

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)845/14-15

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Ref : CB2/HS/1/12

Subcommittee on Poverty

**Minutes of the twenty-fourth meeting
held on Tuesday, 16 December 2014, at 2:00 pm
in Conference Room 1 of the Legislative Council Complex**

- Members present** : Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee, SBS, JP (Chairman)
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, GBS, JP
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC
Hon CHAN Kin-por, BBS, JP
Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
Hon Frankie YICK Chi-ming
Hon Charles Peter MOK, JP
Hon CHAN Chi-chuen
Hon CHAN Yuen-han, SBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, BBS, MH, JP
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki
Hon KWOK Wai-keung
Hon TANG Ka-piu, JP
- Members absent** : Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, SBS, JP
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che
Hon WONG Yuk-man

**Public Officers : Item I
attending**

Ms Gracie FOO, JP
Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs (1)
Home Affairs Bureau

Ms Candy LAU
Principal Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs
(Community Care Fund)
Home Affairs Bureau

Mr David LEUNG
Assistant Secretary for Education (Corporate Services)
Education Bureau

Miss Cecilla LI
Assistant Director (Elderly)
Social Welfare Department

Dr LAW Chi-kwong, GBS, JP
Chairperson, Community Care Fund Task Force under the
Commission on Poverty

Item II

Mr Matthew CHEUNG, GBS, JP
Secretary for Labour and Welfare
Labour and Welfare Bureau

Ms Jane LEE
Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare
(Poverty)
Labour and Welfare Bureau

Ms Reddy NG, JP
Principal Economist (5)
Economic Analysis and Business Facilitation Unit
Financial Secretary's Office

**Clerk in attendance : Mr Colin CHUI
Chief Council Secretary (2) 4**

Staff in attendance : Miss Kay CHU
Council Secretary (2) 4

Miss Maggie CHIU
Legislative Assistant (2) 4

Action

I. Community Care Fund

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)451/14-15(01) to (02)]

The Subcommittee deliberated (index of proceedings attached at **Annex**).

II. Poverty situation in 2013

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)451/14-15(03) to (04)]

2. The Subcommittee deliberated (index of proceedings attached at **Annex**).

III. Extension of period of work of the Subcommittee

[LC Paper No. CB(2)317/14-15(03)]

3. Members supported the proposed continuation of the Subcommittee's work for about 12 months until 31 January 2016. Members noted that the proposal would be submitted to the House Committee for endorsement.

IV. Item(s) for discussion at the next meeting

[LC Paper No. CB(2)451/14-15(05)]

4. Members agreed that the Subcommittee should discuss the following subjects at the next meeting scheduled for Monday, 12 January 2015 at 4:30pm –

- (a) women in poverty; and
- (b) ways to enhance the employment opportunities of people in poverty by promoting support for community economy.

Action

V. Any other business

5. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 4:31pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
11 February 2015

**Proceedings of the twenty-fourth meeting of the
Subcommittee on Poverty
on Tuesday, 16 December 2014, at 2:00 pm
in Conference Room 1 of the Legislative Council Complex**

Time marker	Speaker(s)	Subject(s)	Action required
<i>Agenda item I – Community Care Fund</i>			
000625 - 001225	Chairman Admin CCF Task Force	<p>Briefing on the work progress of the Community Care Fund ("CCF") by the Administration and the CCF Task Force under the Commission on Poverty ("CoP").</p> <p>The Administration and the CCF Task Force added that CoP had recently approved the expansion of the Elderly Dental Assistance Programme ("the EDA Programme") to cover elders who were Old Age Living Allowance ("OALA") recipients. The expansion would be implemented by phases, starting with those aged 80 or above in the first phase to be rolled out in the second half of 2015.</p>	
001226 - 001733	Chairman Mr TANG Ka-piu CCF Task Force	<p>Mr TANG Ka-piu enquired –</p> <p>(a) whether and when CCF would provide rent allowance for poor households who were living in private rental housing; and</p> <p>(b) whether the CCF Task Force had expected the "Pilot scheme on living allowance for carers of the elderly persons from low income families" ("the Pilot scheme on carer allowance") to have only 375 beneficiaries after implementing for nearly half a year.</p> <p>The CCF Task Force responded that –</p> <p>(a) the provision of rent allowance by CCF would be in conflict with the existing government policies; and</p> <p>(b) the relative low participation rate was understandable as carers were invited to join the Pilot scheme on carer allowance by phases. The CCF Task Force would keep in view the progress of the scheme.</p>	
001734 - 002329	Chairman Mr LEE Cheuk-yan CCF Task Force Admin	<p>Mr LEE Cheuk-yan asked if the CCF Task Force–</p> <p>(a) would consider taking an interim measure to help low-income working families before the</p>	

