

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1) 731/04-05
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/EA/1

**Panel on Environmental Affairs and
Panel on Planning, Lands and Works**

**Minutes of joint meeting held on
Tuesday, 16 November 2004, at 8:30 am
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building**

Members present : Members of the Panel on Environmental Affairs

- * Hon CHOY So-yuk (Chairman)
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP (Deputy Chairman)
- * Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, S.B.St.J., JP
Hon Martin LEE Chu-ming, SC, JP
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
- * Hon WONG Yung-kan, JP
Hon LAU Kong-wah, JP
Hon Miriam LAU Kin-yea, GBS, JP
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP
Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, SBS, JP

Members of the Panel on Planning, Lands and Works

- # Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP
Hon LI Kwok-ying, MH
Hon Daniel LAM Wai-keung, BBS, JP
Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC
Hon CHEUNG Hok-ming, SBS, JP

Members absent : Members of the Panel on Environmental Affairs

- * Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
- * Hon LEE Wing-tat
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki

Members of the Panel on Planning, Lands and Works

Hon LAU Wong-fat, GBS, JP (Chairman)
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon Timothy FOK Tsun-ting, GBS, JP

(* Also members of the Panel on Planning, Lands and Works)
(# Also members of the Panel on Environmental Affairs)

- Public officers Attending** :
- Dr Edgar CHENG
Vice Chairman
Council for Sustainable Development
 - Mr Albert LAI
Convenor
Support Group on Solid Waste Management
 - Prof Peter HILLS
Convenor
Support Group on Urban Living Space
 - Ir Otto POON
Convenor
Support Group on Renewable Energy
 - Mrs Susan MAK
Deputy Director of Administration
 - Mr Jonathan McKINLEY
Assistant Director of Administration
(Sustainable Development)
- Clerk in attendance** : Miss Becky YU
Chief Council Secretary (1)1
- Staff in attendance** : Mrs Mary TANG
Senior Council Secretary (1)2
- Miss Mandy POON
Legislative Assistant (1)4
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I. Election of Chairman

As Mr LAU Wong-fat, Chairman of the Panel on Planning, Lands and Works, was not able to attend the joint meeting, Miss CHOY So-yuk, Chairman of the Panel on Environmental Affairs, took the chair for the joint meeting.

II. Engagement process for building a sustainable development strategy for Hong Kong

(LC Paper No. CB(2) 1254/02-03 — Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for the special House Committee meeting on 28 February 2003

LC Paper No. CB(1) 235/04-05(01) — Paper provided by the Sustainable Development Unit of the Administration Wing)

2. The Chairman advised that as the meeting was initiated by the Council for Sustainable Development (the Council), an independent unit appointed by the Chief Executive for promoting and advising the principles and strategies of sustainable development (SD), representatives from the relevant policy bureaux had not been invited to attend the meeting. She also declared interest as a member of the Council as well as a member of the Strategy Subcommittee of the Council.

3. At the Chairman's invitation, Dr Edgar CHENG, Vice Chairman of the Council, gave a power-point presentation on the background to the engagement process and the next steps in building a SD strategy for Hong Kong. The Assistant Director of Administration (Sustainable Development) (AD of A(SD)) then briefed members on the public involvement programme. The convenors of the three support groups also took turns to report on the latest development in their respective pilot areas. Mr Albert LAI, Convenor of the Support Group on Solid Waste Management, said that charging for waste disposal was adopted by many overseas countries as an effective means to reduce waste. However, its implications on the community, in particular on the underprivileged, would need to be carefully assessed taking into account feedback from public consultation. Ir Otto POON, Convenor of the Support Group on Renewable Energy, said that Hong Kong was geographically constrained in developing renewable energy. Besides, the development of renewable energy would hinge on the involvement of the power companies. It was hoped that the views of the Council would be taken into account in the review of the Scheme of Control in 2008. Prof Peter HILLS, Convenor of the Support Group on Urban Living Space, said that based on the views gathered, the declining population growth rate was an issue which should be looked at very carefully in the context of future development and where it should take place.

