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Panel on Home Affairs

Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for the meeting on 17 July 2015

Youth development policy and initiatives

Purpose

This paper summarizes past discussions of the Panel on Home Affairs ("the Panel") on the Government's youth development policy and initiatives.

Background

Youth Development Policy

2. In the 2014 Policy Address, the Chief Executive ("CE") set out his vision on nurturing the next generation as follows -

"The Government fosters a culture of multi-faceted excellence and helps nurture young people through education, employment and whole-person development. We provide them with diversified learning, training and development opportunities that match their abilities, aspirations and education levels.

Young people should develop a positive approach to life and a sense of social awareness. They should take an interest in the development of Hong Kong and our country and cultivate an international vision. They should attach importance to both individual rights and social obligations."

3. According to the Administration's paper provided to the Panel in March 2014, in order to achieve the above objectives, the Home Affairs Bureau ("HAB") would continue to work closely with the Commission on Youth ("COY"), the Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education ("CPCE"),

community organizations and various non-governmental organizations ("NGOs") in fostering youth development work.

New initiatives announced in the policy addresses

4. During his briefings on the CE's 2014 and 2015 Policy Addresses at the Panel meetings respectively on 24 January 2014 and 6 February 2015, the Secretary for Home Affairs advised that the following new initiatives would be launched to foster a culture of multi-faceted excellence and to promote the concept of multiple pathways among the youth -

- (a) a Scholarship Scheme of \$100 million would be launched to encourage universities and tertiary institutions to admit annually about 20 local students who excelled in sports, arts and community service starting from the 2015-2016 academic year on a full cost recovery basis;
- (b) NGOs would be provided with additional resources to enhance career guidance for secondary students in collaboration with schools;
- (c) funding would be increased such that 14 000 young persons could benefit from the Funding Scheme for Youth Exchange in the Mainland, the Funding Scheme for Youth Internship in the Mainland and the Community Participation Scheme for Organizing Exchange Tours to the Mainland each year, while the feasibility of extending the International Youth Exchange Programme to more places would also be explored;
- (d) recurrent subvention for uniformed groups would be doubled starting from 2014-2015, and the funding for the Assistance Scheme for Needy Student Members would be increased to encourage more needy students to join these uniformed groups;
- (e) the four projects of Youth Hostel would be launched in Sheung Wan, Tai Po, Mongkok and Jordan, providing a total of 1 000 rented hostel places;
- (f) additional resources would be allocated to strengthen the networking and communication with young people at the district level, through organizing various activities including voluntary services, leadership training camps and study tours;

- (g) the Government would partner with three local volunteer bodies¹ and the United Nations Volunteers in launching a new Hong Kong-United Nations ("UN") Youth Volunteers Programme in 2015 to support annually 10 local university students to work in various UN agencies in the South East Asian region for about six months. A new Guangdong-Hong Kong Youth Volunteers Programme in which local tertiary students would join the Mainland university students to take part in a 10-day voluntary service programme in various Guangdong villages and towns would also be launched starting from the summer of 2015; and
- (h) a \$300 million Youth Development Fund ("YDF") to support innovative youth development activities which were not covered by existing schemes, including subsidy in the form of matching funds for NGOs, would be set up to assist young people in starting their own business.

Deliberations of the Panel

5. Issues relating to youth development policy and initiatives were discussed by the Panel at a number of meetings in the Fifth Legislative Council ("LegCo"). The major views and concerns of members are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

Youth development policy and COY

6. There was a view that the Administration should ensure that the vision of nurturing the next generation was sustainable in the long run, and clear objectives as well as deliverables should be set out. According to the Administration, youth development work was a long-term and sustained commitment. As the matter straddled various policy areas, the concerted efforts of relevant bureaux/government departments were required. The Government's youth development policy would focus on creating opportunities for them and helping them to realize their potentials. It was the aim of the Government to foster a culture of multi-faceted excellence and to promote multiple pathways and equal opportunities for youth.

7. Pointing out that COY was tasked to advise the Government on matters relating to youth development, some members suggested that consideration should be given to reforming its composition, with a view to enlisting more young people as members of COY. There was, however, another view that

¹ The three volunteer bodies included Agency for Volunteer Service, Hong Kong Volunteers Association and The Peace and Development Foundation

COY should have a balanced mix of representatives of various age groups and backgrounds to facilitate the exchange of views from different perspectives.