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		<p>implementation of the Low-income Working Family Allowance ("LIFA") Scheme in 2016;</p> <p>(b) would include carers of persons with disabilities in the Pilot scheme on carer allowance; and</p> <p>(c) had examined causes of the low participation rate of the Pilot scheme on carer allowance.</p> <p>The CCF Task Force responded that –</p> <p>(a) it appealed to the Finance Committee ("FC") to approve the funding proposal of the LIFA Scheme as soon as possible. As there would be a lead time of 15-18 months for launching LIFA after obtaining FC's approval, the CCF Task Force would explore an interim one-off measure to help needy families before the launch of the LIFA Scheme. However, any interim measure based on an existing scheme would not exactly match the coverage of the LIFA Scheme; and</p> <p>(b) it would continue to explore the feasibility of providing a living allowance for carers of persons with disabilities. Consideration would be given to eligibility criteria, such as the degree of disabilities of persons being taken care of by carers, and the support of the case management network in the community.</p> <p>Regarding the participation rate of the Pilot scheme on carer allowance, the Administration advised that there were three phases of invitation of participation for the scheme and the third phase of invitation had not yet completed. Among the 2 000 applications received, more than 800 were vetted as eligible for the allowance while over 800 were undergoing a vetting process. The target of 2 000 beneficiaries was expected to be reached soon.</p>	
002330 - 003047	Chairman Deputy Chairman CCF Task Force	<p>The Deputy Chairman was of the view that –</p> <p>(a) the Pilot scheme on carer allowance should not affect the home care and community care services received by elderly persons who were being taken care of by carers;</p> <p>(b) the threshold for the assistance programme on "training subsidy for children from</p>	

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		<p>low-income families who are on the waiting list for subvented pre-school rehabilitation services" should be relaxed. In view of the long waiting time for child assessment service in public medical institutions, the CCF Task Force should consider providing a one-off subsidy for children with autism or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder ("ADHD") to procure child assessment service in the private medical sector;</p> <p>(c) the utilization rate of assistance programmes relating to ethnic minorities ("EMs") was too low. To facilitate the employment of EMs, the CCF Task Force should provide more assistance and the Employees Retraining Board ("ERB") should provide vocational training courses regardless of the number of participants; and</p> <p>(d) CCF should provide special allowance for needy families before the launch of the LIFA Scheme.</p> <p>The CCF Task Force responded that –</p> <p>(a) the Pilot scheme on carer allowance did not necessarily affect the home care and community care services received by the elderly persons concerned;</p> <p>(b) it would explore the suggestion on providing a one-off subsidy to facilitate the children, who were at the age of zero to six with autism and ADHD, to procure child assessment service in the private medical sector; and</p> <p>(c) regarding the low utilization rate of the EM related programmes, one of the reasons was that EMs could not spare time to attend the training courses as they needed to work. Besides, the Special Needs Groups Task Force under CoP had discussed with ERB, and the latter had accordingly launched condensed language courses and motivate EMs to spare time to join training courses. Comments on the vocational training courses for EMs would be relayed to ERB.</p>	
003048 - 003633	Chairman Miss CHAN Yuen-han CCF Task Force Admin	<p>Miss CHAN Yuen-han was of the view that –</p> <p>(a) the CCF Task Force should take interim measures to relieve the financial burden of low-income working families before the</p>	

