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Panel on Home Affairs

**Updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 14 June 2016**

Youth development policy and the Youth Development Fund

Purpose

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

Background

Youth Development Policy

2. According to the Administration, its policy objectives on youth development are:

- (a) to foster a culture of multi-faceted excellence and to provide diversified learning, training and development opportunities to young people who have different aspirations;
- (b) to encourage young people to develop an active approach to life and a positive sense of social awareness;
- (c) to deepen their understanding in the developments of Hong Kong and our country;
- (d) to broaden their global perspectives; and
- (e) to allow them to thoroughly understand their individual rights and be happy to take on social obligations.

3. Besides, the Administration has advised that, in order to achieve the above objectives, the Home Affairs Bureau ("HAB") will 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 and on-going initiatives on youth development launched by HAB as announced in 2016 Policy Address

New initiatives

4. (a) strengthening the dialogue between the Government and young people through additional communication channels, and encouraging their participation in public affairs, including the work of government advisory and statutory bodies; and
- (b) launching YDF¹ to support NGOs, in the form of matching funds, in helping young people start their own business, and supporting NGOs in organizing innovative youth development activities not covered by existing schemes.

On-going initiatives

5. (a) continuing to expand the Mainland and overseas youth exchange and internship schemes to provide more opportunities for young people to broaden their horizons;
- (b) enhancing communication with young people through district networks, including organizing more exchange activities, to encourage their participation in community affairs;
- (c) continuing to provide under the Service Corps programme more opportunities for young people to serve in underprivileged areas in the Mainland;
- (d) continuing to implement the Youth Hostel Scheme ("YHS"). Subject to the progress of various projects, funding approval of the Finance Committee will be sought in 2016 for taking forward the

¹ In his 2015 Policy Address, the Chief Executive proposed to set up a \$300 million YDF in the form of matching funds for collaboration with NGOs to assist young people in starting their own businesses. The fund will also subsidize innovative youth development activities not covered by existing schemes. Members may refer to paragraphs 13-22 of LC Paper No. CB(2)1890/14-15(01) for details of the operational arrangements of YDF.

three projects at Sheung Wan, Tai Po and Yuen Long, and maintaining close liaison with interested NGOs to help them launch new projects as soon as practicable;

- (e) continuing to promote the culture of multi-faceted excellence by implementing the Multi-faceted Excellence Scholarship to fund additional undergraduate places for Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education graduates who excel in sport, art and music as well as community service;
- (f) continuing to take forward the Funding Scheme for Youth Life Planning Activities to support the collaboration between NGOs and secondary schools in organizing projects to help students and their parents/teachers better understand life planning and multiple pathways; and
- (g) providing recurrent subvention to 11 youth uniformed groups and two NGOs to support their continual provision of diversified development platforms for young people.

Deliberations of the Panel

6. The subject of youth development policy was discussed by the Panel at a number of meetings in the Fifth Legislative Council ("LegCo"). The Administration consulted the Panel regarding the proposed operational details of YDF at its meeting on 17 July 2015 and members raised no objection to the proposed arrangements.

7. The major views and concerns of members are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

COY and communication with the youth

8. Some members suggested that as COY was tasked to advise the Government on matters relating to youth development, consideration should be given to reforming its composition with a view to enlisting more young people as its members. There was, however, another view that COY should have a balanced mix of representatives of various age groups and backgrounds to facilitate the exchange of views from different perspectives.

9. 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.

10. Some members considered it important for the Administration to strengthen communication with young people and solicit their views on policy initiatives or social issues. They commented that the existing initiatives to strengthen the networking and communication with young people were far from adequate. 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. Besides, District Officers should also take a more proactive role in reaching out to the youth and explaining to them the Government's policies on various fronts. Some members 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. Consideration should also be given to appointing more young people as members of the Area Committees.

11. According to the Administration, it was committed to enhancing communication with young people and had all along encouraged young people to give views on government policies through consultation at different levels and through different channels, including District Councils, COY and the appointment of young people with different backgrounds as members of various advisory and statutory bodies. The Administration advised that COY had explored how to make better use of social media and websites on the Internet to communicate with young people so as to better understand matters of concern to them. The Administration advised that with the support of COY, it would continue to collaborate with community organizations, universities and other stakeholders to promote various youth development activities.

Youth Square ("YS")

12. 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.

13. 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.

YHS

14. In the 2015-2016 legislative session, the Administration consulted members on the capital works proposals for two YHS projects, namely the youth hostel development by Po Leung Kuk in Yuen Long and the youth hostel development by The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups in Tai Po. Members in general expressed support for the two projects. In response to members' concern about the progress of the remaining three YHS projects in Sheung Wan, Mong Kok and Jordan, the Administration advised that it would consult relevant DCs and the Town Planning Board. The Administration informed members that the five projects together would provide about 2 700 places for young people. The construction of the first youth hostel was expected to be completed in 2018. Members may refer to a background brief on YHS (LC Paper No. CB(2)1128/15-16(04) for details of the scheme.