(Post-meeting note: A copy of the power-point presentation materials was circulated to members under LC paper No. CB(1) 254/04-05.)

Public involvement programme

4. Ms Emily LAU noted with concern that the District Councils (DCs) were not consulted on the SD strategy. She pointed out that as SD was a relatively new subject for most of the people in Hong Kong, it was essential for the Council to solicit the support of DCs to get the message across the territory at the district level. She then enquired about the attendance for the forums and workshops organized by the Council.

5. Dr Edgar CHENG advised that DCs were keen participants in many of the public forums and workshops organized by the Council. In fact, with the assistance of the Home Affairs Bureau, he had arranged a briefing for the Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of the 18 DCs on the work of the Council. He acknowledged that a lot had to be done in building a suitable SD strategy for Hong Kong and the initial stage was the implementation of an engagement process. As regards attendance, AD of A(SD) advised that 240 people had attended the three public forums while around 450 people had attended the 11 workshops held in various districts. About 40% of the participants were from DCs and district-based groups such as district business organizations and owners corporations etc. Discussions at these public forums and workshops were held under an interactive process and arrangements had been made to mix people of different backgrounds within the groups.

6. Given the relative low attendance of around 700 people, Ms Emily LAU considered that efforts should be stepped up to promote public awareness of SD before finalizing the relevant policy. Dr Edgar CHENG clarified that the Council's role was not policy formulation but to advise on the preparation of a SD strategy. He added that apart from the forums and workshops, a dedicated interactive website was set up for dissemination of information on SD and for the public to post their views on the engagement process. As a result, there were far more than 700 people who had given their views. He nevertheless agreed that more should be done to promote SD. In this connection, a working group under the chairmanship of Ms Christine FANG was set up to enhance education and publicity on the subject.

7. Ir Dr Raymond HO said that Hong Kong had lagged behind many overseas countries in taking forward SD since the last Norwegian international conference on SD in 1987. He was also disappointed at the lack of active response from either the Government or the community to the questions and motions on SD which he repeatedly raised at the Council meetings over the past years. He therefore considered it necessary for the Administration to intensify the public consultation process to encourage greater public participation. The Council should also take a proactive role in advising the Government on the latest development in SD so that the latter could take on board such information in formulating and implementing its policies. While agreeing that efforts would be stepped up to promote public awareness on SD, Dr Edgar CHENG said that it was not possible for the Council to pursue all aspects of SD in detail within its limited resources. He stressed that SD should be taken forward with good governance not public referendum.

8. Mr Patrick LAU supported that the concept of SD should be promoted in Hong Kong, and that targets and milestones should be set to achieve SD. As it was important to foster the concept of SD in the younger generation, he suggested that this should be included as part of liberal studies in the school curriculum. Expressing similar views, Mr Martin LEE proposed that student representatives should be engaged as observers in the decision-making process of high-powered committees responsible for formulating SD strategies. A simpler language should also be adopted to facilitate better public understanding of the concept of SD. He added that Hong Kong should learn the experience of other overseas countries in taking forward SD.

9. Dr Edgar CHENG agreed that targets and milestones were necessary in achieving SD, and that a simpler language should be used in promoting SD. He said that the Council would take into account overseas experience in devising the SD strategies that were most suitable for Hong Kong's own situation. As regards education for the younger generation, Dr CHENG said that the Education Subgroup of the Council supported the inclusion of the concept of SD in the school curriculum. Apart from the SD Strategy Summit to be held in December 2004, the Council was planning to hold a youth forum on SD strategy. AD of A(SD) added that about 20% of the participants in the public forums were students and young people. The Council would be organizing a youth forum on 5 December 2004 in conjunction with the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups targeting at young people aged 16 to 25. Through the Sustainable Development Fund, the Council would be funding projects such as training of student SD ambassadors who would be promoting the concept of SD in both primary and secondary schools. The Chairman requested the Council to notify members of the details of Summit so that they could participate and provide views.

