

**立法會**  
**Legislative Council**

LC Paper No. CB(2)1477/14-15

(These minutes have been  
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/WS

**Panel on Welfare Services**

**Minutes of meeting**  
**held on Monday, 9 March 2015, at 10:45 am**  
**in Conference Room 3 of the Legislative Council Complex**

- Members present** : Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che (Chairman)  
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan  
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung  
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee, SBS, JP  
Dr Hon LEUNG Ka-lau  
Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC  
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung  
Hon Frankie YICK Chi-ming  
Hon CHAN Chi-chuen  
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki  
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung  
Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH  
Hon TANG Ka-piu, JP
- Members absent** : Hon CHAN Yuen-han, SBS, JP (Deputy Chairman)  
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP  
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC  
Hon CHAN Han-pan, JP  
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, BBS, MH, JP  
Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan
- Public Officers attending** : Item III  
Miss Annie TAM, JP  
Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare  
Labour and Welfare Bureau

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

Miss Stella CHANG  
Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare  
(Welfare) 4  
Labour and Welfare Bureau

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

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

Dr Christina MAW  
Chief Manager (Primary & Community Services)  
Hospital Authority

Dr Terry LUM  
Director  
Sau Po Centre on Ageing  
The University of Hong Kong

Item IV

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

Miss Stella CHANG  
Principal Assistant Secretary for Labour and Welfare  
(Welfare) 4  
Labour and Welfare Bureau

Mr Charles HUI, JP  
Assistant Commissioner (Employment Services)  
Labour Department

Miss Cecilla LI  
Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Elderly)  
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. Information paper(s) issued since the last meeting**

Members noted that no paper had been issued since the last meeting.

**II. Items for discussion at the next meeting**

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)947/14-15(01) to (02)]

2. Members noted that the Administration had proposed to discuss at the next meeting scheduled for 13 April 2015 the following items –

- (a) Progress of implementation of the Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses; and
- (b) Additional provision for social security recipients.

Item for discussion at the regular meeting in May 2015

3. The Chairman suggested that the subject of charitable fund-raising activities should be discussed at the regular meeting in May 2015. As various bureaux and departments were involved in the subject matter, the Chairman suggested that the Administration should be informed earlier of the Panel's intention to discuss the subject matter in order to provide the Administration with more time to prepare a paper for discussion. Supporting the Chairman's suggestion, Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that as there were different kinds of fund-raising activities, it was necessary for the Administration to brief members on the policies regarding charitable fund-raising activities.

### **III. Review of Disability Allowance**

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)947/14-15(05) to (06)]

4. At the invitation of the Chairman, Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare ("PS(LW)") briefed members on the progress of the consultancy study commissioned by the Labour and Welfare Bureau ("LWB") on the practices outside Hong Kong on financial assistance for persons with disabilities ("PWDs"). With the aid of a powerpoint presentation, Dr Terry LUM, Director of Sau Po Centre on Ageing, The University of Hong Kong, briefed members on the consultancy study and the consultancy team's main observations.

#### Contents of consultancy study

5. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that the powerpoint presentation material provided by the consultancy team ("the presentation material") was of a low standard and the main observations of the consultancy team were shallow. In his view, the Disability Allowance in Hong Kong ("DA") could not be compared with the financial assistance for PWDs in some places covered by the study. Citing the social security disability insurance ("SSDI") in the United States as an example, he said that both its coverage of beneficiaries and the amount of allowance were substantially greater than those of DA. As the consultancy team did not provide any recommendations and conclusions for DA, he expressed concern that the Administration would further delay the review of DA beyond the current-term Government.

6. Mr POON Siu-ping asked whether the consultancy team would provide concrete proposals for the Government on DA and the lead time required for the Administration to implement the proposals.

7. Dr Terry LUM responded that the consultancy team was tasked to research into the practices outside Hong Kong in granting financial assistance for PWDs, which was predominantly of a fact-finding nature. The team was not asked to provide recommendations on DA. The consultancy team would provide its observations and highlight the pros and cons of the practices on financial assistance for PWDs of the places covered by the consultancy study for the Administration's consideration.

8. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that according to the consultancy team's observations, the trend of providing allowance for carers of PWDs was not distinct in the places covered by its study. He took the view that it might be due to the fact that the social security systems in these places were comprehensive. As DA did not provide adequate financial assistance for PWDs who required frequent attention and care, an allowance should be provided for their carers.

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9. Dr LEUNG Ka-lau said that "income and asset assessment" and "source of funding for financial assistance" were two distinctive items under the consultancy study. He asked the reasons why the consultancy team had grouped them under the same category of observation. He also enquired about the basis of concluding that a means test was required for the financial assistance in most of the places covered by the consultancy study. Noting that there were two sources of funding for financial assistance for PWDs, namely mandatory social security contribution and taxation, in the places covered by the consultancy study, he took the view that there was no difference between the two in nature.

10. Dr Terry LUM responded that taxation and social security contributions were two different funding concepts as far as provision of financial assistance for PWDs was concerned and they were not in the same category. Under the social security systems in places like Taiwan and the United States, PWDs were required to contribute a certain amount to social security before they were eligible for the assistance. Under the tax funded system, no prior contribution was required and eligibility was usually universal or determined by a means test. The consultancy team observed that in a majority of places under study, applicants for financial assistance were required to either pass a means test or make social security contributions for receiving financial assistance.

11. Dr LEUNG Ka-lau said that a DA applicant's condition regarding his or her ability to "work in the original occupation and perform any other kind of work for which he or she is suited" (hereunder referred to as "the Condition") was currently an assessment criterion. He wondered why the consultancy team stated that there was no restriction on the employment status of DA applicants. He opined that the findings of the consultancy study were unreliable as some information contained in the presentation material contradicted with the facts.

12. Dr Terry LUM responded that the policy intent of DA was not to replace income and DA recipients were not subject to a means test. As such, whether a person was in employment or not would not affect his or her eligibility for DA. The Condition was simply one of the assessment criteria that assisted doctors in deciding whether an applicant was severely disabled.

Scope of review of DA

13. Mr POON Siu-ping said that as there should not be any dispute on the definition of "loss of one limb", the Administration should consider allowing people with loss of one limb to apply for DA without waiting for the completion of the review of DA. Mr TANG Ka-piu enquired about whether

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the Administration would revamp the definition of disability and assessment criteria under the DA Scheme.

14. PS(LW) responded that in addition to studying the subject of allowing people with loss of one limb to apply for DA, the Inter-departmental Working Group on Review of the Disability Allowance ("the Working Group") set up by LWB would also look into other disabling conditions in reviewing the eligibility criteria for DA. It had also listened to the views of the medical sector and studied carefully the Ombudsman's Direct Investigation Report on Granting of Disability Allowance and Processing of Appeals by the Social Welfare Department published in 2009 (the Direct Investigation Report). The Working Group had commissioned the consultancy team to study the practices of other places on financial assistance for PWDs. According to the findings of the consultancy study, people with loss of one limb alone were not eligible for financial assistance, except in the United States where persons who were assessed to be suffering from "ineffective walking" due to loss of one lower limb were eligible for financial assistance. In the case of Hong Kong, public doctors would assess whether a DA applicant required substantial help from others in maintaining his or her posture and dynamic balance while standing or sitting, managing indoor transfer, travelling to clinic, school, place and work as a result of his or her physical impairment. In exploring the issue of allowing people with loss of one limb to apply for DA, the Working Group would compare local practices with practices in places outside Hong Kong. The Working Group was discussing with doctor representatives of the Hospital Authority ("HA") issues in relation to the aforesaid relaxation of eligibility criteria for DA and would explore the feasibility of such a relaxation. However, it might be difficult to include loss of one upper limb as an eligibility criterion for DA as loss of one upper limb was usually not tantamount to severe disability.

