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the Administration)

Subcommittee to Study the Subject of Combating Poverty

Minutes of meeting
held on Thursday, 23 June 2005 at 2:30 pm
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building

Members present : Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee, JP (Chairman)
Hon James TIEN Pei-chun, GBS, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Hon Margaret NG
Hon CHAN Yuen-han, JP
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP
Hon LI Fung-ying, BBS, JP
Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC
Hon Albert Jinghan CHENG

Members absent : Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, JP
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon LAU Chin-shek, JP
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH
Hon KWONG Chi-kin

Public officers attending : Item III
Mrs Cherry TSE, JP
Secretary to Commission on Poverty

Ms Edna WONG
Assistant Secretary to Commission on Poverty

Item IV

Mrs Cherry TSE, JP
Secretary to Commission on Poverty

Ms Edna WONG
Assistant Secretary to Commission on Poverty

Mrs FUNG Yue Mui-fun, Brenda
Principal Assistant Secretary (Elderly Services and
Social Security)²
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

Mr CHENG Chok-man
Chief Social Security Officer
Social Welfare Department

Mr LEE Cert-quinn
Chief Manager/Management (Support Services)
Housing Department

Mr K K YEUNG
Senior Administrative Officer (Strategic Planning)
Housing Department

Mr Tony LIU
Senior Housing Manager/Kowloon West
Housing Department

Mr LI Wing
Controller, Student Financial Assistance Agency
Student Financial Assistance Agency

Clerk in attendance : Mrs Constance LI
Chief Council Secretary (2)⁵

Staff in attendance : Mr Watson CHAN
Head, Research and Library Services

Ms Vicky LEE
Research Officer 3

Miss Betty MA
Senior Council Secretary (2)1

Ms Anna CHEUNG
Legislative Assistant (2)5

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I. Confirmation of minutes of meeting
[LC Paper No. CB(2) 1841/04-05]

The minutes of the meeting on 28 April 2005 were confirmed.

II. Date of next meeting and items for discussion
[LC Paper No. CB(2) 1969/04-05(01)]

2. The Chairman said that at the last meeting, the Subcommittee had agreed to discuss the research report on “Social security system for retirement protection in selected places” at the next meeting on 12 July 2005. To allow more time for the Research and Library Service Division (RLSD) of the Legislative Council (LegCo) Secretariat to prepare the research report, he suggested to defer the meeting to 21 July 2005. Members agreed.

3. The Chairman informed members that over 50 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were jointly conducting a study on the provision of a non-means tested retirement protection system for all elderlies in Hong Kong. He suggested that these organisations should also be invited to present their study findings or proposal on retirement protection in Hong Kong at the meeting on 21 July 2005. Members agreed.

III. Work plan of the Commission on Poverty
[LC Paper Nos. CB(2) 1969/04-05(02) & (03)]

4. At the invitation of the Chairman, Secretary to Commission on Poverty (Secy/CoP) briefed members on the discussions held at the third meeting of CoP on 26 May 2005, as follows –

- (a) the Government Economist was working on the development of poverty indicators. In addition, a study would be conducted on the earnings mobility of Hong Kong people, and the preliminary data would be available in early 2006;

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- (b) CoP would actively monitor the implementation of the district-based approach in Tin Shui Wai, Kwun Tong and Sham Shui Po. This included the formation of district forums to dialogue on poverty alleviation. The meeting also agreed on the need to develop a communication plan to promote the concept of self-reliance and mutual help; and
- (c) Task Force on Children and Youth would hold its second meeting in July 2005 to further look into issues relating to training and employment of youth.

Work plan of CoP

5. Ms Margaret NG said that the most important task of CoP was to identify the gaps and deficiencies in the present policies in reducing poverty and disparity between the rich and the poor. She asked about the progress made by CoP in this respect.

6. Secy/CoP responded that CoP had agreed at its last meeting that it would focus its work in the coming six to nine months on employment, and on children and youth in the context of reducing intergenerational poverty. CoP would consider at its next meeting the current efforts made by the Administration to assist the unemployed, and the future direction on strengthening its welfare-to-work measures. The CoP Secretariat was working on a paper on the welfare-to-work initiatives in overseas countries. As regards children and youth, Secy/CoP said that the Task Force on Children and Youth would hold its second meeting shortly. To facilitate its discussion, the CoP Secretariat was preparing a paper to provide an overview of the existing services and assistance to children and youth in different age groups. CoP would then work with the relevant bureaux to consider how various policies relevant to CoP's work priorities would be implemented in an integrated and coordinated manner.

7. Ms Margaret NG asked whether CoP had sought input from the relevant bureaux and departments in identifying gaps and deficiencies in the policies on children and youth and on employment. Ms NG also requested the CoP Secretariat to provide papers in this regard.

8. Secy/CoP responded that the CoP Secretariat would formulate proposals on the two work priorities of CoP, with input from the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau, Education and Manpower Bureau, Economic Development and Labour Bureau, and relevant departments. Secy/CoP said that the CoP Secretariat would notify the Clerk to the Subcommittee when relevant discussion papers of CoP were uploaded to CoP's website, in order to keep the Subcommittee abreast of the work of CoP.

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9. Ms Emily LAU said that in its concluding observations on the Second Report of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), the United Nations (UN) Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights had made the following comments –

- (a) The Committee recommended that HKSAR should consider extending its social security system to cover unemployed workers through the payment of an unemployed benefit based on contributions from employers and employees;
- (b) The Committee urged HKSAR to review the eligibility criteria for the Comprehensive Social Security Allowance (CSSA) so as to ensure that all those in need, including low-income persons and families, older persons and new migrants were adequately covered by the scheme to enable them to enjoy a decent standard of living; and
- (c) The Committee urged HKSAR to strengthen its efforts to combat poverty and social exclusion, in particular with regard to the disadvantaged and marginalised groups, and older persons. The Committee also recommended the State party to adopt an official poverty line, which would enable the State party to define the extent of poverty and to monitor and evaluate progress in alleviating poverty. The Committee requested that the State party to provide, in its next periodic report, disaggregated and comparative annually-collected data on the number of people living in poverty and on progress made in reducing the incidence of poverty, and the impact, if any, that the newly-established CoP had had on the issue of poverty in HKSAR.

Ms LAU asked whether CoP would study UN Committee's comments and coordinate a response or supplementary report from HKSAR.

10. Secy/CoP said that complex socio-economic issues were raised in the concluding observations of the UN Committee, and many of these such as providing unemployment benefit would need to be fully discussed by the community. Secy/CoP further said that the adoption of a poverty line was more applicable to developing countries. As revealed by the research carried out by the LegCo Secretariat in May 2005 for the developed economies, they usually adopted multi-dimensional indicators which focused on the specific needs of disadvantaged groups.

11. Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed support for conducting a study on the earnings mobility of Hong Kong people. He considered that longitudinal studies should be conducted in this respect.

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12. Secy/CoP said that the Administration had commissioned academia to conduct the first study on the earnings mobility of Hong Kong people in 2001. The current study was to update the information from 2001 onwards. If the study findings were found reliable, the Administration would consider conducting longitudinal studies in this regard.

13. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung said that CoP was set up by the former Chief Executive (CE) in response to the strong call from the community. Mr LEUNG considered that CoP should obtain assurance from the CE-elect that he would honour the former CE's commitment to alleviate poverty and would set out his anti-poverty policy agenda. Mr LEUNG commented that the CoP had lost its "heat" after the departure of Mr C H TUNG, the former CE. The recent discussion of the welfare-to-work initiatives by CoP was also on the wrong direction as such policy was formulated to help refugees in the past. He considered that CoP should make clear who were the needy and what types of work were to be offered to the needy. Mr LEUNG further said that the problem of the needy was not caused by themselves, but was caused by economic re-structuring and relocation of industries to the Mainland. As many of the needy people had contributed to Hong Kong's economy in the past, they should benefit from a re-distribution of social resources. It was also government's responsibility to render assistance to the needy. Mr LEUNG added that consideration should be given to appointing an independent commissioner from overseas to head CoP, and to set out policies to help the poor.