Solid waste management

10. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong noted with concern that substantial amount of wastes would be generated from the proposed demolition of Hunghom Peninsula. These wastes, including 2 400 bath tubs, 5 000 water taps, 12 000 doors and 200 000 tonnes cement, would have to be disposed of in landfills. He then sought the Council's views on whether the proposed demolition ran contrary to the concept of SD and corporate responsibility.

11. Mr Albert LAI said that as a member of a green group in Hong Kong, he was opposed to the proposed demolition of Hunghom Peninsula albeit the economic and social factors involved. While the Council had not discussed the subject before, it agreed in principle that corporate responsibility should be promoted in Hong Kong. The SD strategy would also require waste producers to bear the cost of waste disposal to encourage waste reduction. Prof Peter HILLS said that there was no way that the demolition of Hunghom Peninsula could be defended from the perspective of sustainable development. As the concept of SD was related to governance and public policy, the issues being touched upon reflected the different views on how

Hong Kong should be developed in future. He stressed the importance of integration of policies such that all Government departments could work together as in the case of the building practices under the Buildings Ordinance (Cap. 123) where planning had to be interfaced with other developments.

12. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong opined that the Council should not only focus on devising a SD strategy for the long term but should also monitor existing issues which contravened SD principles, such as the demolition of Hunghom Peninsula, as otherwise it would be seen to be working on paper and out of touch with controversial matters. He hoped that the Council and/or the Administration would make a fair statement on the demolition of Hunghom Peninsula based on SD principles at the SD Strategy Summit to be held in mid-December 2004. He further pointed out that the Council would not be able to garner support from the community if it failed to meet public aspirations. Dr Edgar CHENG said that the Council might need to decide whether such a statement should be made by the Council or jointly with the Administration. As the Council had not looked into the matter, DD of A said that it would be more appropriate for the relevant Policy Bureau to respond.

Urban living space

13. Mr LAU Kong-wah opined that the planning of new towns like Tseung Kwan O and Tin Shui Wai was far from satisfactory as compared to that of Shatin. Instead of planning for large satellite towns, consideration should be given to developing small communities scattered over the New Territories. This would not only minimize the adverse environmental impacts arising from large-scale development on the natural habitat, but also help spread out the working population so that residents in the rural areas would not have to travel a long way to their workplace. Mr WONG Yung-kan echoed that consideration should be given to better utilizing the green areas which comprised about 67% of the land in Hong Kong. He further pointed out that the protection of marine resources as well as the creation of employment opportunities were also SD issues which should be looked into by the Council.

14. Dr Edgar CHENG assured members that the Council would continue its efforts in gathering views from different sectors of the community. He however reiterated that task of the Council was to advise on the preparation of a SD strategy for Hong Kong. It would be up to the Administration to take forward and implement the strategy. On planning issues, Prof Peter HILLS clarified that the documents provided by the Council were meant to be a summary of the responses from the community rather than a detailed proposal. The Council was only acting as a spokesman of the community and the responsibility for taking forward the proposals rested with the Administration. By promoting public debate, the Administration would be able to know the sentiments of different sectors towards SD.

Scope of studies

15. While appreciating the time and efforts which the Council had taken in promoting SD, Mr Abraham SHEK was frustrated that the Administration had failed to take the lead in ensuring compliance with the SD principles as reflected by its policy on reclamation and air quality. Given that the three pilot areas of renewable energy, urban living space and solid waste management represented only a small part of SD, Mr SHEK emphasized that more efforts should be made to promote public awareness on the concept of SD which was a relative new subject to the general public. He then sought clarification on the means to achieve the right balance in meeting the competing priorities in political, economic and social needs.

