

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1) 575/99-00
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref: CB1/PL/EA/1

LegCo Panel on Environmental Affairs

Minutes of meeting
held on Friday, 5 November 1999, at 10:00 am
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building

Members present : Hon Christine LOH (Chairman)
Hon HUI Cheung-ching (Deputy Chairman)
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, JP
Prof Hon NG Ching-fai
Hon Margaret NG
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon CHAN Wing-chan
Hon LAU Kong-wah
Hon Mrs Miriam LAU Kin-ye, JP
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon CHOY So-yuk
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
Hon LAW Chi-kwong, JP

Non-Panel member : Hon LEE Wing-tat
attending

Members absent : Hon Martin LEE Chu-ming, SC, JP
Hon Ronald ARCULLI, JP
Dr Hon LEONG Che-hung, JP
Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun, JP
Hon WONG Yung-kan

Public officers attending : Mr Kim SALKELD
Deputy Secretary for Planning,
Environment and Lands (Environment)

Mrs Philomena LEUNG
Principal Assistant Secretary (Environment)
Planning, Environment and Lands Bureau

Mr Benny Y K WONG
Assistant Director (Waste & Water)
Environmental Protection Department

Dr Malcolm BROOM
Principal Environmental Protection Officer
(Water Policy and Planning)
Environment Protection Department

Mr George LAI
Assistant Director/Projects & Development
Drainage Services Department

Mr W T YEUNG
Chief Engineer/Consultants Management
Drainage Services Department

Clerk in attendance : Mrs Mary TANG, Chief Assistant Secretary (1)6

Staff in attendance : Ms Rosalind MA, Senior Assistant Secretary (1)9

I Confirmation of minutes of meeting

(LC Paper No. CB(1)165/99-00)

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 October 1999 were confirmed.

II Date of next meeting and items for discussion

2. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the next meeting scheduled for Friday, 3 December 1999 at 10:45 am.

- Proposed amendment to the Noise Control Ordinance;
- Proposed amendment to the Dumping at Sea Ordinance; and

- Proposed amendment to the Sewage Services Ordinance and the Sewage Services (Trade Effluent Surcharge) Regulation.

3. Members also agreed to hold a joint meeting with the Panel on Health Services on 3 December 1999 at 10:00 am to discuss the Clinical Waste Control Scheme.

(Post-meeting note: the Panel meeting and the joint meeting were re-scheduled for 20 December 1999 at 9:30 am and 14 December 1999 at 3:30 pm respectively to give way to the extended Council meeting. The agenda for the meeting on 20 December 1999 had been revised to include the discussion on the Strategic Sewage Disposal Scheme.)

4. Mr Andrew CHENG Kar-foo pointed out that the problem of emission of oil fumes from restaurants had been a subject of much concern, as this would affect the health of the general public, in particular, the inhabitants of the buildings in which the restaurants were situated. He considered that there was a need to formulate a policy requiring composite commercial/residential buildings to install central ventilation systems to provide exhaust for the oily emissions. Members agreed that this subject should be included in the list of items for discussion by the Panel and the Administration would be requested to provide a background information paper on the subject .

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III Information papers issued since last meeting

5. Members noted the following information papers issued since the last meeting:

LC Paper No. CB(1)82/99-00 - discussion papers from the Advisory Council on the Environment;

LC Paper No. CB(1)121/99-00 - extract of minutes of LegCo meeting with Wong Tai Sin Provisional District Board members on 8 July 1999 on the promotion of a comprehensive and proactive environmental policy by the Government; and

LC Paper No. CB(1)178/99-00 - extract of minutes of LegCo meeting with Yuen Long Provisional District Board members regarding their concern about expansion of the Wetland Conservation Area at the Deep Bay area.