Volunteer services and uniformed groups

15. 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.

Youth exchange and internship programmes

16. Some members considered that the exchange and internship schemes jointly operated by HAB and COY could broaden the horizons of young people and they expressed support for increasing the funding for organizing more such programmes of longer duration. Some members suggested that HAB might consider encouraging ethnic minority students in Hong Kong, many of whom coming from the Belt and Road countries, to take part in the youth exchange schemes under the Belt and Road Initiative. The Administration advised that it had all along provided support for youth organizations to organize activities promoting the appreciation of different cultures. The Administration would provide resources for them to organize exchanges and activities relating to the Belt and Road Initiative.

17. In response to members' enquiry regarding the Working Holiday Scheme ("WHS") administered by the Labour Department, the Administration advised that it had no plan at the present stage to establish WHS arrangement with the Mainland authorities since a number of other schemes were already in place offering youth exchange or internship opportunities in the Mainland.

YDF

Eligibility and requirements of young entrepreneurs

18. Some members enquired about the rationale for setting an age range of 18 to 35 for applicants of YDF. The Administration explained that the age range was set after making reference to the age limit of other similar youth entrepreneurship schemes and having considered that persons under the age of 18 could not take up contractual or other legal obligations on their own. Besides, potential youth entrepreneurs would need certain work and life experience before they could identify their career aspiration, seize market opportunities and find their entrepreneurial direction. Some members enquired whether these young entrepreneurs would be required to shoulder a certain proportion of the start-up capital so as to raise their sense of commitment towards their business. The Administration was of the view that it was not in the interest of young entrepreneurs to require young entrepreneurs to contribute to part of the start-up capital, particularly those from less well off families who did not have financial resources to start their business.

19. Some members were worried that due to limited entrepreneurial and business experience of young people, the entrepreneurship projects launched might not be commercially viable and would end up in failure. The Administration advised that the essence of YDF was to leverage on the business and professional experience, inter-personal networks and support services

possessed by NGOs, with a view to helping young people pursue their entrepreneurship path.

Nature of businesses

20. Noting that businesses which might embarrass the Government, such as tobacco, would not be supported under YDF, some members sought clarification on what would be regarded as "embarrassing the Government".

21. The Administration advised that under YDF, NGOs would formulate their own assessment criteria and approval procedures for granting of fund to support innovative projects. The assessments conducted by NGOs would not involve any form of political vetting. As a guiding principle, business proposals having undesirable notions (such as gambling, violence, pornography or discrimination), propagating terrorism or involving unlawful activities would not be supported. Some members commented that the restriction of "having undesirable notions" was too vague and could be subject to different interpretation. They suggested that the Administration should specify clearly the scope and nature of businesses which would be classified as "embarrassing" and hence not supported under YDF.

Eligibility criteria of NGOs and monitoring mechanism

22. In response to members' enquiry on the eligibility criteria of NGOs applying for matching grant, the Administration advised that in addition to non-profit making charitable bodies, business associations, professional bodies, charitable organizations set up by commercial firms and educational institutions (such as universities) were eligible to submit applications for matching grants from YDF. The Administration advised that apart from providing start-up grants, it was more important for YDF to offer professional training consultations and support to young entrepreneurs through organizations with entrepreneurial and business experiences (or organizations with such connections and inter-personal networks).

23. Some members asked whether there was any monitoring mechanism to be put in place to ensure prudent use of public funds. The Administration advised that it would closely monitor NGOs to ensure that they would be impartial and fair when they used the fund, vetted the projects and provided grants. NGOs would be required to pass the assessment and an interview conducted by an assessment panel to ensure that all arrangements were comprehensive and appropriate. Only then would YDF disburse the matching fund in phases to the approved applicants. To ensure the prudent use of public funds, the NGOs concerned must sign an agreement with the Government, requiring the submission of, e.g. project reports and financial reports, at a time specified by

YDF. Representatives of HAB or COY might attend the project activities as observers to monitor the progress of the projects. Should any irregularities be identified, the Government had the right to recover from the approved applicants any disbursement in full.

Relevant motion passed by LegCo

24. 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

25. The Panel has scheduled to discuss the youth development policy and YDF at the next meeting on 14 June 2016.

Relevant papers

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

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
7 June 2016

(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.

**Relevant papers on
Youth development policy and the Youth Development Fund**

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 334 to 390 (9.1.2014) Pages 1 to 79 (Members' Motion on "Assisting young people in their development on all fronts") Progress Report
Panel on Home Affairs	24.1.2014 (Item I)	Agenda Minutes
	24.3.2014 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes
	6.2.2015 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes
	17.7.2015 (Item III)	Agenda Minutes
	17.2.2016 (Item III)	Agenda Minutes