

**立法會**  
**Legislative Council**

LC Paper No. CB(2)1645/06-07  
(These minutes have been  
seen by the Administration)

Ref: CB2/HS/1/04

**Subcommittee to Study the Subject of Combating Poverty**

**Minutes of meeting**  
**held on Thursday, 8 March 2007, at 2:30 pm**  
**in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building**

- Members present** : Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee, SBS, JP (Chairman)  
Hon James TIEN Pei-chun, GBS, JP (Deputy Chairman)  
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan  
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan  
Hon Margaret NG  
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, GBS, JP  
Hon CHAN Yuen-han, JP  
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung  
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP  
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP  
Hon LI Fung-ying, BBS, JP  
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung  
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung  
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC  
Hon Albert Jinghan CHENG
- Members absent** : Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP  
Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC
- Member attending** : Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH

**Public officers  
attending** : Item II

Mr Stephen FISHER, JP  
Secretary to the Commission on Poverty

Ms WONG Yuen-ling, Edna  
Assistant Secretary to the Commission on Poverty

Mr Byron NG  
Assistant Commissioner for Labour (Employment Services)  
Labour Department

Ms Betty NG  
Senior Labour Officer (Employment Services)  
Labour Department

Mr NG Wai-kuen  
Chief Social Security Officer (Social Security) 2  
Social Welfare Department

Mr Denys CHAN Tak-kin  
Chief Social Security Officer (Social Security) 4  
Social Welfare Department

**Clerk in  
attendance** : Miss Betty MA  
Chief Council Secretary (2) 4

**Staff in  
attendance** : Mr Chris LAI  
Senior Council Secretary (2) 7

Miss Maggie CHIU  
Legislative Assistant (2) 4

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**I. Confirmation of minutes of previous meeting**  
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1206/06-07]

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2007 were confirmed.

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**II. Further discussion on the Transport Support Scheme**  
[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1187/06-07(01) and (02)]

2. The Subcommittee deliberated (Index of proceedings attached at **Annex**).
3. Members noted the proposed features of the pilot Transport Support Scheme (the pilot scheme) as detailed in the paper provided by the Commission on Poverty (CoP) Secretariat. Members also noted that the Administration planned to submit the funding proposal to the Finance Committee for approval in April 2007, with a view to launching the pilot scheme in June or July 2007. A review would be conducted after the end of the one-year pilot.

Amount of Job Search Allowance and Cross-District Work Allowance

4. Members noted that eligible workers could apply for a Cross-District Work Allowance of \$600 a month at any point in time throughout the one-year period and receive the allowance for a period of no more than six months. The \$600 Job Search Allowance aimed to provide an incentive for job searching and subsidise only part of the transport costs and not the full cost of job searches. If the applicants became unemployed again within one year from the approval date of the application, they could apply for the unused balance of the allowance for job searching.
5. Members further noted that when CoP discussed the pilot scheme, it reached a strong consensus that the transport subsidy should not be regarded as a general income supplement. As such, the pilot scheme should be time-limited and purpose-specific.

Eligibility criteria for the pilot scheme

6. Members present at the meeting held the view that the requirement for applicants to have or to seek a full-time job, and to require them to work 35 hours or more per week for a single employer in order to be eligible for the allowance was too stringent. To benefit more needy workers, these members strongly called upon the Administration to consider relaxing the requirements. These members expressed the following views for the Administration's consideration in revising the eligibility criteria –
  - (a) many workers living in the remote districts were unable to find employment in the local areas because of a lack of employment opportunities which resulted from poor town planning;
  - (b) many low-income employees living in remote areas were part-time casual workers working for more than one employer;

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- (c) in view of the change in the mode of employment, most employees working in the service and retail sectors were not offered full-time employment terms irrespective of their length of service and working hours;
- (d) some low-income workers such as those in the construction industry, could not benefit from the pilot scheme as they might be in a so-called "self-employed" status; and
- (e) the proposed eligibility criteria would defeat the purpose of providing transport subsidy to low-income employees in remote areas to find employment and work across districts.

7. Mr WONG Kwok-hing enquired about the Administration's response to the issues of concern raised by the Tung Chung Livelihood Monitor as set out in its submission.

