

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)1148/01-02
(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/WS

LegCo Panel on Welfare Services

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 14 January 2002 at 10:45 am
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

Members Present : Hon CHAN Yuen-han, JP (Chairman)
Hon LAW Chi-kwong, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, JP
Hon Bernard CHAN
Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun, SBS, JP
Dr Hon YEUNG Sum
Hon CHOY So-yuk
Hon LI Fung-ying, JP
Hon Henry WU King-cheong, BBS
Hon WONG Sing-chi
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee

Member Absent : Dr Hon David CHU Yu-lin, JP

Member Attending : Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP

Public Officers Attending : Items III and IV
Mr Robin GILL, JP
Deputy Secretary for Health and Welfare 3

Action

Item III

Mrs Patricia CHU, BBS, JP
Deputy Director of Social Welfare (Administration)

Item IV

Mr Andrew LAI Chi-wah
Principal Assistant Secretary for the Civil Service (Appointments)

Mrs Jenny CHAN
Assistant Commissioner for Labour (Rights and Benefits)

Items V and VI

Mrs Carrie LAM, JP
Director of Social Welfare

Item V

Miss Diane WONG
Principal Assistant Secretary for Health and Welfare (Welfare) 2

Mr FUNG Pak-yan
Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Family & Child Welfare)

Deputations by invitation : Item III

Hong Kong Council of Social Service

Mr CHUA Hoi-wai
Business Director
Policy Research & Advocacy

Ms Mariana CHAN
Chief Officer
Policy Research & Advocacy

Oxfam Hong Kong

Mr CHONG Chan-yau
Executive Director

Action

Action

Hong Kong Social Workers Association

Prof Angelina YUEN TSANG Woon-ki
President

Hong Kong Federation of Women's Centres

Ms CHAN Yu
Director

Ms HO Mei-yee
Education Officer

Hong Kong Women Workers' Association

Ms WU Mei-lin
Co-ordinator

Co-operative Group to Build a Better Tomorrow

Ms HO Foei-rin
Representative

Miss LAM Lai-ling
Representative

Clerk in Attendance : Ms Doris CHAN
Chief Assistant Secretary (2) 4

Staff in Attendance : Miss Mary SO
Senior Assistant Secretary (2) 8

I. Confirmation of minutes of meeting held on 10 December 2001
(LC Paper No. CB(2)830/01-02)

The minutes were confirmed.

Action

II. Date of next meeting and items for discussion

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)851/01-02(01) and (02))

2. The Chairman invited members to note the Appendix to LC Paper No. CB(2)851/01-02(01) which set out the proposed agenda items for the Panel from February to July 2002. The list had been drawn up by the Administration following her meeting with the Secretary for Health and Welfare to discuss the workplan of the Panel.

3. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the next meeting on 4 February 2002 at 10:45 am -

(a) Implementation of Information Systems Strategy Phase II - Client Information System/Technical Infrastructure; and

(b) Implementation of Lump Sum Grant - An Up-date.

4. Before proceeding to the next item, the Chairman informed members that at the request of the Administration, a proposal to seek a supplementary provision under Subhead 179 - Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme would be discussed under Any Other Business.

III. Community Investment and Inclusion Fund

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)851/01-02(03) to (07))

5. The Chairman welcomed representatives of the Administration and deputations to the meeting.

6. At the invitation of the Chairman, Deputy Secretary for Health and Welfare (DSHW) briefed members on the salient points of the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)851/01-02(03)) which detailed the background, objectives and other details on establishing the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund (the Fund).

7. The Chairman then invited deputations to give views on the Fund, which were summarised in the ensuing paragraphs.

Hong Kong Social Workers Association (HKSWA)

8. Professor Angelina Yuen said that HKSWA strongly supported the establishment of the Fund, and hoped that it could be implemented as soon as possible. To ensure that the Fund would achieve its objectives of promoting mutual care, developing community networks and encouraging community participation, HKSWA had the following suggestions -

Action

- (a) Successful applicants of the Fund should be allowed to take part in the planning and monitoring of their projects, rather than just implementing them, so as to enhance their sense of belonging in the communities or community groups they served;
- (b) Eligibility criteria for the Fund should be broadly set and flexibly applied, so that more new and innovative services could be provided and more people could benefit from it;
- (c) Formulation of the monitoring process should be bottom-up and evolved at the grassroots/neighbourhood level, i.e. representatives from the Administration, local community groups and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), social workers and other professionals should form a community network to map out a self-rule and accountability system. Performance indicators should not be overly standardised and rigid, so as to avoid undermining the creation of new ideas and concepts at the grassroots/neighbourhood level;
- (d) Adequate administrative support should be provided by government bureaux/departments to the project participants;
- (e) Strong partnership between different sectors of the community and the Administration should be maintained and fostered; and
- (f) Duration of the Fund should not be capped at three years, having regard to the fact that one major consideration for approving applications for the Fund was that the proposal should have an investment rather than short-term consumption focus and have long-term impact.

Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS)

9. Mr CHUA Hoi-wai took members through HKCSS' submission tabled at the meeting (LC Paper No. CB(2)851/01-02(06)). In particular, Mr CHUA made the following points -

- (a) The Fund should not be confined to supporting local community-based projects, but should also support projects targetting at individual community groups, particularly those who were disadvantaged;
- (b) Government policies and measures should be complementary to the Fund as far as practicable, so as to create an environment which would enable more people to receive benefits from the Fund;

Action

- (c) A bottom-up approach should be adopted in the formulation of various policies pertaining to the Fund, so as to ensure that resources were used in a most effective manner;
- (d) Eligibility criteria for the Fund should be broadly set and flexibly applied, so that more new and innovative services could be provided and more people could benefit from it. Assistance should also be rendered to inexperienced applicants on the writing-up of their proposals;
- (e) Research studies should be commissioned to evaluate the effectiveness of funded projects and on community support issues, such as how best to build up social cohesion and develop social capital in Hong Kong; and
- (f) Public education on community participation for a harmonious and caring society should be promoted.

Oxfam Hong Kong

10. Mr CHONG Chan-yau said that Oxfam Hong Kong was of the view that the Fund should also support projects of an economic nature so long as their objectives were to encourage community participation and promote social cohesion. Mr CHONG further said that there was a need to have in place a monitoring system, the formulation and implementation of which should involve people from a wide cross-section of the community. To ensure the smooth implementation of the approved projects, support and training should be provided to project participants. Referring to a recent newspaper report that the Fund would give priority to applications from small and medium-sized firms which would mobilise their workforce to perform volunteer work for the community projects, Mr CHONG hoped that this would not be the case as this would run counter to one of the objectives of the Fund of promoting integration and inclusion of the disadvantaged into the community. Mr CHONG also echoed similar views expressed by HKSWA and HKCSS representatives on the need for the Fund to be provided on a longer-term basis.

Co-operative Group to Build a Better Tomorrow (the Co-operative Group)

11. Representatives of the Co-operative Group were of the view that Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) recipients should not have their CSSA payments cut back if they received income from working for a co-operative society supported by the Fund and/or were directors of co-operative societies supported by the Fund. In the light of this, they urged the Administration to review the policy on disregarded income of CSSA recipients to provide more incentives for them to work for income-generating co-operative societies supported by the Fund.

Action

Hong Kong Women Workers' Association (HKWWA)

12. Ms WU Mei-lin introduced the HKWWA's submission (LC Paper No. CB(2)851/01-02(07)) and presented the following views -

- (a) The Fund should not confine to supporting projects targetting at local community-based projects, but should also support projects targetting at individual community groups, particularly those who were disadvantaged;
- (b) The future approving authority should not place too much emphasis on whether a proposal could be run on a self-financing basis in the longer term as one of the criteria for determining whether the proposal should be supported, as this would favour the private sector. This was undesirable because this would mean that community groups, particularly those who were disadvantaged, would have less opportunity to build up their skills and self-confidence through community participation. Moreover, many benefits which could be derived from the Fund could not be quantified in money term;
- (c) People of little means or on public assistance should be remunerated for working for projects supported by the Fund;
- (d) Setting the duration of the Fund at three years was too short for many inexperienced project participants to make their projects work, and should be extended;
- (e) Corresponding changes in certain government policies and legislation needed to be changed to facilitate the smooth implementation of the Fund. For examples, CSSA recipients should not have their CSSA payments reduced if they received income from projects supported by the Fund, and the Societies Ordinance should be amended to allow less than 10 persons to form a society; and
- (f) Government bureaux/departments should render support to project participants, as merely providing financial support to them was not enough.

