

Minutes of the 2nd Meeting in 2024
of the Social Welfare, Housing and Development Planning Committee
of Tai Po District Council

Date: 8 March 2024 (Friday)
Time: 9:30 a.m. – 12:16 p.m.
Venue: Conference Room, Tai Po District Council (“TPDC”)

<u>Present</u>	<u>Time of Arrival</u>	<u>Time of Withdrawal</u>
<u>Chairman</u>		
Mr. LO Hiu-fung	Beginning of the meeting	End of the meeting
<u>Vice-chairman</u>		
Mr. WU Cheuk-him	Beginning of the meeting	End of the meeting
<u>Members</u>		
Mr. YU Chi-wing, MH	Beginning of the meeting	End of the meeting
Mr. LEE Man-kit	Beginning of the meeting	End of the meeting
Mr. LI Wah-kwong, Rex, MH	Beginning of the meeting	End of the meeting
Mr. LEE Hon-cheung	Beginning of the meeting	End of the meeting
Mr. MUI Siu-fung	Beginning of the meeting	End of the meeting
Mr. MUI Ching-hung	Beginning of the meeting	End of the meeting
Mr. CHAN Cho-leung, MH, JP	Beginning of the meeting	11:08 a.m.
Mr. CHAN Yung-wa	Beginning of the meeting	End of the meeting
Ms. CHAN Kin-kwan	Beginning of the meeting	End of the meeting
Mr. CHAN Siu-kuen, MH, JP	Beginning of the meeting	End of the meeting
Mr. MAK Shing-ho, Gary	Beginning of the meeting	End of the meeting
Mr. WAN Koon-kau	Beginning of the meeting	End of the meeting
Mr. WONG Wai-tung	Beginning of the meeting	End of the meeting
Ms. WONG Pik-kiu, BBS, MH, JP	Beginning of the meeting	End of the meeting
Ms. LOK Siu-luen	Beginning of the meeting	End of the meeting
<u>Secretary</u>		
Miss LUK Wing-sum, Joyce	Beginning of the meeting	End of the meeting
Executive Officer (District Council) 3 / Tai Po District Office (“TPDO”) / Home Affairs Department (“HAD”)		

In Attendance

Ms. CHAN Sin-yee	Assistant District Social Welfare Officer (Tai Po/ North) 1 / Social Welfare Department (“SWD”)
Mr. WONG Man-yum	Senior Housing Manager / Tai Po, North & Shatin 3 / Housing Department (“HD”)
Mr. LAU Ka-wing, Kevin	Senior Town Planner / Tai Po / Planning Department (“PlanD”)
Ms. LO Sik-chi, Cynthia	Engineer / 22 (North) / Civil Engineering and Development Department (“CEDD”)
Mr. TSUI Chun-sing	Admin Assistant / Lands (District Lands Office, Tai Po) (“TPDLO”) / Lands Department
Ms. LEE Che-ying	Engineer / New Territories East (Distribution 4) / Water Supplies Department
Dr. SIN Ngai-chuen	Hospital Chief Executive / Alice Ho Miu Ling Nethersole Hospital (“Nethersole Hospital”) / Hospital Authority (“HA”)
Dr. LEUNG Kwan-wa, Maria	Chief of Service / Department of Family Medicine / New Territories East Cluster (“NTEC”) / HA
Ms. CHENG Ka-yan, Christine	Manager (Communications and Community Relations) / Nethersole Hospital and Tai Po Hospital / HA
Ms. MAN Wai-si	Youth and Education Officer (New Territories East) / Independent Commission Against Corruption (“ICAC”)
Ms. WONG Sin-yee, Jade	Assistant Commissioner (Employment Services) / Labour Department (“LD”)
Miss FUNG Lai-hing, Karen	Senior Labour Officer (Employment Services)(Operation) / LD
Mr. LUI Kan-man, Raymond	Senior Liaison Officer (1) / TPDO / HAD
Ms. SING Hoi-shan, Wendy	Senior Executive Officer (District Council) / TPDO / HAD

