

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)961/19-20
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/EA

Panel on Environmental Affairs

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 22 June 2020, at 2:30 pm
in Conference Room 3 of the Legislative Council Complex

- Members present** : Hon Steven HO Chun-yin, BBS (Deputy Chairman)
Hon CHAN Hak-kan, BBS, JP
Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, SBS, JP
Hon Frankie YICK Chi-ming, SBS, JP
Hon WU Chi-wai, MH
Hon CHAN Chi-chuen
Hon Kenneth LEUNG
Hon KWOK Wai-keung, JP
Hon Elizabeth QUAT, BBS, JP
Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok, SBS, MH, JP
Hon CHU Hoi-dick
Hon SHIU Ka-fai, JP
Hon Tanya CHAN
Hon HUI Chi-fung
Hon Kenneth LAU Ip-keung, BBS, MH, JP
Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen, BBS
- Members absent** : Dr Hon Junius HO Kwan-yiu, JP (Chairman)
Hon Dennis KWOK Wing-hang
- Public Officers attending** : **For item III**

Mr WONG Kam-sing, GBS, JP
Secretary for the Environment

Mrs Millie NG, JP
Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (2)
Environmental Protection Department

Mr CHENG Tak-kuen
Assistant Director (Waste Infrastructure Planning)
Environmental Protection Department

For item IV

Mr TSE Chin-wan, BBS, JP
Under Secretary for the Environment

Mrs Millie NG, JP
Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (2)
Environmental Protection Department

Mr CHENG Tak-kuen
Assistant Director (Waste Infrastructure Planning)
Environmental Protection Department

Clerk in attendance : Ms Angel SHEK
Chief Council Secretary (1)1

Staff in attendance : Mr Jason KONG
Senior Council Secretary (1)1

Miss Bowie LAM
Council Secretary (1)1

Miss Mandy POON
Legislative Assistant (1)1

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As the Chairman was unable to attend the meeting, the Deputy Chairman took the chair.

I. Confirmation of minutes

(LC Paper No. CB(1)764/ — Minutes of the meeting held on
19-20 27 April 2020)

2. The minutes of the meeting held on 27 April 2020 were confirmed.

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II. Information papers issued since last meeting

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

III. Food waste collection and delivery arrangements

(LC Paper No. CB(1)766/ — Administration's paper on "Food Waste
19-20(01) Collection and Delivery Arrangements"

LC Paper No. CB(1)766/ — Background brief on "Food waste
19-20(02) management in Hong Kong" prepared by
the Legislative Council Secretariat)

Briefing by the Administration

4. With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, the Secretary for the Environment ("SEN") and the Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (2) ("DDEP(2)") briefed members on the key findings and recommendations of a consultancy study on food waste collection and delivery, the implementation progress of the first phase of the Pilot Scheme on Food Waste Collection ("the Pilot Scheme"), and the plan for launching the second phase of the Pilot Scheme. DDEP(2) advised that the first phase of the Pilot Scheme covered 70 public venues and 120 private establishments also voluntarily delivered their food waste to the food waste treatment facilities managed by the Environmental Protection Department ("EPD"); and the average quantity of food waste collected in 2019 under the first phase was about 100 tonnes per day ("tpd"). The second phase was expected to be rolled out by the end of 2020. In addition to collecting food waste from commercial and industrial sources, the Administration would progressively collect domestic food waste and deliver it to food waste treatment facilities. The quantity of food waste collected under the Pilot Scheme was expected to reach 250 tpd in 2022.

(Post-meeting note: The PowerPoint presentation materials were circulated to members on 22 June 2020, vide LC Paper No. CB(1)798/19-20(01).)

Discussion

Pilot Scheme on Food Waste Collection

5. Ms Tanya CHAN noted that the Administration planned to invite public and private housing estates with experience in source separation of food waste

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to participate in the second phase of the Pilot Scheme, and some public markets and cooked food venues managed by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department ("FEHD") had expressed interest in joining it. She asked about the method for monitoring the performance in food waste recovery of individual participating housing estates. As some public markets and cooked food venues had long opening hours and heavy traffic of customers and goods, she was concerned how food waste could be properly separated and recovered from such venues while maintaining environmental hygiene.

