

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1) 1201/02-03
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/EA/1

Panel on Environmental Affairs

**Minutes of meeting held on
Monday, 24 February 2003, at 3:30 pm
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building**

Members present : Hon CHOY So-yuk (Chairman)
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan (Deputy Chairman)
Dr Hon David CHU Yu-lin, JP
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, JP
Hon Martin LEE Chu-ming, SC, JP
Hon SIN Chung-kai
Hon WONG Yung-kan
Hon LAU Kong-wah
Hon Miriam LAU Kin-yee, JP
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Dr Hon LAW Chi-kwong, JP
Hon Henry WU King-cheong, BBS, JP
Dr Hon LO Wing-lok
Hon LAU Ping-cheung

Members attending : Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon Ambrose LAU Hon-chuen, GBS, JP

Member absent : Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP

Public officers attending : **For item IV**
Environment, Transport and Works Bureau

Mr Donald TONG
Deputy Secretary (Environment)1

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Ms Annie CHOI
Principal Assistant Secretary (Environment)2

Environment Protection Department

Dr Lawrence WONG
Principal Environmental Protection Officer

Clerk in attendance : Miss Becky YU
Chief Assistant Secretary (1)1

Staff in attendance : Mrs Queenie YU
Senior Assistant Secretary (1)6

Miss Mandy POON
Legislative Assistant 4

I. Confirmation of minutes

(LC Paper No. CB(1) 955/02-03 — Minutes of the special meeting held on 14 January 2003

LC Paper No. CB(1) 956/02-03 — Minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2003)

The minutes of the meetings held on 14 January and 6 February 2003 were confirmed.

II. Information paper issued since last meeting

2. Members noted the following information paper which had been issued since last meeting -

LC Paper No. CB(1) 931/02-03 — A set of “Environmental attitude survey of Pearl River Delta residents” provided by the Civic Exchange

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III. Items for discussion at the next meeting

(LC Paper No. CB(1) 958/02-03(01) — List of follow-up actions

LC Paper No. CB(1) 958/02-03(02) — List of outstanding items for discussion)

3. Members agreed to discuss the following items proposed by the Administration at the next regular Panel meeting scheduled for Monday, 31 March 2003, at 3:30 pm -

(a) 208DS “Outlying Islands Sewerage, stage1, phase 1 part 1- Ngong Ping sewerage, sewage treatment and disposal”; and

(b) Detailed proposals for the Landfill Charging Scheme.

4. The Chairman reminded members of the visit to Stonecutters Island Sewage Treatment Works scheduled for Tuesday, 25 February 2003, at 2:30 pm.

IV. Measures to promote municipal solid waste recovery

(LC Paper No. CB(1) 958/02-03(03) — Paper provided by the Administration)

5. The Chairman advised that the subject of “Promoting waste reduction and recovery of domestic waste and creation of new job opportunities in the recycling industry” was last discussed at the joint meeting with the Panel on Manpower on 27 September 2001. Relevant papers and minutes of the meeting were tabled at the current meeting for members’ reference.

6. The Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (Environment)1 (DSETW(E)1) highlighted the salient points in the Administration information paper which set out the progress of measures which the Government had taken to promote the prevention and recovery of municipal solid waste in the past 18 months.

Targets for waste recovery

7. Referring to paragraph 4(c) of the paper which set out the Administration’s target to raise the domestic waste recovery rate from 8% to 14% in 2004 and 20% in 2007, Mr LEE Cheuk-yan noted from paragraph 25(c) that the domestic waste recovery rate had already risen to 13.5% in 2001. He asked whether the good progress was attributed to the effectiveness of measures being adopted or the fact that these targets were indeed too low. DSETW(E)1 explained that the recovery rate of 13.5% was based on surveys carried out in late 2001. The Administration had to carry out more surveys to verify the figure and to ascertain the waste recovery trend in the domestic sector. He stressed that while the Administration would continue its efforts to improve the recovery rate, the target rate of 20% in 2007 was by no means

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easy to achieve even in other advanced countries. To this end, new initiatives would be introduced in the coming years to enhance waste separation and recovery. These included a pilot project on wet/dry waste sorting to be launched in March 2003 to test its cost-effectiveness and suitability for local needs.