14. Secy/CoP said that the work on poverty alleviation had started long before the 2005 Policy Address and the establishment of CoP, and it had been a well established and integral part of Hong Kong's public policies, e.g. provision of public housing, nine-year free education, health care and social services, and the Administration would continue its commitments in this regard. Nevertheless, it was recognized that there was still room for improvement in the provision of these services in meeting the needs of the needy, hence the establishment of CoP. As regards the welfare-to-work initiatives, Secy/CoP explained that CoP recognized that employment was the key to poverty alleviation and self-reliance. A three-pronged approach would be adopted in the context of employment. Firstly, CoP would study whether effective measures had been taken to create job opportunities and maximize participation in the labour market. Secondly, several pilot schemes would be launched in some districts to foster confidence of the needy to rejoin the workforce. Thirdly, CoP would study the incentives to help the unemployed enter/re-enter the labour market.

15. Ms Emily LAU commented that despite the efforts made in the past, the disparity of income between the rich and the poor had increased and there were some 1.2 million people living in poverty in Hong Kong. Ms LAU said that CoP should formulate specific strategies targeting at these people.

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16. Secy/CoP explained that while Gini Coefficient was commonly used to indicate income disparity in a society, it should not be adopted without understanding its calculation method. She explained that in arriving at the Gini Coefficient in Hong Kong, the cumulative share of households and cumulative share of household income was each divided into ten groups, and direct comparison was made between each of the ten groups. However, no reference was made to the changes in income level within each group. Secy/CoP pointed out that the Gini Coefficient of Egypt, Switzerland, Japan, South Korea and India was within the range of 0.30 to 0.33, although the economic development and national income levels in these countries varied greatly. Moreover, when there was economic re-structuring which often led to unemployment in some sectors, the Gini Coefficient of the country concerned would go up.

17. Secy/CoP added that low-income families would still exist even in an affluent society. It would be more important to lift the poor out of poverty. Secy/CoP said that the study on the earnings mobility of Hong Kong people would throw light on the phenomenon of income disparity in Hong Kong.

18. Mr Albert HO said that while he believed that Secy/CoP was by no means playing down the significance of Gini Coefficient, the Administration should recognise and address the problem of income disparity, as great disparity of income could give rise to social instability.

19. Secy/CoP clarified that she had only wanted to point out the need to understand the source of poverty, in order to work out effective measures to address the problem.

20. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that he did not want to go into detailed discussion of Gini Coefficient. However, he wished to point out that the Gini Coefficient of Hong Kong had truly reflected the fact that there was a widening gap between the rich and the poor in Hong Kong.

21. Ms LI Fung-ying expressed concern about the lack of a coordinated approach in tackling the problem of poverty even after the establishment of CoP, and issues relating to poverty were being dealt with by different bureaux and discussed at various LegCo committees. Ms LI considered that the Subcommittee should start to work on specific topics so that concrete proposals could be put to the Administration.

22. Mr Ronny TONG said that the Subcommittee had held several meetings and gauged the views of concern organisations. He was disappointed that CoP had not made much progress in poverty alleviation. He considered that the Subcommittee should adopt a pragmatic approach and work on specific topics.

23. The Chairman explained that as one of the Subcommittee's tasks was to monitor the work of CoP, CoP had been requested to make progress reports to the Subcommittee. He agreed that the Administration should adopt a coordinated approach in tackling poverty. He informed members that the Subcommittee would study specific topics according to its work plan which would be discussed later.

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24. Mr Albert HO said that while he agreed that some immediate measures should be adopted to address problems relating to poverty, it was still necessary to make clear certain concepts if long-term measures were to be developed, e.g. to reduce intergenerational poverty. He considered that CoP should look into the income inequality in Hong Kong, and engage in high-level work, such as establishment of an official poverty line and wealth redistribution policy through tax reforms. He also expressed support for a suggestion made by Dr Fernando CHEUNG at another meeting that the Administration should introduce poverty impact analysis in its policy formulation process.

25. Secy/CoP said that the measures put in place to alleviate poverty were to enhance the abilities and capabilities of the disadvantaged groups to get away from poverty. Government policies on the provision of social services also facilitated a re-distribution of resources, and would take into account the needs of the disadvantaged.

26. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that CoP should look at the overall policy, for example, how the present policies or strategies could be improved to help the needy. He was surprised that CoP's work plan only focused on "welfare-to-work" which was more related to the review of CSSA.

27. Secy/CoP clarified that CoP did not study the review of CSSA, and "welfare-to-work" measures involved wide ranging issues including employment training and integration of service delivery. In fact, CoP adopted a macro perspective and coordinated the work of various bureaux and departments in poverty alleviation.

28. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung said that CoP should formulate a work plan and seek additional resources to fund the work on poverty alleviation.

29. Mr James TIEN said that CoP should be very careful not to adopt a divisive approach when taking forward anti-poverty measures. Mr TIEN further said that the business sector had not asked for a reduction of profit tax. Instead, they considered that salary tax reduction should first be implemented to alleviate the burden of middle class, if permissible under the current financial situation of Government.

District-based approach in alleviating poverty

30. Ms Emily LAU said that although CoP would develop a communication plan to promote its objective and work progress, the Financial Secretary (FS), being Chairman of CoP, had not accepted invitations from district organisations to conduct face-to-face discussion on the specific poverty problems in the districts. She wondered whether CoP would change its mind and respond positively to these invitations.

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31. Secy/CoP clarified that the CoP Secretariat was aware of these invitations and was actively liaising with the District Offices concerned in lining up appointments with the relevant district organisations. Secy/CoP added that the communication plan sought to promote the concept of self-reliance and mutual help, in order to arouse public awareness on corporate social responsibilities and stimulate involvement of the private sector in community building.

32. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that poverty was a social problem, and not a personal problem. He urged that CoP should avoid personalizing the problem of poverty in developing the communication plan. Referring to paragraph 5 of the Administration's paper on work progress of CoP, Dr CHEUNG asked whether CoP meant that the district organizations had been over-relying on resources allocated from central government. He was concerned that CoP had taken the position that districts should find their own resources to implement poverty alleviation projects. He also expressed concern that it took an unduly long time to approve applications for the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund (CIIF).

33. Secy/CoP explained that the communication plan was to convey a positive message on the concept of mutual help and empowerment, and that the private sector would also benefit from participation in community building. Secy/CoP further explained that the Administration had no intention to ask district organizations to implement projects on a self-financed basis. Secy/CoP said that the Administration recognized the need to provide the districts with necessary resources and support. Despite the budgetary constraints, FS had instructed that resources would be allocated for worthwhile projects, particularly those which would have snowball effect in generating greater returns.

34. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung expressed concern that CoP had not yet started work on reducing intergenerational poverty. He also expressed concern that CoP would rely on CIIF to provide resources to districts to implement poverty alleviation projects. He considered that there should be new resources for district organizations to provide services relating to training and employment of youth. He suggested that the eligibility criteria for applying for CIIF should be relaxed.

35. Secy/CoP said that CoP fully recognized the need to provide districts with the necessary services and support. As CoP was to coordinate existing services on poverty alleviation, it would have to look into available resources and relevant schemes for the purpose, e.g. CIIF. To her knowledge, members of CIIF had exchanged views with NGOs in Sham Shui Po recently, and this would enhance understanding on the applications for CIIF. Nevertheless, she would convey members' concerns to CIIF for consideration.

36. The Chairman said that as member of CoP, he had visited the three districts for which pilot schemes would be launched to alleviate poverty. However, he noted that these schemes were mostly led by the Administration, with little involvement from the NGOs. He urged that these committees should involve local NGOs and members of

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the District Councils concerned. The Chairman further said that resources should be provided to poverty alleviation projects in districts. He informed members that Sham Shui Po District Council (SSPDC) had agreed to earmark 10% of its total allocation for supporting local NGOs to implement poverty alleviation measures. However, given the resource constraints, only \$200,000 could be allocated for each of the three projects approved. The Chairman commented that while FS had stated that the revenue generated from personalised vehicle registration marks scheme would be allocated for poverty alleviation, it might have the effect of reducing the allocation from the Lotteries Fund to NGOs.

