立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)265/17-18
(These minutes have been seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/WS

Panel on Welfare Services

Minutes of special meeting
held on Saturday, 4 March 2017, at 9:30 am
in Conference Room 1 of the Legislative Council Complex

Members present	**:**	Hon SHIU Ka-chun (Chairman) Hon KWONG Chun-yu (Deputy Chairman) Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung Hon CHAN Hak-kan, BBS, JP Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung Hon CHAN Chi-chuen Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, BBS, MH, JP Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki Hon KWOK Wai-keung Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH Hon Andrew WAN Siu-kin Hon YUNG Hoi-yan Dr Hon Pierre CHAN Hon Nathan LAW Kwun-chung Dr Hon LAU Siu-lai
Members absent	**:**	Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP Hon Alvin YEUNG Hon CHU Hoi-dick Dr Hon Junius HO Kwan-yiu, JP Hon HUI Chi-fung

[According to the Judgment of the Court of First Instance of the High Court on 14 July 2017, LEUNG Kwok-hung, Nathan LAW Kwun-chung, YIU Chung-yim and LAU Siu-lai have been disqualified from assuming the office of a member of the Legislative Council, and have vacated the same since 12 October 2016, and are not entitled to act as a member of the Legislative Council.]

Public Officers attending : Item I

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

Mr Esmond LEE, JP
Head, Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency

Mr Nick AU YEUNG
Principal Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs (Community Care Fund)
Home Affairs Bureau

Dr LAW Chi-kwong, GBS, JP
Chairman, Community Care Fund Task Force

Attendance by invitation : Item I

The Civic Party

Mr MAK Tsz-kin
Representative

The Federation of Hong Kong & Kowloon Labour Unions

Mr WONG Shun
權益幹事

Labour Party

Mr HO Wai-lun
社區幹事

吳清清小姐

Platform of Concerning Subdivided Flats in Hong Kong

Mr YEUNG Kin-bun
Project Officer

觀塘劏房街坊關注組

Mr SIU Wa
Member

Master of Public Administration Alumni Association, Hong Kong Baptist University

Mr LAU Ka-shing
Chairperson

Young Democrats

Mr IP Nelson
Representative

The Democratic Party

Mr WAN Derek
Representative

葵涌劏房居民大聯盟

Mr NG Kwan-lim
Member

葵涌劏房住客聯盟

黃寶熹小姐
成員

葵涌劏房連線

Miss YIU Tung-mui
Member

葵涌劏房戶問問政府為何無支援小組

Mr TIN Ka-shun
Member

葵涌工廈劏房戶關注組

陳敬譽先生
成員

葵涌N無大開支關注組

黃瑋先生
成員

葵涌爭取基層租戶支援關注組

甄朗庭先生
成員

葵涌街坊民議組

廖莊敏女士
成員

爭取低收入家庭保障聯席

Miss LI Fung-tsing
項目幹事

Concerning Grassroots Housing Rights Alliance

Miss YAM Chun
組織幹事

太子劏房關注組

張志權先生
成員

N無人士關注組

劉卓賢先生
成員

土瓜灣社區家長關注組

譚水靜女士
代表

關注綜援低收入聯盟

李國權先生
組織幹事

關注舊區住屋權益社工聯席

Mr WONG King-lai
召集人

黎治甫先生

香港社會服務聯會

Mr WONG Wo-ping
Chief Officer

西區被逼遷租客大會

李美美女士
成員

Ms LEUNG Yim-mui

Ms LI Foon-yung

Mr HO Chi-chung

鄧寶山先生

Clerk in attendance	:	Mr Colin CHUI Chief Council Secretary (2) 4
Staff in attendance	:	Miss Kay CHU Council Secretary (2) 4 Miss Alison HUI Legislative Assistant (2) 4

Action

I. Support measures for low-income households not living in public housing and not receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)543/16-17(07) to (08), CB(2)898/16-17(01), CB(2)920/16-17(01) to (03) and CB(2)929/16-17(01) to (06)]

At the invitation of the Chairman, Deputy Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare)2 ("DS(W)2") briefed members on the support currently provided by the Administration for low-income households not receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance ("CSSA"). He said that when the support measures for low-income households not living in public housing and not receiving CSSA (hereunder referred to as the "N have-nots") was discussed at the Panel meeting on 9 January 2017, members raised concerns about the implementation of the Low-income Working Family Allowance ("LIFA") Scheme and that the "One-off living subsidy for low-income households not living in public housing and not receiving CSSA" Programme ("the One-off Living Subsidy Programme") would not be relaunched by the Community Care Fund ("CCF"). In conducting the comprehensive policy review on the LIFA Scheme, the Administration would consider views and suggestions of members, concern groups and stakeholders. To prepare for the policy review, the Administration had commissioned a survey company to conduct a survey to gather more data of LIFA families and separately, through the General Household Survey, tried to ascertain why households which appeared to be eligible for LIFA but did not apply for the allowance.

