that the paper was submitted not because of money-related matters but because it was hoped that the Administration could attach importance to the status of DCs. He pointed out that the Government should consider providing offices for DC members or offering assistance to DC members with difficulties in setting up their offices by allocating suitable government properties to them. If the proposal had to be implemented step by step, HAD could consider accommodating offices of the Chairmen and Vice-chairmen of DCs in government properties first. He also suggested that HAD should consider the provision of facilities like conference room for DC members to match with their work requirements.

12. Relevant comments and suggestions made by several Members included: (a) it was reflected that DC members had difficulty in employing suitable staff to work in their offices; (b) it was opined that the problem of appointing representatives of bureaux/departments to attend DC meetings was getting worse in terms of the rank and level of the representatives; (c) objection to the conduction of DC consultation on

policy issues by the Government in a selective manner; (d) it was requested that the Government should consider providing transport allowance to DC members; (e) it was suggested that HAD should consider relaxing the guidelines and restrictions on claiming reimbursements of rental expenses and allowing DC members to lease Chinese tenements as offices. The Government should also face up to the problem of rising shop rentals; (f) it was requested that the Government should support the bilingualism of DC documents; (g) it was suggested that HAD should consider handling the use of DC's conference rooms by DC members in a flexible approach; (h) it was hoped that the contribution of experienced DC members would be recognised by the Administration in the forms of records and awards, and that resources would be provided to them as a kind of support; and (i) it was requested that HAD should consider re-examining the policy on medical allowance and reimbursing the medical insurance premiums with the element of life insurance.

13. The representative of HAD provided a consolidated response to the above views/enquiries: (a) HAD would, as far as possible, submit specific recommendations to the LegCo late this year so as to meet the work requirements of DC members; (b) if English versions of documents or minutes of meetings were requested by the public, the Secretariat would make relevant arrangement despite limitation of resources. In addition, TMDC could request government departments to prepare documents in English for submission to DC as well; (c) regarding the use of conference rooms, the present utilisation rates of conference rooms were so high that even the demands of government departments could not be met. Notwithstanding this, HAD would re-examine the vacant sites in Tuen Mun and discuss with Tuen Mun District Office after the meeting for follow-up actions; (d) the end-of-term gratuity which had been effective from this term could be helpful for some retired DC members. HAD would also explore measures which could help the retired DC members to continue to use their talents; (e) for the requirement of including the "medical allowance" in the total taxable income of DC members, advice of the Inland Revenue Department had to be sought as it was a taxation issue; and (f) for the lease of Chinese tenements as offices of DC members, the restriction was imposed because the rental allowance reimbursed by DC members was funded by public money, and it was HAD's responsibility to ensure that the reimbursement mechanism and its operation were in line with the Laws of Hong Kong.

Hung Shui Kiu New Development Area Planning and Engineering Study
Preliminary Outline Development Plan and Stage Two Community Engagement

14. The representatives of the Planning Department (“PlanD”) and the Civil Engineering and Development Department attended the meeting and briefed Members on the latest position of the Hung Shui Kiu New Development Area Planning and Engineering Study. Members were invited to submit their comments to the Departments before the Stage Two Community Engagement ended on 15 October 2013.

15. Comments and enquiries made by several Members about the Hung Shui Kiu New Development Area (“HSKNDA”) project included: (a) it was requested that the Government should make due arrangements for land resumption, reprovision and rehousing; (b) it was suggested that the supply of public housing in the HSKNDA should be increased; (c) it was urged that the Government should increase the living and transport facilities of the HSKNDA; (d) it was suggested that the Government should enhance the contents of the HSKNDA project; (e) it was hoped that the Government would reconsider the construction of Route 10 and the linking up of the Ha Tsuen Interchange, Sheung Pak Nai and Ha Pak Nai with Pillar Point, the airport etc; and (f) it was opined that the HSKNDA might bring pressure on the social and transport facilities of Tuen Mun, and that the Government should face up to the problem. The representatives responded accordingly.

16. The Chairman said that he had visited “villages in towns” in Shenzhen and showed appreciation of the development model. He hoped that the Government could broaden its vision and draw on the experience of Shenzhen to avoid formulating policies behind closed doors and falling behind. The representative of PlanD said that he would submit the views to the policy bureaux/departments concerned for their consideration.

Secretariat, Tuen Mun District Council
8 October 2013