

**Extract of minutes of the LegCo Members' meeting with
Tai Po District Council members on 24 May 2001**

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Action

II. Provision of a new civic centre and central library in Tai Po

2. TPDC members expressed great disappointment about the delay in the provision of a civic centre and central library in Tai Po which had been raised with the Administration for more than a decade and discussed at previous meetings with Members. The proposed project had been included as a works item under category III of the Capital Works Programme of the former Provisional Regional Council (PRC). However, following the dissolution of the two Provisional Municipal Councils (PMCs), the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) had not included the project in the priority list for implementation in the Public Works Programme.

3. The Administration had informed TPDC members that the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) had to review the policy on the provision of civic centres in Hong Kong to assess the development of and demand for civic centres. TPDC members considered that the proposed policy review was simply a tactic to delay the project as they had clearly conveyed to the Administration the justifications for the construction of a new civic centre and central library on numerous occasions.

4. In explaining the urgent need for a new civic centre and central library in Tai Po, TPDC members further provided the following information:

- (a) Currently, the hall used as a civic centre was used primarily by the adjoining Tai Po Government Secondary School. This was a most unusual arrangement for a secondary school in Hong Kong. It was certainly unfair to the school particularly in view of the emphasis put on education reform and the need to bring about improvement in school environment and facilities.
- (b) Tai Po had a population of over 320 000 people. The need for a civic centre suitable for cultural performance was beyond doubt, even though the Yuen Long Theatre was now available. It was unfair that residents had to travel to other Districts to use their cultural facilities.
- (c) The proposed civic centre and central library would provide suitable venues for organising meaningful activities for the youth. The community believed that this would be a positive action to help address the issues of youth-at-risk and young night drifters in Tai Po District.

5. The Convenor informed the meeting that according to the information provided by the Administration to the Subcommittee to follow up the outstanding capital works projects of the former municipal councils (the Subcommittee) in mid-April 2001, District Councils generally supported giving priority to the 21 capital works projects recommended by LCSD. However, the proposed new civic centre and central library had not been included in the list. The project was included in another list of 27 capital works projects proposed by the respective District Councils for early implementation and for further consideration by the Subcommittee. On the need to review the policy on provision of new civic centres and community centres in Hong Kong, the Administration considered that the review was necessary having regard to the high capital maintenance costs and the utilization of existing facilities. Upon completion of the consultancy study in mid-2002, the Administration would consult the Culture and Heritage Commission (CHC) and the 18 District Councils.

6. In response to the Administration's concern about the cost of the proposed project which was estimated to be \$769.4 million, TPDC members said that they would not accept any compromise on the scope of facilities proposed as these represented the minimum requirements for the community. Instead, the Administration should have due regard to the benefits that the proposed facilities would bring to the community. Members were of the view that the facilities must meet the relevant Hong Kong Standards and Planning Guidelines. Otherwise, it would defeat the purpose of building a civic centre and library for use by members of the community at large.

7. Mr Andrew CHENG Kar-foo informed TPDC members that at the meeting of the Panel on Home Affairs held in April 2001, a representative of CHC had clarified that the scope of the review mentioned in paragraph 5 above covered the overall provision of cultural facilities in schools and community centres in Hong Kong. It was unlikely that the consultancy study would make specific recommendation(s) on the provision of a new civic centre and central library in Tai Po District.

8. TPDC members were of the view that the Administration should accord priority to their request. This should be independent of the follow-up action being considered by the Subcommittee. Members agreed that the matter had been discussed at length by the former PRC, TPDC members and Members. They decided that a case conference to follow up the proposal should be arranged at the existing civic hall in Tai Po. Representatives of the relevant bureaux and departments, and TPDC members would be invited to attend the case conference.

Secretariat

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