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		<p>launch of the LIFA Scheme;</p> <p>(b) some existing assistance programmes for students with special educational needs ("SEN") did not cover the SEN students studying in direct subsidy schools; and</p> <p>(c) the Administration should appeal for donations from the business sector to CCF.</p> <p>The CCF Task Force responded that –</p> <p>(a) it would explore an interim one-off measure to help needy families when more details of the LIFA Scheme were available. The Administration added that it would facilitate the CCF Task Force to follow up in this regard;</p> <p>(b) it would explore the suggestions on providing assistance to SEN students, including those studying in direct subsidy schools; and</p> <p>(c) given that CCF was not set up on a matching basis, the Administration had no plan to appeal for new donations for CCF from the business sector. However, participation and donations from the business sector would be welcomed. The Administration added that it had already received all pledged donations of about \$1.8 billion. It would ensure the proper use of the funding of CCF.</p>	
003634 - 003843	Chairman Mr TAM Yiu-chung CCF Task Force	<p>Mr TAM Yiu-chung suggested that CCF should provide transport subsidy for carers of persons with disabilities and carers of elderly persons.</p> <p>The CCF Task Force responded that the launch of a new pilot scheme should be in line with relevant government policies. It had no plan to consider the suggestion at this stage.</p>	
003844 - 004433	Chairman Mr Albert HO CCF Task Force	<p>Mr Albert HO asked about –</p> <p>(a) the selection criteria for and the review frequency of cancer drugs covered by the assistance programme on "subsidy for patients of Hospital Authority ("HA") for specified self-financed cancer drugs which have not yet been brought into the Samaritan Fund ("SF")" ("subsidy on cancer drugs") ; and</p> <p>(b) whether CCF would consider providing</p>	

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		<p>one-off subsidies for the needy to supplement their expenses on operation consumables and colorectal cancer screening conducted in private hospitals or clinics given the long waiting time for related medical examination in public hospitals.</p> <p>The CCF Task Force advised that –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) under the programme on subsidy on cancer drugs, the nine cancer drugs were selected based on medical scientific evidence while the HA Drug Formulary would be reviewed at least once a year; and (b) the assistance programme on "subsidy for HA patients who marginally fall outside the SF safety net for the use of SF subsidized drugs" had already covered the costs of medical consumables. Regarding the long waiting time for medical examination in public hospitals, the health care policy should be examined to solve the problem. 	
004434 - 004929	Chairman Admin CCF Task Force	<p>The Chairman asked whether –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) any existing non-official members of the CCF Task Force had served for more than six years in the CCF Task Force and served as a member on more than six boards or committees at the same time ("the six-six rule"); and (b) the Administration would consider appointing representatives of beneficiaries of CCF's assistance programmes and of concern groups on poverty to the CCF Task Force. <p>The Administration advised that none of the existing non-official members broke the six-six rule. The CCF Task Force responded that organization of focus group meetings was a more effective channel to collect views of beneficiaries.</p>	
004930 - 005554	Chairman Deputy Chairman CCF Task Force	<p>The Deputy Chairman urged the CCF Task Force to consider collecting views of cancer patients, their family members and cancer self-help groups when it reviewed the coverage of cancer drugs under the assistance programme on subsidy on cancer drugs.</p> <p>The Chairman requested the CCF Task Force to refer the Deputy Chairman's suggestion to HA.</p>	