2. Dr LAW Chi-kwong, Chairperson of the CCF Task Force, said that as he had explained at a meeting of the Panel on Home Affairs, the One-off Living Subsidy Programme provided one-off cash subsidy for the N have-nots who could not benefit from the short-term relief measures put forward in the Budget. When there were changes in relief measures introduced by the Budget, CCF would reconsider whether there were other measures to assist people-in-need, but would not relaunch the One-off Living Subsidy Programme.

3. In response to the Chairman's enquiries about whether CCF would implement new measures to assist the N have-nots, Dr LAW Chi-kwong said that there were suggestions that tenants of sub-divided units ("SDUs") should be provided with rent allowance and energy subsidy. Since it was not the Government's policy to provide rent allowance for the needy households living in private housing and CCF's assistance programmes should not be in conflict with the Government's policy consideration, CCF would not introduce assistance programmes in relation to rent allowance. As regards provision of energy subsidy, the CCF Task Force was given to understand that many SDU tenants were overcharged for energy consumption by their landlords, and providing SDU tenants with energy subsidy might worsen the overcharging problem and benefit the landlord ultimately. As such, the CCF Task Force would not consider the provision of energy subsidy for SDU tenants at this stage.

4. The Chairman invited deputations/individuals to present their views. A total of 31 deputations/individuals expressed their views which were summarized in the **Appendix**.

The Administration's response to deputations' views

5. DS(W)2 said that while the working poor families not receiving CSSA had been working hard, they were more prone to poverty. This was because these families had fewer working members and they needed to support more children. The LIFA Scheme was introduced with a view to relieving the financial burden of these families. In conducting the policy review of the LIFA Scheme, the Administration would take into account deputations' suggestions, including relaxing the working hour requirement and income limit, and including singletons in the Scheme. The Administration had simplified the application form and procedures of LIFA having regard to the feedbacks received.

6. Head, Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency ("Head, WFSFAA") supplemented that he would hold case conferences with frontline staff on a regular basis and give advice on how certain LIFA

applications could be handled. As applicants were more acquainted with the application procedures, the second-round applications were more complete in terms of the information provided, resulting in shorter processing time of the applications. The Working Family Allowance Office ("WFAO") of the WFSFAA had been publicizing the LIFA Scheme through various means since November 2015. Briefing sessions on how to fill in the LIFA application form had been arranged at the 18 districts and upon the invitation of non-governmental organizations ("NGOs"), WFSFAA had attended briefings or form-filling support service sessions on the LIFA Scheme organized by the NGOs, some of which were held after office hours, on Saturdays and Sundays. Four NGOs were engaged to provide form-filling support services for new LIFA applicants at various districts since January 2017. WFAO had put in place a reaching-out programme (setting up enquiry desks at the ground floor lobbies of various Government Office Buildings on specified days since September 2016 and at the Hong Kong Housing Authority Customer Service Centre at Lok Fu on a week-day basis since November 2016). LIFA applicants with difficulties in filling in the application forms were also welcome to call WFAO's hotline and where necessary, leave their contacts so that WFAO could contact them and offer appropriate assistance.

7. Dr LAW Chi-kwong said that evaluation reports on CCF's One-off Living Subsidy Programme were available at the CCF's website. Regarding some deputations' suggestion of providing relocation allowance for occupants who were required to move out of roof-top structures due to enforcement actions of the Buildings Department, he said that CCF was currently implementing the "Relocation Allowance for Eligible Residents of Sub-divided Units in Industrial Buildings who Have to Move out as a result of the Buildings Department's Enforcement Action" Programme. CCF would study whether this Programme could be extended to cover occupants of roof-top structures.

8. Dr LAW Chi-kwong further said that the design of the One-off Living Subsidy Programme was not based on the differences between the rentals in public and private housing. The Programme benefited not only persons who lived in private housing but also those who were inadequately housed or homeless. The living subsidy was therefore not a rent allowance. In designing the One-off Living Subsidy Programme when it was launched for the first time, CCF had taken into account the Government's relief measure of paying two months' rent for public housing tenants. He said that there was no correlation between the One-off Living Subsidy Programme and the LIFA Scheme.