15. PS(LW) further said that DA was non-means-tested and eligible persons with severe disabilities would be provided with DA regardless of their financial status. In addition to DA, PWDs were provided with multifarious support services. Financial assistance for PWDs who had financial difficulties was mainly provided through the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance ("CSSA") Scheme. The Working Group would carefully study the consultancy team's findings.

16. Mr Albert HO said that instead of comparing the practices outside Hong Kong on financial assistance for PWDs, the consultancy team should provide insights on the eligibility criteria for and the way forward for DA. He enquired about when the Administration would finalize the policies on DA.

17. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that members had called for a

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comprehensive review of DA because the existing DA Scheme only covered persons who were severely disabled and had lost 100% of earning capacity. Such restrictions were undesirable as they rendered many PWDs unable to qualify for DA. In many places covered by the consultancy study, PWDs were provided with different tiers of financial assistance according to their degrees of disabilities. The DA Scheme should move towards the same direction so as to address the needs of persons with different degrees of disabilities. He was of the view that the consultancy study was a waste of time and resources as it was merely a survey on financial assistance for PWDs in some places outside Hong Kong. He urged the Administration to conduct a comprehensive study on the needs of persons with different degrees of disabilities and provide them with the required assistance.

Eligibility criteria for DA

18. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that according to the Hong Kong Poverty Situation Report on Disability 2013, the poverty rates of PWDs before and after policy intervention were around 45% and 30% respectively. Given that CSSA was provided on a household basis, a PWD from a CSSA household was not eligible for a separate CSSA payment. Worse still, some of them might not be eligible for DA. As stated in the Special Topics Report No. 62 issued by the Census and Statistics Department, the total numbers of PWDs (including persons with intellectual disabilities) were around 610 000 and only around 130 000 of them were receiving DA. Many PWDs had therefore been excluded from the current system. He took the view that DA should aim at addressing the financial needs of PWDs.

19. Dr Fernando CHEUNG further said that public doctors had been using the criteria in Schedule 1 to the Employees' Compensation Ordinance (Cap. 282) since 1973 to certify whether a person was in a position broadly equivalent to a person with a 100% loss of earning capacity. Given that DA was non-means-tested, an individual's eligibility for DA should not be linked to his or her ability to work. He further said that in the Direct Investigation Report, the Ombudsman had recommended that the reference to "100% loss of earning capacity" should be removed from the eligibility criteria for DA as the reference was misleading and quite irrelevant. However, the Administration had not yet taken any action in this regard. Besides, although the review of DA started in early 2013, the Administration had yet to have any concrete proposals. He wondered why it had taken the Administration so long to complete its review of DA.

20. Dr KWOK Ka-ki and Mr CHAN Chi-chuen said that as DA was a form of financial assistance for the severely disabled persons, the reference to "100% loss of earning capacity" should not be regarded as an eligibility criterion for DA. Given that loss of one limb was only one type of

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disabilities, Dr KWOK said that whether people with loss of one limb should be allowed to apply for DA should not be the focus of the review. In assessing DA applications, a doctor should take account of how the applicant's working ability was affected by his or her disabilities. He sought the consultancy team's views on the appropriateness of including the reference to "100% loss of earning capacity" in the eligibility criteria for DA.

21. Dr Terry LUM responded that as DA was not a form of employee compensation, policies on DA should not be linked to employee compensation policies. He said that the nature of DA was very different from that of the United States' SSDI. SSDI was of an income replacement nature and a person was required to earn enough work credits in order to be eligible for SSDI. However, DA was not intended to replace income. It was therefore not sensible to link the reference to "100% loss of earning capacity" to the eligibility criteria for DA. The consultancy team took the view that there should not be any linkage between an individual's eligibility for DA and his or her working ability.

22. Dr Terry LUM further said that if the provision of financial support for PWDs was intended to replace their income, there should be a linkage between the eligibility criteria for such support and the employment of the beneficiaries. In this case, such a financial support should not be provided under the existing DA platform. Members might need to consider the objective of DA afresh and whether financial assistance for PWDs should be provided in the form of CSSA or under a new scheme.