6. SEN and DDEP(2) responded that the Administration attached great importance to maintaining environmental hygiene when collecting and delivering food waste. Contractors would be engaged for the food waste collection services under the second phase of the Pilot Scheme, and they would be required to record the quantity and quality (e.g. the level of contamination) of the food waste collected from individual premises. The Administration would closely monitor the implementation progress of the Pilot Scheme and performance of the contractors; and would also encourage the trial of smart food waste collection bins in housing estates, which could help monitor food waste collection and ensure environmental hygiene. DDEP(2) added that through publicity efforts and collaboration with property management companies, the Administration would remind residents of participating estates to properly separate food waste from other waste before depositing the food waste at the collection facilities. Visits to housing estates with pilot food waste collection arrangements might be organized for experience sharing purpose.

7. As regards public markets and cooked food venues managed by FEHD, the Assistant Director (Waste Infrastructure Planning) ("AD(WIP)") advised that EPD would work with FEHD to put in place suitable food waste collection arrangements for each venue with regard to the venue's characteristics.

8. The Deputy Chairman requested the Administration to provide the following information in respect of the Pilot Scheme: (a) the geographical distribution of the venues covered by the first phase and the venues that had expressed interest in joining the second phase respectively; and (b) the capital and operating costs of the vehicle fleet for the collection and delivery of food waste under the first phase, and the estimated capital cost of additional vehicles (if any) and operating cost of the entire vehicle fleet under the second phase.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration's written response was circulated to members on 17 July 2020, vide LC Paper No. CB(1)870/19-20(02).)

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Food waste collection and treatment capacities

9. Mr CHU Hoi-dick pointed out that with the expected commissioning of O·PARK2 (i.e. Organic Resources Recovery Centre Phase 2, locating at Sha Ling in North District) and the extension of the "food waste/sewage sludge anaerobic co-digestion" trial scheme to the Sha Tin Sewage Treatment Works in 2022, Hong Kong's overall food waste treatment capacity could reach about 600 tpd in 2022. However, the target quantity of food waste collection under the Pilot Scheme was only 250 tpd in 2022, falling far short of the above treatment capacity. He considered that the Administration should expedite the expansion of the food waste collection network; and give priority to collecting source-separated food waste from rural villages, which could help improve the environmental hygiene conditions in rural villages at the same time.

10. Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok said that he hoped that the free food waste collection services could be extended to domestic premises expeditiously.

11. SEN and DDEP(2) responded that as the Administration planned to trial different collection modes for domestic food waste, including that for rural villages, some rural villages would be invited to join the second phase of the Pilot Scheme. In addition, the Recycling Fund had been providing funding support for collection of food waste from different types of premises, and residents' organizations as well as non-governmental organizations were eligible for funding applications. The current target quantity of food waste collection of 250 tpd was based on the existing design capacities of commissioned food waste treatment facilities. The Administration planned to review the target in end 2021 or early 2022 with regard to the implementation progress of the second phase of the Pilot Scheme, construction progress of O·PARK2, etc.

12. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen pointed out that he had raised a question on the operation of O·PARK1 (i.e. Organic Resources Recovery Centre Phase 1, locating at Siu Ho Wan of North Lantau) at a special Finance Committee meeting during the examination of the Estimates of Expenditure 2020-2021. At that time, the Administration advised that the quantity of food waste collected and treated during the initial phase of operation of O·PARK1 was lower than the design capacity, because the bacteria used in the anaerobic digestion process would take some time to grow and reproduce. He asked about the latest situation of the facility's operation, including whether the outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 ("COVID-19") had affected the quantity of food waste collected; and the time when it was expected that the facility could operate at full capacity.

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13. SEN responded that as the food and beverage sector had suffered a drop of business during the COVID-19 outbreak, the average daily quantity of food waste delivered to O·PARK1 was less than 100 tonnes in recent months. The Administration would endeavour to increase the quantity of food waste collection through the second phase of the Pilot Scheme, with a view to fully utilizing the capacities of existing food waste treatment facilities, i.e. O·PARK1 and the first trial scheme of "food waste/sewage sludge anaerobic co-digestion" at the Tai Po Sewage Treatment Works.

