

Panel on Welfare Services

List of outstanding items for discussion
(position as at 11 October 2010)

Proposed timing for discussion

1. Report of the Subcommittee on Guardianship and Custody of the Law Reform Commission

At the meeting on 8 February 2010, the Administration briefed the Panel on its position on the recommendations made by the Law Reform Commission in the Report on Guardianship of Children and Report on International Parental Child Abduction.

As for the Report on Custody and Access released on 7 March 2005, the Administration advised that it is studying the recommendations carefully in consultation with relevant stakeholders and will consider whether and how to take forward the relevant recommendations.

To be decided

2. Infirm care in non-hospital setting

The Administration consulted the Panel in December 2004 on a proposal to launch a trial scheme to provide infirm care places for medically stable elders in a non-hospital setting. Various options are being explored, including upgrading some of the places in subvented residential care homes for the elderly to provide infirm care. The Administration will report progress in due course.

To be decided

3. Social security assistance for needy elderly

At the meeting on 14 October 2008, Hon WONG Kwok-hing and Hon WONG Kwok-kin proposed to discuss financial assistance and support for poor elders, including providing income supplement for poor elders and implementing a universal retirement protection scheme.

To be decided

Proposed timing for discussion

4. Charitable fund-raising activities

The existing framework for the monitoring of charitable fund-raising activities was discussed at the meeting on 11 June 2007. Members agreed to further discuss the matter in the next session, especially the monitoring of the use of income generated from public charitable fund-raising activities.

Pending completion of the review by the Law Reform Commission

The Administration has advised that the subject matter involved various bureaux and departments. As the Law Reform Commission is now conducting a review of the law and regulatory framework relating to charities in Hong Kong, the Administration has suggested deferring Panel discussion to after the completion of the review.

5. Review of Old Age Allowance

The Chief Executive announced on 24 October 2008 that Old Age Allowance ("OAA") would be increased to \$1,000 a month under the existing system, and the proposal of introducing a means test mechanism to OAA would be shelved for the time being. The Panel was briefed on the relevant funding proposal on 10 November 2008. Members were advised that the Administration was conducting a review on the permissible limit of absence from Hong Kong under OAA, which was expected to be completed by end 2008/early 2009. It would revert to the Panel on the findings of the review in due course.

To be decided

Proposed timing for discussion

6. Review of the system for processing applications for Disability Allowance ("DA") under the Social Security Allowance ("SSA") Scheme

Item proposed by Hon WONG Kwok-hing and Hon WONG Kwok-kin at the meeting on 14 October 2008. Members are concerned about the eligibility criteria for DA, system for processing DA application and the appeal mechanism.

To be decided

Hon WONG Kwok-hing raised an oral question on DA at the Council meeting on 5 November 2008 and enquired about the timing for discussing the item at the Panel meeting on 11 May 2009.

Hon WONG Kwok-hing requested the Panel to discuss the item vide his letter dated 30 October 2009 (LC Paper No. CB(2)183/09-10(01)).

As there was a judicial review against the decision of the Administration in respect of a former applicant's eligibility for DA, and the applicant may appeal against the court ruling in the judicial review, the Administration would like to put on hold the Panel discussion for the time being.

7. Child fatality review mechanism

At the meeting on 22 October 2009, Hon Albert HO expressed concern about the cases of children who died of non-natural causes. Members were advised that the Social Welfare Department ("SWD") had set up a Review Panel to review child death cases captured by the Coroners' Court in 2006 and 2007 and would publish the first annual report in the last quarter of 2009. The Panel released its first Report in January 2010.

1st quarter of 2011

At the meeting on 12 July 2010, the Panel was briefed on the progress of the Pilot Project on Child Fatality Review ("Pilot Project"). The Administration advised that the final report with the evaluation of the Pilot Project would be available in early 2011 and a report would be made to the Panel thereafter. Members agreed that representatives of relevant departments and deputations would be invited to give views when the subject was discussed.

Proposed timing for discussion

8. Long-term social welfare planning

At the meeting on 22 October 2009, Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che enquired about the long-term development planning for social welfare in Hong Kong. The Administration advised that a Task Group on Welfare Planning was formed under the Social Welfare Advisory Committee ("SWAC") to take forward the study. SWAC was conducting a consultation with the sector and relevant stakeholders on the long-term planning of social welfare development in Hong Kong with a view to working out concrete proposals.

To be decided

The Panel held two special meetings on 5 and 26 June 2010 to receive views from deputations on the subject matter. SWAC advised that it would conduct two further consultations in July 2010 to receive views from the sector and relevant stakeholders. The Administration would revert to the Panel on how it would take forward the recommendations of SWAC in due course.

9. Development of social enterprises

The Social Enterprise Advisory Committee was set up on 15 January 2010. The Administration will revert to the Panel on the way forward to promote the development of social enterprises in due course.

To be decided

Proposed timing for discussion

10. Review of the one-year-continuous-residence requirement under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance ("CSSA") Scheme and SSA Scheme

At the meeting on 12 July 2010, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung expressed concern about the recent High Court ruling on the judicial review of the one-year-continuous-residence requirement under the CSSA Scheme and proposed to follow up the matter as well as the residence requirement for OAA applicants. Members were advised that SWD had shelved, with immediate effect, the one-year-continuous-residence requirement in handling applications for CSSA. The OAA applications were processed in accordance with the existing arrangement.

To be decided

In anticipation of the appeal proceedings, members agreed to revisit the need to discuss the matter in due course.

11. Provision of barrier free access and facilities for persons with disabilities

Hon Emily LAU wrote to the Panel on 2 October 2010 and proposed to discuss the findings and recommendations of the Formal Investigation Report: Accessibility in Publicly Accessible Premises released by the Equal Opportunities Commission in June 2010.

To be decided