IV Outlying Islands Sewerage Stage 1 Phase 1, Ting Kau Sewerage Stage 1 and Sham Tseng Sewerage Stage 2 Phase 2
(LC Paper Nos. CB(1)243/99-00(03) and (04))

6. The Deputy Secretary for Planning, Environment and Lands (Environment) (DS/PEL) briefed members on the two information papers which were provided by the Administration further to the discussion at the Panel and the Public Works Subcommittee (PWSC) meetings in June this year. The paper on "Water Quality Management : A Strategic Framework for Sewage Treatment" provided an overview on the planning for sewage treatment in Hong Kong. The other paper on "Sewerage Improvements for Ting Kau, Sham Tseng, Tsing Lung Tau and outlying islands" dealt with the proposal to construct a sewage treatment works (STW) and outfall at Sham Tseng and the upgrading of sludge dewatering capability and the extension of the outfall at Cheung Chau.

Improvements in bathing water quality following commissioning of the Sham Tseng STW

7. Referring to paragraph 9 of the information paper, Miss Emily LAU raised doubts about the effectiveness of the proposed Sham Tseng STW in improving water quality of the seven nearby beaches as the estimated *E. coli* concentration in five out of the seven beaches would not be able to meet water quality objectives (WQO) for gazetted bathing beaches even after the commissioning of the STW. She expressed concern about poor water quality of the beaches and requested the Administration to provide the criteria in deciding whether a bathing beach should be opened or closed to the public.

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8. Mr LEE Wing-tat shared Miss Emily LAU's concern and suggested that secondary instead of primary treatment should be applied in order to meet WQO for the bathing beaches. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that to ensure compliance with WQO, the Administration should consider a higher level of treatment instead of putting forward a less effective but cheaper and more convenient proposal. Miss CHOY So-yuk raised similar concern on the treatment proposed and requested the Administration to provide information on the types of treatment methods which had been considered before arriving at the current proposal. She remarked that the Administration should conduct a comprehensive research on the latest technology in sewage treatment so that the most cost-effective method could be recommended. Moreover, she suggested that the sustainability of sewage treatment systems should be studied by the Council on Sustainable Development which would be set up soon.

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9. DS/PEL explained that the proposed Sham Tseng STW and outfall, though essential in improving the water quality of the adjacent areas and in dealing with the currently unhygienic conditions in the area, was not a solution to all the water pollution problems. He advised that it was necessary also to deal with the more distant pollution sources to improve the background conditions. In this regard, the Administration had

plans for other sewerage systems which, when in place, would collect and treat the sewage from these sources. Therefore, the water quality of the area would be further enhanced after the completion of all related projects. He stressed that a review of alternative treatment methods would further delay the needed improvements to improve the hygienic conditions and the water quality of the surrounding beaches.

10. The Assistant Director (Waste & Water)/Environmental Protection Department (AD(W&W)/EPD) added that with the implementation of all the related sewerage systems, (for example, sewers further down Castle Peak Road, beyond Ting Kau and Tsing Lung Tau) the pollution load would be decreased to an acceptable level. As regards the decision on the closing of beaches, he informed members that there was a system for classifying the beaches and recommending whether a particular beach in question should be closed to the public. He said that EPD was monitoring closely the water quality of the beaches in the area near Sham Tseng and except for the three closed beaches, the others were considered suitable for opening to the public under the prevailing criteria.

Choice of sewage treatment

11. In response to members' suggestion of upgrading the level of treatment to secondary for improvement of water quality of the beaches, AD(W&W)/EPD explained that the proposed STW at Sham Tseng would provide chemically enhanced primary treatment (CEPT) as well as disinfection for the sewage. He advised that CEPT was a well-established technique gaining increasing popularity around the world. It was a relatively new technology developed in the last decade and was considered a highly reliable method. He explained that the main factor affecting beach water quality was the level of bacteria, the use of chemicals in CEPT coupled with disinfection was found to be very effective in killing bacteria in the sewage and in achieving the WQO for beaches. The provision of secondary treatment would not achieve any better reduction in bacteria and would not be cost-effective. He added that an environmental impact assessment had been completed on the proposed STW and this was available for public inspection.