Hong Kong Federation of Women's Centres (HKFWC)

13. Ms CHAN Yu presented the views of HKFWC on the Fund as detailed in its submission (LC Paper No. CB(2)851/01-02(05)). In particular, Ms CHAN said that -

Action

- (a) The Fund should allow people working for the community projects to be remunerated if such projects were profit-making in nature;
- (b) The future approving authority should take into account women's perspectives and pay more attention to the substance and merit of a proposal than to the writing up of the proposal; and
- (c) A bottom-up approach should be adopted for the implementation of the Fund to ensure the transparency of the Fund and the promotion of community participation.

Discussion

14. Mr Fred LI said that the Administration should have regard to some of the recommendations made by the Director of Audit in his Report No. 37 about the administration of the Quality Education Fund (QEF) in the implementation of the Fund. Namely, there should be a set of criteria for determining the level of funding, the executive arm rather than the policy bureau concerned should serve as the secretariat for the Fund committee, and there should be a mechanism to measure the effectiveness of the QEF. In the light of this, Mr LI requested the Administration to brief members on the criteria for determining the level of funding for the Fund and the composition of the approving authority of the Fund. He would like to know, in particular, whether the Social Welfare Department (SWD), instead of the Health and Welfare Bureau (HWB), would serve as the secretariat for the Fund committee. In this connection, he noted that the Fund would be held under the Director of Social Welfare Incorporated and SWD would assist with the administration of the Fund, and the mechanism to measure the effectiveness of the Fund, after the proposed allocation of \$100 million from the General Revenue for the establishment of the Fund had been approved by the Finance Committee (FC). In respect of the funding criteria, Mr LI hoped that due regard would be given to encouraging innovative proposals from people at the grassroots level. Mr LI echoed deputations' view that the Fund should be provided on a longer-term basis, and enquired about the reason(s) for setting the duration of the Fund at three years.

15. DSHW explained that given that the Fund was new, it was prudent to set its duration at three years initially. To ascertain whether the Fund should continue thereafter, a review of the Fund would be conducted towards the end of its three-year operation period. If resources permitted and if there were projects still worthy of support at the end of the three-year period, DSHW said that he was confident that the duration of the Fund could be extended. DSHW added that the Administration was keen to encourage innovative proposals from welfare organisations and community groups. To achieve this, only broad guidelines would be set and the initial thinking was that the application form would only consist of a few headings thereby allowing organisations/groups to propose new ideas or concepts for support under the Fund. To

Action

promote the effectiveness of the Fund, an annual public forum would be held for successful applicants to share their experiences and best practice with the community, and to stimulate other groups to apply for funding.

16. DSHW pointed out that the majority of members of the Fund committee would be non-officials representing a wide cross-section of the community. As regards SWD serving as the Committee secretariat, DSHW said that it was not an issue as the Director of Social Welfare would serve as the paymaster. SWD would work closely with HWB, the Home Affairs Department (HAD), HKCSS and other NGOs to encourage organisations and community groups to apply for funding under the scheme, in addition to assisting them with the application process where necessary.

17. Ms Audrey EU expressed support for the establishment of the Fund, but hoped that it would not be used to support social activities which had no long-term impact on the community and to fund research on community support issues. In respect of the latter, Ms EU was of the view that separate funding should be set aside for funding research on community support issues. Ms EU echoed deputations' views that people of little means or on public assistance should be compensated for working in community projects. Ms EU considered that the Fund committee should not require a proposal to be able to run on a self-financing basis in the longer term before it would approve funding for it as many benefits, such as the building up of community participation, could not be quantified in money term. Ms EU then enquired whether the Fund would support projects targeting at the whole territory or cross-district social groups.

18. DSHW responded that using the Fund to commission and fund research on community support issues was supported by the welfare sector, which recognised that obtaining more knowledge on the issue would enhance the effectiveness of the Fund. DSHW also said that organisations and community groups should not be overly concerned about the self-financing issue, as it was envisaged that the Fund committee would primarily base its consideration on whether an application had a clear focus regarding its objectives, target groups, issues to be addressed with outcomes, and whether it was likely to be sustainable in the longer-term. DSHW indicated that the Fund would not support projects aimed at organising social activities, as it was the Administration's position that projects supported by the Fund should have an investment and longer-term impact rather than a short-term consumption focus. On the question as to whether the Fund would support projects with a territory-wide or cross-district application, DSHW replied that the Fund committee would likely support this since the intention was for the Fund's coverage to be as broad as possible.

