

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)2277/13-14
(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/WS

Panel on Welfare Services

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 10 March 2014, 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 Frederick FUNG Kin-kee, SBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
Hon Frankie YICK Chi-ming
Hon Gary FAN Kwok-wai
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 TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC
Dr Hon LEUNG Ka-lau
Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC
Hon WONG Yuk-man

**Public Officers : Item III
attending**

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

Items III and IV

Miss Annie TAM, JP
Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare
Labour and Welfare Bureau

Item IV

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

Items IV and V

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

Item V

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

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

Mr LAM Ka-tai
Deputy Director of Social Welfare (Services)
Social Welfare Department

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

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

Miss Karen LAI
Council Secretary (2) 4

Miss Maggie CHIU
Legislative Assistant (2) 4

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

[LC Paper Nos. CB(1)841/13-14(01), CB(2)900/13-14(01) and CB(2)906/13-14(01)]

Members noted that the following papers had been issued since the last meeting –

- (a) referral from the Public Complaints Office on the relocation of residential care homes for the elderly ("RCHEs") affected by the North East New Territories ("NENT") New Development Areas ("NDAs") Project [LC Paper No. CB(1)841/13-14(01)];
- (b) the Administration's response to Hon TANG Ka-piu's letter dated 21 January 2014 concerning the calculation method of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance ("CSSA") payments [LC Paper No. CB(2)900/13-14(01)]; and
- (c) referral from the Public Complaints Office on the rehabilitation services for aged persons with intellectual disabilities [LC Paper No. CB(2)906/13-14(01)].

II. Items for discussion at the next meeting

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)988/13-14(01) to (02)]

2. Referring to the Administration's response to the referral from the Public Complaints Office on the relocation of RCHEs affected by the NENT NDAs Project [LC Paper No. CB(1)841/13-14(01)], the Chairman said that the Administration had not addressed the concerns of members and the residents of the RCHEs at Dills Corner Garden. She considered that the Panel should follow up the rehousing matters relating to RCHEs (including the privately-run RCHEs at Dills Corner Garden) affected by the

Action

NENT NDAs Project at the next regular meeting scheduled for 14 April 2014.

3. In view of the large number of elderly affected, Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that the subject matter should be discussed as early as possible. Mr CHAN Han-pan also agreed that the Panel should discuss the matter at the next regular meeting having regard to the development schedule of the NENT NDAs.

4. Members agreed to discuss at the next meeting the following items –

- (a) Setting up a new contract RCHE cum day care unit in a public rental housing development at ex-Kwai Chung Police Married Quarters site, Kwai Chung;
- (b) Redeployment of a permanent directorate post and establishment of next generation infrastructure for the information technology development of the Social Welfare Department;
- (c) Redevelopment of Heep Hong Society's Catherine Lo Centre for the provision of pre-school rehabilitation and other support services; and
- (d) Rehousing matters relating to RCHEs (including the privately-run RCHEs at Dills Corner Garden) affected by the NENT NDAs Project.

5. The Chairman said that the calculation method of the CSSA payments should be discussed at a future meeting of the Panel.

III. Upgrading the post of Commissioner for Rehabilitation and strengthening the directorate manpower of the Rehabilitation Team of the Labour and Welfare Bureau

[LC Paper No. CB(2)988/13-14(03)]

6. At the invitation of the Chairman, Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare ("PS(LW)") briefed members on the Administration's proposal to upgrade the permanent directorate post of Commissioner for Rehabilitation ("C for R") from the existing Senior Principal Executive Officer (D2) rank to Administrative Officer Staff Grade B ("AOSGB") (D3) rank and to create a permanent Principal Executive Officer ("PEO") (D1) post in the Rehabilitation Team of the Labour and Welfare Bureau

Action

("LWB").

Staffing arrangements under the proposed new structure of LWB

7. Mr POON Siu-ping enquired about whether the newly created PEO post would be filled by way of internal promotion. He also sought information on the work arrangements if the proposal to upgrade the C for R post and create additional posts in the Rehabilitation Team of LWB was not approved by the Finance Committee ("FC").

8. PS(LW) responded that, subject to FC's approval, the Civil Service Bureau would deploy two staff members, one from the Administrative Officer grade and the other from the Executive Officer grade to take up the upgraded C for R post and the new PEO post respectively. The four non-directorate posts proposed to be created would be additional civil service establishment. No changes would be made to the duties of the current C for R post until the relevant proposal had been approved by FC.

Strengthening the role of C for R

9. While supporting the upgrading of the C for R post, Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that upgrading the post alone was not enough. Besides, the rank of the post, even after the upgrading, was still too low. He was of the view that C for R should be capable of steering and coordinating the efforts of relevant parties in addressing the concerns of persons with disabilities. Pointing out that in the United Kingdom, matters concerning persons with disabilities were overseen by a Minister, and that an independent organization was set up in Australia to monitor all issues relating to persons with disabilities, he said that C for R, who would be responsible to PS(LW) after the proposed upgrading, just did not compare. As the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee ("RAC") was established under LWB and the rank of the C for R post was rather junior, he wondered whether the Government had attached importance to the interests of persons with disabilities.

