

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)977/08-09
(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/WS

Panel on Welfare Services

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 9 February 2009, at 10:45 am
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

Members present : Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip (Chairman)
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon LI Fung-ying, BBS, JP
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH
Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC
Hon Paul CHAN Mo-po, MH, JP
Hon WONG Sing-chi
Hong WONG Kwok-kin, BBS

Members absent : Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee, SBS, JP

Member attending : Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan

Public Officers attending : Item IV

Mr Matthew CHEUNG Kin-chung, GBS, JP
Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Mr Paul TANG, JP
Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Mr Stephen Fisher, JP
Director of Social Welfare

Miss Eliza LEE
Deputy Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare)1

Miss Ann HON
Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Subventions)

Ms Irene YOUNG
Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare) 1

Ms Zandra MOK
Political Assistant to Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Item V

Ms Carol YIP
Deputy Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare) 2

Ms Betty HO
Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare) 3

Mrs Kathy NG
Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Elderly)

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

Staff in attendance : Mr YICK Wing-kin
Assistant Legal Adviser 8

Miss Florence WONG
Senior Council Secretary (2) 5

Miss Lulu YEUNG
Clerical Assistant (2) 3

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I. Confirmation of minutes

[LC Paper No. CB(2)764/08-09]

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2009 were confirmed.

II. Information paper(s) issued since the last meeting

2. Members noted that no information papers had been issued since the last meeting.

III. Items for discussion at the next meeting

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)765/08-09(01) and (02)]

3. Members agreed to discuss the Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged proposed by the Administration at the next meeting to be held on 9 March 2009 at 10:45 am.

4. The Chairman referred members to a letter from a deputation informing the Panel that it had completed a study on the implementation of Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs) and invited members' views on whether the Panel should discuss the subject matter at the next meeting. Noting that the Administration's review on the implementation of IFSC service mode was underway, members agreed to discuss the implementation of IFSC service mode at the next meeting and receive views from deputations on the subject.

Joint Panel meeting

5. The Chairman sought members' view on holding a joint meeting with the Panel on Health Services to discuss the subject of employment assistance to ex-mentally ill persons.

6. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan suggested extending the scope of discussion to employment assistance to persons with disabilities. Members agreed.

7. Members agreed to hold a joint Panel meeting and the Chairman of the Panel on Health Services should be consulted on the revised scope of discussion. Members agreed further that members of the Panel on Manpower and the Panel on Education would be invited to join the discussion of the issue.

(Post-meeting note : As the issue falls mainly within the policy purview of the Panel on Manpower, it was agreed between the Chairmen of this Panel, the Panel on Health Services and the Panel on Manpower that the issue be taken up by the Panel on Manpower; and a joint meeting between the

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Panel on Manpower and this Panel could be held if necessary. Members of the Panel on Health Services will be invited to join the discussion of the issue once a meeting date has been confirmed.)

IV. Review Report on the Lump Sum Grant Subvention System

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)765/08-09(03) and (04), CB(2)783/08-09(01) and Review Report on the Lump Sum Grant Subvention System provided by the Administration]

8. At the invitation of the Chairman, Secretary for Labour and Welfare (SLW) said that the Administration was pleased to note that the Lump Sum Grant Independent Review Committee (IRC) had come to the conclusion that "the principles of the Lump Sum Grant Subvention System (LSGSS) are sound" and that "the system is worth retaining, and every effort should be made to improve it", as set out in its Review Report on the Lump Sum Grant Subvention System (the Review Report). This was consistent with the Administration's own assessment. The Administration agreed with IRC that the LSGSS could be improved and accepted in principle all its 36 recommendations. The Administration would take them forward in concert with the welfare sector and seek funding approval, with a view to introducing most of the new initiatives by the end of 2009. SLW then highlighted the Administration's response to the Review Report and its recommendations, details of which were set out in the Administration's paper.

Overall assessment

9. While welcoming the Administration's acceptance of all the 36 recommendations made by IRC, Mr WONG Kwok-hing enquired if the Administration would bid for additional resources under the 2009-2010 Budget to take forward the new initiatives.