Absent

Mr. LAM Yick-kuen, MH

Opening Remarks

The Chairman welcomed participants to the 2nd meeting in 2024 of the Social Welfare, Housing and Development Planning Committee (“SHDC”), and announced that Ms. MAN Wai-si, Youth and Education Officer (New Territories East) of ICAC was attending the meeting in place of Ms. LING Wai-chi, Senior Youth and Education Officer (New Territories East). The Chairman then announced that Mr. LAM Yick-kuen was unable to attend the meeting due to other commitments and had submitted a notice of absence to the TPDC Secretariat (“Secretariat”). Pursuant to Order 64 of the TPDC Standing Orders (“Standing Orders”), the SHDC would only

give consent to a Member's application for absence from a meeting filed on the grounds of sickness (including sickness due to pregnancy), jury service, attendance at a meeting or an activity on behalf of the District Council ("DC"), attendance at meetings of the Legislative Council or Executive Council, confinement or assumption of paternal care. As such, Mr. LAM Yick-kuen's application for absence was approved by the SHDC.

I. Confirmation of the minutes of the 1st meeting in 2024 of the SHDC on 11 January 2024

2. No proposed amendments to the minutes had been received by the Secretariat prior to the meeting. The Chairman asked Members whether they had any proposed amendments.
3. No Members had put forward any proposed amendments, and the captioned minutes were confirmed.

II. Hospital Authority – Report on the provision of medical services in Tai Po District

4. The representative of HA reported on the provision of medical services by HA in Tai Po District, details of which were as follows:

- (i) The number of people served by Accident and Emergency Department ("A&ED") of Nethersole Hospital every day between 29 February and 6 March 2024 was between 225 and 328.
- (ii) The bed occupancy rate of medical wards ranged from 103% to 119%.
- (iii) The bed occupancy rate of paediatric wards ranged from 45% to 68%.
- (iv) The bed occupancy rate of orthopaedic wards ranged from 71% to 83%.
- (v) The A&ED of Nethersole Hospital had earlier introduced a new measure to implement a special refund arrangement for waiting patients. After initial diagnosis and triage by nurses, patients in relatively stable conditions (such as in Triages IV and V) could decide on their own whether to continue to wait for A&ED services or seek consultation elsewhere. From February 9 to 18, 1 032 applications for refund had so far been received by public hospitals, accounting for 1.9% of the total number of attendances, and the fund was expected to be completed in approximately 30 working days.
- (vi) As for the expansion of Nethersole Hospital, the hospital had reflected Members' suggestions, patients' needs, manpower and district situation to the Planning Unit at the Headquarters of HA and relevant departments. The expansion plan would take into account the overall population in the New Territories as well as the planning of

North District Hospital and Prince of Wales Hospital. Members would be informed of the progress if any.

5. Members' comments and questions were as follows:

- (i) They suggested that the hospital introduce delivery care services at Obstetrics and Gynaecology Department ("O&GD") and provide data on pregnant women population in the district.
- (ii) They suggested that a letter should be issued to the Health Bureau ("HHB") to express the urgent need for the expansion of Nethersole Hospital.
- (iii) They asked about the progress of expansion of Wong Siu Ching Family Medicine Centre ("FMC").
- (iv) They asked about the planning and development of the Ex-Jockey Club Swimming Pool Site at On Pong Road, Tai Po.
- (v) The facilities in the waiting area of Tai Po Jockey Club General Out-patient Clinic ("Jockey Club GOPC") were in a dilapidated condition and it was suggested that a cover or marquees be provided.

6. The representative of HA responded as follows:

- (i) The introduction of an O&GD required consideration of various complementary factors such as population characteristics, healthcare manpower and paediatric services before comprehensive planning could be carried out.
- (ii) The departments concerned were still discussing the feasibility of expanding the Wong Siu Ching FMC.
- (iii) The development of the Ex-Jockey Club Swimming Pool Site at On Pong Road, Tai Po for use as a community health centre had yet to be finalised by the departments concerned.
- (iv) Improvement measures to the facilities in the waiting area of Tai Po Jockey Club GOPC would be explored with the departments concerned.