19. Mr WONG Sing-chi enquired whether the Fund would support services already in existence in the community it intended to serve, and whether assistance would be provided to those applicants in need of guidance in writing up their proposals.

Action

20. Deputy Director of Social Welfare (Administration) (DDSW) responded that it was the Administration's intention that the Fund should support projects which could fill service gaps in encouraging community participation and promoting social inclusion. DDSW further said that in line with established practice, SWD would assist applicants in their applications for the Fund. Mr WONG Sing-chi said that it would be useful if SWD could publicise what the service gaps referred to by DDSW were.

21. Dr YEUNG Sum expressed support for the establishment of the Fund, but was of the view that the eligibility criteria, outlined in paragraphs 8 and 9 of the Administration's paper, were too difficult for applicants to meet. Notably, projects should normally be non-profit distributing in nature, and yet had to be able to sustain on a self-financing basis. Dr YEUNG pointed out that if people of little means or on public assistance were not compensated for working for community projects, they would not be able to participate in the community projects as going to work would invariably incur some expenses. As a result, one major objective of the Fund to integrate the disadvantaged into the society would be defeated. In the light of this, Dr YEUNG suggested that the Administration should consult the community groups again, particularly those who were disadvantaged, to work out a set of more reasonable eligibility criteria.

22. DSHW responded that socially disadvantaged groups were the target of the Fund. DSHW explained that the eligibility criteria set out in the Administration's paper represented initial thinking which would need to be discussed and approved by the Fund committee. They were intentionally written in a loose manner so as to enable the Fund committee to refine them as it gained more experience in vetting applications. DSHW further said that the Administration had consulted a large number of welfare and community groups in the preparation of the paper. Under these circumstances, the Administration did not see the need to consult these groups again on the Fund's eligibility criteria.

23. Referring to the newspaper article mentioned by Mr CHONG Chan-yau in paragraph 10 above, Mr LEE Cheuk-yan expressed concern that if small and medium-sized firms were given money to run community projects, their employees might be forced to perform voluntary work. Mr LEE shared the views expressed by deputations and members that in order to encourage the socially disadvantaged to participate in community building and development, it was necessary to provide them with some financial incentives. In this connection, Mr LEE asked the Administration to give a reply as to whether the Fund would allow project participants to receive some form of remuneration. Mr LEE was also of the view that the cooperation of other government bureaux/departments was necessary, so as to avoid the implementation of the funded projects being bogged down by bureaucracy.

24. DSHW clarified that the newspaper article referred to by Mr LEE Cheuk-yan had misunderstood the Administration's view that some local projects might seek

Action

support from small and medium-sized firms and that this might take the form of voluntary work. Whilst this might well be a by-product of the Fund, there was no question of compulsion. On the question of compensating people of little means or who were on public assistance for working on community projects, DSHW said that it depended on the details of each application and would be for the Fund Committee to decide. As regards securing the cooperation of other government bureaux/departments to facilitate the smooth implementation of funded projects, DSHW said that HWB, as the secretariat for the Fund committee, would be best placed to take this up with the relevant policy bureaux and government departments.

25. Mr LAW Chi-kwong expressed concern about the lack of a policy underpinning the Fund, and how other government policies would be adjusted to complement the Fund. For example, it was not clear whether organisations such as the mutual aid committees and kaifong welfare associations could apply for the Fund. DSHW responded that HWB and SWD would be working closely with the Home Affairs Bureau and HAD to address the issues highlighted by Mr LAW. These committees and associations would be eligible to apply.

26. Mr Henry WU hoped that clearer eligibility criteria for the Fund could be worked out by the Fund committee expeditiously after it was established. Mr WU also hoped that there would be an upper limit on the level of funding for each application and on the number of funded projects which an organisation or community group could be awarded over the three-year period. Referring to paragraph 5 of the Administration's paper which stated that the establishment of the Fund corresponded to the increasing role played by social capital in addressing social issues, a trend that was developing and was actively encouraged in many countries, Mr WU enquired whether any overseas countries had established a fund to promote mutual care, develop community support network and encourage community participation as in the case of Hong Kong.