8. Responding to members' views and concern, Secretary to CoP (Secy/CoP) made the following points –

- (a) the purpose of the pilot scheme was to provide incentive for needy workers in remote districts to find jobs and to work across districts, and to cover part of their travelling expenses involved in job searching and working across districts;
- (b) taking into account the need to keep the scheme simple and the administrative costs low, the Administration proposed to use 35 hours or more per week, which was the most common criterion used in defining full-time employees, as a cut-off point for the pilot scheme;
- (c) it was estimated that some 70 000 workers would be eligible for the pilot scheme. However, if the scheme was extended to part-time casual workers, the potentially eligible applicants would involve a very large number of economically inactive persons in the four remote districts. This would give rise to the question of possible abuse of the pilot scheme by those without genuine needs for finding jobs. As the financial implications were significant, the Administration would need to ensure prudent use of public funds in considering whether the eligibility criteria should be further relaxed;
- (d) self-employed persons were not eligible for the allowance;
- (e) disabled persons who received training in sheltered workshops would not be eligible for the pilot scheme because they were not

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bona fide workers; and

- (f) the Administration proposed not to count the transport allowances as earnings under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme.

9. Members in general expressed strong reservations with the Administration's responses. They remained of the view that the requirement of working 35 hours or more a week for one employer was unnecessary and unacceptable. Mrs Selina CHOW, however, considered that assisting the disadvantaged to seek full-time employment would enhance their sense of belonging to stay in the job.

10. In the light of the views expressed by members, the Chairman considered that the Administration should relax the requirement of working 35 hours or more a week to 18 hours or more a week, given that workers who worked 18 hours or more a week for four consecutive weeks was within the meaning of "continuous employment" in the Employment Ordinance (Cap. 57). To alleviate the problem of verifying the employment records if the applicants worked for more than one employer, the Chairman and Mr Ronny TONG considered that the applicants would be required to make self-declaration and hold legal responsibility for the declaration.

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11. Having regard to members' views and suggestions, Secy/CoP agreed to consider modifying the eligibility criteria for the pilot scheme.

12. Members agreed that a further meeting should be held to continue discussion with the Administration on the pilot scheme before the resumption of the Second Reading debate on the Appropriation Bill 2007, and the Financial Secretary should be invited to attend the meeting. Members further agreed that the Subcommittee would discuss at the next meeting other measures proposed in the 2007-2008 Budget to help the disadvantaged, including the Child Development Fund and the development of social enterprises (SEs).

*(Post-meeting note : The next meeting of the Subcommittee was scheduled for 26 March 2007 at 4:30 pm.)*

**III. Draft report on "Elderly in poverty"**  
[LC Paper No. CB(2)863/06-07(03)]

13. The Chairman took members through Chapters 1 to 4 of the draft report on elderly in poverty. Members raised no questions on Chapters 1 and 2. As regards members' views and suggestions on Chapter 3 (Causes of elderly in poverty and problems faced by elders) and Chapter 4 (Measures to assist elderly

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in poverty), the Chairman said that the Legislative Council (LegCo) Secretariat would incorporate members' views in the revised draft report for members' consideration at the next meeting.

14. Mr James TIEN and Mrs Selina CHOW said that Members belonging to the Liberal Party did not object to studying the provision of retirement protection for elderly in Hong Kong. However, they had reservations about the implementation of the proposed universal retirement protection scheme.

15. Members agreed that discussion on Chapter 5 (Recommendations) would be continued at a future meeting.

**IV. Proposed overseas duty visit to study the development of social enterprises**

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1187/06-07(03)]

16. Members raised no objection to the proposal of the Subcommittee conducting an overseas duty visit in August 2007 to study the development of SEs in the United Kingdom (UK) and Spain.

17. Members agreed that the Research and Library Services Division of the LegCo Secretariat should be requested to conduct a research on the SE policies and their implementation in the UK, Spain and Hong Kong, and prepare a research outline for the Subcommittee's consideration at the next meeting.

**V. Any other business**

Proposed work plan of the Subcommittee

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1252/06-07(01)]

18. Members endorsed the proposed work plan of the Subcommittee and the time frame for completion of work as set out in the paper prepared by the LegCo Secretariat. The Chairman said that the Subcommittee would provide its work plan to the House Committee for information.

19. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 4:35 pm.

**Proceedings of the meeting of the  
Subcommittee to Study the Subject of Combating Poverty  
on Thursday, 8 March 2007, at 2:30 pm  
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building**