7. Members' comments and questions were as follows:

- (i) They suggested that representatives of HA and Department of Health ("DH") should conduct a site visit with Members so as to improve the facilities in the waiting area of Jockey Club GOPC.
- (ii) They suggested that additional toilet cubicles be provided in the expansion of Nethersole Hospital.

- (iii) They suggested redevelopment of Wong Siu Ching FMC.
- (iv) They suggested the provision of cardiology services in Nethersole Hospital.

8. The representative of HA responded as follows:

- (i) He understood that there was a demand for a cardiology department in the hospital in the district. The hospital had already set up an additional angiography room, which was put in trial in mid-March this year.
- (ii) The hospital would reflect the views on the provision of an additional O&GD to the Headquarters.

9. Members' comments were as follows:

- (i) They proposed that non-locally trained doctors be invited to join the medical team in Tai Po.
- (ii) They suggested that the cardiology department should provide all-year-round service.
- (iii) They would like to invite the DH to send officer to attend the SHDC meetings.

10. The representative of HA responded as follows:

- (i) A total of 97 non-locally trained doctors were employed by the HA in 2023, of whom 17 were assigned to hospitals or clinics in the NTEC.
- (ii) Regarding the arrangements for the expansion of Wong Siu Ching FMC, the HA would consider various factors in depth, including the complementary healthcare services in the district as well as the completion of other healthcare facilities, such as community health centres, to ensure that patients would continue to have access to timely general out-patient services when the expansion works were underway.

(Post-meeting note: For paragraph 5(iv) above, with the coordination by the Secretariat, the HHB would send officers to attend the SHDC meeting on 5 July to brief Members on the progress of the development of a district health centre at the Ex-Jockey Club Swimming Pool Site. As for the upgrading of facilities in the waiting area of the clinic in question mentioned in paragraph 5(v) above, the Secretariat was liaising with the departments concerned and arranging a site visit for Members. Moreover, Members attended a briefing and exchange session on primary healthcare development organised by the HHB on 6 April 2024 to learn about the services and future development of Tai Po District Health Centre.)

III. Social Welfare Department – Report on the data on major social services in Tai Po District
(TPDC Paper No. SHD 8/2024)

11. The representative of SWD went through TPDC Paper No. SHD 8/2024.
12. Members' comments and questions were as follows:
 - (i) They suggested that the SWD strengthen co-operation with District Services and Community Care Teams ("Care Teams") in jointly organising community activities and working out a mutual communication mechanism for sharing relevant information.
 - (ii) They suggested that the department provide training to Care Teams, such as through courses and talks, to share cases and skills in coping with help-seekers.
 - (iii) They suggested that the department provide clear guidelines for case triage so that Care Teams could effectively refer those in need to the appropriate units for follow-up.
13. The representative of SWD responded as follows:
 - (i) The SWD had been maintaining close co-operation and contact with Care Teams, and would refer cases with the consent of clients concerned.
 - (ii) To enable Care Teams to have a better understanding of the social welfare services provided in the district, and to strengthen mutual liaison and co-operation, the department would organise a Briefing on Welfare Services in Tai Po District on 12 March. Members were asked to encourage Care Teams to take active participation in the briefing.
14. A Member asked the department to take note of the views to increase support services for single-parent families and provide services such as application for water heaters and rental assistance to single-parent families in need of housing. In addition, it was suggested that the department strengthen publicity in the district and update publicity leaflets and contact information regularly.
15. The representative of SWD pointed out in response that there were different types of assistance funds set up by the department and subvented non-governmental organisations to assist people with financial difficulties. She asked Members to contact her after the meeting to learn about individual cases.
16. The Chairman reflected that there were street sleepers and beggars in the vicinity of Lam Tsuen and MTR Tai Po Market Station, and hoped that the department would keep in mind to pay

attention to such situation and take follow-up actions in a timely manner.

17. The representative of SWD responded that The Salvation Army Integrated Service for Street Sleepers and Integrated Family Service Centres of SWD had provided follow-up services to the street sleepers mentioned.

18. Members' comments and questions were as follows:

- (i) It was suggested that the SWD and Hong Chi Jockey Club Kwong Fuk Workshop ("Hong Chi Workshop") should write to the HD to strive for the setting up of a flagpole at the entrance of Hong Chi Workshop for holding flag-raising ceremonies on the National Day and the Reunification of Hong Kong with the Motherland so as to enhance the promotion of national education.
- (ii) It was suggested that publicity on rehabilitation service facilities in the district should be strengthened to promote a caring and inclusive community.

19. The representative of SWD responded as follows:

- (i) She thanked Members for their support for the rehabilitation services, and would convey their suggestion to Hong Chi Workshop.
- (ii) She hoped that Members would continue to support the provision of rehabilitation service facilities in the district so as to build an inclusive community for all.

20. The representative of HD added that the provision of flag-raising facilities at Kwong Fuk Estate was greatly supported, but a feasibility study had to be carried out accordingly.

(Post-meeting note: The area in front of the entrance of Hong Chi Workshop in Kwong Fuk Estate was relatively narrow and not suitable for the setting up of flag-raising facilities there. The HD would identify a suitable location in the estate before carrying out a feasibility study. At this stage, it was proposed that consideration could be given to the provision of flag-raising facilities within the community hall.)

IV. Social Welfare Department and Independent Commission Against Corruption – Reports on the response to community activities held between January and February 2024 in Tai Po (TPDC Paper No. SHD 9/2024)

21. The representative of SWD asked Members to take note of the response to the community activities held by the SWD in Tai Po between January and February 2024 as set out in TPDC Paper No. SHD 9/2024.

22. The representative of ICAC asked Members to take note of the information on the All for Integrity events held by the ICAC in Tai Po District in January and February 2024 as set out in TPDC Paper No. SHD 9/2024. The first phase of activities in celebration of the 50th anniversary of ICAC had been successfully held, and more activities would continue to be organised in collaboration with various sectors in Tai Po District to promote a culture of probity in the future.

23. Members did not raise any comments or questions.

V. **District Lands Office, Tai Po – Report on matters relating to the illegal structures on and illegal occupation of Government lands**
(TPDC Paper No. SHD 10/2024)

24. The representative of TPDLO went through TPDC Paper No. SHD 10/2024.

25. Members did not raise any comments or questions.

VI. **District Lands Office, Tai Po – Report on the progress of processing redevelopment applications of small houses and old houses in Tai Po District**
(TPDC Paper No. SHD 11/2024)

26. The representative of TPDLO went through TPDC Paper No. SHD 11/2024.

27. Members did not raise any comments or questions.

VII. **Planning Department – Report on the progress of processing planning applications in Tai Po District by the Town Planning Board and its Rural and New Town Planning Committee**
(TPDC Paper No. SHD 12/2024)

28. The representative of PlanD went through TPDC Paper No. SHD 12/2024.

29. A Member asked about the planned use of the site next to Valtorta College (i.e. the former National Education Centre).

30. The representative of PlanD said that no relevant information was available at the moment, and he would reply later.

31. The Chairman asked the departmental representative to communicate with Members again

after the meeting.

(Post-meeting note: In relation to the enquiry in paragraph 29 above, the PlanD added as follows: the former Tai Po Government Primary School was designated as “Government, Institution or Community” zone on the Approved Tai Po Outline Zoning Plan No. S/TP/30. According to the list of Vacant School Premises Sites Reviewed under the Central Clearing House Mechanism, the school premises site had been allocated to the Education Bureau (“EDB”) for educational purposes. For details, please visit:

https://www.pland.gov.hk/pland_en/resources/info_serv/vsp/vsp.html.

The response of EDB: At present, the school premises were retained by the EDB for contingency arrangement. To make good use of public resources, the EDB would lend out the school premises to other government departments for supplies storage purposes according to their needs.)

VIII. Housing Department – Report on the information relating to the vacant housing units, execution of the Marking Scheme for Estate Management Enforcement, and the vacant storage rooms in the public housing estates in Tai Po District
(TPDC Paper No. SHD 13/2024)

32. The representative of HD went through TPDC Paper No. SHD 6/2024.

33. Members’ comments and questions were as follows:

- (i) They asked about the current implementation of the Marking Scheme for Estate Management Enforcement in Public Housing Estates (“Marking Scheme”), and were concerned about the serious situation of throwing objects from height in Tai Wo Estate, which they hoped that the HD would step up supervision.
- (ii) They asked about the progress of increasing the supply of units at Kwong Yan House, Kwong Fuk Estate.
- (iii) They suggested that the department install additional fixtures to prevent birds from building nests at the crossing outside Kwong Yan House of Kwong Fuk Estate Bus Terminus.
- (iv) As the processing of applications for decoration of DC ward office, as well as that of the addition and transfer of names took a very long time, they urged the relevant section of the department to speed up the vetting and approval process or streamline the application procedures.
- (v) They asked the department to take note of the closure of the disabled toilet in Fu Shin Market throughout the year. Moreover, the floor of the male toilet was wet and slippery which posed a safety hazard.

- (vi) As for the Marking Scheme, such as throwing objects from height, smoking, littering and bird feeding, they suggested that the department strengthen education and enforcement.
- (vii) They asked about the situation of vacant housing units in Fu Tip Estate, and hoped that the traffic supporting facilities and the shopping centre could be completed as soon as possible. It was also suggested that temporary stalls be set up at suitable locations in the estate for the convenience of residents.
- (viii) They suggested that the department provide data to the EDB after the intake of flats in Fu Tip Estate so as to enable the bureau to have a good grasp of the school-age population in the district. It was also suggested that statistical information such as the location of work of the new residents moved in should be compiled and forwarded to the Transport Department (“TD”) for planning purposes.

(Post-meeting note: After the intake of flats in Fu Tip Estate, the HD would consider using questionnaires to survey the work/school places of the residents, and, with the consent of the residents, would forward the information to the TD for appropriate follow-up actions.)
- (ix) They suggested that regular inspection of fences in the district should be conducted to prevent wild pigs from wandering into the estate.
- (x) They asked whether arrangements had been made in respect of the municipal solid waste (“MSW”) charging policy, such as the provision of food waste composters and recycling facilities. It was suggested that the HD and Environmental Protection Department (“EPD”) step up publicity on the MSW charging and recycling facilities in place.
- (xi) Large-scale rodent disinfection work was required to carry out as rodent infestation was serious in Tai Po District.

34. The representative of HD responded as follows:

- (i) In face of the problem of throwing objects from height, the HD had adopted the Marking Scheme to tackle such irregularities. If the objects thrown only caused pollution to the environment and did not pose a direct threat to personal safety, the household in question would be allotted with 7 penalty points. However, if the act of throwing objects might cause personal injury, such as throwing heavy or sharp objects, it would be regarded as the most serious misdeed and 15 penalty points would be allotted with the tenancy might be terminated immediately. For effective surveillance and enforcement, the HD had adopted an intelligent approach by quickly tracking the images of tenants involved in throwing objects from height through a software and focusing on reviewing the images of about 10 seconds before and after the act of throwing to pinpoint the target. Moreover, the number of close-

circuit televisions (“CCTVs”) in housing estates had been increased to enhance surveillance efficiency.

- (ii) There would be an increase in the number of units at Kwong Yan House, Kwong Fuk Estate. These new units would be completed by the end of April and handed over to the Allocation Section for allocation upon completion.
- (iii) The installation of fixtures (bird spikes) to prevent birds from gathering near the bus stop at Kwong Yan House would be completed in mid-April.
- (iv) The processing of applications for DC ward offices would be expedited and the responsible officers would be referred for follow up.

(Post-meeting note: The applications for decoration of DC ward offices, as well as that of the addition and transfer of names were completed in March.)

- (v) The distribution of door keys to prospective households of Blocks 6 to 9 of Fu Tip Estate commenced on 28 February this year and was expected to be completed by mid-March, with approximately 150 to 200 cases handled daily. The department expected to distribute door keys to households of Block 2 to 5 from late March to early April, and would improve the distribution arrangements.

(Post-meeting note: Distribution of door keys to prospective households of Block 3 of Fu Tip Estate commenced on 27 March this year, with about 200 cases handled daily. In addition, the distribution of door keys for Blocks 2 and 4 to 5 was anticipated to commence in mid-April.)

- (vi) The Architectural Services Department was being urged to submit data and conduct meeting on matters relating to the commercial facilities and bus routes in Fu Tip Estate. In addition, the department was in the process of identifying areas for business operators to set up stalls in the estate, and would continue to collect data on households. Members would be informed if there was any further information.
- (vii) Noting the closure of the disabled toilet in Fu Shin Market throughout the year and the wet and slippery floor of the market, he would reflect the situation to the relevant department for follow-up actions.
- (viii) Publicity would be beefed up to educate the public not to feed wild birds. In addition, the department would first issue warnings and then allot penalty points to members of the public for unauthorised drying of clothes outdoors.

(Post-meeting note: The HD had adopted the Marking Scheme to cope with such irregularities. The Marking Scheme was categorised into four grades from A to D according to the degree of seriousness of the misdeeds and penalty points were allotted correspondingly. The Marking Scheme was an important management tool, aiming at ensuring environmental hygiene and effective management of public housing estates. The HD would strive to create a healthy and pleasant living environment to ensure a safe and clean community for all residents.)

- (ix) Tenants who had been allotted penalty points to the extent that they had to be expelled from their units might have their cases examined by the department in conjunction with the SWD.
- (x) Discussions had been held with the management company on wild pigs wandering into the estate. Inspection of fences would be strengthened and repair would be carried out forthwith in case of damage detected.
- (xi) It was noted that the demand for food waste composters would increase as a result of the MSW charging policy. The department would step up publicity on MSW charging through various means such as carnivals.
- (xii) Rodent infestation had been a long-standing problem in the district. The department had stepped up rodent disinfection efforts, such as the installation of rodent guards and filling up of rat holes, as well as the setting up of overnight rodent control teams to place baits and rat glue traps, which had produced some encouraging results initially.

35. Members' comments and questions were as follows:

- (i) They thanked the housing manager for the speedy handling of the signing of the tenancy agreement in respect of DC ward office.
- (ii) As a flat on the second floor of Kwong Chi House, Kwong Fuk Estate was suspected to have aged pipes, it was suggested that the said flat should not be re-allocated.

(Post-meeting note: If the estate office received complaints from tenants about leakage of pipes in their flats, it would immediately refer them to the engineering section for inspection and repair. The estate office had not received any reports about pipe leakage from tenants in their flats on the second floor recently.)
- (iii) They urged the department to expedite the installation of food waste composters in housing estates and improve the rules for earning points.
- (iv) They hoped that the department would work with the EPD to place large designated bags of MSG charging on each floor, and asked whether designated bags would be distributed for free in Tenants Purchase Scheme ("TPS") estates in the first six months.
- (v) With the imminent intake of flats in Fu Tip Estate, they urged the department to arrange an area or set up temporary marquees for business operators, such as furniture and decoration companies, to provide services to residents as early as possible.
- (vi) As the services provided by estate management companies varied, they requested the department to urge the Owners' Corporations ("OCs") to strengthen monitoring of the hygiene conditions within their housing estates.

- (vii) They suggested including the future public housing planning in Tai Po District in the agenda.

(Post-meeting note: The CEDD conducted a site visit with Members on 16 April to inspect the progress of the site formation works for public housing development at To Yuen Tung.)

- (viii) As residents had nowhere else to lodge their complaints about water leakage problems in TPS estates, Members suggested that the department assist in following up the cases, such as sending letters from a lawyer issued on their behalf to the owners or tenants concerned to improve the situation.
- (ix) As the environmental hygiene of Fu Shin Estate was far from ideal, it was suggested that the department and Members conduct an on-site inspection and carry out effective supervision. In addition, a toilet cubicle in the female toilet of Fu Shin Market had been under repair for a long time, they asked about the progress.

36. The representative of HD responded as follows:

- (i) It would examine the amendment legislation on feeding feral pigeons by the Government and provisions relating to estate boundary would be enforced.
- (ii) Arrangements had been made to provide space for about 20 decoration companies to operate in the estate.
- (iii) Discussions would be held with management companies on ways to deal with the problem of feral pigeon feeding.
- (iv) In response to throwing objects from height, CCTV cameras had been installed in each housing block and artificial intelligence technology had been introduced to identify offenders based on video recordings. The department would strengthen communication with OCs and install more CCTV cameras in the future.
- (v) Information on future public housing planning would be obtained from the relevant section for Members' reference.
- (vi) He was aware of the problem of water leakage, and considered that Members' suggestion was feasible. The department would discuss with the Joint Office for Investigation of Water Seepage Complaints on the feasibility and mechanism, and would reflect the matter to the relevant departments.
- (vii) Installation of additional food waste composters in the estate would be expedited.
- (viii) The cleansing and hygiene of Fu Shin Estate was followed up by the management company appointed by the OC. The department would urge the OC and management company to pay more attention to the matter.

- (ix) The situation of Shin Kwan House was noted and could be discussed after the meeting.

(Post-meeting note: As the market in question was owned and managed by The Link, HD was not in a position to provide information on the progress of repair. Having understood the case, the department learned that The Link had indicated that it had already started to order the relevant parts for repair and would complete the repair of toilet cubicle as soon as possible for public use.)

IX. Any other business

Labour Department – Report on the latest development of employment services in Tai Po District

37. The representative of LD introduced the latest development of employment services:

- (i) Job seekers could check and search for the latest vacancies through the Interactive Employment Service (“iES”) website and iES mobile application. The Telephone Employment Service Centre of LD arranged job referrals for callers. Job seekers might also make appointments directly with employers whose contact information was publicly available or negotiate for on-the-spot interviews using video conferencing.
- (ii) The department was in close contact with the HD with a view to providing appropriate employment services to the residents of Tai Po District, such as promoting the iES website and iES mobile application to new and existing tenants of transitional housing.
- (iii) The Department had also been actively implementing various employment programmes to encourage employment. For example, the Employment Programme for the Elderly and Middle-aged (“EPEM”) aimed at encouraging employers to engage job seekers aged 40 or above through the provision of training allowance to employers. In addition, the Re-employment Allowance (“REA”) Pilot Scheme would be launched in the third quarter of this year to encourage persons aged 40 or above who had not been at paid employment for three consecutive months or more to rejoin the workforce. A maximum REA of \$10,000 would be provided to each eligible person who had worked for six consecutive months, and an additional REA of \$10,000 to those who had worked for 12 consecutive months.

38. Members’ comments and questions were as follows:

- (i) They suggested that the department set up vacancy search terminals (“VSTs”) in large housing estates.
- (ii) They asked whether the ward offices of DC Members were eligible as employers under the EPEM.

39. The representative of LD responded as follows:

- (i) Job seekers might make use of the VSTs installed at the Job Centres of LD as well as at other designated premises for browsing employment information. It was recommended that job seekers might as well make use of the iES website and iES mobile application, which would be available for use at any time and anywhere, to access employment information. The usage of the two could not be compared.
- (ii) The ward offices of DC Members were required to advertise their vacancies through the LD to engage persons aged 40 or above for employment and provide them with on-the-job training. They might also join the EPEM, which they would be subjected to same requirements as that for employers in general. Members might refer to the publicity materials of the department, or make enquiries with the department for details.

40. A Member suggested that the department organise job fairs in Tai Po District.

41. The representative of LD responded that job fairs were organised in different parts of the territory (including Tai Po District) from time to time.

42. A Member suggested that if the number of visits to the VSTs fell below a certain level, the department could take them back and consider installing them at other locations in the district.

43. The representative of LD responded that this suggestion could be examined.

44. A Member pointed out that education issues were not covered at the meetings of SHDC.

45. The Chairman pointed out that the representative of EDB often attended DC meetings to report on the activities in the district but did not present the education situation in the district, which could be studied by the Committee after the meeting.

46. The Secretary added that Members could raise education issues with the representative of EDB at meetings of the Community Involvement, Culture and Recreation Committee.

X. Date of next meeting

47. The next meeting was scheduled to be held at 9:30 a.m. on 10 May 2024 (Friday).
48. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:16 p.m.

Tai Po District Council Secretariat
April 2024