

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)416/13-14
(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/WS

Panel on Welfare Services

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 11 November 2013, at 10:45 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 LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee, SBS, JP
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC
Dr Hon LEUNG Ka-lau
Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
Hon WONG Yuk-man
Hon Frankie YICK Chi-ming
Hon CHAN Chi-chuen
Hon CHAN Han-pan
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, BBS, MH, JP
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki
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 Gary FAN Kwok-wai

**Public Officers
attending**

Item IV

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

Mr Donald CHEN
Deputy Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare) 2
Labour and Welfare Bureau

Mr FUNG Pak-yan
Deputy Director of Social Welfare (Administration)
Social Welfare Department

Mr NG Wai-kuen
Chief Social Security Officer (Social Security) 1
Social Welfare Department

Ms Cecilia CHAN
Senior Statistician (Social Welfare)
Social Welfare Department

Item V and VI

Mrs Elina CHAN
Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare
(Welfare) 3
Labour and Welfare Bureau

Miss Cecilla LI
Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Elderly)
Social Welfare Department

Mr Kenneth WOO
Chief Executive Officer (Subventions/Planning)
Social Welfare Department

Item V

Mr Stephen SUI, JP
Commissioner for Rehabilitation
Labour and Welfare Bureau

Mr FONG Kai-leung
Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Rehabilitation and
Medical Social Services)
Social Welfare Department

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. Confirmation of minutes

[LC Paper No. CB(2)216/13-14]

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2013 were confirmed.

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

[LC Paper No. CB(2)195/13-14(01)]

2. Members noted that a submission from a member of the public regarding the Guangdong Scheme was issued to members on 31 October 2013.

III. Items for discussion at the next meeting

[LC Paper No. CB(2)217/13-14(01) and (02)]

3. Members noted that the Administration had proposed to discuss at the next meeting scheduled for 9 December 2013 the following items –

- (a) Study on retirement protection in Hong Kong;
- (b) Extension of the Principal Assistant Secretary (Poverty) post;
and

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- (c) Amendments to the medical assessment form for Disability Allowance under the Social Security Allowance Scheme.

4. Regarding (a) above, Mr TANG Ka-piu said that to his understanding, the consultancy team led by Professor Nelson CHOW had been inviting stakeholders to offer views on retirement protection. He said that the Panel might consider inviting the deputations which had submitted proposals on retirement protection to the consultancy team to give views at the next regular meeting.

5. In response to Mr TANG Ka-piu's enquiry about the expected timing for the activation of the Subcommittee on Retirement Protection under the Panel which was currently on the waiting list, the Chairman said that she was given to understand that the Subcommittee on Issues Relating to Air, Noise and Light Pollution would complete its work in March 2014. The Subcommittee on Retirement Protection could be activated in around April 2014 when a vacant slot arose upon the completion of the work of that Subcommittee.

6. Concerning (c) above, Dr Fernando CHEUNG asked whether the Administration would also brief members on the review of Disability Allowance ("DA") at the next meeting. The Chairman said that according to the Administration, it would only brief members on the proposed amendments to the medical assessment form for DA.

7. Members agreed to discuss the three items as listed in paragraph 3 above at the next regular meeting.

8. Mr TANG Ka-piu asked whether the Panel would consider discussing the extension of the Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities to public mini-bus services. The Chairman said that in view of the long list of outstanding items for discussion, it was necessary for the Panel to prioritize the subjects to be discussed.

Follow-up to matters discussed at the special meeting on 22 July 2013

9. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that at the special meeting on 22 July 2013, the Administration had undertaken to report to the Panel on the proposed enhancements to the humanitarian assistance package for refugees, torture claimants and asylum seekers in Hong Kong (hereinafter referred to as "protection claimants") within three months. He suggested that the subject should be discussed in December 2013.