10. SLW replied that the Administration would seek additional resources in accordance with the established mechanisms to introduce the new initiatives.

11. Referring to the Administration's paper, Ms LI Fung-ying noted that the Administration "agreed" with some recommendations in the Review Report, and it "agreed in principle" to some other recommendations. She enquired about the material difference in the Administration's response. Ms LI requested the Administration to provide a concrete timetable for and priorities of implementing the new initiatives.

12. SLW explained that the Administration had agreed to take forward the more straightforward recommendations, such as those having no resource implications, as soon as practicable and hoped to introduce most of the new

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initiatives by the end of 2009. The Administration could only agree in principle to take forward some of the other recommendations having resource and other significant implications, as it had to seek funding approval as necessary and consult the sector on how best these recommendations might be taken forward. To facilitate members' monitoring of the implementation of recommendations, Ms LI requested the Administration to provide the specific implementation timetable after the meeting. SLW said that the Administration would advise members of the timetable at an appropriate time and that, as mentioned in the Administration's paper, the Administration aimed at introducing most of the initiatives by the end of 2009.

13. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan was unconvinced of the conclusion drawn by IRC that the principles of LSGSS were sound, given that the system had created problems of poor staff morale, high turnover rate and deteriorating service quality in the welfare sector. Hence, he cast doubt about the effectiveness of the 36 recommendations in addressing the problems in the welfare sector.

14. Echoing Mr LEE's views, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung considered that the 36 recommendations made by IRC were premised on the principle of "flexibility", the golden rule that the Administration insisted to retain, which in fact had created many staff morale issues in the welfare sector. He requested the Administration to critically overhaul the system.

15. SLW responded that the Administration agreed with IRC that LSGSS was worth retaining although it could be improved, and it accepted in principle all the 36 recommendations. The Administration would endeavour to take concrete measures to further improve the system. For instance, the Administration agreed in principle to the recommendation about setting up a Social Welfare Development Fund to support training and capacity enhancement initiatives, and was exploring possible sources of funding, having regard to the Government's overall funding priorities.

16. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che said that the Review Report had fully reflected the grave concerns raised by the stakeholders since the implementation of LSGSS. He asked if the Administration would consider scrapping the system.

17. SLW reiterated that as stated in the Review Report, the system was worth retaining, and every effort should be made to improve it. Hence, the Administration would retain the LSGSS and take forward the recommendations in the Review Report to enhance it in concert with the welfare system. SLW added that the 36 recommendations were inter-related and could complement each other in bringing about improvements to the system.

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Staffing arrangements

18. Mr WONG Kwok-hing expressed concern about the malpractice of 19 subvented NGOs for not making corresponding salary adjustment to their staff after receiving supplementary subvention as a result of the 2008-2009 civil service pay adjustment. Pointing out that the 19 NGOs concerned had not used the additional fund solely on salary adjustment according to its dedicated purpose approved by the Finance Committee, Mr WONG asked if the Administration would consider clawing back the balance of the subvention and introducing measures to prevent the recurrence of similar situation.

19. SLW said that it was stated clearly in the Review Report that as a good management practice, NGOs should spend the additional funding provided in line with the civil service pay adjustments on staff in subvented services. In his reply to an oral question raised at the Council meeting on 4 February 2009, he had advised that subvented organisations in the public sector, including the higher education institutions, the Hospital Authority and welfare NGOs, had the autonomy to devise their human resources policies. SLW envisaged that when the Best Practice Manual for NGOs on various management issues was developed and put in place by the welfare sector, NGOs would be expected to benchmark their practices against the manual in various areas including human resource policies. For instance, as a good management practice for NGOs, the additional funding provided in line with the civil service pay adjustments should be spent on staff in subvented services. SLW added that if NGOs were found to have deviated significantly from the good management practices without justifications, such that service quality was adversely affected, the Administration might consider disclosing such information publicly. With the enhancement in transparency, NGOs would be put under pressure to observe the best practice.

