

**Extract from minutes of meeting of
Panel on Welfare Services held on 8 March 2004**

X X X X X X X X

19. On the long term development of social welfare services, DSW said that two strategies would be adopted. Firstly, the Administration would focus on the "social investment" concept as opposed to the "welfare dependence" concept. The objective was to strengthen the capacities and capabilities of individuals, families and communities; foster self-help, mutual help, networking and support; and encourage giving in terms of donations and volunteerism. Such paradigm shifts would encourage self-reliance and self-betterment and facilitate economic and social inclusion and integration at the individual level; and build up human capital and social capital and strengthen intergenerational solidarity and cohesion at the societal level. Secondly, the Administration would engage the third sector in developing new strategic directions in relation to shifting from a purely "service provision" approach to more emphasis on "social enterprise" and "capacity building". Moreover, there would be greater efforts in developing the tripartite partnership between Government, the business community and the third sector in building up social capital. The latter was important for the sustainability of Hong Kong's welfare system which was financed by a low tax regime.

20. Mr WONG Sing-chi was of the view that the Administration should come up with a blueprint for the social welfare policies, as had been done in the past in the form of a five-year plan or ten-year White Paper. Mr WONG urged the Administration to embark on discussions with the welfare sector in mapping out such a blueprint. The Chairman concurred, and further said that the absence of a blueprint for the social welfare policies was a testament of a lack of directions on the part of the Government in that regard.

21. Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (DSHWF) responded that there was no question of the Government lacking strategic directions in the development of social welfare policies, for the reasons already given by DSW in paragraph 19 above and as responded by the Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food during the motion debate on "Drawing up the blueprint for Hong Kong's social welfare policies for the next decade" at the Council meeting on 25 February 2004. The reason why the Administration abandoned the conventional planning mechanism, which sought to match service provision with population level or other rigid

parameters, was because such a mechanism would not serve its purposes having regard to the rapidly changing circumstances. DSHWF assured members that despite the efficiency savings, it did not mean that the Administration would not continue to invest in social welfare and in the services which were required. DSHWF further said that the Administration well understood that it could not develop its strategic directions in a vacuum. To this end, the Administration had already initiated a dialogue with the welfare sector on the future directions of social welfare policies. A conference would be held in the coming April to engage the welfare sector in the discussion on how Hong Kong should move towards a social investment approach in the provision of welfare services. This would be complemented by further discussions, both with the third sector, as envisioned in the 2004 policy agenda, and all relevant stakeholders.

X X X X X X X X