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005555 - 010008	Chairman Mr TANG Ka-piu CCF Task Force	<p>Mr TANG Ka-piu asked whether the CCF Task Force would –</p> <p>(a) further extend the assistance programme on "subsidy for elders who are on the waiting list of Integrated Home Care Services ("IHCS") (Ordinary Cases) for household cleaning and escorting services for medical consultations" ("subsidy for household cleaning and escorting services") after its extension to 31 December 2014; and</p> <p>(a) facilitate the collaboration between the medical sector and welfare sector with an aim to shorten the waiting time of elderly persons for assessment of dementia.</p> <p>The CCF Task Force responded that –</p> <p>(a) the evaluation of the programme on subsidy for household cleaning and escorting services indicated that there was no need to regularize the aforesaid programme. Moreover, the relevant IHCS teams had recently reviewed the service need of the existing beneficiaries and confirmed that some beneficiaries had already received IHCS while the demand for CCF subsidized services could also be supported by other community support services. Therefore, the programme would not be further extended; and</p> <p>(b) it would continue to explore the feasibility of providing assistance for persons with dementia and their families.</p>	
010009 - 010239	Chairman Mr Albert HO CCF Task Force	<p>Mr Albert HO was concerned that the humanitarian assistance available to the mandated refugees, torture claimants and asylum seekers was seriously inadequate. He urged the CCF Task Force to provide assistance for them. The CCF Task Force noted the suggestion which had been received before, but indicated difficulty in exploring a suitable way to help them.</p>	
010240 - 010513	Chairman Miss CHAN Yuen-han	<p>Miss CHAN Yuen-han urged the CCF Task Force to enhance assistance programmes on subsidizing drug costs borne by patient beneficiaries for relevant drug treatment. The CCF Task Force undertook to reflect the comment to HA.</p>	

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010514 - 011102	Chairman Dr KWOK Ka-ki CCF Task Force	<p>Dr KWOK Ka-ki was of the view that –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) CCF should provide rent allowance for needy undergraduate students who were not allocated with student hostels but lived in sub-divided flats; (b) the amount of additional grant of \$2,000 under the assistance programme on "increasing the academic expenses grant under the Financial Assistance Scheme for Post-secondary Students" ("FASPS") was too small; and (c) the administrative fee of the EDA Programme was too high. <p>The CCF Task Force responded that –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) it would consider if Dr KWOK's suggestion at (a) above was feasible; (b) the Administration was going to conduct a review of the academic expenses grant of FASPS, which currently provided an annual academic expenses grant of about \$4,700 for each eligible post-secondary student. As an interim measure, CCF had launched the assistance programme to disburse a maximum additional grant of \$2,000 per year to each eligible post-secondary student to relieve their financial burdens on their daily academic expenses, on top of the original FASPS provision; and (c) the lower-than-expected participation rate of home care service users under the EDA Programme had resulted in a higher proportion of administration fee as compared with the dental subsidies disbursed. Nevertheless, with the expansion of the Programme to cover OALA recipients, it was expected that the percentage of administration fee would return to the normal level in view of the large number of target beneficiaries involved. 	
<i>Agenda item II –Poverty situation in 2013</i>			
011103 - 013448	Chairman Admin	Briefing by the Administration on Hong Kong's poverty situation in 2013.	
013449 - 014004	Chairman Mr TANG Ka-piu Admin	<p>Mr TANG Ka-piu asked –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) when the LIFA Scheme would be launched 	

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		<p>if the funding requirements concerned was approved by FC in either December 2014 or January 2015;</p> <p>(b) whether the Administration would study and take account of the full expenditure pattern of households for setting the poverty line; and</p> <p>(c) whether the Administration would consider increasing the amount of Work Incentive Transport Subsidy ("WITS") to enhance its efforts in poverty alleviation.</p> <p>The Administration responded that –</p> <p>(a) it would strive to expedite the launch of the LIFA Scheme after obtaining FC's funding approval. Taking into account the lead time of 15 to 18 months required and barring unforeseeable circumstances, the earliest launch date of the LIFA Scheme was expected to be second quarter of 2016 if the funding approval was obtained in early 2015;</p> <p>(b) to compile the poverty statistics on annual basis, it would take into account statistics on household income collected every year, instead of the full expenditure pattern of households which would only be surveyed by the Census and Statistics Department ("C&SD") every five years; and</p> <p>(c) the WITS Scheme was under review by the Labour Department.</p>	
014005 - 014627	Chairman Deputy Chairman Admin	<p>The Deputy Chairman expressed the views that –</p> <p>(a) setting the poverty line at half of the median household income did not necessarily leave some people statistically below the poverty line;</p> <p>(b) having about 80 000 households, which received Comprehensive Social Security Assistance ("CSSA") but lived below the poverty line, indicated that the CSSA Scheme was deficient;</p> <p>(c) CoP should continue to work towards universal retirement protection with an aim to lower the elderly poverty rate and achieve poverty reduction; and</p> <p>(d) CoP should study the poverty situation of</p>	