20. Noting that some subvented NGOs had not spent the additional funding provided in line with the civil service pay adjustment on staff in subvented services in the past two years, Ms LI Fung-ying was of the view that the Administration should take action to ensure that NGOs would spend the additional funding solely on staff. Otherwise, the Administration misled the Finance Committee when it invited members to approve the proposal on civil service pay adjustment which contained the additional subvention amounts. Ms LI asked about the Administration's position on the issues of concern raised by frontline staff as elaborated in the Review Report, and the corresponding actions to be taken.

21. SLW reiterated that under the spirit of LSGSS, NGOs had the autonomy to devise their human resource policies. Nevertheless, he expected that NGOs would adhere to the Best Practice Manual as it would be developed by the welfare sector. As he had mentioned earlier, NGOs would be under pressure to

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observe the Best Practice Manual if significant non-compliance affecting service quality were to be made public.

22. Having regard to the widespread discontent about "unequal pay for equal work" in the welfare sector, Mr WONG Sing-chi urged the Administration to accord priority to drawing up measures to improve staff morale in the sector. SLW responded that the Administration attached great importance to the staff morale issue and believed that the IRC's recommendations relating to staffing arrangements which the Administration had agreed to take forward could address staff concerns.

23. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan was concerned about the excessive reserves accumulated by individual NGOs. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che said that as the Provident Fund provisions should be spent on commitments for provident fund, the Administration should take immediate action to state explicitly to NGOs not to keep excessive reserves for the purpose. He did not see the need for the Administration taking action after the Best Practice Manual had come into place.

24. In respect of the concerns about the excessive reserves kept by NGOs, SLW said that as recommended by IRC, the Government would make available an actuarial service for NGOs to assess their ability to meet snapshot staff commitments. If the result of the actuarial study affirmed that the NGO was capable of meeting snapshot staff commitments, the NGO concerned would have a sound basis for considering more progressive policies in enhancing the remuneration package for staff.

Best Practice Manual for NGOs

25. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan took the view that the Best Practice Manual was the primary initiative put forward by IRC to improve the corporate governance and human resource policies of NGOs. He saw no reasons why subvented NGOs should not strictly adhere to the Best Practice Manual as it involved the proper use of public money. Instead of only publicising the names of those NGOs which had not followed the non-binding Best Practice Manual, Mr LEE strongly urged the Administration to introduce a punitive system for non-compliance with the Best Practice Manual. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung, Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che, Mr WONG Sing-chi, Ms LI Fung-ying and Mr Ronny TONG expressed similar views. They were of the view that the Best Practice Manual should be binding on NGOs to ensure the effectiveness and compliance of the manual.

26. SLW said that the reconstituted Lump Sum Grant Steering Committee (LSGSC) would work with the sector in drawing up a Best Practice Manual for NGOs on various management issues as recommended by IRC. Should NGOs deviate significantly from the guidelines set out in the Best Practice Manual at the expense of service quality, the information would be made public. This

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would exert pressure on the NGOs concerned. Nevertheless, he would convey members' concerns to the reconstituted LSGSC for consideration. SLW further said that SWD might cease the subventions to NGOs if the NGO concerned did not meet the performance standards. In addition, NGOs with a poor track record would be in a less favourable position when they submitted bids for new services. Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare added that while upholding the principle of flexibility under LSGSS and that NGOs were responsible for their own internal management, SWD would take appropriate actions against NGOs for non-compliance with the performance standards and conditions as stipulated in the Funding and Service Agreements (FSAs).

27. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che considered that it would be difficult, if not impossible, for the welfare sector to reach a consensus and develop the Best Practice Manual, having regard to the fact that NGOs had developed their own management policies since the implementation of LSGSS.

28. Mr Ronny TONG expressed concern about the composition of the reconstituted LSGSC. In his view, representatives of service users should be included.

29. The Chairman said that the Administration should include representatives from staff unions in drawing up the Best Practice Manual. Consideration should also be given to allowing staff members to take vote to indicate their support for the manual.

30. SLW said that LSGSC would be reconstituted to strengthen its role and composition. Chaired by the Director of Social Welfare (DSW) and comprising representatives of the Government, NGOs' management, staff unions and service users, the reconstituted LSGSC would also include independent members from the community. A working group could be formed under the reconstituted LSGSC for developing the Best Practice Manual, and management consultants could be commissioned to assist in the task, if necessary.