27. DSHW said that the Administration had found some studies on the types of funding put in place by some countries to utilise social capital in addressing social issues. However, these were not directly comparable to the proposed Fund but were more akin to the local Lotteries Fund. On the formulation of more detailed eligibility criteria and the setting of an upper limit of funding per application, DSHW reiterated that these would be considered by the Fund committee. The Administration did not wish to set a limit in advance of inviting applications as it wished to encourage innovation.

28. Ms LI Fung-ying expressed similar views about the importance of coming up with more clearly defined eligibility criteria for the Fund, so that interested groups would know what were required of their proposals. Ms LI was concerned that the composition of the Fund committee did not have representatives from the grassroots

Action

level and urged that they be included. Ms LI also shared the view that inexperienced applicants should be provided with assistance in writing up their proposals.

29. DSHW said that every effort would be made to ensure that the composition of the Fund committee was broad and involved many different sectors of the community. DSHW added that the Administration was well aware that small or new community groups might have difficulty in submitting applications. To address this, these groups would be encouraged to make early contact with SWD, HAD, HKCSS and NGOs providing welfare services.

30. Mr Frederick FUNG was of the view that requiring a project to run on a self-financing basis was too difficult, if not impossible, for small community groups, which generally comprised the socially disadvantaged, to meet. In this connection, Mr FUNG requested that this requirement be removed. DSHW responded that the self-financing requirement was only a suggestion for the Fund committee to consider and it was a longer-term objective which might not apply to all. In view of the fact that the purpose of the Fund was to support projects which were likely to bring about a more harmonious and caring society, he believed that whether a project was likely to be able to operate on a self-financing basis would only be one of many considerations for the Fund committee. Responding to Mr FUNG's enquiry, DSHW said that he believed that the Fund committee would also support projects which might not be capable of operating on a self-financing basis in the long-term.

31. In concluding the discussion, the Chairman said that members and deputations were supportive of the setting up of the Fund. They were, however, concerned about the lack of clearly defined eligibility criteria for the Fund, particularly on the self-financing requirement and whether people of little means or on public assistance would be remunerated for working for projects supported by the Fund. In this connection, the Chairman suggested that the Administration should revert to the Panel its response to the aforesaid two issues and other views/concerns expressed by members and deputations at the meeting before proceeding to seek an allocation of \$100 million from the General Revenue for the establishment of the Fund from FC.

32. DSHW said that there would be a delay in implementing the Fund if the Chairman's suggestion was acceded to. In his view, a better approach would be to set-up the Fund as soon as possible so as to enable the Fund committee to come up with an agreed set of eligibility criteria in the light of the experience gained in vetting applications. He envisaged that the Administration would be in a position to respond to the views and concerns raised by members and deputations at the meeting one year after the start of the Fund. Mrs Sophie LEUNG and Mr LAW Chi-kwong expressed reservation about delaying the implementation of the Fund. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan and Dr YEUNG Sum said that they would not insist on the approach suggested by the Chairman if the Administration agreed to reflect all the views and concerns raised by members and deputations at the meeting in its paper for FC. Moreover, the

Action

Adm Administration should report back to the Panel on the composition of the Fund committee and the set of eligibility criteria adopted by it. DSHW agreed.

IV. Financial Assistance Scheme for Family Members of Those Who Sacrifice Their Lives to Save Others

(LC Paper No. CB(2)851/01-02(08))

33. Ms LI Fung-ying expressed support for the establishment of a new Scheme to provide financial assistance to the surviving family members of those who sacrificed their lives to save others. Ms LI, however, was of the view that the scope of the Scheme should be broadened to benefit those who became disabled as a result of saving others. DSHW responded that the Administration had considered the suggestion made by Ms LI but eventually dropped the idea given the difficulty in determining the level of payment for individuals with different types of disability. However, DSHW said that the Administration would re-consider the issue of providing financial assistance to those who became disabled as a result of saving others.

34. As surviving family members of those who sacrificed their lives to save others had to apply for financial assistance under the Scheme, Mr WONG Sing-chi considered it necessary for an appeal mechanism to be put in place to deal with aggrieved applicants. DSHW responded that there was no need for such a mechanism, as payments would be made to applicants if they confirmed that they had a financial need. DSHW explained that the reason for not introducing a means-test under the Scheme was to ensure that timely assistance was provided to the surviving family members of the deceased. DSHW pointed out that this was another reason why the Administration had not sought to extend the Scheme to include those who became disabled as a result of saving others, as determining the level of financial assistance to those who became disabled would not be straight-forward.