Strengthening support for waste separation and recovery

8. Noting that Report No. 39 of the Director of Audit had recommended the expeditious provision of waste separation facilities on a floor-to-floor basis in all public housing estates, Dr LAW Chi-kwong enquired about the progress in this regard. The Principal Environmental Protection Officer (PEPO) advised that the results of the pilot programmes carried out by the Housing Department (HD) in 2000 and 2001 to test the effects of placing waste separation bins on each floor of public housing blocks had been very positive. By way of illustration, the recyclables collected from Chak On Estate in Sham Shui Po had increased by over 40% for paper, over 300% for aluminum cans and about 700% for plastics. DSETW(E)1 supplemented that HD would extend the arrangement to more public housing estates incrementally, wherever such was practicable and subject to the availability of resources as each bin cost about \$600 to \$700. By March 2003, eight public housing estates covering 26 300 households would be included in the programme.

9. Apart from placing waste separation bins on each floor of public housing blocks, Dr LAW asked whether the Administration would consider providing refuse storage chambers and chutes in residential blocks to enhance waste recovery and separation as in the case of overseas countries. DSETW(E)1 advised that while the automatic refuse collection system (ARCS) had been made available in some public housing estates, its application was constrained by factors such as the physical conditions and layout of individual estates. Notwithstanding, the Administration would examine the feasibility of such a system in new projects such as the South East Kowloon Development where a consultancy study was underway to consider, among other things, the provision of ARCS in the wider context of waste management.

10. To contain the growth of domestic waste which was much higher than that of population growth, Mr LAU Ping-cheung remained of the view that consideration should be given to imposing a landfill charge on domestic waste as in the case of construction and demolition (C&D) waste. DSETW(E)1 replied that the Administration was committed to the polluter-pays principle. The proposed landfill charge for C&D waste was only the first step and extension of such a charge to other types of waste would be considered in due course.

Making available land for waste recovery operations

11. While welcoming the setting up of the Recovery Park in Tuen Mun, Ms Miriam LAU asked whether the local community also supported the proposed establishment. If so, consideration should be given to expediting the process. DSETW(E)1 confirmed that the proposal was supported by the Tuen Mun District

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Council, and that the first phase of the Park was planned to come into operation in 2005. The Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (Environment)2 (PASETW(E)2) advised that since it would take time to complete the reclamation and site formation works as well as the provision of basic infrastructure such as water, electricity and drainage system, it would be extremely difficult to advance the completion schedule to 2004. Besides, a full Environmental Impact Assessment would have to be conducted given the scale of the project.

12. On the allocation criteria for the Park, DSETW(E)1 said that the Government had yet to decide on the modus operandi of the Park. Nevertheless, efforts would be made to introduce a wide variety of recycling trades in the Park taking into account the prevailing market trend. The recycling industry would be consulted in this respect.

Enhancing community participation and involvement

13. In response to Ms Cyd HO's question, DSETW(E)1 advised that in addition to the Environment and Conservation Fund, there were other funding resources for research and development of new environmentally friendly products.

Enhancing publicity and public education

14. Referring to his last visit to a botanical garden in Japan, Mr Martin LEE noted that no litter bins were available within the garden as visitors were expected to bring the litter back home for disposal. He asked whether a similar approach would be adopted in Hong Kong. Ms Miriam LAU however remarked that public awareness was of paramount importance in waste prevention and reduction. Otherwise, the provision of fewer or no litter bins in Hong Kong would only result in a rise in littering. DSETW(E)1 explained that as littering was an offence in Hong Kong, litter bins had to be made available to ensure that the public would not be compelled to breach the law. To encourage waste recycling, waste separation bins were being placed beside litter bins to facilitate waste recovery. He nevertheless agreed to the need to further promote public awareness on waste prevention and reduction. To this end, the Administration would step up public education and publicity campaigns. Mr LEE suggested that the Administration should encourage the public to use handkerchiefs rather than tissue papers. DSETW(E)1 undertook to consider including a relevant message in the Announcements of Public Interests.

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Government leadership

15. At members' request, the Administration undertook to provide further information on green procurement practices within the Government.