23. In response to Mr TANG Ka-piu's enquiry about whether the means tests for financial assistance for PWDs in places outside Hong Kong under study were household-based or individual-based, Dr Terry LUM undertook to provide the required information after the meeting.

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*(Post-meeting note: The Administration's response was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(2)1306/14-15(01) on 21 April 2015.)*

Medical assessment on DA applicants

24. Dr KWOK Ka-ki said that the reference to "100% loss of earning capacity" had given rise to many disputes among doctors as well as between doctors and DA applicants. Unlike the United States and Australia where assessments on occupational disability and a person's ability to work were conducted by specialist doctors or doctors engaging in occupational medicine, many junior doctors of HA were required to make medical assessments on DA applicants. He took the view that the eligibility of applicants for DA should be assessed by a team comprising members who had received the relevant professional training.



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25. Mr Frankie YICK said that medical assessments on both DA applicants and work injury cases should be made by professional teams. He hoped that LWB and HA could follow up issues on fraudulent work injury cases. PS(LW) noted the suggestions.

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26. At the request of Mr Frankie YICK, Deputy Director of Social Welfare (Administration) undertook to provide information on the number of appeal cases lodged with the Social Security Appeal Board ("SSAB") on DA applications in the past five years, and the number of cases under which SSAB's decisions were different from the original ones.

*(Post-meeting note: The Administration's response was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(2)1306/14-15(01) on 21 April 2015.)*

27. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung said that under the existing social security system, able-bodied persons were not provided with adequate protection, not to mention PWDs. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen said that the Administration tended to think that the disadvantaged would ask for financial assistance even if they did not have financial needs and worry that the level of assistance for the disadvantaged would be over-provided. In his view, it was unnecessary to compare DA with similar allowances in other jurisdictions as the extent of assistance provided in a jurisdiction for the disadvantaged should commensurate with its financial capability. The Administration should change its mindset and be generous in assisting the disadvantaged given its sound financial status. He took the view that the Administration had made use of the consultancy study to delay making improvements to DA.

The consultancy team's recommendations and views on DA

28. At the invitation of the Chairman, Dr Terry LUM shared with members the views and preliminary observations of the consultancy team on DA. He said that the existing DA system did not keep pace with the changes in the concept of disability in society. That said, the consultancy team was of the view that if no changes would be made to the prevailing policies, it would not be worthwhile to devise an elaborative assessment mechanism for DA. Rather, it might be more feasible to consider including mobility disability caused by loss of one lower limb (i.e. the model adopted in the United States) in the assessment criteria for DA.

29. Dr Terry LUM further said that the consultancy team considered it necessary to look into policies on PWDs in a holistic manner rather than mending the existing DA Scheme. The consultancy team shared some members' views that there should be a revamp of financial assistance for PWDs although it was outside the scope of the consultancy study.

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30. As regards the way forward for the provision of financial assistance for PWDs, Dr Terry LUM said that disability was not clearly defined in Hong Kong. In Hong Kong, there was a linkage between rehabilitation and disabilities whereas in many overseas jurisdictions, the concept of rehabilitation usually had the meaning of "correctional" and was delinked from disabilities. Many overseas jurisdictions attached importance to equitable participation of PWDs in society. Disability policies instead of rehabilitation policies should be in place and it was vital to line up disability policies with participation of PWDs in society. The consultancy team was of the view that financial support for PWDs and rehabilitation policies should not be considered separately. The Administration should establish a mechanism under which the provision of financial and service support for PWDs would facilitate their equitable and meaningful participation in society.

Removal of the reference to "100% loss of earning capacity"

31. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that at its meeting on 9 December 2013, the Panel passed a motion agreeing that the Government should implement expeditiously the revisions to the Medical Assessment Form ("MAF") for DA by removing the reference to "100% loss of earning capacity", but objecting to the removal of the Condition as a criterion for assessing an applicant's "other physical, mental conditions including visceral diseases" so that people with loss of one limb or other conditions (including visceral diseases) might have a chance to be diagnosed by doctors as severely disabled and be eligible for DA. Expressing concern that many PWDs were unable to receive DA because of the Administration's inaction towards the carried motion, he asked when the Administration would act according to the carried motion. The Chairman said that since some members had objected to the removal of the Condition, further discussion on the subject matter with the Administration might be necessary.

