

**For discussion
on 16 November 2004**

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
PANEL ON ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS AND
PANEL ON PLANNING, LANDS AND WORKS**

The Sustainable Development Strategy Engagement Process

Introduction

This paper briefs Members on progress with the engagement process designed by the Council for Sustainable Development (SD) with the aim of involving the community in building an SD Strategy for Hong Kong. The paper covers the following areas -

- The background to the engagement process
- The public involvement programme
- Feedback on the engagement process
- The next steps in building an SD Strategy for Hong Kong

Background to the Engagement Process

2. The Council for SD was appointed by the Chief Executive on 1 March 2003. The membership and terms of reference of the Council are at **Annex A** to this paper. One of the terms of reference of the Council is -

“To advise on the preparation of a sustainable development strategy for Hong Kong that will integrate economic, social and environmental perspectives.”

3. In November 2003, the Council for SD convened a workshop, inviting

stakeholders from various sectors to consider an appropriate way of taking forward this task, with particular emphasis on the need to involve the community in building a suitable strategy for Hong Kong. As a result of input from stakeholders, the Council agreed that for the initial stage of strategy building, a five stage “engagement process” should be implemented, as follows -

- I. Identifying Pilot Areas for the initial stage of the strategy
- II. Preparing a document to invite responses
- III. Directly involving the wider community
- IV. Reporting on the community response
- V. The Government to publish a strategy document

4. In December 2003, based on proposals from Principal Officials sitting on the Council, three Pilot Areas were identified for the purpose of the first “round” of the engagement process, namely: Solid Waste Management, Renewable Energy and Urban Living Space. When selecting these areas, Council members noted that for future rounds of the engagement process, there was a need to consider an effective arrangement for collecting direct community input into the selection of Priority Areas for the strategy.

Public Involvement Programme

5. In order to ensure that the engagement process would be steered by concerned stakeholders, and with a view to promoting a participatory and inclusive approach consistent with the principles of sustainable development, the Council for SD in February 2004 established three Support Groups to take forward the process. These Support Groups are chaired by non-Government representatives of the Council or its Strategy Sub-committee, and the membership includes stakeholders from various sectors, as well as relevant government officials.

6. The immediate tasks of these groups was to advise on the preparation of an appropriate document to inform the public of aspects of the three Pilot Areas and to seek their responses to certain key questions in these areas that are relevant to Hong Kong's sustainability. The result of the Support Groups' deliberations was the issue of the Council for SD "Invitation and Response" (IR) document: *Sustainable Development – Making Choices for Our Future*, a copy of which is at **Annex B**.

7. Following the launch of the IR document in July, the Council opened a range of channels to encourage a wide response to the issues raised in the document. Some of the initiatives were -

- A dedicated interactive website (www.susdev.org.hk) as a resource for providing information and allowing the public to post views on the engagement process and the individual Pilot Areas
- A public exhibition on SD and the Pilot Areas that toured popular public venues in Hong Kong
- IR leaflets with simple questionnaires, distributed at various public locations together with SD Strategy "wishing wells", into which people placed the completed questionnaires
- Four public forums and eleven public workshops on the Pilot Areas, in various locations throughout Hong Kong.

8. Throughout the course of the programme, the Sustainable Development Unit (SDU - which serves as the Secretariat to the Council for SD) has prepared reports and updates on these activities, and has posted these on the SD Strategy website.

9. As well as the responses that have been generated by the specific activities described above, the Council has received direct written submissions, either on specific Pilot Areas or on the process in general. Members may wish to note also

that an Announcement in the Public Interest (API) on the IR document has been shown regularly on local TV stations.

Feedback on the Engagement Process - A Brief Preliminary Analysis

10. We are currently reviewing the feedback on the engagement process. However, a number of indications of public preferences and tendencies are already apparent from the responses to the IR document and the detailed reports from the workshops.

A. Solid waste management

11. Stakeholders agreed that landfill facilities are not a sustainable measure and that a long-term and comprehensive waste management strategy, based on a four-tier waste management hierarchy¹ is required. There was general support for “user pays” charges for waste disposal, with many respondents arguing for a fair charging mechanism and gradual implementation. A large number of stakeholders favoured mandatory producer responsibility schemes. There was support for the development of waste disposal facilities that use new thermal and biological treatment technologies to reduce the volume of waste, although there was also concern that such facilities should meet stringent environmental standards.