31. The Chairman cast doubt on the effectiveness of IRC's 36 recommendations to improve LSGSS as the system per se was proven ineffective. He considered that the only viable way to enhance the effectiveness of the recommendations was to include punishment provisions in the Best Practice Manual, which was strongly demanded by members present at the meeting. The Chairman added that consideration should be given to imposing different levels of penalties on NGOs commensurate with the seriousness of the non-compliance acts.

32. As regards the concern on ways to enhance the compliance of the Best Practice Manual, SLW said that it would be a matter for the reconstituted LSGSC to consider in the course of drawing up the manual. SLW assured members that

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he would convey members' concerns to the reconstituted LSGSC for consideration.

Financial issues

33. Mr WONG Sing-chi said that the financial difficulties faced by most NGOs were largely attributed to the reduced LSG provision amounted to \$452 million as a result of the Enhanced Productivity Programme (EPP) and Efficiency Savings (ES) exercise. In addition, to meet the snapshot staff commitment, NGOs tended to adopt a more conservative approach in controlling staff costs and accumulating reserves for the purpose. He asked if the reduced subvention would be returned to the welfare sector. Mr WONG further sought clarification on whether additional recurrent funding would be provided for small NGOs.

34. SLW stressed that EPP and ES were across-the-board exercises in the whole public sector, including the Government and subvented sectors. To help NGOs strengthen their administrative capacity, the Administration had provided an additional \$200 million recurrent funding to NGOs under LSGSS from 2008-2009 onwards. As regards the support for small NGOs, SLW said that the Administration would take on IRC's recommendation and set up a help desk to provide one-stop service and management advice to small NGOs and to facilitate their collaborative efforts. To help small NGOs develop, SWD would make available additional resources for them to strengthen their administrative and professional support. Small NGOs might apply for grants up to \$300,000 (or 10% of its LSG, whichever was lower) each year for a total of four years. SLW further said that the Administration would welcome joint proposals from NGOs if NGOs considered that doing so would enhance their competitiveness in bidding new services.

35. Mr Alan LEONG opined that individual NGOs decided to join the LSG subvention mode based on the amount of LSG calculated in 2000, i.e. before EPP and ES took place. The reduction of LSG provisions as a result of EPP and ES had posed financial difficulties to NGOs. Mr LEONG said that the Administration should consider reimbursing the deducted provisions to NGOs.

36. SLW reiterated that the targets of EPP and ES were set across-the-board in the whole public sector. SLW added that, meeting these targets, many NGOs had re-engineered their services to bring about improvements with the savings generated.

Other concerns

37. With reference to the terms of reference of IRC, Mr Alan LEONG said that IRC was not tasked to study the impact of LSGSS on the service quality

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before and after the inception of the LSG subvention mode. Mr LEONG asked whether the Administration would conduct studies in this regard.

38. SLW responded that IRC had made reference to objective assessments on the services provided to users before and after the implementation of LSGSS. As stated in the Review Report, since the implementation of LSGSS which provided flexibility for service re-engineering, some NGOs had enhanced their services through streamlining work processes, re-prioritising services and redeploying resources.

39. Mr Alan LEONG further enquired if the Administration had collected feedback from the service users on the subvention mode. SLW replied that SWD collected feedback from users from time to time and LSGSC also comprised representatives of user groups.

40. Mr Alan LEONG enquired which body was responsible for conducting periodic review on the changing social needs and drawing up the long-term planning of welfare services. In his view, collaboration with frontline staff on welfare planning was crucial. SLW replied that the Social Welfare Advisory Committee was conducting a study on long-term welfare planning, whereas the Elderly Commission, the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee and the Women's Commission would continue to review services in specific areas in the light of the changing needs.

41. Expressing concern about the service quality of new services, Mr LEE Cheuk-yan asked about the criteria for awarding new services under competitive bids.