8. According to the Administration, all members of COY were appointed by the Government, and most of the existing members were under the age of 35 on their first appointment. As in the case of other advisory and statutory bodies, the suitability of a candidate for appointment to COY was mainly considered on the basis of merits such as ability and experience. Members of COY would be drawn from a wide spectrum of sectors in the community in order to promote the expression of views from different perspectives. The Administration assured members that their views and suggestions on the composition of COY would be further considered.

Communication with the youth

9. A suggestion was made that the Administration should provide more communication channels/platforms for young people, in particular the "post-eighties" and "post-nineties" generations, who had actively participated in social movements and voiced their views on various social issues in recent years. There was a view that the Administration should actively disseminate information on the government policies through public media and the Internet so that young people could have a better understanding of the rationale behind the policies. This would be conducive to building up consensus in the community. Some members also considered that the Administration should support the continuous operation of district youth forums, in addition to the territory-wide Youth Summit, so that young people could express their views on matters of their concern and participate in social affairs on a more regular basis.

10. According to the Administration, it was committed to enhancing communication with young people. Public consultation on major policy initiatives would be conducted through various consultation mechanisms, and young people were welcome to express their views through these channels, as well as other non-governmental forums in the community. The Administration noted that young people preferred to express their views at social websites via the Internet platform. It would actively consider how to make better use of the Internet to communicate with young people so as to better understand their views and concerns.

Youth Square ("YS")

11. In response to members' concern about the utilization rate of the facilities in YS, the Administration advised that the Youth Square Management Advisory Committee had introduced measures to promote YS's mission as a focal point for territory-wide youth development activities. To encourage youth entrepreneurship and support the development of social enterprises,

YS would offer rental discount to young entrepreneurs and social enterprises that operated youth-related business at a concessionary level equivalent to that offered to registered non-profit making organizations.

12. Members were also advised that the Administration had engaged a consultant to carry out a review of the management and operation mode of YS, in order to assess whether the existing management and operation mode was the most cost-effective and appropriate arrangement. The consultancy study had recommended a number of measures for promoting the popularity of YS, attracting patronage and improving usage of its facilities. Members also noted that the Hong Kong Art School ("HKAS") had moved into YS from June 2013, taking up some of the spaces of the minor facilities. It was envisaged that HKAS would bring in organic changes in the use of YS as a whole.

Youth Hostel Scheme ("YHS")

13. When the Panel discussed issues related to YHS, some members held the view that the number of hostel units offered under YHS was inadequate to address the long existed housing shortage problem. They called on the Administration to expedite the early completion of the projects.

14. The Administration advised that the aims of YHS were to unleash the potential of under-utilized sites in the hands of NGOs, and provide some relief to the current shortage of housing accommodation for young people. The scheme was intended to be a measure to meet the aspirations of some working youths by giving them an alternative to having their own living space for a period of time, and not meant to address their long-term housing needs. Hostel tenants were expected to make use of the opportunity to accumulate savings to meet their aspirations for future development, and make their own plans for housing over the long term. In response to a concern about whether NGOs would maintain the rental of their hostels at affordable level, the Administration advised that a standard level of rental would be set for compliance by NGOs.

15. In reply to members' enquiry about the anticipated completion dates for the four YHS projects, the Administration advised that the two projects in Sheung Wan and Tai Po had completed the technical feasibility studies and the relevant procedures (such as town planning application) were under way. It was the Administration's plan to seek funding approval from the Finance Committee in 2015-2016 for construction of the two projects in Sheung Wan and Tai Po which were scheduled for completion respectively in 2017 and 2017-2018. As for the other two projects in Mongkok and Jordan, the early stage preparation was under way.

Volunteer services and uniformed groups

16. Regarding the Administration's support for uniformed groups, there was a view that the Administration should increase the funding for uniformed groups so as to promote positive values and proper life attitude among young people. There was, however, another view that the Administration should provide more support for young people to organize programmes and activities independently, which would be more effective in promoting their growth and development. The Administration advised that it had been the Government's policy to encourage the involvement of young people in the planning and organization of youth activities, including those initiated by HAB-subsidized uniformed groups and NGOs, and those administered by CPCE.

\$100 million Scholarship Scheme

17. While supporting the Government's proposal to launch the \$100 million Scholarship Scheme, members hoped that the number of scholarships to be awarded each year, which was initially set at around 20, could be increased, so as to benefit more students. An enquiry was raised on whether universities and tertiary institutions could exercise discretion under the Scholarship Scheme for admitting students with exceptional non-academic talents/achievements whose Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education ("HKDSE") examination results did not meet the basic university admission requirements.