14. Mr WU Chi-wai opined that the target quantity of food waste collection under the Pilot Scheme was only a drop in the bucket, given that over 3 600 tonnes of food waste was generated each day. Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok and Mr Tony TSE asked about the estimated total treatment capacity of O·PARK1, O·PARK2 and the first two "food waste/sewage sludge anaerobic co-digestion" trial schemes; site selection and implementation timetables of other food waste treatment facility projects; and the construction progress and expected commissioning date of the Integrated Waste Management Facilities Phase 1 ("IWMF1").

15. Mr HUI Chi-fung pointed out that according to a paper provided by the Administration to the Public Works Subcommittee (LC Paper No. PWSC105/18-19(01)), Hong Kong's overall food waste treatment capacity was expected to reach around 1 800 tpd, i.e. around 50% of the food waste currently generated, by mid 2030s. He enquired whether a blueprint had been formulated for long-term food waste collection arrangements in parallel with the development of/planning for food waste treatment facilities.

16. SEN responded that according to overseas experiences, around 50% of food waste could be recycled in the best case. Therefore, the above food waste treatment target of 1 800 tpd by mid 2030s was already an ambitious target for Hong Kong. The estimated total treatment capacity of O·PARK1, O·PARK2 and the first two "food waste/sewage sludge anaerobic co-digestion" trial schemes would be about 600 tpd. EPD was conducting a feasibility study for the construction of O·PARK3, and had been working with the Drainage Services Department ("DSD") to examine further application of the "food waste/sewage sludge anaerobic co-digestion" technology for better utilization of existing resources to increase Hong Kong's food waste treatment capacity. AD(WIP) added that the Design-Build-Operate contract for O·PARK2 was awarded in September 2019. The facility was expected to begin operation in end 2022. As regards IWMF1, the construction works commenced in end 2017 and were expected to be completed in early 2025.

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17. On the formulation of long-term food waste collection arrangements, DDEP(2) advised that it would be subject to the results of and experience gained from the Pilot Scheme, as well as the development progress of various food waste treatment facilities.

Reducing food waste at schools

18. The Deputy Chairman commended the Administration's successful efforts in promoting a "food wise" culture. Nevertheless, he observed that schools had continued to generate a considerable amount of food waste. He asked about measures to encourage schools and school lunch suppliers to reduce food waste.

19. SEN responded that apart from providing free food waste collection services for primary and secondary schools through school lunch suppliers under the first phase of the Pilot Scheme, the Administration had been supporting the implementation of measures at schools to reduce food waste under the "Green Schools 2.0" programme, including the installation of on-site systems for meal distribution. DDEP(2) supplemented that EPD provided free food waste collection services for about 600 primary and secondary schools through 10 school lunch suppliers under the first phase of the Pilot Scheme, and the Administration would continue to strengthen education in schools on food waste reduction and assist schools in the installation of relevant equipment.

Recycling Fund

20. Mr Tony TSE noted from paragraph 14 of the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(1)766/19-20(01)) that the Recycling Fund had earmarked \$50 million to encourage the industry to initiate business on food waste collection and delivery to food waste treatment facilities. He sought details on the supported projects, the amount of fund approved, and the effectiveness of the funding scheme.

21. DDEP(2) responded that the Recycling Fund had earmarked \$50 million in 2018 for the launch of a solicitation theme on projects related to food waste. If a project was granted funding support under the solicitation theme, the grantee could seek reimbursement for expenditures on manpower, hardware, etc. The solicitation theme was well received by the recycling industry and could boost business confidence in the recycling of food waste. The Recycling Fund had so far approved 19 projects with a total funding of around \$47 million under the solicitation theme. Such projects included initiation of business on food waste collection and delivery, use of new technology for food waste recycling, purchase of new equipment related to food waste recycling, etc. In response to Mr Tony TSE's further question, DDEP(2) advised that the

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Administration would consider allocating more funds to the solicitation theme in future if necessary.