Discussion

Implementing assistance measures for the N have-nots

9. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that many N have-nots were much worse off than tenants of public housing as they were suffering from expensive rental and the homeless people were in a very difficult situation. Given that CCF was established to plug the gaps in the existing system and the N have-nots could not benefit from the relief measures introduced by the Budget, CCF should launch assistance programmes for the N have-nots. The One-off Living Subsidy Programme should continue before such programmes were introduced. Dr LAW Chi-kwong reiterated the objective of the One-off Living Subsidy Programme and said that CCF appreciated the plight of the N have-nots and was willing to consider other assistance measures for them. Taking the view that the purpose of both the relief measures introduced by the Administration and the one-off living subsidy was to relieve the financial burden of the needy groups, Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that he did not agree to CCF's justifications of abolishing the One-off Living Subsidy Programme.

10. Dr KWOK Ka-ki and Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung said that although many N have-nots were in financial difficulties, they were not covered by the Administration's relief measures and CCF's assistance schemes. They expressed dissatisfaction that the Administration was willing to waive rates for property owners but reluctant to provide financial assistance for the poor.

11. Mr POON Siu-ping said that in view of the long waiting time for public housing and the lack of rent control, many N have-nots had to pay high rental in private housing. Since the One-off Living Subsidy Programme would not be relaunched and the policy review of the LIFA Scheme would only be conducted in mid-2017, assistance should be provided for these N have-nots in the interim.

12. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that as CCF sought to assist those who were facing economic difficulties and in need of assistance, he did not see the reasons why CCF did not provide any assistance for the N have-nots. He urged CCF to study the suggestions of deputations and implement assistance programmes for the N have-nots.

13. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen opined that the N have-nots still required assistance even though the Administration no longer took a relief measure to pay rent for public housing tenants. As such, the Administration should take into account the needs of the underprivileged but not the changes in

relief measures in considering whether to discontinue an assistance programme.

14. The Deputy Chairman said that some N have-nots had reflected that the application procedures of LIFA were too complicated. As many of them were casual workers, they were unable to obtain proof of working hours from their employers. Coupled with the abolition of the One-off Living Subsidy Programme, these N have-nots were in great financial hardship. CCF should seriously consider relaunching the One-off Living Subsidy Programme before new assistance measures for the N have-nots were implemented.

15. In response to the enquiries of the Deputy Chairman, Dr KWOK Ka-ki, Mr POON Siu-Ping and Mr CHAN Chi-chuen on how the Administration and CCF would help the N have-nots, Dr LAW Chi-kwong reiterated the concerns and views of the CCF Task Force about provision of energy subsidy and rent allowance for SDU tenants. CCF would study some of the suggestions of members and deputations and hoped to receive more suggestions on effective assistance measures for the N have-nots. In response to Mr POON Siu-ping's enquiry about whether CCF had studied a deputation's suggestion of providing consumption coupons for spending in social enterprises, Dr LAW Chi-kwong said that CCF had not discussed the subject matter but would explore the provision of consumption coupons.

16. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that the One-off Living Subsidy Programme was launched thrice and according to the first and second evaluation reports published by CCF, about 89% of the respondents agreed that the subsidy could relieve their financial pressure. It was mentioned in the third evaluation report that about 89% of respondents agreed that the subsidy provided under the Programme could relieve their financial pressure and help them meet living expenses such as rent and utility costs. He expressed dissatisfaction that although CCF recognized the financial hardship of the N have-nots, it had no plan to launch new assistance programmes for them after abolishing the One-off Living Subsidy Programme. He further said that about one-third of the beneficiaries of the One-off Living Subsidy Programme were singletons and were not covered by the LIFA Scheme. In the light of the huge fiscal surplus, he asked how the Administration would help the N have-nots to relieve their financial pressure.

17. DS(W)2 responded that the low-income group was among the most needy groups and the LIFA Scheme was introduced to assist eligible low-income working families. There were views that some N have-nots could not benefit from the LIFA Scheme because the working hour

thresholds were too high and singletons should not be excluded from the Scheme. In conducting the policy review of the LIFA Scheme, the Administration would take into account these suggestions.

18. In response to the Deputy Chairman's enquiries about the time frame for drawing up measures to help the N have-nots and the causes of the low application rate of LIFA, DS(W)2 said that the policy review of the LIFA Scheme would commence in mid-2017. The number of families who might be eligible for LIFA was only a crude estimate based on the income as well as working hours of the statistics then available. The Administration would conduct a survey to gather more data of members of LIFA families. Households who appeared to be eligible for LIFA but did not apply for the allowance would be asked about the reasons why they had not done so.