18. The Administration advised that in line with the concept of "multi-faceted excellence", the Scholarship Scheme would give recognition to and place emphasis on non-academic achievements. The award of scholarships would be based mainly on students' achievements in sports, arts and community service, rather than academic merits. As a new scheme, it was considered more appropriate to target at HKDSE graduates who had met all the basic requirements of university admission and/or any further requirements stipulated by individual faculties/departments. To give due respect to universities' autonomy in admission, the students nominated by secondary schools as well as the Assessment Panel formed under the Scholarship Scheme would be referred to the universities for consideration.

Youth Development Fund

19. Members in general supported the proposed establishment of the \$300 million YDF. There was also a suggestion that the Administration should invite experienced businessmen to act as mentors to guide the young people throughout the start-up and running of their business. According to the Administration, it was consulting COY on the operational details of YDF, e.g. eligibility criteria, approval procedures and allocation priority. The Administration had also been collecting views and suggestions on YDF from

young entrepreneurs and NGOs which ran youth business start-up programmes. The initial views collected suggested that the Government should play the role not only in providing start-up funds, but also in working with experienced NGOs to provide various forms of support such as linking up the youths with mentors with relevant experience, provision of business information and guidance, as well as assistance in establishing business networks.

Relevant motion passed by LegCo

20. A motion relating to youth development was passed at the Council meeting of 8 January 2014. The wording of the motion is in **Appendix I**.

Latest development

21. The Administration will brief members on its overall objectives and strategies for youth development and the efforts of various bureaux/departments in youth development work at the Panel meeting on 17 July 2015. Members will also be consulted on the proposed parameters of the \$300 million YDF.

Relevant papers

22. A list of relevant papers on the website of LegCo is in **Appendix II**.

(Translation)

**Motion on
“Assisting young people in their development on all fronts”
moved by Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan
at the Council meeting of 8 January 2014**

**Motion as amended by Hon Kenneth LEUNG, Hon KWOK Wai-keung,
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che, Hon CHAN Kin-por and Hon Michael TIEN**

That, as young people are the future masters of Hong Kong society, the Government should provide young people with room for development and upward mobility opportunities; in this connection, this Council urges the Government to allocate resources to increase the variety of and places for local higher education programmes and expand various training and employment support services targeted at young people; at the same time, the Government should adopt concrete policies and assistance measures to promote diversified economic development for supporting young people in starting up businesses, thereby enabling young people to freely choose the academic discipline, occupation and lifestyle suitable to them, so as to help them to build a bright future with greater confidence and a pragmatic attitude; specific proposals are as follows:

Education —

- (1) to increase the number of subsidized places in post-secondary and tertiary institutions, and strengthen vocational education for students, so that young people can identify as early as possible their objectives of career prospects, and lay a good foundation for upward mobility;
- (2) to comprehensively review the assistance as well as loans and repayment arrangements under the various existing student finance schemes, including providing indigent students with more tuition fee remission and additional support, and alleviate the tuition fee burden of university students by ways such as allowing tax deduction on repayment amounts of university education loans, studying the feasibility of allowing local students to apply for student loans for further studies overseas, and increasing the amount of grant for tertiary students, etc.;
- (3) to comprehensively review the Continuing Education Fund Scheme, including raising the cap on the amount of subsidy receivable by each applicant to \$40,000, extending the period of four years within which

applicants must submit all claims as required by the scheme to 10 years, and abolishing the restriction on applicants to make a maximum of four claims, etc., so as to encourage young people to pursue continuous education;

Employment –

- (4) to formulate a comprehensive employment policy for young people with the objectives of developing young people's potentials and strengthening the productivity of society;
- (5) to review and consolidate the various existing training programmes for young people, and enhance the practicability and effectiveness of the training and employment support structure for young people, so as to encourage young people to join industries which need new blood, such as the construction industry, transport industry and shipping industry, etc.;
- (6) to proactively approach long-term unemployed young people and hidden youths, and provide career counselling and support to them;
- (7) to extend and consolidate the various similar apprenticeship schemes, such as the Technician Apprenticeship (Traineeship) Training Scheme, Modern Apprenticeship Scheme as well as Beauty Care and Hairdressing Traineeship Scheme;
- (8) to subsidize young people from low-income families, particularly ethnic minority young people, so as to support them to attend self-enrichment courses and enhance their competitiveness in choosing career;
- (9) to support the development of small and medium enterprises by ways such as offering appropriate subsidies and tax concessions, so as to actively encourage them to employ young workers and trainees;
- (10) to review and improve the existing Employment Ordinance to strengthen the protection for young people who take up part-time and short-term jobs or are employed on a contractual basis;
- (11) to conduct a study on enacting legislation to require an annual three-day paid training leave for employees, so as to encourage young employees to pursue continuing education;
- (12) to adopt diversified measures to attract overseas enterprises to come to Hong Kong for investment, and establishing new and emerging