<b>Time marker</b>	<b>Speaker(s)</b>	<b>Subject(s)</b>	<b>Action required</b>
<i>Agenda Item I – Confirmation of minutes</i>			
000000 - 000232	Chairman	Confirmation of minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2007	
<i>Agenda Item II – Further discussion on the Transport Support Scheme</i>			
000233 - 000953	Chairman Admin	Briefing by the Administration on the proposed features of the pilot Transport Support Scheme (pilot scheme) and the implementation timetable	
000954 - 003134	Chairman Mr WONG Kwok-hing Dr Fernando CHEUNG Ms LI Fung-ying Admin	<p>Concern about the stringent eligibility criteria for the pilot scheme, particularly the requirements for applicants to have or seek a full-time job and to work 35 hours or more per week for a single employer.</p> <p>The Administration's response –</p> <p>(a) the pilot scheme should be time-limited and purpose-specific and cover only part of the travelling expenses incurred in seeking employment and working across districts;</p> <p>(b) there was a need to keep the pilot scheme simple and the administrative costs low and to minimise the chances for abuse; and</p> <p>(c) there would be substantial financial implications if the eligibility criteria were further relaxed</p> <p>View of Ms LI Fung-ying that the pilot scheme should be extended to low-income workers living in districts other than the four remote districts if they had to commute long distance to work</p>	
003135 - 003646	Chairman Ms Emily LAU Mr Ronny TONG Admin	<p>View of Ms Emily LAU that no prerequisite conditions had been imposed on the eligibility for the pilot scheme when it was announced by the Financial Secretary (FS)</p> <p>Discussion on the Chairman's suggestion to require applicants to make self-declaration on the information they submitted to alleviate the problem of verifying the employment records</p>	
003647 - 004109	Chairman Mr Ronny TONG Admin	Discussion on Mr Ronny TONG's suggestion to raise the amount of Job Search Allowance to encourage needy workers to attend more job interviews	

<b>Time marker</b>	<b>Speaker(s)</b>	<b>Subject(s)</b>	<b>Action required</b>
004110 - 004652	Chairman Mrs Selina CHOW Admin	Discussion on Mrs Selina CHOW's suggestion of creating local employment opportunities in remote areas to facilitate employment of needy workers in such districts	
004653 - 005200	Miss CHAN Yuen-han Admin	Views of Miss CHAN Yuen-han that –  (a) the eligibility criteria for the pilot scheme were stringent and should be further relaxed; and  (b) the pilot scheme should be extended to low-income workers in other districts if they had to commute long distance to work	
005201 - 005638	Chairman Admin	The Chairman's view that the eligibility criteria should be relaxed to enable needy workers who worked 18 hours or more a week to be eligible for the pilot scheme  Administration's response to members' views expressed at previous meetings that workers who earned less than \$6,200 a month should also be eligible for Cross-District Work Allowance on a partial basis	
005639 - 010149	Mr Albert CHENG Admin	Views of Mr Albert CHENG that Job Search Allowance should be provided for a longer period and needy workers who worked 18 hours or more a week should be eligible for the pilot scheme	
010150 - 010721	Mr Abraham SHEK Admin	Concern that the eligibility criteria for the pilot scheme were too complicated and should be relaxed	
010722 - 011324	Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung Admin	View of Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung that FS, who was Chairman of Commission on Poverty, should give due regard to the problems faced by needy workers when deliberating the implementation details of the pilot scheme	
011325 - 011722	Ms Margaret NG Admin	Enquiry about the role played by FS in drawing up the proposed features and implementation details of the pilot scheme	
011723 - 012637	Chairman Mr WONG Kwok-hing Dr Fernando CHEUNG Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung Admin	Members' repeated request for further relaxing the eligibility criteria for the pilot scheme  Proposal to invite FS to attend the next meeting to discuss the pilot scheme	<b>Admin agreed to consider members' views and modify the eligibility criteria for the pilot scheme</b>
012638 - 013303	Mr LEE Cheuk-yan Admin	Suggestions for raising the income threshold to two-thirds of median monthly income and providing the Cross-District Work Allowance of \$500 for 12 months	



<b>Time marker</b>	<b>Speaker(s)</b>	<b>Subject(s)</b>	<b>Action required</b>
013304 - 013450	Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung Admin	Continued need to provide Cross-District Work Allowance for needy workers after the pilot run to ensure that they could sustain in employment	
013451 - 013641	Chairman Ms Emily LAU	Suggestion to further discuss the pilot scheme at the next meeting to be held before the Resumption of the Second Reading debate on the Appropriation Bill 2007  Discussion items for the next Subcommittee meeting	
013642 - 013699	Mr WONG Kwok-hing Administration	The Administration's response to the issues of concern raised by the Tung Chung Livelihood Monitor as set out in its submission	
<i>Agenda Item III – Draft report on "Elderly in poverty"</i>			
013700 - 015649	Chairman Mr James TIEN Ms Emily LAU Ms LI Fung-ying Dr Fernando CHEUNG Mrs Selina CHOW	Discussion on Chapters 1 to 4 of the draft report.	
<i>Agenda Item IV – Proposed overseas duty visit to study the development of social enterprises</i>			
015650 - 020127	Chairman Ms LI Fung-ying Mr James TIEN Ms Emily LAU	Proposed overseas duty visit to study the development of social enterprises in the United Kingdom and Spain	
<i>Agenda Item V – Any other business</i>			
020128 - 020144	Chairman	Proposed work plan of the Subcommittee and time frame for completion of work	