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10. The Deputy Chairman said that according to some media reports, the Administration intended to increase the housing rental assistance for protection claimants. He suggested requesting the Administration to provide a written response in this regard. Having considered the information provided by the Administration, the Panel might consider holding a joint meeting with the Panel on Security on the subject.

11. Noting that the Administration was reviewing the assistance level provided for protection claimants, the Chairman invited the Secretary for Labour and Welfare ("SLW") to update members on the progress of the review.

12. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that there was a pressing need to improve the situation of protection claimants as they had to rely on the Administration's assistance for their daily living expenses. He urged the Administration to complete the review and revert to the Panel as soon as possible. SLW responded that the review was being conducted. The Administration would endeavor to complete the review as soon as possible.

13. Members agreed to the Chairman's suggestion that, subject to agreement by the Panel on Security, a joint meeting with that Panel should be held to discuss the assistance for protection claimants in mid-December 2013. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that the Panel should hold a special meeting to discuss the issue if the Panel on Security did not agree to hold a joint meeting.

(Post meeting note: The Administration had subsequently advised that it expected to report to the Panel on the proposed enhancements to the humanitarian assistance package for non-refoulement claimants and asylum seekers by January 2014.)

IV. Annual adjustment of the standard payment rates under the Social Security Allowance and the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance ("CSSA") Schemes and issues relating to rent allowance under the CSSA Scheme

[LC Paper No. CB(2)217/13-14(03) and (04)]

14. The Chairman drew members' attention to Rule 83A of the Rules of Procedures ("RoP") regarding personal pecuniary interest to be disclosed. She reminded members to declare interests in the matter under discussion,

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if any.

15. At the invitation of the Chairman, SLW briefed members on the Administration's proposal to seek the approval of the Finance Committee ("FC") to adjust the standard payment rates under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance ("CSSA") Scheme and rates of allowance under the Social Security Allowance ("SSA") Scheme as from 1 February 2014, having regard to the latest Social Security Assistance Index of Prices ("SSAIP").

Level of rent allowance

16. Mr TANG Ka-piu said that a one-person CSSA household could only afford to rent a "coffin-sized unit" (棺材房) even if the maximum rates of the rent allowance ("MRA") was increased by 5.9% as proposed by the Administration. He requested the Administration to provide a breakdown of the types of private accommodation rented by one-person CSSA households. Deputy Director of Social Welfare (Administration) ("DD(SW)(A)") responded that the Administration did not have such information.

17. Mr TANG Ka-pui sought information on the number of CSSA recipients residing in private residential care homes for the elderly ("RCHEs") who could not cover fully the fee charged by these RCHEs with their CSSA payment.

18. DD(SW)(A) responded that there were some 26 000 elderly CSSA recipients residing in private RCHEs. Their average CSSA payment was \$6,759 a month. Generally speaking, the amount should be sufficient to cover the fees charged by these RCHEs.

19. In response to Mr CHAN Han-pan's enquiry about the number of CSSA households living in private housing who were paying a rent equal to or less than MRA, DD(SW)(A) said that there were 48% of such households. With the proposed increase of 5.9% for MRA, the number of such households would be increased to 60% and to 68% if the one-off subsidy under the "Subsidy for CSSA Recipients Living in Rented Private Housing" programme of Community Care Fund ("CCF") was also taken into account.

20. To facilitate members' understanding on the degree of the relevant assistance programme of CCF could provide for the eligible one-person

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and two-or-more-person CSSA households, the Deputy Chairman, Mr TANG Ka-piu, Mr POON Siu-ping and Mr CHAN Han-pan requested the Administration to provide information on –

- (a) the number of CSSA households (breakdown by the number of eligible members in a household) living in private housing who could not fully cover their actual rent by the rent allowance;
- (b) the number of CSSA households (breakdown by the number of eligible members in a household) living in private housing who could not fully cover their actual rent by the rent allowance adjusted in February 2014 and the subsidy provided by CCF; and
- (c) the differences (in terms of both percentage and amount) between the actual rent paid by and the rent allowance as well as the CCF subsidy payable to the aforesaid households before and after the rent allowance adjustment in February 2014 and the provision of the CCF subsidy.