42. DSW said that SWD would take into account the service quality and track records of the NGOs concerned, as well as the added value of the services in considering service proposals. NGOs were not competing on costs as the funding provision was fixed. DSW added that except for manpower requirements specified in the invitation for proposals, for instance, those relating to healthcare staff in the residential care homes for the elderly, SWD imposed no restrictions on staffing in the service proposals.

Motion moved by Mr LEE Cheuk-yan and Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che

43. The Chairman invited members to refer to the motion intended to be moved by Mr LEE Cheuk-yan and Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che. The wording of the motion was tabled at the meeting, as follows -

That this Panel expresses regret that the Review Report on the Lump Sum Grant Subvention System fails to propose direct solutions to the problems arising from the system, and expresses

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dissatisfaction with the Government's total acceptance of the entire review report without further soliciting in detail the feedback from various stakeholders in the sector; this Panel now urges the Government to address expeditiously the problems derived from the implementation of the Lump Sum Grant Subvention System, implement concrete measures which are premised on maintaining service quality to resolve directly the problems in the social welfare sector such as "unequal pay for equal work", "chaotic staffing establishment", "low staff morale" and "failure of the grassroots to obtain appropriate services due to increases in service charges", enhance monitoring of the operation of all subvented services and report the progress to this Panel regularly. (Translation)

44. Taking into account that IRC had devoted considerable time and efforts to the review of LSGSS, Mr WONG Sing-chi considered that the first part of the first sentence should be deleted from the motion. Mr Paul CHAN expressed a similar view.

45. While recognising the efforts made by IRC, Mr LEE Cheuk-yan remained of the view that the Review Report had not thoroughly resolved the problems arising from the LSGSS. Nevertheless, Mr LEE suggested to amend the motion as follows –

That this Panel considers that the Review Report on the Lump Sum Grant Subvention System fails to thoroughly resolve the problems arising from the system, and expresses dissatisfaction with the Government's total acceptance of the entire review report without further soliciting in detail the feedback from various stakeholders in the sector; this Panel now urges the Government to address expeditiously the problems derived from the implementation of the Lump Sum Grant Subvention System, implement concrete measures which are premised on maintaining service quality to resolve directly the problems in the social welfare sector such as "unequal pay for equal work", "chaotic staffing establishment", "low staff morale" and "failure of the grassroots to obtain appropriate services due to increases in service charges", enhance monitoring of the operation of all subvented services and report the progress to this Panel regularly. (Translation)

46. The Chairman put the motion to vote. Six members voted for the motion and no member voted against it. The Chairman declared that the motion was carried.

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V. District-based Scheme on Carer Training
[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)765/08-09(05) and (06)]

47. Deputy Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare) 2 (DS(W)2) briefed members on the background for launching of the District-based Trial Scheme on Carer Training (the Trial Scheme) and the latest progress in extending the Trial Scheme as detailed in the Administration's paper.

48. Mr WONG Sing-chi noted that District Elderly Community Centres (DECCs) were invited to apply for one-off seed money of \$50,000 each for organising elderly care training programmes and providing carer services. He was concerned that the additional resources were provided to the existing service providers, instead of enhancing support for the carers of elders.

49. DS(W)2 said that in addition to equipping individuals with basic elderly care skills and a caring mindset to prepare for an ageing population, the Trial Scheme also aimed to encourage partnership and capitalise on the synergy between DECCs and community organisations with a view to widening the community network for assisting elders and carers. Some community organisations like women organisations, elder self-help organisations and offices of District Councillors had partnered with the participating DECCs in the organisation of carer training programmes and provision of carer services. Besides, SWD had injected additional \$42 million and \$18 million to 156 elderly centres in January and June 2008 respectively for strengthening their manpower provision in order to enhance the support services for elders in the community and their carers. She added that DECCs, residential care homes and Day Care Centres/Units provided not only residential or day care services to the elders but also an array of support services to their carers, including counselling, skill training, provision of information, and respite residential and day care services for elders, thereby rendering relief to carers.

50. While welcoming the launch of the Trial Scheme, Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che expressed concern about the sustainability of the services and enquired about the arrangements after the seed money of \$50,000 was used up by the participating DECCs.