19. Expressing concern that many SDU tenants were overcharged for use of electricity by their landlords, Mr CHAN Chi-chuen requested the relevant government bureaux/departments to study ways to address the overcharging problem. DS(W)2 responded that the Environment Bureau ("ENB") had replied to Members' question on collection of electricity and water charges by landlords from tenants of inadequate housing at a Council meeting in January 2017. He would relay members' views on the subject matter to ENB.

Providing rent allowance for the N have-nots

20. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung said that in the light of surging rental in private housing, the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong suggested that rent allowance should be provided for the N have-nots to alleviate their financial burden. DS(W)2 responded that given the tight housing supply, the Administration considered that the provision of rent allowance for the N have-nots might be counterproductive as landlords might increase the rent and recipients of the rent allowance might not benefit from it in the end. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung said that the removal of rent control by the Administration had caused rental of private housing to soar. The Administration should not ignore the rental burden faced by the N have-nots.

(At 12:16 pm, the Chairman adjourned the meeting for five minutes.)

21. The Chairman said that the motion prepared by Dr Fernando CHEUNG regarding regularizing the One-off Living Subsidy Programme would be dealt with at the Panel meeting on 13 March 2017.

II. Any other business

22. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:23 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
8 November 2017

Appendix

Panel on Welfare Services

Special meeting on Saturday, 4 March 2017, at 9:30 am

Support measures for low-income households not living in public housing and not receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance

Summary of views and concerns expressed by deputations/individuals

No.	Name of deputation / individual	Views
1.	The Civic Party	[LC Paper No. CB(2)929/16-17(01)]
2.	The Federation of Hong Kong & Kowloon Labour Unions	[LC Paper No. CB(2)920/16-17(01)]
3.	Labour Party	● The Administration should implement rent control given that the low-income households who were neither public housing tenants nor Comprehensive Social Security Assistance recipients (hereunder referred to as the "N have-nots") were facing high rental of sub-divided units. ● The Administration should provide rent allowance for households on the waiting list for public rental housing ("PRH"). ● The Administration should continue to disburse the One-off Living Subsidy for Low-income Households Not Living in Public Housing and Not Receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance ("the One-off Living Subsidy") to relieve the financial burden of the N have-nots.
4.	吳清清小姐	● The Administration should relax the working hour requirements of the Low-income Working Family Allowance ("LIFA") Scheme and allow working hours of all family members to aggregate. ● The Administration should relax the income limits to 60% and 60%-75% of the median monthly domestic household income ("MMDHI") for full-rate and half-rate LIFA allowance respectively, as well as provide an additional allowance for households with family income equivalent to or below 50% of MMDHI. ● The Administration should relax the requirements under the LIFA Scheme for low-income families with disabled members

No.	Name of deputation / individual	Views
		and children with special needs. ● The Administration should set up a one-stop online system to simplify the application procedures of the LIFA Scheme.
5.	Platform of Concerning Subdivided Flats in Hong Kong	[LC Paper No. CB(2)929/16-17(02)]
6.	觀塘劏房街坊關注組	[LC Paper No. CB(2)929/16-17(03)]
7.	Master of Public Administration Alumni Association, Hong Kong Baptist University	[LC Paper No. CB(2)898/16-17(01)]
8.	Young Democrats	● LIFA and the Work Incentive Transport Subsidy could not replace the provision of the One-off Living Subsidy in relieving the financial burden of the N have-nots. ● The Administration should review the eligibility criteria for PRH and provide rent allowance for households who had applied for public housing units for more than three years but had not yet been allocated such units.
9.	The Democratic Party	[LC Paper No. CB(2)929/16-17(04)]
10.	葵涌劏房居民大聯盟	[LC Paper No. CB(2)1024/16-17(02)]
11.	葵涌劏房住客聯盟	● Given that the N have-nots households were living in unfit dwellings and facing high rental and overcharge of utility bills by property owners, the Administration should grant subsidies for utility bills to such households directly. ● Application procedures of the LIFA Scheme were cumbersome and the relevant promotion was insufficient.
12.	葵涌劏房連線	● Given that the N have-nots households were living in unfit dwellings and facing high rental and overcharge of utility bills by property owners, the Administration should grant subsidies for utility bills to such households directly. ● The Administration should continue to disburse the One-off Living Subsidy to address the needs of the N have-nots.
13.	葵涌劏房戶問問政府為何無支援小組	● The Administration should continue to disburse the One-off Living Subsidy to help