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		<p>persons with disabilities, EMs and women.</p> <p>The Administration responded that –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) there would always be some people statistically below the poverty line; (b) some recipients of CSSA were still living below the poverty line as CSSA was provided to maintain subsistence living and the concept of "relative poverty" was adopted to set the poverty line. Members could refer to the Hong Kong Poverty Situation Report 2013 for poverty figures of selected household groups, including CSSA poor households; (c) the elderly poverty rate of 30.5% after policy intervention could be overstated as the poverty line analysis took account only of income but not assets. In fact, 56% of poor elderly persons not receiving CSSA said that they had no financial needs and more than 40% were owner-occupiers in private property with no mortgage. That said, the Administration was very concerned about the poverty situation of elderly persons; and (d) C&SD had conducted a survey on persons with disabilities, the report of which would be issued shortly. 	
014628 - 015126	Chairman Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung Admin	<p>Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung enquired about –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the implementation progress of the OALA Scheme; (b) the progress of the study on retirement protection; and (c) whether the Administration had ever evaluated the effectiveness of implementing universal retirement protection. <p>The Administration responded that –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the OALA Scheme was well received with more than 420 000 elderly persons benefited. Upon the full implementation of the Scheme in April 2013, the elderly poverty rate saw a significant decline from 44.9% before policy intervention to 30.5% after recurrent cash intervention in 2013. That indicated the effectiveness of the Scheme in reducing 	

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		<p>poverty;</p> <p>(b) retirement protection was a highly complex subject. CoP intended to conduct a public consultation on retirement protection and needed more time to study the related issues; and</p> <p>(c) CoP would carefully consider the various issues relating to the way forward for retirement protection.</p>	
015127 - 015642	Chairman Dr KWOK Ka-ki Admin	<p>Dr KWOK Ka-ki was of the view that the current policies and the LIFA Scheme could hardly relieve the financial burden of needy families with SEN children.</p> <p>The Administration advised that the LIFA Scheme and the regularized programme on "training subsidy for children who are on the waiting list of subvented pre-school rehabilitation services" could help grass-root families with SEN children.</p>	
015643 - 020312	Chairman Miss CHAN Yuen-han Admin	<p>Miss CHAN Yuen-han was of the view that the Administration should study comprehensively the characteristics of beneficiaries of the social security system and the poverty alleviation policy with an aim to further enhance assistance to the needy.</p> <p>The Administration explained that the residence requirement of the CSSA Scheme had been lowered from seven years to one year. Besides, the OALA Scheme was effective in alleviating poverty. The threshold of the LIFA Scheme was set in relation to working hours among other criteria. More would be done to help the needy.</p>	
020313 - 020843	Chairman Mr LEUNG Che-cheung Admin	<p>Mr LEUNG Che-cheung suggested that the Administration should make reference to the experience of the first term of CoP in taking district-based measures which were considered more effective in tackling poverty problems at the district level.</p> <p>The Administration pointed out that the implementation of the OALA Scheme had a visible effect in Yuen Long district, of which the elderly poverty rate was reduced by 5.6 percentage points in 2013 year-on-year. The implementation of the LIFA Scheme was expected to further alleviate the poverty situation in Yuen Long and other districts. Members' views on poverty situation would be reflected to</p>	