32. PS(LW) responded that to address the concern of members and some doctors of HA about the reference to "100% loss of earning capacity", the Administration proposed to remove the reference from MAF and briefed members on its proposal at the Panel meeting on 9 December 2013. Revisions to MAF were also suggested to facilitate doctors' assessment of DA applications. The Administration was ready to revise MAF but considered it more appropriate to remove both the reference to "100% loss of earning capacity" and the Condition. After that Panel meeting, the Administration had discussed the subject matter with some doctors of HA. It would seek the views of the Panel and the relevant concerned groups in this regard. The Chairman said that the Administration should complete its discussions with members belonging to different political parties, and revert

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to the Panel before its regular meeting in April 2015 on whether the Administration would revise MAF by removing the reference to "100% loss of earning capacity" and at the same time retaining the Condition as an assessment criterion. The Administration was also requested to provide the Panel with the timetable for revising MAF before that meeting.

#### Briefing on the outcome of the review of DA

33. In response to the Chairman's enquiry about when the Administration would brief members on the Working Group's conclusions and recommendations on DA, PS(LW) said that the Working Group was examining the findings of the consultancy study and looking into issues relating to allowing people with loss of one limb to apply for DA. The Working Group would suitably consult the relevant organizations and individuals in due course and would consider the need to report to the Commission on Poverty ("CoP"). The Administration would work on the improvements to MAF and re-examine the Direct Investigation Report. The Administration hoped to complete the aforesaid work by the end of 2015.

34. Pointing out that DA was non-means-tested, Dr Fernando CHEUNG questioned the need for the Working Group to report its work to CoP. PS(LW) responded that one of the terms of reference of the Working Group was to report to, and seek steer as deemed appropriate from, the former Social Security and Retirement Protection Task Force ("SSRPTF") under CoP. As CoP had been merged with SSRPTF in the second term of CoP, the Working Group might need to report its work to CoP direct. However, she would consider whether there would still be a need to do so. The Chairman requested the Administration to brief the Panel on the outcome of the review of DA before reporting to CoP.

#### **IV. Promoting active ageing**

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)947/14-15(03) to (04)]

35. At the invitation of the Chairman, Secretary for Labour and Welfare ("SLW") briefed members on the progress of various initiatives of LWB on promoting active ageing.

#### Public transport fare concession

36. Mr TANG Ka-piu asked whether the Administration had any plan to provide public transport fare concession for retired persons who were aged between 60 and 64 to facilitate them to move around the community. SLW responded that the Administration had no plan to extend the Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with

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Disabilities ("the \$2 Scheme") to cover persons aged between 60 and 64 at this stage. As the minimum age requirement for most of the Government's assistance schemes for elderly persons had been set at 65, lowering the age limit for the \$2 Scheme would involve major policy consideration. Moreover, resources should be used for helping the most needy and providing fare concession for employable able-bodied persons who did not have financial difficulties might not be appropriate. A comprehensive review of the \$2 Scheme would be conducted around one year after the full implementation of the extension of the \$2 Scheme to green minibuses ("GMBs"). The Administration would evaluate the effectiveness of the \$2 Scheme and study the future positioning of policies relating to the provision of public transport fare concession.

37. In response to Mr CHAN Chi-chuen's enquiry about whether the \$2 Scheme would be extended to trams, SLW said that Hong Kong Tramways Limited ("HKTL") hoped that the Administration could bear the full amount of fare and therefore offer free ride to the eligible beneficiaries of the \$2 Scheme. The Administration had explained to HKTL that such a proposal did not tally with the arrangements for other public transport operators participating in the \$2 Scheme. In reviewing the \$2 Scheme, the Administration would study whether there was room for including trams in the \$2 Scheme.

38. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen sought information on the implementation of the extension of the \$2 Scheme to GMBs in phases. He also enquired about the response of GMB operators to the \$2 Scheme and the number of operators which had not indicated interest in joining the \$2 Scheme.

39. SLW responded that the first phase of extension of the \$2 Scheme to GMBs would be implemented in end-March 2015. The first phase would cover 110 operators and 380 routes (representing about 75% of all the GMB operators and around 78% of the total number of GMB routes). Hoping to encourage more operators to join the \$2 Scheme, the Transport Department was liaising with the remaining operators. The Administration aimed to release more detailed information on the first phase in mid-March 2015 and roll out the second phase in around mid-2015.

*(Post-meeting note: The Administration's paper on the details of the extension of the \$2 Scheme to GMBs was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(2)1065/14-15(01) on 17 March 2015.)*

Encouraging elderly employment

40. As many elderly persons who were receiving CSSA and aged between 60 and 64 still wished to continue to work, Mr TANG Ka-piu said that the

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Administration should consider extending the Integrated Employment Assistance Programme for Self-reliance to this group of people.

41. SLW responded that helping CSSA recipients leave the CSSA net would facilitate deployment of resources for the provision of social security assistance for the most needy. To this end, the Administration had been encouraging and assisting able-bodied CSSA recipients to secure employment and move towards self-reliance. To follow up the Steering Committee on Population Policy's strategy of unleashing the potential of local labour force, the Government would consider reviewing the existing welfare arrangements to see if they had the effect of serving as a disincentive for elderly persons to continue working.

42. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung opined that the Administration should facilitate elderly persons to unleash their talent and contribute to society after they had retired rather than promoting elderly employment. Many elderly persons could not retire and had to do casual work to support their living. Some elderly drivers of GMBs had reflected that their employers had suppressed their wages and fringe benefits. The Administration should assist these elderly persons instead of promoting active ageing.

43. Mr POON Siu-ping was of the view that in the absence of retirement protection, many elderly persons had to continue to work. Given that some training programmes conducted by the Employees Retraining Board ("ERB") were placement-tied and priority might be accorded to younger applicants, he enquired about how the Administration would ensure that elderly persons could participate in these training programmes. He also sought information on the number of job vacancies available for elderly persons, the number of participants of the Employment Programme for the Middle-aged ("EPM") who were aged 65 or above and the way forward of EPM.

44. SLW responded that ERB had in its Three-year Strategic Plan for 2015-2016 to 2017-2018 emphasized the overall objective of "Training for empowerment, employment for alleviation of poverty". In 2015-2016, ERB would focus on providing training for mature persons amongst other target groups. ERB would also conduct market research on people aged 50 or above and retired persons to understand their views on continuing employment. The market research would also cover employers to understand their opinions on hiring this group of people. Subject to the research findings, ERB would launch training courses on a pilot basis, targeting at people aged 50 or above and retired persons. That aside, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University had offered training programmes for elderly persons to learn how to do simple survey-related work.

45. SLW further said that some 2 500 employees aged 40 or above were

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placed under EPM in 2014 and the Administration would strengthen its efforts in encouraging mature persons to re-join or remain in the employment market. The Labour Department ("LD") would organize thematic job fairs and set up a dedicated webpage for mature persons under the Interactive Employment Service website to facilitate them in obtaining employment information.

46. Assistant Commissioner (Employment Services) supplemented that setting of age limit for job vacancies posted with LD was generally not allowed. Job vacancies were open to all job seekers including mature persons. As some mature persons were more interested in part-time jobs, LD would extend EPM to also cover part-time jobs to encourage employers to provide more part-time employment opportunities for mature persons.

Elderly persons' participation in formulation of policies

47. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that the Administration had adopted a positive attitude towards elderly persons in drawing up initiatives on promoting active ageing but regarded elderly persons as a burden in formulating policies in relation to population, health care and retirement protection. He hoped that the Administration could be positive towards elderly persons in all policy areas.

