

**For information
on 18 February 2005**

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
HOUSE COMMITTEE**

Sustainable Development

Introduction

This paper briefs Members on initiatives undertaken by the Government and the Council for Sustainable Development in seeking to make Hong Kong a more sustainable city. The paper describes the current state of play and then provides relevant background under the following headings –

- Council for Sustainable Development
- Sustainable Development Strategy for Hong Kong
- Sustainable Development Fund
- Promotion of Sustainable Development
- Sustainability Assessments of Government Programmes

Council for Sustainable Development (Council for SD)

Current Position

2. The work of the Council for SD during its first term, which will expire on 28 February, has focussed primarily on the formulation of a Sustainable Development (SD) Strategy for Hong Kong and the promotion of community awareness of SD, mainly through the award of grants from the SD Fund. The current position with regard to these initiatives is described below.

Background

3. In his 1999 Policy Address, the Chief Executive (CE) announced an intention to set up a Council for SD to provide expert advice to the Government and to encourage the community to put the concept of sustainable development into practice. In March 2003, the CE appointed the Council for SD under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary for Administration. Membership of the Council is drawn from the business, social and environmental sectors, and also includes Principal Officials with responsibility for relevant policy portfolios. The Council has two sub-committees, which are responsible for advising on the development of an SD Strategy and on education and publicity initiatives (including the award of grants from the SD Fund) respectively.

Sustainable Development Strategy for Hong Kong

Current Position

4. In July 2004, the Council for SD began a public engagement process aimed at encouraging the community to take part in a dialogue about pursuing SD in Hong Kong, with particular reference to three “Pilot Areas”, namely, solid waste management, renewable energy and urban living space. The process concluded in December 2004 with an SD Strategy Summit, and the Council is now finalising its report to the Government on the outcome of the process and proposals for an SD strategy for Hong Kong in respect of the three Pilot Areas.

Background

5. The design of an engagement process aimed at building an SD strategy for Hong Kong began with a stakeholder workshop hosted by the

Council for SD in November 2003. Workshop participants urged that an open and participatory process of engagement be established to allow people from all walks of the community to share their views on how the city might become more sustainable. With input from three stakeholder Support Groups, the Council issued an “Invitation and Response” (IR) document entitled: *Sustainable development: Making Choices for Our Future* and began a programme of community engagement activities in July 2004. As part of the programme, the Council opened a number of channels to encourage a wide response to the issues raised in the IR document. These channels included –

- A dedicated interactive website as a resource for providing information and allowing the public to post views on the engagement process and the individual Pilot Areas
- An exhibition on SD and the Pilot Areas that toured popular public venues in Hong Kong
- IR leaflets with simple questionnaires, distributed at various public locations together with SD Strategy “wishing wells”, into which people placed the completed questionnaires
- Four public forums and eleven public workshops on the Pilot Areas, in various locations throughout Hong Kong
- A Youth Forum targeted at the young people
- A multi-stakeholder SD Strategy Summit.

An Announcement in the Public Interest (API) on the IR document was also broadcast regularly on local TV and radio stations.

6. By the close of the formal public engagement exercise, over 1 900 responses in various forms had been received, and over 1 000 participants had attended the public forums, workshops and summits hosted by the Council.

Sustainable Development Fund

Current Position

7. The SD Fund has so far provided grants to ten community organisations to implement projects that will help to promote public awareness of the principles of SD. The total budgeted cost of these projects is \$10.85 million, and their expected duration ranges from 12 to 36 months. In consultation with the Council for SD, we will monitor the performance of the grant recipients and the outcomes of the projects, while looking to provide further support from the fund to worthwhile community-based initiatives. We plan to open the SD Fund for a further round of applications in March 2005.

Background

8. The proposal to establish an SD Fund to support community initiatives on sustainable development was another initiative announced in the 1999 Policy Address. Following the appointment of the Council for SD, the Fund was established in June 2003 with a sum of \$100 million, to provide a central source of financial support for initiatives that will help to develop a strong public awareness of the principles of SD, and encourage sustainable practices in Hong Kong. The Council for SD advises on the disbursement of the Fund, and has advised that, initially, a sum of \$10 million annually be earmarked for grants.

Promotion of Sustainable Development

Current Position

9. The Council for SD advises on the development and content of publicity and community education programmes to promote public awareness of

SD. Council Members also speak to non-government organizations, green groups, academic institutions, and business organizations, both locally and overseas, about the Council's work, with a view to building strong partnerships for sustainability. In January 2005, on the advice of the Council, the Sustainable Development Unit (SDU) launched an SD Online Resource Centre, which provides a centrally located and easily accessible starting point for people, in particular students, who are searching for information on SD issues both locally and around the world.

10. The Council's Education and Publicity Sub-committee (EPSC), which includes co-opted Members from organisations such as Oxfam, Friends of the Earth (HK), the Business Environment Council and Education City, is considering further publicity and education programmes, for example, a community-wide SD competition, a promotional campaign for projects supported by the SD Fund projects, and the launch of a Schools and Community Outreach Programme.

Background

11. The concept of SD is relatively new to Hong Kong, and is unfamiliar to many in the community. The SDU has previously organised a range of initiatives seeking to enhance public awareness of sustainability. These include –

- An international symposium, "*Sustainability and the City*", in June 2002, which brought together local, overseas, Mainland and Macao experts to share experience and discuss key sustainability issues for Hong Kong and the Pearl River Delta region
- A bilingual booklet on SD published in 2002 to introduce the concept of SD to the community and in particular school students

- A series of exhibitions on “*Building a Sustainable City*” in 2002 that visited public locations throughout Hong Kong
- A School Outreach Programme from 2002 to 2004 that directly engaged secondary school students, with a view to raising awareness among young people
- A Community Fair with the theme of “*Sustainability and the Community*” in January 2003, organised in conjunction with schools and stakeholder groups
- The United Nations Asia-Pacific Leadership Forum: *Sustainable Development for Cities* in February 2004, which was jointly convened by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Government of the People's Republic of China. This forum provided a platform for cities to exchange views on how to take forward commitments agreed at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg.

Sustainability Assessments of Government Programmes

Current Position

12. In order to integrate SD principles into the Government’s work, all bureaux and departments are required to conduct a sustainability assessment (SA) on major new policies and programmes and explain the SA findings in their submissions to the Policy Committee or the Executive Council.

13. In order to equip government colleagues with appropriate knowledge of SD, the SDU provides training for civil servants on SD principles and the proper application of the SA system. In 2005, the SDU will conduct a series of visits to bureaux and departments, with a view to enhancing their general capacity to apply the assessment system.

Background

14. The initiative for all bureaux to carry out “sustainability impact assessments” of major new policy proposals was announced in the 1999 Policy Address. The SA system has been in place within the Government since December 2001 to ensure that all major policies and programmes are assessed for their sustainability implications. Since late 2003, bureaux and departments have been required to carry out SA on new major proposals before public consultation and to incorporate the assessment findings into the relevant consultation documents as appropriate. The SDU regularly reviews the operation of the SA system.

Sustainable Development Unit

Administration Wing

Chief Secretary for Administration’s Office

February 2005