10. PS(LW) responded that the Administration had attached great importance to promoting the well-being of persons with disabilities and actively implemented the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ("the Convention"). The upgrading of the C for R post would help enhance the work in this regard. While C for R would be responsible to PS(LW) after the proposed upgrading, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare ("SLW") would be personally involved in rehabilitation matters as and when required.

Action

11. The Chairman said that the responsibilities and authority of C for R should be strengthened to ensure the enforcement of the Convention and the proactive implementation of relevant policies to safeguard the interests of persons with disabilities. She enquired about how the Administration would ensure that C for R could perform these functions after the post was upgraded.

12. PS(LW) responded that under the proposed new organization structure of LWB, C for R and two Deputy Secretaries ("DS") (one at AOSGB1 (D4) rank and the other at AOSGB (D3) rank) would report to PS(LW). C for R would coordinate the work relating to rehabilitation and could seek PS(LW)'s advice on policy issues or matters requiring higher level coordination. Issues requiring higher level attention would also be escalated to PS(LW) or SLW if necessary. The Administration would inform RAC, the Chairperson of the Equal Opportunities Commission ("EOC") and the relevant parties in the community of the new role of C for R and the new organization structure of LWB if the funding proposal was approved by FC.

13. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that on the face of it, the upgrading of the C for R post was in line with the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ("UN Committee")'s recommendation. He, however, cast doubt on how C for R could perform the monitoring role if he/she was only given a higher rank but not entrusted with the appropriate authority. In his view, one of the most important functions of C for R was to monitor the work of the Government with respect to rehabilitation policies and issues pertaining to the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities. It would be difficult for C for R to deliver this important function if he/she worked under PS(LW) as a deputy.

14. PS(LW) clarified that the post holder would be designated to deal with issues concerning persons with disabilities and could seek PS(LW)'s advice on the work requiring higher level involvement or when he/she encountered difficulties in the co-ordination of cross-bureau policies and initiatives. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that the Administration should state clearly in its proposal C for R's authority and his/her independent role in coordinating and monitoring the work of the Government pertaining to the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities.

15. In response, PS(LW) said that it was already stipulated in the proposed job description that one of the main responsibilities of C for R was to enhance the coordination among government bureaux/departments,

Action

public bodies and non-governmental organizations ("NGOs") on implementing the Convention and monitoring the delivery of rehabilitation services by government departments.

16. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung said that C for R could not perform the monitoring duties unless he/she was independent from the Administration and held a higher rank post. He therefore did not support the Administration's proposal.

Establishing an independent monitoring mechanism

17. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that the UN Committee expressed concern at its meeting in 2012 that the rank of Hong Kong's C for R was too low and that Hong Kong lacked an independent monitoring mechanism as required under Article 33(2) of the Convention. Article 33(2) of the Convention also stipulated that States Parties should establish one or more independent mechanisms to promote, protect and monitor the implementation of the Convention. The mechanism(s) should take into account the principles relating to the status and functioning of national institutions for protection and promotion of human rights. In its concluding observations, which was published on 11 October 2012, on the report submitted by China (including Hong Kong and Macao) on her implementation of the Convention, the UN Committee recommended that Hong Kong should strengthen the authority of C for R and set up an independent monitoring mechanism that involved the active participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. In this connection, he considered it essential to put in place an independent monitoring mechanism as recommended by the UN Committee.

18. PS(LW) responded that RAC assisted the Government in promoting and monitoring the implementation of the Convention, and EOC was responsible for monitoring and enforcing the Disability Discrimination Ordinance ("DDO") (Cap. 487). Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that while EOC enforced legislation concerning equal opportunities, it was not set up according to the Paris Convention or the principles adopted by international human rights organizations. Besides, members of RAC were appointed by the Government and the operation of RAC was not transparent enough. He hoped that the Administration would take the UN Committee's recommendations seriously and set up an independent mechanism to monitor the implementation of the Convention.

19. PS(LW) responded that RAC had a wide representation. Members of RAC comprised persons with different disabilities, parents of persons

Action

with disabilities, representatives from self-help organizations of persons with disabilities and NGOs providing rehabilitation services. The Administration would continue to give due regard to the interests and rights of persons with disabilities and monitor the implementation of the Convention.

20. Dr Fernando CHEUNG asked whether the Administration had any plan to take forward the UN Committee's recommendations and set up an independent monitoring mechanism which involved the active participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations.