48. Dr Fernando CHEUNG further said that comparing with Hong Kong, many overseas places allowed their elderly persons a higher level of participation by involving them in policy formulation. Having regard to the problem of ageing population, many overseas places attached great importance to elderly's viewpoints in society development and accorded priority to the needs of elderly persons in formulating policies. Given that the poverty rate of elderly persons in Hong Kong was around 30% after policy intervention, the Administration should capitalize on elderly persons' experience and engage them in policy formulation. In his view, the promotion of active ageing was moving towards a wrong direction. He called on the Administration to establish a system to facilitate elderly persons to participate in policy formulation.

49. SLW responded that the Elderly Commission ("EC") was set up to advise the Government on the formulation of a comprehensive policy on the elderly and the Elder Academy Scheme was one of the inaugural schemes proposed by EC. Many elderly persons had received higher education and were professionals. They were valuable assets to the community and were encouraged to participate actively in community activities. Elderly persons were welcomed to participate in community affairs, e.g. running for District Council election. He said that starting from 1 April 2015, the appointment rate of women to government advisory and statutory bodies would be raised

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to 35%. This would allow more women, including elderly women, to participate in formulating policies.

50. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that all members of EC were appointed by the Government but they did not represent elderly persons. He took the view that EC should comprise members who would speak for the rights of the elderly.

*(At 12:50 pm, the Chairman extended the meeting for 10 minutes beyond the appointed ending time to allow sufficient time for discussion.)*

Provision of elderly centre services

51. Mr Frederick FUNG said that the demand for elderly centre services in some districts was greater and the waiting time for some of these services was long. The Administration should take account of the demand and the elderly population in a district in the planning and provision of elderly centres. Given the inadequate supply of residential care homes for the elderly ("RCHEs") in some districts, many elderly persons could not stay in the community which they had built up social bonding when they were institutionalized. In his view, the provision of RCHEs and elderly centres in a district should dovetail with one another and elderly service plans should be drawn up in a holistic manner.

52. SLW responded that there were currently 41 district elderly community centres ("DECCs") and 168 neighbourhood elderly centres ("NECs") throughout the territory. While the Administration would strive to provide a residential care place for an elderly person in the district he or she preferred, it was sometimes difficult because of a lack of suitable premises for RCHEs in some districts.

53. Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Elderly) supplemented that there were elderly centres in each of the 18 districts. Since 2014-2015, the Government had increased the annual recurrent funding by some \$160 million for the purpose of strengthening community support services for elderly persons, including additional resources to DECCs and NECs as well as upgrading social centres for the elderly to NECs. This would enable all elderly centres to increase their manpower, thereby providing more support and services for elderly persons. In planning for the provision of elderly centres, the Administration would take account of the size of the elderly population, the distribution of elderly centres and the demographic situation of the elderly persons in a district. Provision of elderly centres would also be considered in new public rental housing developments. In this connection, a new NEC had been provided at Kai Ching Estate.

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*(At 12:55 pm, with the consent of all members present, the Chairman extended the meeting for ten minutes beyond the extended ending time.)*

54. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung said that there was a large elderly population in Kai Yip Estate but the provision of elderly services there was inadequate. A new NEC was, however, provided in Kai Ching Estate which had a small number of elderly residents. If the elderly persons residing in Kai Yip Estate wished to use the services at nearby NECs, they needed to go to Kai Ching Estate. As the pathway near the market in Kai Yip Estate was blocked by kiosks, he expressed concern about how the elderly persons could travel safely from Kai Yip Estate to Kai Ching Estate. SLW responded that LWB would look into the matter with the Transport and Housing Bureau to ensure a barrier-free access for the elderly residents in Kai Yip Estate.

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*(Post-meeting note: The Administration advised that there was an NEC with premises at two housing blocks at Kai Yip Estate which should be accessible to the elderly residents of the Estate.)*

**V. Any other business**

55. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:03 pm.