21. Mr POON Siu-ping said that the Administration should consider regularizing the relevant assistance programme of CCF to relieve the rental burden of CSSA households living in private housing. He expressed concern about how the level of rent allowance compared with the market rent.

22. SLW responded that when CCF re-launched the "Subsidy for CSSA Recipients Living in Rented Private Housing" programme in September 2013, it had doubled the one-off subsidy. Each eligible one-person and two-or-more-person CSSA household would receive a one-off subsidy of \$2,000 and \$4,000 respectively. The provision of a rent allowance comparable to the market rent might trigger a rise in the private housing rental and would generate financial pressure on the non-CSSA private housing tenants. In the Administration's view, to address the housing needs of the needy groups, the supply of public rental housing ("PRH") should be increased and accelerated in the long run.

23. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that if the parent of a two-person single-parent household did not satisfy the residence requirements, the family was only entitled to the rent allowance applicable to one-eligible-person. The Administration should consider reviewing the arrangement to alleviate the financial burden of these families. Mr Frederick FUNG said that some newly arrived families were inadequately

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housed because only the eligible members could obtain the rent allowance. The Administration should take steps to address the problem. DD(SW)(A) responded that rent allowance could only be provided for eligible members of CSSA households.

24. Mr Albert HO said that many newly arrived single parents had to rely on their children's CSSA payments for a living because they were not eligible for CSSA. He was gravely concerned that the development of children of these families would be adversely affected because of their financial hardship. Given that these children were Hong Kong residents, he urged the Administration to relax the residence requirements for CSSA.

25. SLW responded that the Director of Social Welfare ("DSW") could exercise discretion to approve CSSA applications of newly arrived families on a case by case basis. Other forms of assistance, e.g. short-term food assistance, were available to individuals who were not eligible for CSSA. In response to Mr LEUNG Chi-cheung's enquiry on the number of such cases, DD(SW)(A) said that between 2004 and 30 September 2013, about 14 000 cases not meeting the residence requirement were approved CSSA at DSW's discretion.

26. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung said that some CSSA households had to use part of their living expenses to make up for the differences between the actual rent and the rent allowance. The Administration should find out the amount involved in topping up the differences and how their livelihoods were affected so as to provide them with the necessary assistance.

Adjustment mechanism

27. Pointing out that there were about 100 000 CSSA households living below the poverty line, Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that the existing level of CSSA was inadequate to meet the basic needs. Under the current adjustment mechanism, the CSSA payment rates lagged behind the prevailing inflation and thus failed to keep up with the pace of changes in living costs. He said that the last study on basic needs was conducted in 1996 and since then, the Administration had not conducted any similar study. The Administration should reposition the level of basic needs and review the adjustment mechanism.

28. SLW responded that as the poverty line was based on relative poverty while CSSA was to cater for basic needs, it was not unusual to have CSSA households below the poverty line. Among these CSSA

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households, 80% were living in PRH and 10% in self-owned properties. They might be better off when compared with those non-CSSA households below the poverty line. While priority should be accorded to helping the non-CSSA working households who were living in private housing and were below the poverty line, support for CSSA households, particularly the special needs groups, would be enhanced. Assistance would be provided for students from CSSA households to facilitate their upward mobility. A pilot scheme would also be launched in April 2014 to encourage able-bodied CSSA recipients of Integrated Employment Assistance Programme for Self-reliance to take up employment.

29. Mr Albert HO said that the Administration should set specific targets to reduce the poor population after setting the poverty line. According to the Administration, there were certain CSSA households bound to be below the poverty line because the concept of relative poverty was adopted in setting the poverty line. He asked whether it was the Government's policy direction in the long run.