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Producer Responsibility Schemes

16. Apart from mobile phone batteries, Ms Emily LAU asked whether similar producer responsibility schemes would apply to other products. DSETW(E)1

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advised that the pilot mobile phone battery recycling programme would provide the Administration the necessary information and experience for planning similar industry-based product responsibility schemes in the future. Ms Cyd HO enquired if the Administration would consider imposing pre-sale environmental tax on products to cover the future recycling cost as in the case of other overseas countries. Mr LAU Ping-cheung however expressed concern that the additional recycling cost would have to be borne by customers. DSETW(E)1 said that the Administration was studying different approaches adopted by overseas countries but no concrete plan had been made so far. PASETW(E)2 added that the Administration would have to ascertain the cost implications of the various approaches on consumers and the acceptance of the community as a whole. The Chairman was in support of the introduction of an environmental tax and urged the Administration to seriously look into the issue.

Close cooperation with the business sector

17. Ms Emily LAU sought elaboration on the leftover food donation programme. PASETW(E)2 advised that in order to optimize the use of leftover food and minimize the need to dispose of food waste at landfills, arrangements had been made with the hotel industry and voluntary organizations to deliver leftover food in a timely manner to needy people. Similar programmes such as plastic bottles and textile recycling programmes specially designed for hotels, as well as plastic bag recovery programmes involving supermarket chains, convenient stores and shopping malls had been launched. Mr LAU Ping-cheung asked how the Administration could encourage the production of degradable plastic bags and bottles. PASETW(E)2 advised that the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) had issued testing guidelines on the degradability, safety and functional performance of such products. Products that could pass the test could apply for registration with EPD which would upload relevant information onto the Internet for public access. So far, one product had been registered.

Other measures to handle difficult waste

18. Mr Martin LEE asked how the Administration would deal with the disposal of used computers. PASETW(E)2 said that used computers were difficult to handle because they became obsolete in a short period of time and there could be further environmental problems if the recovered computers were not sent to proper treatment facilities. . She noted that many overseas countries disposed of their used computers to third-world countries and this would only shift the environmental problem elsewhere. Ms Miriam LAU considered it neither satisfactory to dispose of used computers at landfills. Alternative disposal measures on a permanent basis should be worked out. Meanwhile, efforts should be made to publicize the names and contact numbers of relevant community agencies which coordinated the delivery of used computers to those who were in need. PASETW(E)2 noted Ms LAU's view, adding that the Administration would study the experience gained from a pilot computer recycling programme organised by a green group in considering how used computers

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could be handled.

Pilot project on wet/dry waste sorting

19. DSETW(E)1 advised that the pilot project aimed to facilitate public participation in sorting domestic waste at home by separating them into two broad categories i.e. wet and dry waste. Dry waste would be separately collected and delivered to a temporary sorting facility at the Island East Transfer Station where recyclables would be recovered for recycling purpose while wet waste would be disposed of at landfills. The Chairman opined that efforts should also be made to recycle the bulk of 3 700 tonnes of food waste produced daily. DSETW(E)1 affirmed that the Administration was exploring alternative means to handle organic waste. In fact, a tendering exercise on recycling of organic waste into compost had been conducted but no conforming tenders were received.

20. Instead of a pilot project, Mr LEE Cheuk-yan opined that the Administration should implement the wet/dry waste sorting in full scale to enhance waste recovery on the one hand and to reduce the amount of domestic waste to be disposed of at landfills on the other. The savings achieved as a result could also be used to employ environmental protection ambassadors to collect waste, thereby creating immediate employment opportunities. DSETW(E)1 explained that the Administration's current plan was to launch the pilot scheme in four housing estates in the Eastern District for a period of 12 months. It would carry out a review to examine the feasibility, logistics and cost-effectiveness of this form of waste recovery taking into account factors such as the participation rate, the recovery rate and the cost-revenue analysis. The Chairman declared interest that she was involved in the pilot project in the Eastern District. Given the technical difficulties arising in the course of implementation, she agreed with the Administration on the need to launch this form of recovery on a pilot basis.

21. As to why the Eastern District was selected for the pilot project, DSETW(E)1 advised that it was mainly because the Island East Transfer Station had the spare capacity for the temporary sorting facility. Subject to the outcome of the review of the pilot project, the Administration would examine the feasibility of setting up similar facilities in other refuse transfer stations for sorting dry waste.

V. Any other business

22. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 4:30 pm.