21. PS(LW) responded that the Administration had carefully examined the duties and responsibilities of C for R and the functions of the Rehabilitation Team of LWB having regard to the UN Committee's recommendations. As explained earlier, RAC would assist the Government in promoting and monitoring the implementation of the Convention in Hong Kong, and EOC would serve as a safeguard for protecting the equal opportunities of persons with disabilities and their rights under DDO. The upgraded C for R post would step up efforts for enhanced co-ordination of rehabilitation-related issues.

22. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that in the absence of an independent monitoring mechanism, public views on matters concerning persons with disabilities might be overlooked. He expressed regret that the Administration had no intention to establish an independent monitoring mechanism.

23. The Chairman said that it was pivotal to have an independent monitoring mechanism as it could help the Administration to fill the gaps in the existing system. She requested the Administration to brief members on the work of C for R after the upgraded post had been taken up.

24. In response to the Chairman's invitation of view, nine members expressed support for the Administration's proposal, two members were against it and one abstained. In view of the voting results, the Chairman said that the Panel supported in principle the submission of the relevant proposal to the Establishment Subcommittee for consideration.

IV. Creation of one time-limited supernumerary post of Administrative Officer Staff Grade C (D2) in the Labour and Welfare Bureau

[LC Paper No. CB(2)988/13-14(04)]

Action

25. At the invitation of the Chairman, PS(LW) briefed members on the Administration's proposal to create one supernumerary post of Administrative Officer Staff Grade C (D2) rank (i.e. Principal Assistant Secretary (Special Duty) ("PAS(SD)")) in LWB for two years from 1 June 2014 up to 31 May 2016. The proposed post would provide dedicated support to the work related to the exploration of the feasibility of a voucher scheme on residential care services for the elderly ("RCS voucher scheme") and the formulation of the Elderly Services Programme Plan ("Programme Plan") to be prepared by the Elderly Commission ("EC").

Proposed duties of DS(Welfare)1 and DS(Welfare)2

26. Mr POON Siu-ping said that DS(Welfare)2's workload appeared to be heavier than that of DS(Welfare)1. According to the Administration's proposal, while DS(Welfare)2 would be required to take up additional responsibility by supervising the Special Duty Team, DS(Welfare)1 would no longer be required to oversee the Rehabilitation Team, which was currently under his/her purview. PS(LW) responded that in assigning the duties to the two DS, consideration was given to the workload and the nature of the duties. Under the Administration's proposal, DS(Welfare)1 would take up from DS(Welfare)2 policy matters relating to Child Development Fund, short-term food assistance service and Employment in One-stop Programme and DS(Welfare)2 would focus on elderly services, social security and poverty alleviation.

Feasibility study on an RCS voucher scheme

27. Pointing out that the four-year Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly ("Pilot Scheme on CCS Voucher") had only been implemented for six months and the first round of the review had yet to be conducted, the Deputy Chairman wondered why the Administration had to explore an RCS voucher scheme at this stage. In view of the ageing population, the Administration should consider initiatives from a wider perspective in order to address the needs of the elderly. However, noting from the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)988/13-14(04)) that the Programme Plan would confine to RCS and community care services ("CCS"), he enquired about the future direction for elderly services.

28. PS(LW) responded that the Administration would invite EC to study the feasibility of introducing an RCS voucher scheme and submit a report one year after the creation of the PAS(SD) post. If it was considered

Action

feasible to run an RCS voucher scheme on a pilot basis, the Administration could provide the necessary resources in 2015-2016 the earliest. In considering the timing for creating the PAS(SD) post, the Administration had taken into account the need to improve elderly services, particularly RCS, as soon as possible. The subject of an RCS voucher scheme was in fact considered in a study commissioned by EC in 2009, followed by the Consultancy Study on Community Care Services commissioned by EC in 2010 that formed the basis of the implementation of the current Pilot Scheme on CCS Voucher. The Administration considered that it was an opportune time to explore the feasibility of an RCS voucher scheme. The feasibility exploration of an RCS voucher scheme would leverage on the experience of designing the Pilot Scheme on CCS Voucher. Moreover, EC would be working on the RCS voucher scheme and conduct this study while drawing up the Programme Plan. As such, the Programme Plan would provide a wider context for an RCS voucher scheme, while an RCS voucher scheme would serve as an input to the Programme Plan. PS(LW) said that EC comprised representatives from LWB, the Food and Health Bureau, the Transport and Housing Bureau and the Hospital Authority ("HA"). These official representatives would advise EC on matters relating to care, housing, health, medical, etc. for the elderly.

29. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that while there was a long waiting list for subsidized residential care homes for the elderly ("RCHEs"), the occupancy rate of private RCHEs was only around 70% to 80% because the quality of private RCHEs varied greatly. In his view, making use of the private market to address the shortfall of subsidized residential care places for the elderly would be a total failure. To his understanding, the consultancy study commissioned by EC in 2009 had not recommended the introduction of an RCS voucher scheme. He further noted that the introduction of such a scheme had yet to receive the unanimous support of EC members and the Administration had not engaged the public on this issue. Given that the participant rate of the Pilot Scheme on CCS Voucher was low and it had only been implemented for about six months, it was uncertain at this stage whether this new funding mode would be effective. He expressed strong reservation about the Administration's proposal and queried the justifications for extending the voucher scheme to RCS. He further said the Administration should not overlook persons with disabilities in considering long-term care policies.

30. PS(LW) clarified that the Administration had no plan to launch an RCS voucher scheme at this stage. The introduction of an RCS voucher scheme on a pilot basis would be subject to the outcome of the feasibility study and EC's recommendations. The proposed PAS(SD) post would be

Action

dedicated to assist EC in formulating the Programme Plan and taking forward work related to the feasibility study on an RCS voucher scheme. EC would engage different stakeholders, concern groups and consultants in the course of conducting the feasibility study and formulating the Programme Plan.

31. While agreeing that the formulation of the Programme Plan was necessary, Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that the Administration should provide more details about the Programme Plan. The Administration would not obtain members' support if the scope of the Programme Plan only included an RCS voucher scheme. He further said that the Administration had commissioned The University of Hong Kong in 2009 to conduct a consultancy study on an RCS voucher scheme. According to the findings of the study, a voucher scheme might render some elderly persons who had no pressing need for institutional care to use RCS. An RCS voucher scheme was therefore not recommended as per the results of the consultancy study. He said that he did not support the Administration's proposal.

32. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung said that the Administration should ensure that the services it provided would meet the users' needs. If an RCS voucher scheme were to be launched, the services provided under the scheme should be comparable to the services provided by subsidised RCHes. In his view, a voucher scheme should cover both elderly persons and persons with disabilities who were in need of institutional care. Pointing out that the Pilot Scheme on CCS Voucher was not welcomed by many eligible elderly people because the services did not suit their needs, he opined that the Administration should not pursue a voucher scheme for RCS. He said that he did not support the Administration's proposal.

33. Mr Albert HO said that it was the Administration's practice to engage a third party, e.g. universities, to conduct feasibility studies for the Administration's proposed initiatives and creation of posts would usually take place when the initiatives were considered feasible as per the study results. In this connection, he considered that the Administration's current proposal was quite unusual. Given that EC, which was a permanent advisory body, should have the manpower resources to carry out its functions, and that there were diverse views on a voucher approach to RCS, he did not see the reasons for creating the PAS(SD) post.

34. PS(LW) responded that EC would conduct the feasibility study on an RCS voucher scheme mainly through its existing Working Group on Long-term Care Model and would set up a dedicated working group for the

Action

preparation of the Programme Plan. EC would commission consultants from universities to assist it in conducting these tasks. The proposed PAS(SD) post would provide support to EC, which included liaising with consultants, collecting views from stakeholders, preparing papers, drawing up proposals, etc. LWB was currently providing support to EC but given the amount of additional work involved in the aforesaid tasks, the Administration considered the creation of the PAS(SD) post necessary. To tie in with the time frame for preparing the Programme Plan, it was proposed that the PAS(SD) post be created for two years.

35. Pointing out that the Administration had earmarked about \$800 million for issuing a total of 3 000 RCS vouchers from 2015-2016 to 2017-2018, Dr KWOK Ka-ki held the view that the Administration had in effect prepared to launch an RCS voucher scheme. He said that the Administration was attempting to obtain members' support for an RCS voucher scheme through its staffing proposal which was unacceptable to him. As there were a lot of disputes in the community about a voucher approach to elderly services and a review on the Pilot Scheme on CCS Voucher had yet to be conducted, he considered creating the post of PAS(SD) at this stage unnecessary. He said that some NGOs had lowered their tender price in order to obtain the Administration's contracts for RCHEs and as a result, the salary of their staff had been suppressed. He was wary about the impact on the staff and the residents of these RCHEs as well as the service quality. Expressing concern about the quality of private RCHEs and these NGO-run RCHEs, he said that the Administration should provide subsidized RCHEs through governmental or subvented organizations.

36. Mr TANG Ka-piu said that while there was room for improvement for the Pilot Scheme on CCS Voucher, it had provided some organizations with the opportunity to participate in CCS. Given that the operating costs of many private RCHEs were high because of expensive rental, it would be difficult for them to provide the same, let alone better, level of services as subsidized RCHEs. While having no strong view against the exploration of an RCS voucher scheme, he considered it necessary to have a clear policy direction for RCS, including the weighting of vouchers in RCS and the ratio of self-financing places and subsidized places in RCHEs. The Administration should allow more time for discussion of an RCS voucher scheme before consulting Members on any proposals.

37. PS(LW) stressed that the Administration had no intention to change its role in the provision of subsidized RCS. The Administration had implemented the Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare

Action

Users ("Special Scheme") to encourage NGOs owning land to provide more diversified welfare services through redevelopment or expansion on their sites. The Special Scheme would also provide a basis for longer-term planning for premises and manpower for elderly services. She reiterated that the Administration had no plan to launch an RCS voucher scheme at this stage. The Administration would seek support from Members on introducing a pilot RCS voucher scheme after EC had completed its feasibility study.

38. PS(LW) further said that in formulating the Programme Plan, EC would conduct a comprehensive study on the existing provision of elderly care services. Particular attention would be given to the supply and demand of welfare premises for the elderly services, related manpower issues, and the viability and desirability of different modes of service delivery. Public consultation would be conducted when formulating the Programme Plan.

Policy direction for elderly services

39. Regarding the growing demand for RCS arising from the ageing population, Dr Helena WONG said that it was unclear whether the future policy direction to meet the demand would be to provide RCS predominately by private RCHes. If it was the case, the charges for private RCS would go up and the users would have to bear part of the charges unless the value of RCS vouchers would be equal to or not less than that of subsidized RCS. Instead of presenting its proposals in a piecemeal manner, the Administration should provide a comprehensive plan for formulating elderly service policies for discussion by the public and Members. In her view, land planning should complement elderly service policies and sites should be earmarked in new development areas for constructing RCHes.

40. Noting that the number of elderly people was projected to increase to 2.56 million by 2041, Dr Helena WONG enquired about the Administration's projection of RCS to be provided by subsidized RCHes and by service vouchers respectively in addressing the need for RCS arising from the ageing population.

41. In response, PS(LW) said that the Administration would take into account the recommendations made in the Programme Plan in planning for RCS for the elderly. She stressed that the Administration would continue to provide support for subsidized RCHes.

Action

Follow-up action

Admin

42. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that the description of the Programme Plan in the Administration's paper was flimsy. The Deputy Chairman said that the Programme Plan should not confine to studying RCS policies for the elderly but should also cover policies on housing, financial security, health and medical, psychological, employment and recreational needs of the elderly. In this connection, the Administration was requested to provide the following information before submitting the relevant proposal to FC –

- (a) the parameters of the proposed RCS voucher scheme, including the co-payment arrangements, means test requirement, etc., and how these parameters would differ from those of the subvented RCHEs;
- (b) the role and participation of operators of subvented RCHEs and self-financing RCHEs in the proposed RCS voucher scheme; and
- (c) the direction and scope of the Programme Plan.

(Post meeting note: The Administration had provided the required information in its paper (LC Paper No. EC(2014-15)3 submitted to the Establishment Subcommittee for the meeting on 30 April 2014.)

43. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that the relevant staffing proposal should be voted on separately at FC.

44. In response to the Chairman's invitation of view, four members expressed support for the Administration's proposal, two members were against it and two abstained. In view of the voting results, the Chairman said that the Panel supported in principle the submission of the relevant proposal to the Establishment Subcommittee for consideration.

V. Programmes and initiatives relating to the purview of the Panel on Welfare Services set out in the 2014-2015 Budget
[LC Paper No. CB(2)988/13-14(05)]

45. At the invitation of the Chairman, SLW briefed members on the welfare initiatives covered by the Budget and other major initiatives that were planned to be implemented from 2014-2015 onwards.

Action

Funding for social welfare initiatives

46. Mr TANG Ka-piu expressed concern that the Government might reduce its financial commitment to social services to ease the worries of some members of the public that Hong Kong might be spending excessively on social welfare and moving towards welfarism. He said that although social welfare expenditure accounted for the second largest government expenditure in the 2014-2015 Budget, the existing social services were inadequate to meet the demand. He called on the Administration to present the expenditures on social services and social security separately to avoid the misperception that social services had already been adequately provided.

47. SLW responded that the expenditure on social security and social services accounted for around 69% and 31% respectively of the government's overall spending on social welfare. The spending on social services in 2014-2015 had increased by 97% when compared with the figure in 2004-2005. He said that a detailed breakdown of the expenditure on individual social security and social service items could be found in the relevant Controlling Officer's Report in the Estimates which was accessible by the public.

48. Mr TANG Ka-piu said that the Chief Executive had stated in his Manifesto that adequate money would be set aside in a special fund to meet the extra expenditure that would be needed by reason of the ageing population to provide elderly care, medical and health services in the years to come. He asked whether the Administration had set up such a fund for the construction of RCHEs and retirement protection.

49. SLW responded that the Financial Secretary had explained on many occasions that the Administration would consider views from various sectors of the community on the Working Group on Long-Term Fiscal Planning's recommendation to set up a "Future Fund". Regarding retirement protection, SLW said that the Administration would consider the way forward having regard to the outcome of the study on retirement protection conducted by Professor Nelson CHOW and his consultancy team.

50. Given the Government's heavy commitment for infrastructure developments, the Chairman and Mr TANG Ka-piu expressed worry that it might not have sufficient funds for implementing a retirement protection scheme even though the consultancy team so recommended as per the

Action

study results. They said that SLW should strive to bid for funds for retirement protection.

51. SLW responded that it was clearly stated in the Budget Speech that the Government could still afford expenditure increases but the growth in public expenditure should be commensurate with that of the economy and government revenue. The recurrent government expenditure on social welfare in 2014-2015 was estimated to reach \$56.9 billion, representing a 9.7% increase over \$51.9 billion in 2013-2014. Funds would be allocated for implementation of the poverty alleviation measures set out in the 2014 Policy Address.

52. The Chairman took the view that the Government should be more aggressive in overcoming the challenges posed by the wealth gap and ageing population.

Residential care services and rehabilitation services

53. Mr Albert HO said that in view of the serious shortfall of residential care places for the severely disabled and inadequate mental health rehabilitation services, increasing the social welfare expenditure in the 2014-2015 Budget alone could not address the problems. The Administration had not set reasonable targets for the provision of such services. He enquired whether the Administration had any concrete plans in the coming two to three years to resolve the inadequacies of the aforesaid services.

54. SLW responded that the Administration had comprehensive planning for residential care places. FC approved in February 2014 the transfer of \$10 billion to the Lotteries Fund ("LF") to provide funding for implementing feasible projects for welfare services under the Special Scheme. The injection to LF had demonstrated the Government's commitment to strengthening welfare services. Based on the rough estimation of the applicant organizations, if the some 60 proposals received under the Special Scheme could be implemented smoothly, about 17 000 additional service places for the elderly and persons with disabilities would be provided in the coming five to 10 years. These 17 000 places included residential care places (around 7 000 places and 2 000 odd places for the elderly and persons with disabilities respectively), day care places for the elderly (around 2 000 places) and day training/rehabilitation services places for persons with disabilities (some 6 000 places).

55. SLW added that in addition to the aforesaid additional places, the

Action

Government would provide, within its current term of office, about 5 000 subsidized residential care places for the elderly and 2 710 rehabilitation service places. The rehabilitation service places included 1 150 residential care places to be provided by the new integrated rehabilitation service centre under the redevelopment project at the former site of Siu Lam Hospital in Tuen Mun for the severely mentally handicapped, the moderately mentally handicapped and persons with severe disabilities and around 300 places by the Kai Nang Sheltered Workshop and Hostel in Kwun Tong. Furthermore, an additional 1 500 places of the Enhanced Home and Community Care Services ("EHCCS") would be provided from March 2015 onwards. The Guangdong Scheme, the Pilot RCS Scheme in Guangdong and the RCS voucher scheme under exploration would provide more choices of institutional care services for the elderly and help enhance the quality of RCHEs.

Admin

56. The Deputy Chairman said that since support services for persons with dementia were currently provided by District Elderly Community Centres ("DECCs"), it would be difficult to ascertain the manpower resources deployed to such services. As such, there was a suggestion that service centres dedicated to elderly persons with dementia should be set up on a pilot basis. Expressing concern about whether there were sufficient staff for the provision of services for persons with dementia, he requested the Administration to provide the total amount of funds allocated to each service unit for the provision of such services.

(Post meeting note: The Administration provided the required information vide LC Paper No. CB(2)1909/13-14(01) on 26 June 2014.)

57. Deputy Director of Social Welfare (Services) ("DD(SW)(S)") responded that support services for elderly persons with dementia were provided in an integrated manner. In addition to DECC, services and facilities for elderly persons with dementia were available at day care centres for the elderly ("DEs") and some RCHEs. Starting from October 2010, an updated Schedule of Accommodation with a higher net operational floor area had been adopted for new and reprovisioned DEs to provide more room for the elderly, including those with dementia.

58. Dr Helena WONG said that in view of the growing demand for the services for persons with dementia, she called on the Administration to increase the resources for day care centres for the elderly with dementia. She further said that while dental examinations for the residents of subsidized RCHEs were arranged by the Administration occasionally,

Action

dental treatment was not provided. Noting that the dental conditions of some of these residents were very bad, she expressed concern about the dental care provided for them by carers and the carers' service quality.

Admin

59. To facilitate members to monitor the staffing supply for DECCs and Neighbourhood Elderly Centres ("NECs"), the Deputy Chairman requested the Administration to provide information on the number of additional staff (and their respective ranks) to be employed for each of the 41 DECCs and 119 NECs for strengthening community support and services for the elderly and their carers.

(Post meeting note: The Administration provided the required information vide LC Paper No. CB(2)1909/13-14(01) on 26 June 2014.)

60. Dr KWOK Ka-ki was dissatisfied with the Administration's approach in handling the shortage problem of RCHEs. He said that the additional residential care places proposed by the Administration was insufficient to accommodate the existing waitlistees for RCHEs, let alone the growing demand in the next 10 years brought about by the ageing population. The Administration should, based on the estimated increase in the number of elderly people, project the demand for both subsidized RCHEs and bought places in private RCHEs in 2023, and set targets to meet the demand.