30. SLW responded that adopting the concept of relative poverty and setting the poverty line at 50% of the median monthly domestic household income ("MMDHI") was comparable to the approach adopted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. He said that the poverty line was not a "poverty alleviation line". Since the poverty line did not take into account assets, which was one of its limitations, the poor population, particularly the poor elderly population, could have been overstated by including the "asset-rich, income-poor" retirees. Poverty alleviation measures would be targeted at the needy groups.

31. Mr Frederick FUNG said that the Administration should align the poverty line with the basic subsistence level (i.e. "the CSSA level") by setting the "CSSA level" at 50% of MMDHI. He requested the

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32. The Deputy Chairman was of the view that the existing adjustment mechanism had lagged behind inflation. He said that in addition to the annual adjustment to the standard payment rates, the Administration should provide an inflationary adjustment allowance on a quarterly basis, taking account of the actual inflation in the preceding quarter, to allow the payments to catch up with inflation.

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33. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung and Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung supported the Deputy Chairman's suggestion on the quarterly inflationary adjustment as it would help maintain the purchasing power of the payments. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that the Administration should find ways to solve the time lag problem in the existing adjustment mechanism. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung said that the Administration should improve the CSSA Scheme to help the CSSA households living below the poverty line. He further said that the Administration should impose rent control, otherwise, the needy groups living in private housing would continue to suffer from high rent.

34. SLW responded that there had been significant over-estimations of SSAIP in the past and, as a result, the social security payment rates had to be adjusted downward later to make up for the difference. Besides, the current system allowed the Administration to consider additional adjustments to the CSSA standard payment rates at times of persistently high inflation. In 2008, the Administration adjusted ahead of the normal schedule the CSSA standard payment rates by 4.4% to ease the impact of rising prices on CSSA households.

35. Mr Frederick FUNG said that while the increase in the rental of PRH was moderate in the past few years, the rental of private housing had soared. The Administration should develop a rent index reflecting the rental movement in private housing for calculating MRA for CSSA households living in private housing.

36. SLW responded that the rent index compiled by the Census and Statistics Department had already reflected the movement of private housing rent borne by households in the lower expenditure group.

37. Mr Frederick FUNG said that the flat size for a one-person PRH applicant was 17m². It was impossible for CSSA households to rent a flat of the same size with the existing level of rent allowance. Pointing out that the rent index had reflected the movement of rent in the territory as a whole, he considered that the Administration should use separate rent indices for PRH in urban district, extended urban district and the New Territories. In response, SLW reiterated that CCF provided an assistance programme to relieve the financial burden of these households in face of periodic rent increase.

38. Mr WONG Yuk-man was of the view that SSAIP did not accurately reflect the impact of price changes on CSSA recipients. The Administration should review the items covered in the compilation of

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SSAIP and update the expenditure pattern of CSSA households on essential items. The weighting system of SSAIP should also be updated.

39. Mr WONG Yuk-man was concerned that the CSSA standard payment rates and rent allowance were on the low side and expressed dissatisfaction about the proposed rates of increase for CSSA standard payment rates, Old Age Allowance, Disability Allowance and MRA as they could not catch up with inflation. In his view, the Administration should conduct a comprehensive review of the methodology for adjusting social security payment rates and provide flexibility in the adjustment mechanism to ensure that the rates of increase would stay close to the economic conditions.

40. Dr Fernando CHEUNG found it unacceptable to have about half of CSSA households living below the poverty line. It had reflected that there were deficiencies in the existing CSSA system. He reiterated that the Administration should critically review the existing CSSA system and implement measures to lift the CSSA households above the poverty line.

41. Referring to Annex I to the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)217/13-14(03)), the Deputy Chairman said that the figures were misleading. The average monthly CSSA payment contained therein had in fact included the standard payments, rent allowance, supplements, etc. The public might misunderstand that the average monthly CSSA payments had excluded other payments and therefore they might think that a CSSA household received a sum higher than the amount listed in Annex I. He called on the Administration to improve the presentation of the figures by listing out different kinds of CSSA payments to avoid such a misunderstanding.

