

**For information**

**On 28 November 2006**

## **LEGCO PANEL ON WELFARE SERVICES**

### **Subcommittee on Strategy and Measures to Tackle Family Violence**

#### **Development of “Kwun Tong District Welfare Concourse”**

##### **Purpose**

This paper reports on the development of “Kwun Tong District Welfare Concourse” (“the Concourse”) and outcome of the review of the District Coordinating Committee / Local Committee (DCC/LC) mechanism.

##### **Background**

2. Upon the Social Welfare Department’s (SWD’s) structural re-organisation implemented by phases between September 2001 and March 2002, District Social Welfare Officers (DSWOs) were upgraded with enhanced roles and functions in district welfare planning and service co-ordination. Among other recommendations of the Study to Evaluate the Effectiveness of SWD’s Enhanced District Social Welfare Office Functions (the Study) conducted by the Hong Kong University in 2003, SWD was recommended to review the existing DCC/LC mechanism and consider setting up a district-level welfare council with a view to providing a platform for further improving cross-department, cross-service and cross-sector collaboration in planning the welfare activities gearing towards meeting district needs.

3. To take forward the above recommendations, the Kwun Tong District Social Welfare Office piloted an 18-month project in July 2004 to set up a district welfare co-ordination mechanism named the Concourse. Its aim was to prioritize and address the district-specific welfare-related issues through a cross-sector, cross-service and cross-department platform. In addition, the Concourse was also tasked to review, inter alia, the existing DCC/LC mechanism in terms of its roles and functions, structures and composition, and

draw up recommendations on the way forward of the DCC/LC mechanism and the district welfare co-ordination mechanism.

### **The Concourse**

4. Chaired by the District Social Welfare Officer (Kwun Tong), the Concourse commenced in July 2004 with 24 members, comprising representatives from the Non-Governmental Organizations, Kwun Tong District Council, academics, schools, medical sector, business sector, government departments, community organizations and service users. The terms of reference of the Concourse are at the Annex I.

5. Having reviewed the district specific issues with reference to the district profile and service statistics and after in-depth deliberation, the Concourse selected domestic violence as the priority welfare issue to be tackled in Kwun Tong. A Task Group was formed to take on board a nine-month locality-based project on domestic violence in Sau Mau Ping and Po Tat area (the Sau Po Project) since January 2005. The project aimed at combating domestic violence in the locality by enhancing the early identification of families-at-risk and promoting cross-service collaboration. A series of community education programmes and training sessions were conducted and the procedures for referring battered spouse cases to the Family and Child Protection Services Unit in the district were streamlined. The pilot project of the Concourse was completed in December 2005.

6. As gathered from the findings and feedback, the concerned stakeholders were very positive about the outcomes of the Concourse and the Sau Po Project. Among other observations, cross-sector collaboration was important to facilitate early identification and effective intervention in fighting against domestic violence both at district level and on locality basis. The Concourse provided a forum in the district for cross-service and cross-sector collaboration to prioritise and address district welfare-related issues.

### **Review of DCC/LC Mechanism**

7. As stated in its terms of reference, the Concourse was tasked to review on the existing DCC/LC mechanism in terms of its roles and functions, structure and composition. The review was conducted from July to August 2005 and views were collected from members of the DCC/LC of Kwun Tong

district on the effectiveness of the mechanism. Feedback gathered showed that the existing mechanism of DCC/LC was generally perceived as essential as it was service-specific and covered a wide spectrum of participation from relevant sectors, e.g. welfare, non-profit making, commercial, schools and other local stakeholders. In addition, the composition of around 20 persons in each of the committees under the DCC/LC mechanism and the chairmanship under the District Social Welfare Officers (DSWOs) was also considered appropriate.

## **Outcome and Progress**

8. In view of the experiences and views gathered in relation to the existing DCC/LC mechanism and the Concourse, DSWOs of SWD commenced a series of consultation with stakeholders in the districts through their co-ordinating mechanism, district forums, etc., on the proposed way forward in early 2006. Apart from maintaining the existing mechanism of DCC/LC to continue co-ordinating service-specific issues, it was recommended that a cross-service district welfare co-ordination mechanism should be set up to support DSWOs in formulating overall district welfare strategies and planning. The latter is a separate mechanism to facilitate DSWOs in prioritizing various service needs and enhancing cross-sector and cross-service collaboration in the district. Details on the terms of reference, membership, and frequency of meeting of the proposed district welfare co-ordination mechanism are at Annex II.

9. Consultation with Hong Kong Council of Social Service was also conducted at the central level. The proposal of maintaining the existing DCC/LC mechanism and set-up of the cross-service district welfare co-ordination mechanism was supported by concerned stakeholders.

10. It is targeted to effect the formation of the new mechanism in all 12 SWD districts by phases in the financial years of 2006-07 and 2007-08. Kwun Tong, Yuen Long, Southern, Wong Tai Sin/Sai Kung, Sham Shui Po District Social Welfare Offices will set up the mechanism in 2006-07 while the remaining districts will follow suit in 2007-08. As led by DSWOs and supported by district stakeholders, the formation of the new mechanism in the concerned districts in 2006-07 has been smooth and on schedule with memberships confirmed and meetings conducted.

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**Kwun Tong District Welfare Concourse (The Concourse)**

- (a) To advise and develop the district welfare plan promoting well-being of the community having regard to the population profile as well as social and welfare needs of the district;
- (b) To identify, prioritize, and address district-specific issues through the implementation of district-based joint project/programme by mobilizing the collaborative efforts secured at a cross-service, cross-sector and cross-department level;
- (c) To promote community collaboration/partnership nurturing mutual trust amongst sectors and sustaining vision-guided joint actions;
- (d) To provide a forum for involved parties to assess the district's social and welfare needs through regular monitoring and evaluating on the outcomes of the action plans;
- (e) To enhance the interfacing between different service delivery systems in the district;
- (f) To review the existing DCC / LC mechanism in terms of its roles and functions, structure and composition; and
- (g) To review whether this mechanism is effective to address the district welfare needs / issues.

## **The Proposed District Welfare Co-ordination Mechanism**

### **Terms of Reference**

The proposed district welfare co-ordination mechanism focuses mainly on supporting District Social Welfare Officers (DSWOs) in prioritizing service needs and formulation of overall district welfare strategies and planning. The proposed mechanism<sup>1</sup> will not be directly involved in organizing district activities and programmes. Its major roles and functions are to support and advise the DSWOs in respect of:

- (a) Identification and prioritizing district welfare needs and district-specific issues and addressing district-wide welfare-related issues requiring cross-sector and cross-service intervention strategies;
- (b) Developing overall strategies and district welfare plan and promoting the well-being of the district having regard to the needs and priorities formulated; and
- (c) Promoting cross-sector and cross-service collaboration in the district and enhancing the interface between different service delivery systems in the district.

### **Membership**

The proposed district welfare co-ordination mechanism will be chaired by District Social Welfare Officers with a membership of around 25 or as considered appropriate by the district. The mechanism will consist of representatives from DCC/LC of a district, relevant government departments, schools, local organizations, business sector, other local stakeholders and service users. As the mechanism will deal with overall district welfare and cross-service issues, representatives of more senior level from their organizations, such as agency head or service co-ordinators of NGOs, will be preferred.

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<sup>1</sup> Specific name is to be decided by districts. An example of the name is illustrated by “Kwun Tong District Welfare Concourse”.

## **Frequency of Meeting**

Since the mechanism is expected to mainly focus on strategic level of district welfare issues instead of involving in service activities and programmes, it will usually meet around two times each year to tie in with the district welfare planning cycle currently adopted by DSWOs.