61. Pointing out that a few thousand persons with disabilities were waiting for rehabilitation service places, Dr KWOK Ka-ki considered that providing only 331 additional places was of little help in shortening the waiting time for such service. He further said that many mental patients who had been discharged from hospitals were not followed up by case managers.

62. SLW recapitulated that a total of 2 710 rehabilitation services places for persons with disabilities would be provided within the current term Government. The recurrent funding amounting to some \$21.6 million for providing 331 additional rehabilitation services places for persons with disabilities was the proposed provision for 2014-2015 only. As regards residential care places for the elderly, the additional 7 000 residential care places to be provided under the Special Scheme represented around 25% increase over the current provision. While it would not be possible to meet the demand for residential care places fully, the Administration would make its best effort to compress the waiting time through the continual increase in the provision of such places. The Programme Plan to be drawn up by EC would look into the challenges posed by an ageing

Action

population and provide insights into enhancing the planning for the provision of RCHes.

63. In response to Dr KWOK Ka-ki's enquiry about how the services of the Integrated Community Centres for Mental Wellness could be enhanced with an additional recurrent funding of \$9.3 million, SLW said that additional staff would be deployed to dovetail with the HA's Case Management Programme, thereby benefiting more mental patients.

Community care services

64. Pointing out that home-based CCS were provided through Integrated Home Care Services ("IHCS"), EHCCS and Pilot Scheme on CCS Voucher, the Deputy Chairman asked whether the Administration aimed to integrate different modes of home-based CCS or promote EHCCS through the provision of additional EHCCS places. Noting that the EHCCS places in some districts had not been fully taken, he enquired about the reasons for increasing the provision of EHCCS places.

65. The Deputy Chairman expressed concern that the Administration might continue to adopt the competitive bidding approach in selecting suitable service providers for EHCCS upon the expiry of the existing contracts as well as for the additional 1 500 EHCCS places. He was wary about the impact on the service users, the serving operators and their staff if the serving operators were unsuccessful in bidding the contracts. Pointing out that EHCCS had been implemented for many years, he took the view that the Administration should regularize the provision of EHCCS and review the funding mode. Given that the serving operators had been providing the services for a long time, he called on the Administration to abolish competitive bidding for EHCCS and provide the operators with recurrent funding for running the services.

66. DD(SW)(S) responded that the contracts which comprised around 5 000 places of EHCCS and the Pilot Scheme on Home Care Services for Frail Elders would end in February 2015. The Administration would integrate the major service content of the Pilot Scheme to EHCCS in March 2015. IHCS would not be included in the integration.

67. Pointing out that there was certain interface between IHCS (Frail Cases) and EHCCS as both of them covered persons with moderate impairment and the demand for the former was also great, the Deputy Chairman said that the Administration should not overlook IHCS in the amalgamation of CCS.

Action

Low-income Working Family Allowance

68. Mr POON Siu-ping enquired whether the Administration had conducted manpower planning for the implementation of Low-income Working Family Allowance ("LIFA").

69. SLW responded that the Administration was working on the preliminary planning for LIFA and would streamline the staffing requirement as far as practicable. The Administration would brief the relevant committee of the Council on LIFA and seek FC's approval of the relevant funding proposal when ready.

70. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that under the Administration's initial proposal, LIFA did not cover singletons. Referring to the survey conducted by the Society for Community Organization, he said that almost 50% of the working elderly aged 60 or above were singletons. The number of working elderly at the age of 60 had increased from 130 000 persons in 2007 to 226 000 persons in 2012 (i.e. from 11.5% in 2007 to 16.1% in 2012). Given that civil servants and employees of non-governmental organizations had to retire at the age of 60 but they were not eligible for Old Age Allowance or Old Age Living Allowance for not meeting the age requirement of 65, some of them might have financial difficulties after their retirement. Pointing out the many senior singleton workers who satisfied the working hour and income requirements of LIFA were still living below the poverty line, he called on the Administration to seriously consider extending LIFA to cover low-income singletons to ease their financial burden. The Chairman and Dr Fernando CHEUNG took the view that special allowance should also be offered to low-income working families with elderly, chronically ill or disabled members under LIFA.

71. SLW responded that although singleton workers were not covered by LIFA, they could apply for Work Incentive Transport Subsidy ("WITS"). Eligible workers satisfying the relevant working hour requirement of WITS could receive a full-rate subsidy of \$600 which was equivalent to the amount of basic allowance proposed for an eligible LIFA applicant who met the LIFA working hour requirement of 144 hours per month.

72. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung considered it unacceptable to exclude singletons from LIFA. He said that many senior working singletons were in poverty and some of them were living in sub-divided units. LIFA should also aim to help elderly people to escape poverty and the

Action

Administration should set up a retirement protection fund. He took a strong view that Professor Nelson CHOW and SLW should sit on the Working Group on Long-Term Fiscal Planning. The Chairman said that the Administration's initiatives failed to target at resolving poverty and ageing problems. She shared the view that SLW should be appointed to the Working Group given his expertise in social welfare matters.

73. SLW responded that the Community Care Fund ("CCF") had introduced a "One-off living subsidy for low-income households not living in public housing and not receiving CSSA" programme to provide a subsidy of \$3,500 for one-person household; \$7,000 for two-person household; and \$10,000 for three-or-more-person household. The programme had benefited a large number of families. He further said that the Working Group on Long-Term Fiscal Planning which comprised experts from the accounting, tax and actuarial fields would explore ways for the public finances to cope with an ageing population and long-term financial commitments. LWB had provided its views and the necessary information to the Working Group to facilitate its analysis.

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

Child care services and after-school care services

74. Dr Helena WONG said that in view of inadequate provision of RCHes and services for persons with disabilities, those in need of these services had to stay at home and were taken care of by their family members. The Democratic Party had been urging the Administration to provide allowance for these carers to ease their financial burden. She hoped that the Administration would give serious consideration to the matter.

75. Dr Helena WONG expressed dissatisfaction that the 2014-2015 Budget had disregarded child care services. While the Administration would provide additional places for home-based child care service under the Neighbourhood Support Child Care ("NSCC") Project from 2014-2015, it had no intention to raise the payment rate for child carers. She said that not many people would be interested in being child carers with such a meager payment. She also said that the additional provision of 360 fee-waiving and fee reduction quotas for after-school care services and the slight increase in the number of places in aided standalone child care centres were inadequate to meet the demand. She hoped that SLW could meet with representatives of women organizations and listen to their views

Action

so as to improve child care services.

76. SLW responded that of the proposed injection of \$400 million into the Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged ("PFD"), \$200 million would be dedicated to provide more after-school learning and support initiatives for primary and secondary school students from grassroot families. In addition to providing the disadvantaged children with learning support, PFD also helped in their personal development which would be advantageous to their upward mobility.

77. Regarding the provision of carer allowance, SLW said that a pilot scheme on providing living allowance for 2 000 eligible carers of the elderly persons from low-income families would be launched under CCF. The amount of allowance was proposed to be set at \$2,000 per month for each eligible carer and eligible carers who took care of more than one elderly person at the same time might claim up to \$4,000 per month. The Administration would evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot scheme during the pilot period.

Home care service for persons with severe disabilities

78. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that an annual funding of \$163 million was allocated to a three-year Pilot Scheme on Home Care Service for Persons with Severe Disabilities ("Pilot Scheme on HCS for PSD") which provided home-based care services in two districts for 540 users. The Pilot Scheme on HCS for PSD would be regularized and extended to all 18 districts for 3 250 users upon the expiry of the pilot period but the annual funding for the regularized scheme was only about \$200 million. As such, the unit cost would be reduced. Pointing out that the care service sector had already encountered difficulties in recruiting suitable staff, he expressed concern that the scope and the quality of HCS might be adversely affected because of a lower unit cost. He sought information on the implementation of and the assessment tool for the regularized HCS for PSD Scheme.

(With the consent of all members present, the Chairman extended the meeting for 15 minutes beyond the extended ending time.)

79. SLW clarified that the \$163 million was a lump sum grant for the Pilot Scheme on HCS for PSD for a period of three years and the \$200 million was a recurrent funding for the HCS for PSD regular scheme. DD(SW)(S) supplemented that having capitalized on the experience of the Pilot Scheme on HCS for PSD, the Administration had included the most

Action

Admin

needed services in the regular scheme. The regular scheme would be extended to persons with severe disabilities in all districts, irrespective of whether they were on the waiting list for residential care services. A simplified assessment tool would be used to facilitate a quicker assessment of the applicants' eligibility for the services. At the request of Dr Fernando CHEUNG, the Administration would provide information on the unit cost of both the pilot and regular schemes on HCS for PSD, and on the implementation of and the assessment tool for the HCS for PSD regular scheme.

Cross-sectoral collaboration in helping the disadvantaged

80. Mr POON Siu-ping sought information on the steps the Administration would take to enhance the partnership between the community and the business sectors in strengthening the social welfare support for the disadvantaged.

81. SLW said that monetary contributions from the business sector to PFD were matched dollar-for-dollar by the Government. As for the Child Development Fund ("CDF") projects, the business sectors also provided matching contribution to the savings accumulated by the participating children. The Government planned to inject \$400 million into PFD to further encourage cross-sectoral collaboration in launching projects to assist the disadvantaged. The Government also proposed to earmark an additional \$300 million for CDF in the next financial year to ensure the sustainable development of CDF projects. In addition, CCF would continue to seek ways to strengthen the support for the needy.

VI. Any other business

82. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:16 pm.