

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)135/13-14
(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/WS

Panel on Welfare Services

**Minutes of special meeting
held on Monday, 21 January 2013, at 8:30 am
in Conference Room 3 of the Legislative Council Complex**

Members present : Hon CHAN Yuen-han, SBS, JP (Chairman)
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC
Dr Hon LEUNG Ka-lau
Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
Hon Frankie YICK Chi-ming
Hon CHAN Chi-chuen
Hon CHAN Han-pan
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, BBS, MH, JP
Hon Alice MAK Mei-kuen, JP
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan
Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH
Hon TANG Ka-piu

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

Members attending : Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH
Dr Hon Joseph LEE Kok-long, SBS, JP

**Public Officers : Item I
attending**

Labour and Welfare Bureau

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

Miss Annie TAM, JP
Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Mr Patrick NIP, JP
Director of Social Welfare

Home Affairs Bureau

Mr TSANG Tak-sing, GBS, JP
Secretary for Home Affairs

Ms Florence HUI Hiu-fai, SBS, JP
Under Secretary for Home Affairs

Ms Gracie FOO Siu-wai, JP
Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs (1)

Ms Aubrey FUNG Ngar-wai
Principal Assistant Secretary (Civic Affairs) 2
Home Affairs Bureau

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

Staff in attendance : Ms Catherina YU
Senior Council Secretary (2) 4

Miss Maggie CHIU
Legislative Assistant (2) 4

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I. Briefings by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare and the Secretary for Home Affairs on the Chief Executive's 2013 Policy Address

[The 2013 Policy Address booklet entitled "Seek Change Maintain Stability - Serve the People with Pragmatism (LC Paper Nos. CB(2)496/12-13(01) and (02))]

Secretary for Labour and Welfare ("SLW") briefed members on the new and on-going welfare initiatives of the Labour and Welfare Bureau ("LWB") and Social Welfare Department ("SWD") as outlined in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)496/12-13(01)).

2. Secretary for Home Affairs ("SHA") briefed members on the new and on-going initiatives of the Home Affairs Bureau ("HAB") as detailed in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)496/12-13(02)).

(Post-meeting note: The speaking notes of SLW and SHA were issued to members via LC Paper Nos. CB(2)535/12-13(01) and (02) on 21 January 2013.)

Disability Allowance

3. Noting that the Administration would establish an inter-departmental working group ("the Working Group") to study the proposal to allow people with loss of one limb to apply for disability allowance ("DA") and that the Working Group would seek steer from the Social Security and Retirement Protection ("SSRP") Task Force under the Commission on Poverty ("CoP") on the subject matter, Mr WONG Kwok-hing said that such an arrangement would cause further delay on the provision of DA for people with loss of one limb. He requested the Administration to provide a timetable for implementing the Chief Executive ("CE")'s pledge pertaining to allowing people with loss of one limb to apply for DA.

4. SLW responded that the progress of the review of DA was affected by a judicial review case followed by an appeal lodged by an ex-DA applicant. He said that the Working Group would not only look into the eligibility of people with loss of one limb for DA but would also consider how to address disability levels comparable with "loss of one limb". The Working Group would endeavor to complete the review on DA and report to and seek steer from CoP's SSRP Task Force regarding its work as soon as practicable.

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Support for the elderly and persons with disabilities

5. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that he was greatly disappointed in the social welfare initiatives in the CE's 2013 Policy Address. In his view, the Government did not have concrete planning for or make commitment to social welfare or conduct any review on the existing social welfare policies. Pointing out that there were about 28 000 waitlistees for residential care homes for the elderly ("RCHEs") and more than 5 000 of them had passed away while waiting for RCHEs, Dr CHEUNG said that the provision of only 1 700 new subsidized RCHE places from 2012-2013 to 2014-2015 was far from adequate.

6. Dr Fernando CHEUNG also expressed grave concern about the long waiting time and serious shortfall of residential care services ("RCS") for persons with disabilities ("PWDs") and pre-school rehabilitation services for children with disabilities. He said that there were about 7 000 waitlistees for RCS for PWDs and the waiting time for a place at a Hostel for Severely Mentally Handicapped Persons was over 10 years. For pre-school rehabilitation services, the number of waitlistees stood at 6 800 and the waiting time was one to three years. Many children who were 0 to 2 years old had missed the opportunity to receive suitable services due to the long waiting time. Even for urgent and serious cases, the children concerned had to wait for at least three months for a place in a Special Child Care Centre. He strongly urged the Administration to formulate concrete plans for the provision of RCS for PWDs and pre-school rehabilitation services having regard to the great demand for such services.