42. In response to the Chairman's invitation of view, members supported in principle the submission of the relevant funding proposal to FC for consideration. At the request of the Chairman, the Administration undertook to provide the information requested by members before the relevant FC meeting.

Visit to RCHEs in Shek Tsai Ling

43. Mr TANG Ka-pui expressed concern that the RCHEs in Shek Tsai Ling had to cease operation as a result of the development of North East New Territories. Since around 1 200 of the residents in these RCHEs would be affected, he suggested arranging a visit to the RCHEs concerned.

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44. SLW responded that a displacement mechanism was in place for the residents of private RCHEs participating in the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme ("EBPS") who were affected by development projects. The District Social Welfare Officers concerned would provide the necessary assistance to the affected residents.

45. In view of the large number of elderly affected, Mr TANG Ka-pui called on the Administration to draw up a displacement plan without delay. Members agreed that a visit to the RCHEs concerned should be arranged.

[To allow sufficient time for discussion, the Chairman extended the meeting for 15 minutes beyond the appointed ending time.]

V. Setting up of rehabilitation and elderly service facilities in the development of Urban Renewal Authority at Hai Tan Street / Kwelin Street / Pei Ho Street, Sham Shui Po
[LC Paper No. CB(2)217/13-14(05) and (06)]

46. The Chairman drew members' attention to RoP 83A regarding personal pecuniary interest to be disclosed. She reminded members to declare interests in the matter under discussion, if any.

(The Deputy Chairman took the chair at this juncture in the absence of the Chairman.)

47. At the invitation of the Deputy Chairman, Commissioner for Rehabilitation ("C for R") briefed members on the proposal to construct a 60-place Special Child Care Centre ("SCCC") cum 60-place Early Education and Training Centre ("EETC"), a 48-place Day Care Centre for the Elderly ("DE") and a sub-base for Neighbourhood Elderly Centre ("NEC sub-base") in the development project of the Urban Renewal Authority ("URA") at Hai Tan Street/Kweilin Street/Pei Ho Street, Sham Shui Po.

Provision of pre-school rehabilitation services

48. Noting that there were currently more than 7 000 applicants for pre-school rehabilitation services but only about 607 additional places would come on stream in 2013-2014, Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed grave concern about the serious shortfall of such places. He said that early identification and intervention was important for the growth and

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development of disabled children and the long waiting time had deprived them of the opportunity to receive suitable services. In his view, under the Administration's existing approach, the provision of pre-school rehabilitation services could never catch up the demand. He strongly urged the Administration to use revolutionary ways to address the problem.

49. Sharing Dr Fernando CHEUNG's concern, Mr POON Siu-ping enquired whether the Administration had any concrete plans and time frame to shorten the waiting time and meet the demand for pre-school rehabilitation places.

50. C for R responded that the Administration had already reserved sites for providing some 1 300 pre-school rehabilitation places. It would continue to actively identify additional sites at the planning stage for the provision of more places to meet the demand. He said that among the 6 000 odd waitlistees for subvented pre-school rehabilitation places, more than half of them were waiting for places in EETCs. The Community Care Fund ("CCF") had since December 2011 launched an assistance programme to provide training subsidy for pre-school children from low-income families who were in need of rehabilitation services. Most of the target beneficiaries were waiting for EETC places. Parents of these needy children could make use of the training subsidy to enable their children to receive self-financing services operated by non-governmental organizations. The Administration was working on the incorporation of the relevant CCF programme into its regular subvented services to help relieve the burden of subvented pre-school rehabilitation services. The Administration would strive to regularize the programme by the first half of 2014.

51. In response to Mr POON Siu-ping's enquiry on whether more welfare facilities could be provided in the development projects of URA, Chief Executive Officer (Subventions/Planning) ("CEO(S/P)") responded that the Social Welfare Department ("SWD") had liaised with the Planning Department and the Lands Department on the welfare facilities to be included in the proposed project. The facilities were proposed having taken into account the planning parameters, service needs, the views of the relevant District Council and the residents.