enterprises or industrial/commercial businesses, so as to create more positions for Hong Kong and increase the employment and promotion opportunities for young people;

- (13) to encourage and support young people to develop their career in the Mainland, and enrich their understanding of the Mainland;
- (14) to set up a handicraft apprenticeship training scheme to train young people for engaging in work on creativity or with traditional characteristics, such as arts fairs, music performances, dragon boat training and fireworks production etc.;
- (15) to increase the Government's budget and funding for culture and arts, so that arts groups can increase placement opportunities for young art workers;

Business start-up –

- (16) to establish business start-up funds and provide relevant education and information for offering concrete support to young people to start up businesses;
- (17) to set up creative industry parks in various districts for providing studios with stable rents and long-term tenancy agreements to young people who aspire to a career in creativity, culture and arts;

Personal growth –

- (18) to increase the number of hostel places in various tertiary institutions, so that young people can experience communal living during university studies and cultivate their skills of interpersonal communication and companionship as well as co-operative abilities;
- (19) to increase the number of internship places in Hong Kong and overseas for students of various tertiary institutions, and continue to increase the number of countries and places under the Working Holiday Scheme to enable young people to gain experiences and have exchanges in various places in the world, so as to broaden their international vision;
- (20) to strengthen local sports development as well as training and support for athletes to enable young people to follow the direction of sports in developing their personal goals and career;

- (21) to strengthen the manning ratio of guidance personnel for young people in schools and non-profit-making organizations, so as to assist them in facing problems of education, family, making friends and career prospects, etc.; and
- (22) to promote young people's participation in community services and devotion to voluntary services, so as to instil proper values in young people;

this Council also urges the Government to extensively collect views from young people when formulating development policies for young people by ways such as increasing their participation in the Government's advisory framework, and increase the number of school social workers in secondary schools to provide young people with services related to 'career and life planning'; at the same time, the Government should actively enhance Hong Kong's competitiveness and promote economic development, including driving the development of headquarters economy, so as to provide young people with more high-quality positions and let them have more upward mobility opportunities; the Government should also attach importance to the balanced development of young people's physical and mental well-being, encourage them to occupy themselves with wholesome activities or hobbies and avoid over-indulging in the virtual network, and teach them to stay away from drugs; this Council also urges the Government to:

- (23) substantially upgrade the level of the CreateHK agency, and set up an advisory committee on creative industry under the direct leadership of the Financial Secretary for co-ordinating the work of relevant government departments, and invite members of the industry to join the committee, so as to support the development of the creative industry, and provide upward mobility opportunities for young people who are highly creative but not good at conventional academic subjects; and
- (24) introduce a local talent scheme for funding local talents to enrol in the programmes of the best academic institutions all over the world which are not offered locally or are markedly different from local programmes in quality, so as to encourage Hong Kong young people to pursue excellence in different academic disciplines, nurture top-class talents in various fields in Hong Kong and assist in the diversification of Hong Kong's industries in the long run.

Appendix II

Relevant papers on youth development policy and initiatives

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Home Affairs	18.2.2013 (Item VI)	Agenda Minutes
Legislative Council	8 & 9.1.2014	Official Record of Proceedings (8.1.2014) Pages 5420 to 5476 (9.1.2014) Pages 5477 to 5555 (Members' Motion on "Assisting young people in their development on all fronts")
Panel on Home Affairs	24.1.2014 (Item I)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Home Affairs	24.3.2014 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes
Legislative Council	22.10.2014	Official Records of Proceedings Pages 641 to 643 (written question raised by Hon Dr Priscilla LEUNG on "Home-purchase difficulties faced by young people")
Legislative Council	10.12.2014	Official Records of Proceedings Pages 3473 to 3476 (written question raised by Hon CHAN Kin-por on "Helping young people to start online businesses")
Panel on Home Affairs	6.2.2015 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes