

(Translation)

Minutes of the 12th Meeting of
Social Services and Community Development Committee (3/22-23)

Date : 20 December 2022
Time : 2:30 p.m.
Venue : Main Conference Room, Tsuen Wan District Office

Present:

Members

Mr MAN Yu-ming, MH
Mr CHAN Sung-ip, BBS, MH
Mr CHAN Yuen-sum, Sumly (Temporary Chairman)
Mr LUK Ling-chung, Antonio
Mr KOT Siu-yuen, MH
Mr LAU Cheuk-yu

Government Representatives

Ms HUI Yuen-mei, May	Senior Liaison Officer (2), Tsuen Wan District Office
Ms YUEN Mo-kuen, Monita	Assistant District Social Welfare Officer (Tsuen Wan/Kwai Tsing) ³ , Social Welfare Department
Ms LIM Merry	Manager (New Territories South) Marketing and District Activities, Leisure and Cultural Services Department
Ms TSE Sai-lin, Jasmine	Deputy District Leisure Manager (Tsuen Wan) ¹ , Leisure and Cultural Services Department

Tsuen Wan District Council Secretariat

Representatives

Mr LIM Kuen	Senior Executive Officer (District Council), Tsuen Wan District Office
Miss MAK Wing-yan, Wendy (Secretary)	Executive Officer (District Council) ³ , Tsuen Wan District Office
Mr NG Cheuk-pong, James	Executive Officer (District Council) ⁴ , Tsuen Wan District Office

Attendance by Invitation:

For discussion of Item 3

Ms YUEN Mo-kuen, Monita	Assistant District Social Welfare Officer (Tsuen Wan/Kwai Tsing) ³ , Social Welfare Department
-------------------------	---

Ms HUI Yuen-mei, May

Senior Liaison Officer (2), Tsuen Wan
District Office

Absent:

Members

Mr YAU Kam-ping, BBS, MH

Mr WONG Ka-wa (Chairman)

The Meeting

I Opening Remarks and Introduction

The Secretary stated that the Chairman was absent due to other commitments and therefore unable to preside over the meeting. According to section 35(3) of the Tsuen Wan District Council Standing Orders (the “Standing Orders”), the Members of the Committee present should elect a Member from amongst themselves by a simple majority vote to act as Temporary Chairman and preside at the meeting. The Temporary Chairman should enjoy all the powers conferred on the Chairman by the Standing Orders for the purpose of presiding at meetings. Members unanimously agreed that Mr CHAN Yuen-sum, Sumly should assume the role of Temporary Chairman of this meeting.

2. The Temporary Chairman said that for Members’ information, Mr YAU Kam-ping was absent with apologies.

3. The Temporary Chairman reminded Members that according to section 28 of the Standing Orders, unless otherwise agreed by the Chairman, each Member might speak for each agenda item once at the meeting. For each agenda item, a maximum of four Members might speak and each of them might speak up to 1.5 minutes. Each Member who had submitted a paper might have up to three minutes to introduce the paper and speak. Each representative from government departments might have up to three minutes for giving responses.

(Note: Mr LAU Cheuk-yu joined the meeting at 2:34 p.m.)

II Item 1: Confirmation of Minutes of the 11th Meeting held on 25.8.2022

4. The Temporary Chairman said that the Secretariat had distributed to Members earlier the minutes of the meeting of the Social Services and Community Development Committee (SSCDC) held on 25 August 2022. The Secretariat did not receive any proposed amendments to the minutes prior to this meeting. The captioned minutes were confirmed without amendment.

III Item 2: Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

5. The Temporary Chairman said that there were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

IV Item 3: Concern about the Latest Development of the Issue of Homeless People in Tsuen Wan District

(SSCDC Paper No. 7/22-23)

6. The Temporary Chairman said that the representatives from the departments responsible for giving responses were:

- (1) Ms YUEN Mo-kuen, Monita, Assistant District Social Welfare Officer (Tsuen Wan/Kwai Tsing)³ (ADSWO(TW/KwT)³), Social Welfare Department (SWD); and
- (2) Ms HUI Yuen-mei, May, Senior Liaison Officer (2) (SLO(2)), Tsuen Wan District Office (TWDO).

7. Mr LUK Ling-chung, Antonio introduced the paper. He produced a photo at the meeting and explained that the street sleeper shown in the photo often hung around in areas of Tsuen Wan and Kwai Tsing districts. He pointed out that non-profit-making organisations (NPOs) had more resources which could facilitate the arrangement of places for street sleepers to freshen up as well as the provision of counselling services. He opined that it was difficult to set up an independent area in commercial buildings for providing services to street sleepers. Taking Princess Alexandra Community Centre as an example, he suggested converting some of the existing facilities into a place open to street sleepers for freshening up. He observed a recent increase in the number of street sleepers under flyovers, and the situation of their unauthorised occupation of spaces appeared to be worsened. For example, the street sleepers built beds outside the area covered by the flyover. He hoped that the SWD could give them a helping hand.

8. ADSWO(TW/KwT)³ of the SWD responded that as of the end of November 2022, 53 street sleepers were identified in Tsuen Wan district, accounting for 3.5% of the total number of street sleepers in Hong Kong. The SWD had followed up on the cases referred by Members without delay. The SWD had always been concerned about the situation of street sleepers. In response to the welfare needs of street sleepers, the SWD had subsidised non-governmental organisations to operate three Integrated Services Teams for Street Sleepers (ISTs) to render integrated services to street sleepers across the territory, including day and late-night outreach visits, short-term accommodation, counselling, employment guidance, personal care (e.g. bathing, haircut and meal arrangement), emergency fund and service referrals, etc. The purpose of establishing the ISTs was to address the immediate welfare needs of street sleepers and enhance their skills for self-reliance, thus assisting them in living off the streets and reintegrating into the community. The SWD welcomed the referral of cases with welfare needs by Members and government departments, and it would contact the relevant units promptly for follow-up.

9. SLO(2) of the TWDO responded that regarding the renovation of the facilities at Princess Alexandra Community Centre proposed by the Member, she would make further reports after discussing such proposal with relevant colleagues.

10. The views and enquiries of Members were summarised as follows:
- (1) he opined that the problem of street sleepers in Tsuen Wan district was more serious recently in comparison with other districts, and there were even cases where two to three street sleepers gathered in the same place. He hoped that the departments concerned could render assistance (the Temporary Chairman);
 - (2) he expressed concern about the long-standing problem of street sleepers and pointed out that under the footbridge behind Ho Fung College (Sponsored by Sik Sik Yuen) near Kiu Tau Village, an old woman often slept there with several dogs she owned. She placed a lot of miscellaneous articles on the road, causing environmental hygiene problems. A few years ago, the TWDO and SWD had arranged officers to follow up on her case, advising and even helping the old lady to look for appropriate accommodation. However, she refused assistance from the relevant departments. He said that the consequent environmental hygiene problems had caused nuisance and great distress to the residents of Kiu Tau Village and Wo Yi Hop Village, and enquired whether there was any legislation regulating such issue. In addition to the SWD, he urged other departments concerned to pay attention to and study the problem of street sleeping (Mr MAN Yu-ming); and
 - (3) he had paid multiple visits to street sleepers in Tsuen Wan district and found that mental health or addiction problems were common among them. He had once got in touch with a street sleeper on Kwok Shui Road, who had then been able to secure long-term accommodation with the assistance of a charity for homeless people. He described the mental state of the street sleeper at the time and said that the shabbily-dressed street sleeper had entered his office to borrow a phone. He hoped that the Government would provide additional resources to voluntary groups and community organisations so that they could enhance the effectiveness of their work and further their efforts in caring and assisting street sleepers (Mr LAU Cheuk-yu).

11. Mr LUK Ling-chung, Antonio concluded by thanking all parties concerned for their follow-up actions and responses, and further enquired on whether there was an increase in the figures provided by the SWD as of the end of 2022 when compared to those in the same period of 2021. He hoped that the SWD and its professionally trained staff would strengthen their work in caring for homeless persons, and would take a supportive and helpful approach in treating vulnerable groups rather than handling their cases like complaints.

12. ADSWO(TW/KwT)3 of the SWD responded that street sleeping was a complex social problem fell within the purview of various policy bureaux and departments. Relevant government departments and district offices had been working closely together to support street sleepers. She added that the number of street sleepers in Tsuen Wan district had been 50 in 2021-2022. The statistics was mainly compiled from the information submitted by social workers after obtaining the consent of street sleepers and making professional judgments. She pointed out that the IST of The Salvation Army (The Salvation Army) had provided services in Kowloon (except Yau Tsim Mong district) and the New Territories (including Tsuen Wan district) since

October 2022. As far as she knew, in early October 2022, The Salvation Army had conducted some outreaching visits in Tsuen Wan district and distributed suitable warm items to those in need. The Salvation Army had also paid visits to the temporary cold shelters during their opening hours and distributed promotional leaflets to the needy. The SWD would continue to closely monitor the situation and service needs of street sleepers with a view to providing appropriate welfare support services.

(Post-meeting note: The Secretariat distributed the promotional leaflets of The Salvation Army (Kowloon and the New Territories) to Members for reference on 2 February 2023.)

13. The Temporary Chairman concluded by encouraging Members to liaise and communicate with the newly established collaborative service teams more often. He believed that the SWD, TWDO and NPOs would join hands to help homeless persons. He said that as the weather was getting cold lately, if Members found any street sleepers in need of warm clothing, they could proactively refer their cases to the SWD and The Salvation Army for follow-up.

V Item 4: Any Other Business

14. Members expressed concern about this year's production and distribution of the notebooks for the coming year.

(A) Date of Next Meeting

15. The Temporary Chairman reminded Members that the next meeting was scheduled for 23 February 2023 and the deadline for submission of paper was 8 February 2023.

(Post-meeting note: The 13th meeting of the SSCDC was postponed to 29 June 2023.)

VI Adjournment of Meeting

16. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:48 p.m.

Tsuen Wan District Council Secretariat
6 January 2023