B. Renewable energy

12. Respondents indicated support for solar and wind energy facilities, but

¹ Tier 1: to reduce waste generation at source as far as possible

Tier 2: to recover and recycle remaining waste as far as possible

Tier 3: to reduce the volume of remaining waste as far as possible (including use of best available technologies for thermal or biological treatment)

Tier 4: finally, to dispose of any remaining waste at sanitary landfills as a last resort

acknowledged the practical difficulty of finding suitable locations for these facilities and the initial cost of such installations. Issues concerning access to the electricity grid were raised; in this regard, it was felt that the power companies should play a role in encouraging RE both by initiating their own RE projects and allowing access to the power grid to other RE providers. Some stakeholders suggested investing in land on the Mainland to facilitate the development of RE facilities that could supply power to Hong Kong. Energy from waste was broadly recognized as a form of Renewable Energy. Many respondents suggested that public education on energy conservation should be more strongly promoted as part of an SD Strategy.

C. Urban living space

13. While recognising that in some cases full redevelopment of run-down urban areas might be necessary, stakeholders generally preferred urban revitalisation to redevelopment where possible, with many suggesting that old buildings and communities should be preserved and their local environment improved, for example, through the provision of more open space. Some stakeholders raised the issue of changes in population growth and profiles, and felt that these should be taken into account in reaching any decisions on further development of urban areas. Stakeholders had diverse views on how NT areas might be developed to maximise land resources, although most favoured a balanced approach that would allow for more mixed types of development while preserving rural characteristics. In regard to the built environment, on issues such as development density and building height, the majority expressed a wish for Government to draw up an overall policy on sustainable building design.

The Next Steps in Building an SD Strategy for Hong Kong

14. The next steps for the Council for SD are: to collate detailed responses from stakeholders to the IR document; to present a summary of the feedback that the Council has received; and to discuss this further with stakeholders, *including the Government*, before finalising recommendations on the SD Strategy. To this end, the Council will host an SD Strategy Summit in mid-December with the aims of -

- Presenting the summary of feedback on the engagement process
- Preparing the proposed recommendations to the Government on the strategy, in the light of comments from the participating stakeholders
- Beginning a dialogue on how best to take the engagement process forward to address future topics for SD

Government Response

15. One of the key factors in putting together an effective and credible SD Strategy will be the reaction of the Government to the outcomes of the engagement process. Officials with responsibilities relevant to the Pilot Areas sit on the Support Groups, and the Principal Officials concerned are full Council Members. Several government officials have attended workshops and other activities during the engagement process, and have been able to gain a first-hand insight into how the public perceives the issues in the IR document. Nonetheless, a formal response will be required from the Government on the issues outlined in the document before the Council for SD will be able to conclude its recommendations on the SD Strategy. In this regard, we shall specifically invite views from concerned bureaux and departments before compiling a final report on the Strategy. We would then expect the Government to publish an SD Strategy document based on the advice of the Council

for SD and the findings of the engagement process, before the middle of 2005.

Conclusion and Views Sought from Members

16. Although considerable effort has gone into promoting stakeholder ownership of this first exercise in putting together an SD Strategy, and the public's response has been encouraging, we recognise that improvements need to be made in taking this task forward. Sustainable development is a relatively new subject for most people in Hong Kong, and there is a need to review and build on this initial engagement process to ensure that the community can identify the issues that are key to the city's long-term sustainability and help define appropriate goals and priorities. In this regard, we invite Members to comment on the engagement process, on the outcomes of the process so far, and on how we might take this forward to achieve an effective and participatory SD Strategy for Hong Kong.

Sustainable Development Unit

Administration Wing

11 November 2004

Annex A

Membership and Terms of Reference of the Council for Sustainable Development

Terms of Reference

- (a) To advise the Government on the priority areas it should address in promoting sustainable development;
- (b) To advise on the preparation of a sustainable development strategy for Hong Kong that will integrate economic, social and environmental perspectives;
- (c) To facilitate community participation in the promotion of sustainable development in Hong Kong through various means, including the award of grants from the Sustainable Development Fund; and
- (d) To promote public awareness and understanding of the principles of sustainable development.

Membership

Chairman : Chief Secretary for Administration

Vice-chairman : Dr Edgar Cheng, GBS, JP

Members : Dr Lily Chiang
Ms Choy So-yuk
Mr Barrie Cook
Ms Christine Fang, JP
Mr Hans Michael Jebsen, BBS
Mr Thomas Kwok, JP
Professor Lam Kin-che, JP
Mr Andrew Liao, SBS, SC, JP
Ir Otto Poon, BBS
Mr Tai Hay-lap, BBS, JP
Mr Tik Chi-yuen, JP
Professor Tsui Lap-chee
Secretary for Economic Development and Labour
Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works
Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food
Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands

Annex B

A copy of this document is kept at the Legislative Council Library.
Please contact the Legislative Council Library if you wish to refer to this document.