7. SLW responded that the great demand for RCHEs was partly due to the insufficient support for facilitating the elderly persons to age in the community. To promote ageing in the community, the Administration had holistically strengthened the community care services ("CCS") and RCS for the elderly. Sites in 11 development projects had been earmarked for constructing new contract RCHEs with a view to meeting the needs of elderly persons who required institutional care.

8. Mr Albert HO said that to achieve the policy objective of "aging in place", the Administration should provide adequate home-based services and CCS, thereby reducing the demand for RCS by the elderly who did not have imminent need for institutional care.

9. Pointing out that many care services, e.g. home-based care services, did not involve land resources, Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung said that the

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Administration should not use shortage of suitable sites as an excuse for not being able to meet the demand for care services. In view of the serious shortfall in RCS, he considered that the Administration should increase the provision of home-based care services.

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10. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che said that the Administration should map out a holistic plan for welfare services taking into account the problems of ageing population, the ageing problems of PWDs, the complementary support required for different services, etc. Considering that the Administration had no social welfare planning since mid-1990s, the

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Chairman requested the Administration to provide a list of social welfare problems existed in the community since mid-1990. Dr Fernando CHEUNG and Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che also requested the Administration

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to provide the following information –

(a) the supply and demand for RCS and CCS including day care services and home-based care services in the next five years;

(b) of the 1 700 new RCS to be provided up to 2014-2015, the number of places to be provided by private residential care homes ("RCHs") participated in the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme and subvented RCHEs respectively and their locations; and

(c) locations of the 11 development projects earmarked for the construction of new RCHs for the elderly.

(Post-meeting note: The required information under (c) had been included in the Administration's response to issues raised by members at the Panel meeting on 12 November 2012 vide LC Paper No. CB(2)432/12-13(01) dated 3 January 2013.)

11. The Chairman said that it was necessary to improve the barrier-free facilities in some premises such as shopping centres and restaurants. She requested the Administration to follow up the matter.

Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly

12. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che said that since the participants of the Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly ("the Pilot Scheme") were required to make contributions according to the co-payment rates, some elderly persons might not be able to participate in the Pilot Scheme due to financial difficulties. The Administration should strengthen home-based services and CCS to ensure that these elderly

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persons would receive the required services.

13. Noting that the first phase of the Pilot Scheme would focus on the elderly persons with moderate impairment, Dr Joseph LEE expressed concern about whether CCS could better meet the needs of these elderly persons than RCS and how the level of impairment of the elderly persons was determined.

14. SLW responded that eligible participants of the first phase of the Pilot Scheme would be those who had been assessed by the Standardised Care Need Assessment Mechanism for Elderly Services of SWD as moderately impaired. Generally speaking, the elderly persons who met the requirements of admission to care and attention places of RCHEs would be those assessed as moderately impaired.

Poverty line

15. Mr Ronny TONG enquired about the timetable for setting the poverty line by CoP and the measures to be taken by the Administration to help the impoverished group after the poverty line had been set.

16. Mr Alan LEONG said that objective targets, such as to reduce the population living below the poverty line by a certain number in a year, should be set to alleviate poverty. In his view, in the absence of objective targets, it would be difficult to monitor effectiveness of poverty alleviation measures.

17. SLW responded that addressing the needs of the underprivileged groups was one of the key policy initiatives of the current term of Government. The setting of the poverty line had signified the Government's courage and commitment to alleviating poverty. CoP's SSRP Task Force would discuss the setting of the poverty line at its first meeting scheduled for end-January 2013 and the target would be to set the poverty line within 2013. The Administration would make reference to the poverty line to formulate poverty alleviation policies targeting those groups in need.

18. Mr Albert HO expressed concern about the time to be taken to set the poverty line. In his view, poverty alleviation measures should be rolled out even without a poverty line. The poverty line should be a tool for quantifying the poverty situation, thereby facilitating the formulation of objective targets for decreasing the poverty-stricken population. He enquired whether the Administration would set quantifiable targets to

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eliminate poverty after the poverty line had been set. He also sought information on the support the Administration would provide for the impoverished groups.