16. Dr Edgar CHENG advised that cooperation from all sectors of the community was crucial in promoting SD. After collating the views from the engagement process, the Council would analyze the feedback before finalizing its recommendations on SD strategy to the Government. Ir Otto POON said that the concept of SD had to be built up in a longer term. With the present economic climate where quick profits were an overriding factor, economic growth would take precedence over SD. Hence, there was a need to educate the younger generation on the importance of SD. Mr Albert LAI pointed out that the pursuit of sustainable development required innovative means to integrate the needs of social, environmental and economic aspects, rather than mechanically balancing such needs. Professor Peter HILLS said that Hong Kong was a society driven by livelihood and economic issues. The findings of the SD study commissioned by the Planning Department (PlanD) years ago revealed that economic issues were placed on the top of the agenda. In order for the public to accept SD, there was a need to foster a change in the priorities. The question was how this could be done and who should take the lead as some might prefer more emphasis on social and economic injustices while others would opt for political and other issues. It would be a slow process and education would play an important role.

17. While supporting the principles of SD, Ms Emily LAU did not agree that the SD strategy should be confined to the integration of economic, social and environmental perspectives. Referring to the findings of the study conducted by PlanD, she opined that economic development was accorded the high priority because this was the focus of the Government in the past. However, in view of the recent controversy over constitutional reform, more emphasis should now be placed on political development, social responsibility etc which were also important SD issues. In this connection, the Council should extend its scope of studies to cover governance as well. She also considered it necessary for the Council to state its stance on the recent incidents, including the demolition of Hunghom Peninsula, the West Kowloon Development and harbour reclamation, as otherwise the Council would be seen as a tool to rationalize Government actions and would not be able to gain support from the public. Dr Edgar CHENG took note of Ms LAU's views. He explained that political development was not included in the SD strategy because it had already been integrated in the economic, social and environmental perspectives. The Chairman concurred that the Council should look into more immediate issues.

18. Ms Emily LAU asked if the Administration had conducted any SD assessments for its legislative and financial proposals. The Deputy Director of Administration (DD of A) confirmed that a set of over 40 SD indicators had been adopted in assessing the sustainability of all legislative and financial proposals. Since 2002, the Administration was required to set out in all papers submitted to the Chief Executive in Council outcome of SD assessments and about 500 of such papers had been issued.

19. Mr Patrick LAU asked if the Council would also look into the issues of waste recycling and development of hydro-electricity. In response, Dr Edgar CHENG said that the related information and discussions could be found in the interactive website of the Council.

Coordination with the Mainland

20. Mr LAU Kong-wah agreed that community involvement was essential in reaching a consensus on the way forward for building a long-term SD strategy for Hong Kong. As the engagement process had just begun, he wished to remind the Council the need to ascertain the implications arising from the close interaction between Hong Kong and the Mainland which would directly affect the economic, planning, transport, and population policies of both sides. He hoped that the Council would take into account the latest development in cross-boundary activities in formulating the SD strategy. Mr Jeffrey LAM echoed that the task of the Council was not an easy one having regard to the need to balance the competing demands among economic, social and environmental development. From a business point of view, cleaner environment and better air quality would encourage foreign investments but over emphasis on environmental protection might deter economic and business development. Direct application of overseas experience in SD to Hong Kong would not be appropriate given its unique situation. With the increase in economic activities between Hong Kong and the Mainland, the developments on both sides should be taken into account in formulating the SD strategy. Mr Albert LAI advised that SD was essential as it aimed to protect our existing resources for future generations. It was also meant to resolve the conflict between environment protection and economic development. By way of illustration, a good waste management programme would enhance the recycling business which would in turn bring about economic benefits to Hong Kong. Dr Edgar CHENG added that cross-boundary issues were being dealt with by the joint working group of the Pearl River Delta Region.

Way forward

21. Dr Edgar CHENG assured members that the Council would conduct its work in an open and transparent manner. Comments from members and the public on the outcomes of the engagement process so far and how the Council might take this forward to achieve an effective and participatory SD strategy for Hong Kong were most welcomed. The Chairman informed members that the Administration's

response to the recommendations of the Council would be presented to the Panel on Planning, Lands and Works for consideration in due course. Meanwhile, political parties were invited to give their views on SD to the Council.

III. Any other business

22. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10:30 am.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
20 January 2005