52. Mr Frederick FUNG said that given the great demand for welfare facilities in urban districts, the Administration should impose a condition in land grant or land exchange to require URA to deploy a prescribed area of its project sites for welfare facilities. The Administration should also

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make use of vacant space in government buildings and public rental housing blocks for these facilities.

53. CEO(S/P) responded that in addition to welfare facilities, the Administration had to take into account other needs in the society on the use of sites. SWD had expended great efforts in liaising with relevant government departments/bureaux to secure more land for welfare facilities and would continue its efforts in this regard.

54. Mr Frederick FUNG said that the Administration should make a pledge that the provision of pre-school rehabilitation places would meet the growing demand and set targets to reduce the waiting time for such services.

55. C for R responded that while it was the Administration's goal to provide sufficient places to meet the demand for pre-school rehabilitation services, it had genuine difficulties in identifying sufficient suitable sites for the facilities. The Administration would in parallel explore different modes of pre-school rehabilitation services and regularize the relevant CCF assistance programme to improve the waitlisting situation.

56. Dr Helena WONG enquired about the number of places for integrated programmes in kindergarten-cum-child care centres ("IP"), the number of applicants for such places and additional provision for pre-school rehabilitation places. Assistance Director of Social Welfare (Rehabilitation and Medical Social Services) ("ADSW(R&MSS)") responded that there were currently 1 860 IP places and 1 492 waitlistees for such places. The waiting time for IP places was around 13 months to 17 months. The 1 200 additional places to be provided in the coming five years did not include IP places. The Administration would invite kindergarten-cum-child care centres to provide more IP places. He added that the 60 new places each for SCCC and EETC would be available when the new SCCC cum EETC under the project commenced operation in 2020-2021.

57. Dr KWOK Ka-ki sought information on how the provision of the new SCCC and EETC places under the project would shorten the waiting time for such places, improve the current waitlisting situation for pre-school rehabilitation services and the time frame for setting up another new SCCC cum EETC.

58. ADSW(R&MSS) responded that since some users of SCCC and EETC might leave the centres at the age of six and there would be new

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entrants to these centres as well as changes in the pre-school population, it would be difficult to estimate the waitlisting situation in 2020-2021. There were currently a total of 479 places (274 places for EETC and 205 places for SCCC) in Sham Shui Po District. While these places would be sufficient to accommodate all the 325 waitlistees in the district, it could not meet the demand in the entire Kowloon West district where there were 921 children waiting for the services. He added that of the 1 200 additional places to be provided from 2013-2014 to 2017-2018, two-third would be EETC places and the remaining one-third would be SCCC places. The aforesaid CCF programme had enabled about 2 100 children to receive self-financing pre-school rehabilitation services.

59. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that the training subsidy provided by CCF was only for EETC services and could not meet the needs of the disabled children, particularly the moderately and severely mentally handicapped children. Furthermore, the amount of subsidy was insufficient for parents to engage private pre-school rehabilitation services. He pointed out that given the large number of waitlistees for self-financing pre-school rehabilitation services operated by NGOs, the NGOs concerned were unable to estimate the waiting time for their services. He considered that the situation was disastrous and the Administration should adopt revolutionary thinking in solving the serious shortfall of these services.

Location and size of new DE

60. Since the new DE under the project would not be located near the MTR station, Mr TANG Ka-piu was concerned whether it would be inconvenient for the service users and their family members to access to the new DE. Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Elderly) ("ADSW(Elderly)") responded that transportation would be provided for DE users. She assured members that the services at the new DE would not be affected after the relocation.