35. Mr LAW Chi-kwong expressed regret that the Administration had failed to consult the Panel before implementing the Scheme on 9 January 2002, having regard to the facts that the Scheme involved new policy and had financial implications as the Administration had estimated that the maximum financial implications of the Scheme would be in the order of \$12 million per annum. DSHW responded that the reason for adding the Scheme to the agenda for the meeting was to brief members on the Scheme, as soon as possible. DSHW further said that although the Scheme had financial implications, in the current financial year, there should be no need to seek FC's approval as the maximum level of payment for each application under the Scheme would be approximately \$6 million, and the Secretary for the Treasury had delegated authority to create non-recurrent commitments, as and when a case arose, provided the financial assistance did not exceed \$10 million.

36. Mr Fred LI expressed deep regret about the Administration's timing of discussing the Scheme with the Panel five days after the commencement of the Scheme. For this reason, he had grave doubts about the Administration's sincerity in seeking the views of the Panel. Mr LI further said that he was unconvinced that there

Action

was any urgency in implementing the Scheme on 9 January 2002 prior to consulting the Panel on 14 January 2002. DSHW responded that there was a need to implement the Scheme expeditiously to address the public's call for a dedicated mechanism to help alleviate the financial hardship which surviving family members might face as a consequence of the heroic act.

37. Ms Cyd HO was of the view that the Scheme should not discriminate against surviving family members of illegal immigrants who sacrificed their lives to save others. DSHW disagreed with Ms HO and said that it was right that the Scheme should only cover surviving family members of those who had entered Hong Kong lawfully or were lawfully residing in Hong Kong at the time of death.

38. As the Administration had failed to explain why it had not followed the established practice of prior consultation with the relevant Panel in this particular case, Mr Fred LI suggested that the matter be brought to the attention of the House Committee to seek its support for matter to be raised with the Chief Secretary for Administration. Members agreed.

V. New initiatives to strengthen support for families
(LC Paper No. CB(2)587/01-02(06))

39. Due to time constraint, members agreed to defer the discussion of this item. Director of Social Welfare (DSW) proposed that instead of deferring the discussion of this item to the next meeting, members might wish to visit one of SWD's integrated family services centres in March whereupon SWD staff could brief members on the details set out in the Administration's paper. Members agreed that the clerk should liaise with SWD to fix a date for the visit.

VI. Any other business

**Supplementary provision of \$150 million under Subhead 179
Comprehensive social security assistance scheme**

40. DSW sought members' support for seeking FC's approval on 1 February 2002 for a supplementary provision of \$150 million for the CSSA Scheme. DSW explained that the supplementary provision was necessary to ensure that there would be adequate fund to meet the three-month expenditure from January to March 2002, including also an advance payment for 1 April 2002 which was a public holiday, given that the trend of increase of CSSA cases was likely to continue or even accelerate under the current economic situation.

41. As the shortfall of fund for meeting the three-month expenditure from January to March 2002, including also an advance payment for 1 April 2002 which was a

Action

public holiday, was only an estimate, Mr LAW Chi-kwong was of the view that the Administration could defer seeking a supplementary provision for the CSSA Scheme from FC to March 2002 when the whole picture would become clearer. Mr LAW requested the Administration to provide a comparison of the actual and estimated number of and expenditure for the different categories of CSSA recipients for the current financial year. DSW explained that seeking a supplementary provision for the CSSA Scheme from FC on 1 February 2002 instead of waiting until March 2002 was operationally desirable as CSSA monthly payments were made in advance. Moreover, this would convey a message to the public of the Government's commitment to assist those in need. As regards the information requested by Mr LAW, DSW explained that the original expenditure estimate for 2001-02 was produced on a broad brush basis and with a view to ensuring adequate provision of funds. This explained why despite the fact that CSSA expenditure in 2000-01 was lower than the preceding year, a growth of over 7% was allowed for in the 2001-02 provision. It was therefore not very meaningful to compare the then broad-brush estimated growth by detailed categories of recipients with the actual increase in CSSA caseload in 2001-02.

42. In summing up, the Chairman said that members had no objection to the Administration's plan to seek a supplementary provision of \$150 million from FC on 1 February 2002.

43. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:13 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
20 February 2002