No.	Name of deputation / individual	Views
		relieve the financial burden of the N have-nots irrespective of whether any relief measures had been put forward in the Budget.
14.	葵涌工廈劏房戶關注組	● Expressed concern that the Administration did not re-launch the One-off Living Subsidy Programme in 2017 though the N have-nots households were facing high rental.
15.	葵涌N無大開支關注組	● Expressed concern that application procedures of the LIFA Scheme were cumbersome and singletons were not covered under the Scheme. ● The Administration should regularize the One-off Living Subsidy Programme to help relieve the financial burden of the N have-nots who were facing high rental.
16.	葵涌爭取基層租戶支援關注組	● Enquired whether the Administration would take assistance measures to address the needs of the N have-nots who were facing high rental and overcharge of utility bills by property owners.
17.	葵涌街坊民議組	● The Administration should continue to disburse the One-off Living Subsidy given that the N have-nots households were facing high rental and overcharge of utility bills by property owners.
18.	爭取低收入家庭保障聯席	[LC Paper No. CB(2)1024/16-17(01)]
19.	Concerning Grassroots Housing Rights Alliance	[LC Paper No. CB(2)1024/16-17(03)]
20.	太子劏房關注組	● Given that application procedures of the LIFA Scheme were cumbersome and casual workers had difficulty certifying their working hours, the Administration should relax the requirements under the LIFA Scheme. ● Given that the N have-nots households were facing overcharge of utility bills by property owners, the Administration should grant subsidies for utility bills to such households directly.
21.	N無人士關注組	● Expressed concern that the Administration did not re-launch the One-off Living Subsidy Programme in 2017, given that the

No.	Name of deputation / individual	Views
		N have-nots could not benefit from other relief measures and the financial position of the Community Care Fund was stable. ● The Administration should regularize the One-off Living Subsidy Programme since more N have-nots could be benefited. ● It was difficult for low-income families to meet the requirements for working hours and family income under the LIFA Scheme.
22.	土瓜灣社區家長關注組	● Given that casual workers had difficulty certifying their working hours, the Administration should simplify application procedures of the LIFA Scheme and the School Textbook Assistance Scheme. ● The Administration should relax the income limits of the LIFA Scheme to 75% of MMDHI. ● The Administration should increase the supply of PRH and implement rent control in order to address the housing needs of grassroots households.
23.	關注綜援低收入聯盟	● LIFA could not replace the provision of the One-off Living Subsidy in relieving the financial burden of the N have-nots.
24.	關注舊區住屋權益社工聯席	● The Administration should continue to disburse the One-off Living Subsidy to help relieve the financial burden of the N have-nots irrespective of whether any relief measures had been put forward in the Budget. ● LIFA could not replace the provision of the One-off Living Subsidy in addressing the needs of the N have-nots.
25.	黎治甫先生	● The Administration should continue to disburse the One-off Living Subsidy to relieve the financial burden of the N have-nots. ● The Administration should implement rent control given that the N have-nots were facing high rental of sub-divided units.
26.	香港社會服務聯會	[LC Paper No. CB(2)929/16-17(05)]
27.	西區被逼遷租客大會	● Given that the N have-nots households were living in unfit dwellings and facing high rental and overcharge of utility bills by property owners, the Administration should regularize

No.	Name of deputation / individual	Views
		the One-off Living Subsidy Programme to help relieve the financial burden of the N have-nots. ● Enquired whether the Administration would take assistance measures to address the needs of the N have-nots. ● It was difficult for the N have-nots to apply for LIFA given its cumbersome application procedures.
28.	Ms LEUNG Yim-mui	● Given that the N have-nots households were living in unfit dwellings, the Administration should take assistance measures to address their needs.
29.	Ms LI Foon-yung	● Given that the waiting list for PRH was long and the N have-nots households were living in unfit dwellings and facing high rental, the Administration should continue to disburse the One-off Living Subsidy.
30.	Mr HO Chi-chung	● LIFA could not replace the provision of the One-off Living Subsidy in addressing the needs of the N have-nots. ● The Administration should take assistance measures to relieve the financial burden of the N have-nots who had applied for public housing units for more than three years.
31.	鄧寶山先生	● LIFA could not replace the provision of the One-off Living Subsidy in addressing the needs of the N have-nots. ● The Administration should continue to disburse the One-off Living Subsidy to help relieve the financial burden of the N have-nots irrespective of whether any relief measures had been put forward in the Budget. ● The Administration should review its policy to take assistance measures for the N have-nots.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
8 November 2017