61. Noting that the net operational floor area ("NOFA") of the new DE would be increased after the relocation, Mr TANG Ka-piu sought information on the reasons for increasing NOFA for DEs. ADSW(Elderly) responded that the NOFA provided for the DE in the Hai Tan Street development was based on an updated Schedule of Accommodation ("SoA") for DE with a higher NOFA. If the Administration was able to secure bigger premises, the updated SoA would be adopted for new and reprovisioned DEs.

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Usage of the ex-DE premises in Lai On Estate

62. In response to Mr TANG Ka-piu's enquiry about the usage of the premises vacated by the DE at Lai On Estate, ADSW(Elderly) said that the Administration would optimize usage of the premises taking into account the service needs in the district nearer the time of the completion of the project.

63. The Deputy Chairman said that the Administration could consider providing 20 day care places or 15 places each for SCCC and EETC with a total NOFA of 142m² in the ex-DE premises at Lai On Estate. In his view, the Administration should plan ahead and earmark the premises so that the provision of these places could be actualized by the completion of the project. ADSW(Elderly) responded that the Administration would plan ahead for the use of the ex-DE premises at least two to three years prior to the relocation of the existing DE and priority would be accorded to subvented welfare services.

Manpower provision for NEC sub-base

64. Pointing out that there was no personal emoluments provision for the NEC sub-base, the Deputy Chairman expressed concern about the manpower deployment for the NEC sub-base if it had the same opening hours as the DE. He enquired whether fund would be allocated to personal emoluments for the NEC sub-base and if not, whether the NEC sub-base could be opened to public only on need basis.

65. ADSW(Elderly) responded that it was not uncommon to have sub-base for NECs. The operators of the NECs with sub-base would sort out the opening hours, taking into account the district need for the services. The Deputy Chairman called on the Administration to review the existing manpower arrangements for NECs with sub-base.

66. In response to the Deputy Chairman's invitation of view, members supported in principle the submission of the relevant funding proposal to FC for consideration.

VI. Setting up a new contract residential care home for the elderly and a day care centre for the elderly at Tuen Mun Town Lot 499 (Ex-Kwong Choi Market, Tuen Mun)

[LC Paper No. CB(2)217/13-14(07) and (08)]

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67. The Deputy Chairman drew members' attention to RoP 83A regarding personal pecuniary interest to be disclosed. He reminded members to declare interests in the matter under discussion, if any.

68. At the invitation of the Deputy Chairman, Principal Assistance Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare)3 ("PAS(LW)(Welfare)3") briefed members on the proposal to construct a 100-place Contract Residential Care Home for the Elderly ("the contract RCHE") and a 60-place DE at Tuen Mun Town Lot 499, i.e. the Ex-Kwong Choi Market site at Tseng Choi Street and Tsing Min Path, Tuen Mun.

Completion time of the proposed project

69. Noting that it would take about 10 years for the contract RCHE and DE to commence service, Mr TANG Ka-piu and Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed concern about the long completion time for the project. CEO(S/P) responded that the Lands Department had considered the scale and requirements of the project in estimating the completion time. According to the land sale conditions, the purchaser of the site was required to complete the construction of the contract RCHE and DE within 72 months after the acceptance of the relevant conditions. Taking into account the time required for the selection process of suitable operators for the contract RCHE and DE, the relevant facilities were expected to commence service around the fourth quarter of 2021.

70. Mr TANG Ka-piu, Dr Fernando CHEUNG and Mr TAM Yiu-chung said that the Administration should try to expedite the works so that the contract RCHE and DE could come into operation as early as possible. The Deputy Chairman said that to enable the contract RCHE and DE to commence service earlier, the Administration should invite tenders for service operation six months before the completion of the construction works. ADSW(Elderly) responded that the Administration would make its best effort to compress the tendering procedures.

71. In response to Mr TANG Ka-piu's enquiry about whether the proposed dementia supplement was based on the assumption that the 60 additional DE places would all be taken up by the elderly suffering from dementia, ADSW(Elderly) said that the supplement was a proportional projection.