19. SLW responded that six task forces had been formed under CoP to consider poverty alleviation initiatives in different areas. Poverty alleviation measures would be implemented, when necessary, before the poverty line was set. After the poverty line was set, the Administration would consider appropriate poverty alleviation initiatives to assist the needy groups identified from the poverty statistics, and would provide information on addressing the problem of inter-generational poverty.

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Community Care Fund

20. Mr Ronny TONG said that according to the media, the Community Care Fund ("CCF") had not received some of the pledged donations from the business sector. He was concerned about the sustainability of the CCF's programmes when CCF had exhausted its funds. He asked whether the Administration would continue to run the CCF programmes if CCF did not have sufficient funds and whether it had any plan to inject new funds into CCF.

21. SLW explained that CCF was not meant for implementing standing assistance programmes but for providing assistance to people who faced economic difficulties and fell outside the social safety net or those within the safety net but had special circumstances that were not covered. CoP had set up the CCF Task Force to, among others, give advice on the operation of CCF. The CCF Task Force would consider incorporating measures which were proven effective into the Government's regular assistance and service programmes as far as practicable.

Manpower shortage of front-line care staff

22. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che said that there was a serious shortage of supply of front-line care staff in the social welfare sector. He called on the Administration to discuss with the welfare sector expeditiously measures to meet the sector's demand for front-line care staff and revert to the Panel on the outcome of its discussion with the sector.

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Releasing labour force of women

23. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che said that some women could not go to work because they had to take care of their families. He requested the

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Administration to provide information on whether it would consider extending the service hour of after-school learning support to 7 pm or 8 pm so as to release labour force of woman.

24. Dr Helena WONG said that the CE's 2013 Policy Address failed to address the needs of women. Noting that the Policy Address had no coverage on gender mainstreaming but advocated family core values, she expressed concern about whether the family core values promulgated by the Family Council would encourage releasing the labour force of women. She also asked whether the Women's Commission ("WoC") would be replaced by the Family Council.

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25. Secretary for Home Affairs responded that the Administration had no intention to replace WoC with the Family Council. He said that the Administration recognized the diversity of local families and consciously avoided an exclusive definition of "family". The Family Council had established the criteria of family core values and would promote these core values through publicity programmes. The Administration undertook to provide information on the details of the core values promulgated by the Family Council and on how these values would help in releasing the labour force of women.

Mandatory Provident Fund

26. Miss Alice MAK and Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung said that the Mandatory Provident Fund ("MPF") was a form of retirement protection and to provide genuine retirement protection for the working class, the off-setting arrangement of long service payment and severance pay under MPF should be abolished.

Mental health services

27. Miss Alice MAK said that to her knowledge, the Case Management Programme was not very effective. She called on the Administration to strengthen the Programme to help more people in need. She said that rehabilitation services for ex-mentally ill persons should also be enhanced.

28. Dr Joseph LEE said that as the Hospital Authority ("HA"), the Food and Health Bureau ("FHB") and LWB were involved in the provision of community mental health services and rehabilitation services, it was important to delineate the division of responsibilities of HA, FHB and LWB to ensure proper planning of these services.

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29. SLW said that the provision of mental health services was an on-going initiative. HA, FHB and LWB would work closely together in strengthening the community mental health services.

Tackling domestic violence

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30. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che expressed support for the Administration's zero tolerance approach for domestic violence. At Mr CHEUNG's requests, the Administration undertook to provide information on new measures to be adopted and new resources to be allocated to prevent and tackle domestic violence so as to live up to its zero-tolerance approach for domestic violence and tie in with the three-pronged strategy.

(Post-meeting note: The required information was contained in the Administration's papers for the Panel's meetings on 14 January and 19 February 2013 (LC Paper Nos. CB(2)447/12-13(06) and CB(2)620/12-13(15) issued on 8 January and 8 February 2013 respectively.)

Support and services for youth

31. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen was of the view that no new initiatives and policies were proposed in the CE's 2013 Policy Address regarding support and services for youth.