51. DS(W)2 said that the provision of seed money was to facilitate participating DECCs to kick off elderly care training programmes. Should DECCs wish to continue with the training programmes on a recurrent basis after the seed money was used up, the programmes would be funded under the recurrent provisions of the respective NGOs. Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Elderly) (AD/SW(E)) added that elderly care training programmes were within the scope of services to be provided by DECCs stipulated in FSAs.

52. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che took the view that carer-helpers were playing an

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important role in supporting elders to age in the community owing to insufficient residential care places for the elderly. Mr CHEUNG proposed to provide subsidies to carer-helpers for those elders who were on the waiting list for admission to subsidised residential care homes for the elderly. Echoing Mr CHEUNG's view, Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung expressed concern about the insufficient subsidised residential care places. He was of the view that the provision of training to the carers alone could not solve the problems arising from insufficient subsidised residential care places.

53. DS(W)2 advised that EC was studying issues relating to the long-term planning of the provision of residential care services for the elderly. The Administration would work with EC to explore how to promote further the development of quality residential care services in meeting the long-term care needs of the elderly.

54. Mr Ronny TONG queried about the need to train 1 500 carer-helpers a year and whether the carer services were fee charging. In response, DS(W)2 said that while many DECCs had provided free carer services, some had developed fee-charging services, and the participants of the training programmes included family members who needed to take care of elders at home and individuals who aspired to become carer-helpers. In the light of the ageing population, DS(W)2 envisaged that the skills and knowledge acquired by the participants would be useful to themselves, their family members, the neighbourhood and the community.

55. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan wondered why some DECCs were allowed to develop fee-charging carer services. He cautioned that this would give rise to the employer and employee relationship, which departed from the objective of the Trial Scheme.

56. DS(W)2 responded that the issue of developing fee-charging carer services had been considered at the EC Working Group. While the objective of the Trial Scheme was to further enhance support to elders and their carers at the district level and equip individuals with a caring mindset to prepare for ageing population through training programmes, it would not rule out the possibility of engaging those who had completed the training programmes to work as carer-helpers to provide carer services. The Administration noted that some participants who had completed the training courses had joined the pool of carer-helpers. This could supplement the existing community care services for elders, and provide another form of care to elders and their carers. This would also facilitate the development of social enterprises. DS(W)2 said that the Administration welcomed DECCs to develop different service modes according to their district characteristics, users' needs and customers' affordability.

57. As regards the fee charging arrangements, AD/SW(E) said that DECCs

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had adopted different modes for providing carer-helper services to customers. The scope of services included escort service, temporary care, accompanying elders for outdoor or leisure activities and medical appointments, etc. Citing the provision of escort service by a DECC as an example, she advised that \$45 per hour was charged for a minimum of two-hour services every time, and the carer-helper concerned was paid for the service and covered by insurance.

58. The Chairman was of the view that the objective of the Trial Scheme should be spelt out clearly. If its primary objective was to equip individuals with basic elderly care skills and prepare them to work as volunteers, free services should be provided for the elders. Should DECCs be encouraged to develop fee-charging carer services, training programmes for paid carer-helpers should be taken forward under a separate scheme. He also cautioned that the Administration should study the legal liabilities incurred by DECCs if the carer services were fee-charging and the carer-helpers were paid.

59. Expressing similar views, Mr LEE Cheuk-yan said that he did not object to developing fee-charging carer services by DECCs as this would create new job opportunities. However, this should be launched under a separate scheme and the carer-helpers should be paid at a reasonable wage level. He could not accept that DECCs deployed volunteers to provide fee-charging services, which, in his view, was a form of exploitation. Mr LEE requested the Administration to provide information on the number of DECCs which had developed or planned to develop fee-charging carer services and the details of the fee structure.

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60. DS(W)2 said that DECCs were required to plough back any revenue generated from the Trial Scheme to carer training and carer services. She reiterated that flexibility given to DECCs was meant to help develop different service modes according to the district characteristics, participants' preference, users' needs and customers' affordability such that the community could be benefited as a whole. Nevertheless, the Administration would take into account members' views in the next round of review.

VI. Any other business

61. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:50 pm.