Other measures to promote food waste reduction and recycling

22. Ir Dr LO Wai-ki pointed out that in some overseas places, small-sized food waste dryers had been commonly installed under households' kitchen sinks for reducing the volume and weight of food waste by dehydration, which could help reduce transportation cost of food waste and facilitate its recycling. Such equipment could also reduce odour emanated from food waste and improve hygiene. He considered that the Administration should study the application of such equipment in Hong Kong.

23. Mr WU Chi-wai considered that the Administration should promote the separation of dry and wet domestic waste at source by providing food waste undersink grinders, which shredded food waste into small pieces for disposal through the sewerage system, in new residential buildings or new development areas. He asked about the progress of relevant trials, interdepartmental coordination in improving the sewerage system for coping with additional sewage load arising from the use of undersink grinders, and the Administration's long-term plan for reducing food waste disposal at landfills through utilizing the sewerage system.

24. SEN and DDEP(2) responded that the Environment and Conservation Fund had granted funds for the implementation of five projects to install domestic food waste treatment equipment under the kitchen sinks of about 600 residential units in nine buildings. These projects would gradually commence in 2020 and run for about one year each. EPD and DSD would closely monitor the operation of such equipment and its impact on water consumption and sewage treatment.

25. Mr HUI Chi-fung considered that municipal solid waste ("MSW") charging was a key policy tool to reduce food waste disposal and promote food waste recycling. He expressed grave disappointment that MSW charging could not be implemented within the planned time frame, as the relevant bills committee had decided in June 2020 to discontinue its scrutiny work on the Waste Disposal (Charging for Municipal Solid Waste) (Amendment) Bill 2018.

26. Mr CHU Hoi-dick considered that the Administration had misjudged the degree of support from Members before introducing the said bill to the Legislative Council ("LegCo"), resulting in the prolonged process and eventual discontinuation of the bill's scrutiny. He hoped that the Administration would reintroduce the bill the soonest possible in the next LegCo term.

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27. SEN responded that the Administration concurred that MSW charging could be a driving force for food waste reduction and recycling, and had spared no efforts in enhancing Hong Kong's waste management. He remarked that in other Asian cities with MSW charging in place (e.g. Seoul and Taipei), it had generally taken a long time to reach a community consensus on the implementation of a charging scheme for MSW disposal; and there were cases in some jurisdictions where the relevant legislative proposals were not passed in the first attempts.

IV. Management of yard waste

(LC Paper No. CB(1)766/ — Administration's paper on "Management
19-20(03) of yard waste"

LC Paper No. CB(1)766/ — Background brief on "Management of
19-20(04) yard waste" prepared by the Legislative
Council Secretariat)

Briefing by the Administration

28. With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, AD(WIP) briefed members on the implementation progress of "A Food Waste and Yard Waste Plan for Hong Kong 2014-2022" and enhancement measures on promoting yard waste reuse and recycling. The major aspects of the enhancement measures were as follows:

- (a) separation and collection — EPD had issued the Guidelines on Handling Yard Waste for Recycling and Disposal ("the Recycling Guidelines") to government departments, stipulating that yard waste generated from public works had to be collected and separated on site. The Government had started incorporating the relevant guidelines and requirements, whenever practicable, into tender/contract documents of suitable public works projects;
- (b) treatment — EPD would develop a Yard Waste Processing Centre ("the Centre") at a site near T·PARK (a sludge treatment facility in Tuen Mun), which was expected to be commissioned in early 2021 for four years; and
- (c) reuse and recycling — to boost local demand for recycled products derived from yard waste, the Government would convert yard waste into different useful materials. The Centre under planning would also sort out suitable thick tree trunks and branches, which

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would be cut into wood boards or beams and desiccated for storage. They could then be used by government departments and the trades concerned for renovation/decoration purpose, or upcycling into other products.

(*Post-meeting note:* The PowerPoint presentation materials were circulated to members on 22 June 2020, vide LC Paper No. CB(1)798/19-20(02).)

Discussion

Long-term plan for yard waste management

29. As the use of biochar had potential environmental benefits, such as mitigating the impacts of climate change, Mr CHU Hoi-dick suggested that the Administration should focus on the conversion of yard waste into biochar (instead of conversion into compost) and yard waste upcycling.