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		CoP.	
020844 - 021302	Chairman Mr LEE Cheuk-yan Admin	<p>Mr LEE Cheuk-yan was concerned that the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project ("NSCCP") did not comply with the requirement of the statutory minimum wage, and the number of places of child care services and after-school care programme was far from adequate. These had hindered the release of women labour force.</p> <p>The Administration agreed that the release of labour force of women, persons with disabilities, EMs and elderly persons should be supported by relevant policies. The Steering Committee on Population Policy had thoroughly discussed the aforesaid issues and would make announcement in this regard in early 2015.</p>	
021303 - 021800	Chairman	<p>The Chairman declared that he was one of the non-official members of CoP. He was of the view that –</p> <p>(a) the existing poverty line could not truly reflect the poverty situation as it did not take account of disposable income;</p> <p>(b) the ageing population would increase the number of elderly persons with low income but high assets, thereby substantially affecting the analysis of the poverty line framework in the long run; and</p> <p>(c) apart from providing allowances and subsidies, CoP should also take concrete measures to enhance the employment opportunity of people in poverty.</p>	
021801 - 022022	Chairman Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung Admin	<p>Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung noted with concern that the poverty line analysis did not take account of disposable income.</p> <p>The Administration explained that the setting of the poverty line was generally in line with the international practice adopted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and local organizations, such as Oxfam Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Council of Social Service. However, there were limitations in the poverty line, for example, both monthly expenditure for the basic daily necessities and assets of an individual or a household were not counted in setting the poverty line.</p>	
022023 - 022231	Chairman	Dr KWOK Ka-ki was of the view that the LIFA	

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	Dr KWOK Ka-ki	Scheme could not help economically inactive households and needy families which had to take care of their children, in particular those with SEN children.	
022232 - 022437	Chairman Miss CHAN Yuen-han	Miss CHAN Yuen-han urged the Administration to consider coordinating NGOs to provide services on home-based child and elderly care with an aim to help women in poverty and release women labour force, as well as promote local employment opportunities.	
022438 - 022657	Chairman Mr LEUNG Che-cheung Admin	<p>Mr LEUNG Che-cheung asked if the Administration would –</p> <p>(a) try to shorten the 18-month lead time required to expedite the launch of the LIFA Scheme; and</p> <p>(b) consider distributing more copies of the Hong Kong Poverty Situation Report 2013 to the public.</p> <p>The Administration advised that –</p> <p>(a) as the LIFA Scheme would have a wide coverage and involve substantial preparatory work, a lead time of 15-18 months was required to get ready the necessary manpower and computer system before the launch of the LIFA Scheme. In fact, the Administration was proceeding with the preparatory work and it would strive for an early launch of the Scheme after obtaining the funding approval from FC; and</p> <p>(b) the Hong Kong Poverty Situation Report 2013 was available at the official website of CoP and its hardcopies could be obtained from the CoP Secretariat.</p>	
022658 - 022906	Chairman Mr LEE Cheuk-yan Admin	<p>Mr LEE Cheuk-yan was of the view that some of the existing policies on home-based child care under NSCCP, the biennial review of the rate of statutory minimum wage and outsourced services by government departments, had contributed to the poverty situation in Hong Kong.</p> <p>The Administration expressed disagreement to Mr LEE's view. It clarified that instead of providing job opportunities, the objective of NSCCP was to foster community participation and mutual help in the neighbourhood, and provide needy families with flexible child care support service. Home-based child carers under</p>	

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		NSCCP provided services as volunteers and would receive incentive payments.	
022907 - 023000	Chairman Admin	In response to the Chairman's concluding remarks, the Administration stressed that the major aim of the poverty alleviation policy was to encourage young people and adults to become self-reliant through employment, while provision of allowance and subsidies was only one of the measures to alleviate poverty.	
<i>Agenda item III –Extension of period of work of the Subcommittee</i>			
023001 - 023047	Chairman	Members supported the proposed continuation of the Subcommittee's work up to 31 January 2016, which would be submitted to the House Committee for endorsement. The Chairman said that there would be a election of the Chairman of the Subcommittee at the meeting in February 2015.	
<i>Agenda item IV –Item(s) for discussion at the next meeting</i>			
023048 - 023100	Chairman	Members decided on the subjects to be discussed at the meeting scheduled for 12 January 2015.	

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
11 February 2015