32. SLW responded that the 3 000 temporary work opportunities for young people aged between 15 and 29 created under non-governmental organizations ("NGOs") by the Government during the economic downturn in 2008 would be extended for 12 months to allow the Administration and the NGOs concerned time to help the young participants find suitable employment. Outreaching services for youth at risk had also been strengthened, including setting up three more youth outreaching teams, one each in Tseung Kwan O, Ma On Shan and Tung Chung, as well as identifying "hidden" youth through the Cyber Youth Outreaching Projects with a view to providing them with timely counseling, support and guidance. Director of Social Welfare supplemented that for the three new youth outreaching teams established in January 2013, day and night time outreaching services were provided by each team so that more effective support could be provided to the needy youth.

33. Mr TANG Ka-piu said that if the Administration considered support for youth employment a form of social welfare planning, the aforesaid temporary posts for young people should be extended for a longer period.

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He found it difficult to understand why the Administration rendered support for youth employment but refused to renew the contracts of the 68 SWD's non-civil service contract Community Work Organisers ("CWOs"). He said that the Administration should consider provide funding to the NGOs concerned for hiring these CWOs given their long years of service and working experience.

34. SLW reiterated that the purpose of extending the temporary work opportunities was to allow the young people concerned to better prepare themselves for securing employment.

35. The Chairman said that little was mentioned in the CE's 2013 Policy Address about the support for needy students to participate in extra-curriculum activities. The Administration should formulate policies to address the problem of inter-generational poverty.

36. Mr CHAN Han-pan said that the problem of youth unemployment would give rise to a lot of social problems. Given the high unemployment rate of young people, the Administration should formulate more comprehensive policies to support youth employment. He suggested that Youth Employment Start ("Y.E.S.") should be set up in all districts and schools should help young people with life planning starting from their secondary schooling. Tax concession could be considered to encourage employers to engage more students to do summer jobs.

37. SLW responded that the Administration recognized the importance of youth employment. To encourage participation in workplace attachment training under the Youth Pre-employment Training Programme and Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme ("YPTP&YWETS"), the allowance payable to the trainee who had completed the one-month attachment would be increased from \$2,000 to \$3,000.

38. SLW said that there were currently two Y.E.S., one in Langham Place and the other in Kwai Fong. These centres were welcomed by young people because of their locations. Establishing Y.E.S. in districts which were not popular for young people might not be useful to them.

Guangdong Scheme

39. The Chairman said that the Administration should communicate with the organizations which had expressed interest in providing services relating to the Guangdong Scheme to ensure the smooth implementation of the Scheme.

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40. SLW responded that the tendering exercise for the appointment of agent for the Scheme was in progress. The Administration aimed to implement the Scheme in September 2013, and about 30 000 Hong Kong elderly people residing in Guangdong were expected to benefit from the Scheme initially.

41. The Chairman said that a longer meeting should be arranged for the discussion of future Policy Addresses. In response to Dr Fernando CHEUNG's request for including the subject of social welfare planning in the Panel's agenda, the Chairman said that the subject matter would be discussed at the Panel's meeting tentatively in March or April 2013 and deputations would be invited to attend the meeting to give views.

[To allow sufficient time for discussion, the Chairman extended the meeting for 10 minutes beyond the appointed ending time.]

II. Any other business

Proposal for formation of a subcommittee on strategy and measures to tackle family violence
[LC Paper No. CB(2)496/12-13(03)]

42. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that when his proposal on setting up a subcommittee on strategy and measures to tackle family violence under the Panel was discussed at the Panel meeting on 14 January 2013, members noted that the subcommittee, if formed, would be put on the waiting list and agreed that the Panel should continue to follow up the subject of domestic violence until the subcommittee was activated. He referred members to the proposed terms of reference, work plan and time frame of the subcommittee which were set out in his letter dated 15 January 2013 (LC Paper No. CB(2)496/12-13(03)).

43. Dr Helena WONG and Miss Alice MAK expressed their support for the formation of the subcommittee. Miss Alice MAK said that the Panel should follow up matters relating to domestic violence before the activation of the subcommittee and the deputations should be invited to give views at Panel meetings on the subject matter.

44. The Chairman sought members' view on the proposed terms of reference, work plan and time frame of the subcommittee in Dr Fernando CHEUNG's letter. Members accepted Dr Fernando CHEUNG's proposal and noted that the subcommittee would be put on the waiting list.

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45. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 9:38 am.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
24 October 2013