Provision of residential care places

72. Dr KWOK Ka-ki said that given the great demand for residential

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care places for the elderly, the Administration should optimize the plot ratio of the proposed site to increase the provision of the residential care places.

73. PAS(LW)(Welfare)3 responded that it was a legal requirement that no part of a residential care home might be situated at a height of more than 24m above the ground floor. Because of the height limit, maximizing the plot ratio might not bring about an increase in the number of places in RCHEs. The list of the 11 sites earmarked for the construction of new RCHEs and DEs (i.e. Annex 3 to LC Paper No. CB(2)217/13-14 (07)) was a snapshot report. She said that the Administration would continue to secure suitable sites for the construction of RCHEs.

74. Dr KWOK Ka-ki said that in view of the more advanced fire equipment nowadays, the Administration should consider relaxing the height limit for RCHEs.

75. PAS(LW)(Welfare)3 responded that the Fire Services Department ("FSD") had been consulted in October 2013 about the height limit for RCHEs. Having regard to the mobility of the frail elderly and the safety issues, FSD considered the existing height limit for residential care homes appropriate.

[With the consent of all members present, the Deputy Chairman extended the meeting time to end at 1:10 pm.]

76. Mr TAM Yiu-chung said that the Administration should provide more residential care places for the elderly as far as possible subject to the fulfillment of safety requirements. He said that to his understanding, Tuen Mun District Council had suggested that welfare facilities for children and youth should also be provided in the proposed site. As the height limit did not apply to welfare facilities for children and youth, the Administration should consider providing these facilities at higher floors of the premises.

77. PAS(LW)(Welfare)3 said that the Administration would take into account the service needs and the services already available in the district in considering the types of welfare facilities to be provided under the project. CEO(S/P) added that having regard to the fact that an integrated children and youth services centre and an integrated family service centre had already been set up in the vicinity of the proposed site and the site limitations, welfare facilities for children and youth would not be provided

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under the project.

78. Dr Helena WONG said that the Government's Population Policy Consultation Document did not cover elderly care policies. The Administration should set targets for the provision of such places to meet the growing demand arising from the ageing population. In her view, if the planning of residential care places for the elderly was constrained by land resources, the Administration should explore other ways to increase the supply, e.g. by setting up RCHEs in public rental housing blocks. She asked whether it would be the Administration's policy direction to require the relevant bureaux or departments to include the construction of RCHEs in their future development projects.

79. PAS(LW)(Welfare)3 responded that the Administration had taken a multi-pronged approach to increase the supply of subsidized residential care places for the elderly. In addition to identifying suitable sites, residential care places were acquired under various bought place schemes. The Administration would do its best to increase the supply of subsidized residential care places for the elderly.

Ratio of self-financing places in contract RCHEs

80. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that the monthly fee for the self-financing places in some contract RCHEs ranged from \$10,000 to \$20,000 and many elderly persons who were in need of institutional care could not afford such a high fee. Instead of setting aside 40% of contract RCHE places as self-financing places, the Administration should subvent all places in contract RCHEs which were under the Administration's construction projects to accommodate more elderly persons with financial difficulties.

81. ADSW(Elderly) responded that fee levels of self-financing places of contract RCHEs proposed by operators of these RCHEs would be a factor for consideration in the evaluation of tenders. To her knowledge, the operators would set the fee levels according to the locations of the RCHEs and the market situation.

82. The Deputy Chairman said that elderly persons with financial difficulties could not afford to reside in self-financing places in contract RCHEs because of the high fee. The Administration should adjust the ratio of self-financing places in contract RCHEs according to their locations. For contract RCHEs located in poverty stricken districts such as Tuen Mun, a lower ratio of self-financing places should be set.

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ADSW(Elderly) responded that the Administration would consider the Deputy Chairman's suggestion.

83. In response to the Deputy Chairman's invitation of view, members supported in principle the submission of the relevant funding proposal to FC for consideration.

VII. Any other business

84. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:06 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
17 December 2013