30. Mr Kenneth LAU expressed support for the measures to promote yard waste reuse and recycling. However, he was concerned about the implementation progress of the measures, as there had not been significant improvement in yard waste recycling in recent years. He called on the Administration to strengthen interdepartmental coordination so as to increase the recycling rate of yard waste expeditiously.

31. The Under Secretary for the Environment ("USEN") responded that according to the Administration's estimation, biochar production had the potential to absorb all the yard waste in Hong Kong and biochar had extensive potential uses locally. Therefore, if large-scale adoption of the biochar production technology was feasible, it could be a long-term solution to yard waste management. To test the recycling method and develop local outlets for biochar, the Administration would establish a pilot plant in EcoPark (a recycling-business park in Tuen Mun) for conversion of yard waste into biochar ("the Pilot Plant"). If the feasibility of biochar production was confirmed, the Administration would identify suitable sites for the development of biochar production facilities of a larger scale. While site selection would be a challenging process, the Administration expected that restored landfills at remote locations could be potential options.

32. USEN advised that pending the development of facilities for large-scale production of biochar, the Centre would provide the first-stage process to help manage yard waste. The scope of services of the Centre would include screening, sorting and processing (with treatment methods covering shredding, branch removal, wood-cutting into wood boards and wood beams, etc.) of the

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yard waste received to produce different useful materials, such as compost, bulking agent for composting, mulch for gardening and mushroom cultivation materials. The handling capacity of the Centre was about 30 tpd in the first year, and would gradually increase to an annual average of around 60 tpd.

33. USEN also explained that although the recycling rate of yard waste had remained low in the past few years (during which the Administration had been conducting a study on enhancing yard waste management), it was expected that the recycling rate could be increased significantly to about half of all yard waste in Hong Kong by 2022 when both the Centre and the Pilot Plant were in operation.

34. Mr Tony TSE and the Deputy Chairman sought elaboration on the Administration's long-term target and plan for yard waste management, including the land, financial and manpower resources required for different recycling/upcycling methods.

35. USEN responded that the long-term target was to reuse and recycle all local yard waste. Given that conversion of yard waste into compost required considerable land resources and was time-consuming, and the compost produced by the various Organic Resources Recovery Centres was expected to fully meet local demand for compost, composting was not an ideal recycling method for yard waste in the context of Hong Kong. Other types of materials to be produced by the Centre, including mulch for gardening and mushroom cultivation materials, could provide more outlets for recycled yard waste. That said, the local demand for such products was limited and would not be able to absorb all local yard waste. The Administration therefore planned to expand Hong Kong's recycling capacity for yard waste through conversion into biochar. As this recycling method had been successfully adopted on a large scale in some overseas places such as Stockholm, the Administration was optimistic about the local application of the technology. As regards upcycling of yard waste, it would require high quality wood boards and beams cut out from trees, of which the supply would be limited.

36. Mr Kenneth LAU expressed concern whether the development and operation of yard waste recovery bases at restored landfills would affect nearby residents. USEN responded that only restored landfills that were far away from residential areas would be considered for the development of such facilities. In addition, as each facility would only handle a few truckloads (i.e. tens of tonnes) of yard waste each day, nuisances caused by the facilities' operation were expected to be insignificant.

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37. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen noted from paragraph 15 of the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(1)766/19-20(03)) that the estimated daily handling capacity of the Pilot Plant was 15 to 20 tonnes of yard waste for the production of some 3 to 5 tonnes of biochar. He asked whether such handling capacity could be reached in the initial stage of the Pilot Plant's operation, and what were the estimated energy consumption and carbon emission of the plant.

38. AD(WIP) responded that as the production of biochar mainly involved thermal technology, it was expected that the Pilot Plant could reach its design capacity in a short period of time, provided that sufficient and suitable yard waste was delivered to the Pilot Plant. As the consultancy study on the development of the Pilot Plant (which covered the technology and equipment to be used) had just commenced and was expected to complete in mid 2021, the Administration did not have any estimation on the energy consumption and carbon emission of the Pilot Plant at this stage.

Financial implications

39. Mr CHU Hoi-dick asked whether the development of the Centre and the Pilot Plant would require funding approval by the Finance Committee. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen enquired about the estimated capital cost and annual operating cost of the Pilot Plant, and the estimated annual operating cost of the Centre.