12. DS/PEL added that the key objective of the project was to protect the health of the community. He appreciated members' concern about the need for a higher level of sewage treatment but remarked that this should be considered in the light of the increased cost the community would have to pay and the scientific evidence which suggested the necessary level of treatment for achievement of WQOs. He assured members that the proposal put forward by the Administration was made after considering alternative sewage treatment methods available. The proposed method was found to be the most cost-effective one that was supported by scientific evidence. He stressed that as far as effectiveness of treatment was concerned, there was only a limited difference between chemically enhanced primary treatment and secondary biological treatment. However, in terms of land, construction and operating costs, a biological treatment plant would be far more expensive than a chemical treatment plant. He solicited members' support for the project as it would provide substantial improvement

to the water quality in the area. The delay in its implementation would put the health of the community at risk and would put back considerably the time in which improvements to water quality could be achieved.

13. As regards members' request for a comprehensive schedule for implementation of all the related sewerage schemes in the area, AD(W&W)/EPD said that although the Administration had a preliminary schedule for the implementation of the related projects in different stages, a definite timetable for the completion could not be given. This was because a number of factors, which included the delays in the land resumption process, would affect the progress of projects. He assured members that the Administration would try its best to speed up the implementation of the projects and would provide the implementation schedule for members' reference.

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Visual impact of a multi-storey secondary treatment plant at Sham Tseng

14. Referring to paragraph 19 of the paper, Mr LEE Wing-tat doubted whether the alternative option of a multi-storey secondary treatment plant would cause significant visual impact to the nearby residents. He pointed out that there was a private residential development with building blocks up to 40 storeys high in the vicinity of the STW site. Therefore, a secondary STW of about ten storeys in height should not be more obstructive than the private development blocks. He stated that the improvements to beach water quality should not be hampered by local objections on grounds of visual impacts. He also said that the Democratic Party would not be prepared to support the funding for the type of primary STW which the Administration proposed to build. The Chairman enquired whether the Administration had conducted any public consultation on the issue of visual impact. Sharing the same concern, Miss Emily LAU requested the Administration to provide more information about the consultation exercise on the option of building a multi-storey secondary treatment plant in the area and to identify the objecting parties.

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15. The Chief Engineer/Consultants Management/Drainage Services Department informed members that the recommendation of the environmental impact assessment prepared by consultants was to build the sewage treatment works to low elevation to avoid visual impact. This was accepted by the Environmental Affairs Committee of Tsuen Wan Provisional District Board. He advised that a multi-storey plant would cause considerable visual impact to nearby residents since the STW site was along the seafront of Sham Tseng area. DS/PEL supplemented that the proposed STW had been discussed at several meetings of the Tsuen Wan Provisional District Board. Local objections were raised against the construction of the STW. The Administration was requested to provide a buffer area to the STW in form of a green zone or park area. He said that the nature of a STW and a residential development was quite different and thus should not be put to a parallel comparison when assessing their visual impacts. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong suggested that the Administration should explore the feasibility of building a secondary treatment plant underground instead of the multi-storey design and provide the cost and benefits of this alternative design for members' consideration. In response,

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AD (W&W)/EPD explained that although the feasibility of this option could be further explored, upgrading of the Sham Tseng STW to a higher level of treatment would not be cost-effective since there would not be significant improvements to the water quality in terms of reduction in bacteria, compared with the proposed method of CEPT with disinfection.

Other considerations

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16. On the enforcement actions against those restaurant and factory operators making expedient connections to discharge their sewage, AD (W&W)/EPD said that the Administration was taking proactive actions to take enforcement actions against illegal discharges. He undertook to provide members with information on the prosecution statistics.

17. As to whether the Administration had any alternative proposal in case the funding request for the Sham Tseng STW was turned down at the PWSC, AD (W&W)/EPD reiterated that the STW project was a necessary step in the improvement of the water quality of the area although it could not achieve all the WQOs by itself. Further improvements would depend on the implementation of other sewerage schemes within the Administration's wider sewage treatment strategy. He hoped that members would appreciate the importance of this project as a first step for water quality improvement and support its funding. DS/PEL added that part of the proposed sewerage works were connected with road projects in the area. If the sewerage projects were held back, there would be knock-on complications on other improvement programmes as well.

18. Concluding the discussion, the Chairman said that in view of members' reservations over the proposed level of sewage treatment, the Administration might have to re-consider whether it should submit its funding proposal to PWSC at this stage.

V Any other business

19. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:50 am.

Legislative Council Secretariat

9 December 1999