40. AD(WIP) advised that a contractor would be engaged for the operation of the Centre, and the expenditure in 2020-2021 financial year would be about \$30 million. Pending the completion of the said consultancy study, there was no estimation at this stage on the capital cost and annual operating cost of the Pilot Plant.

41. The Deputy Chairman considered that the Administration should provide details on the land and financial resources required for enhancing yard waste management when it reported the relevant initiatives to the Panel in future.

Management of yard waste from public works

42. Noting that the guidelines and requirements under the Recycling Guidelines would be incorporated into the tender/contract documents of suitable public works projects, Mr Tony TSE asked about the implementation progress of the initiative, and the types of public works projects that would be deemed to be suitable for the purpose.

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43. USEN and AD(WIP) responded that the initiative had already been implemented and new tender/contract documents of suitable public works projects should contain the said guidelines and requirement. The Recycling Guidelines stipulated that yard waste generated from public works had to be collected and separated on site where appropriate. As some public works projects would be carried out on small sites and there would not be sufficient space for on-site treatment of yard waste, the yard waste should be delivered to EPD's recycling facilities instead.

44. Mr HUI Chi-fung expressed disappointment that the majority of yard waste generated by government departments had been disposed of at landfills in the past. He sought further information on EPD's recycling facilities to which yard waste from public works projects would be delivered. In addition, he and the Deputy Chairman were concerned whether the delivery of yard waste to these recycling facilities would be closely monitored to prevent improper disposal of the yard waste.

45. USEN responded that government departments generated about 100 tonnes of yard waste every day, mainly from public works and daily clearance duties relating to routine vegetation maintenance. It was expected that with the implementation of the Recycling Guidelines and operation of the Centre, all such yard waste would be treated either on site or at the Centre in future.

46. AD(WIP) advised that yard waste disposal at landfills was recorded and closely monitored. EPD had also been closely monitoring the implementation of the Recycling Guidelines, and had reminded relevant government departments of the requirements as well as other yard waste-related measures at a recent interdepartmental meeting.

47. Mr HUI Chi-fung asked whether there were cases requiring follow-up actions due to deviation from the Recycling Guidelines. AD(WIP) advised that the Administration would provide the information in writing after the meeting.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration's written response was circulated to members on 17 July 2020, vide LC Paper No. CB(1)870/19-20(02).)

Post-typhoon tree waste

48. Mr Kenneth LAU asked whether the Administration had put in place arrangements for handling a surge in the volume of tree waste due to typhoons in a timely manner; and whether all tree waste caused by super typhoon Mangkhut had been cleared.

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49. The Deputy Chairman remarked that the work on clearing tree waste caused by super typhoon Mangkhut had spanned over a year. Quoting paragraph 19 of the background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat (LC Paper No. CB(1)766/19-20(04)), he asked whether the industrial grade wood shredder and two non-industrial grade wood shredders procured by EPD would be sufficient for handling tree waste generated from emergency circumstances in future. To enhance the handling efficiency of such tree waste, he suggested that small, mobile wood shredders be provided to the community for distributed treatment and personnel with proper training be assigned to operate the machines.

50. USEN explained that in the aftermath of super typhoon Mangkhut, the Administration had faced difficulties initially in handling the tree waste generated, as the machines at refuse transfer stations that received the tree waste could not handle it properly. Due to the above, the Administration subsequently set up a temporary wood waste collection area in the Kai Tak Development Area, and procured the aforementioned wood shredders a few months later. All such tree waste had been cleared.

51. USEN and AD(WIP) advised that based on the above experience, the Administration had formulated new contingency arrangements for handling post-typhoon tree waste. Areas near some landfills would be designated for temporary storage, where wood shredders would be placed for efficient handling of tree waste. Moreover, truck driver associations and unions had been provided with guidelines on the transportation of post-typhoon tree waste. Currently, the three wood shredders procured by EPD were placed at EcoPark, North East New Territories Landfill and West New Territories Landfill respectively. There were plans to deploy additional wood shredders for the operation of the Centre.

V. Any other business

52. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 4:14 pm.