37. Secy/CoP said that the district-based approach was adopted in view of the different needs in the districts, and it would be difficult to adopt a uniform approach for all the 18 districts. To better understand the specific needs of individual districts, representatives from government departments, NGOs and private sector would be invited to meetings to work out their strategies. Secy/CoP further said that the revenue from personalised vehicle registration marks scheme should not have any impact on the Lotteries Fund.

Consultation mechanism

38. The Chairman asked whether CoP would, apart from seeking views from CoP members, consult relevant advisory bodies and hold public forums to gauge public views when specific topics were discussed.

39. Secy/CoP responded that CoP would make use of the existing network of advisory bodies established under different government bureaux and departments. For example, CoP would focus its work on employment (including welfare-to-work policy). To facilitate CoP's consideration of the policy direction at its next meeting, the CoP Secretariat had approached relevant advisory bodies to seek their views on the issue.

IV. Research report on “Benchmarks for granting subsidies or financial assistance to people in need in Hong Kong”

[LC Paper No. RP07/04-05]

40. With the aid of powerpoint, Head, Research and Library Services Division of the LegCo Secretariat (Head, RLSD) briefed members on the research report on “Benchmarks for granting subsidies or financial assistance to people in need in Hong Kong”.

41. The Chairman said that he was given to understand that RLSD was unable to obtain information from the Administration on the rationale and justifications for adopting the current benchmarks (such as the income and asset limits) for granting subsidies and financial assistance under the various schemes. The Chairman asked representatives of the Administration attending the meeting whether the benchmarks

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were derived by the bureaux/departments concerned, and whether the central government had a set of common benchmarks or reference points for determining the eligibility for the various subsidies and assistance.

42. Principal Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Elderly Services and Social Security)² (PAS(ES&SS)) responded that the Public Assistance (PA) Scheme was introduced in the 1970s, and the policy on social security evolved over time to meet prevailing social needs. The PA Scheme had been expanded to cover additional items of essential household expenditure, and was currently known as the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme. She added that the eligibility for CSSA payments was based on income and asset tests.

43. The Chairman asked whether there was any rationale or philosophy for adopting the current benchmark for granting CSSA. He noted that a basic need approach was adopted for CSSA, for which a baseline was drawn based on needs considered essential to an individual. He asked whether people having an income below that line was considered to have an unacceptable standard of living, therefore the amount of CSSA was to make up the difference between the baseline and the actual income.

44. PAS(ES&S) said that the standard rate of CSSA was to meet the basic needs of an individual, while special grants were also made to meet the recipients' specific needs such as rental and special medical expenses.

45. Ms Emily LAU said that different benchmarks had been adopted probably because these schemes served different policy objectives. Nevertheless, she hoped that the Administration could provide the rationale and justifications for adopting different benchmarks for the various kinds of subsidies and assistance.

46. Miss CHAN Yuen-han commented that the Administration had all along adopted a piece-meal or remedial approach to tackle poverty, and there was no overall policy in setting the benchmarks for granting assistance to the needy. She asked how CoP would deal with this problem.

47. Secy/CoP said that different benchmarks had been adopted to address the specific needs of different target groups. On the need to devise a common set of benchmarks for different services, Secy/CoP was of the view that the responsible bureaux could first be invited to examine whether the existing benchmarks were still justified.

48. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung said that the CSSA Scheme was not originally designed to help the unemployed, and the Administration should take a serious look at the structure of CSSA to see whether it could still meet the current needs. Mr LEUNG said that the Administration should recognise that poverty in Hong Kong was mainly caused by unemployment as a result of economic re-structuring, and the Administration should consider revamping the CSSA Scheme so that different types

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of assistance would be provided for different categories of the needy. Mr LEUNG suggested that there should be an unemployment allowance for the unemployed, and the assistance should be granted to an individual rather than on a household basis. Mr LEUNG considered that the Administration should provide additional resources for alleviation of poverty, and increase the tax if necessary.

49. Mr LEUNG further said that it would be a waste of time to discuss whether Hong Kong should become a welfare society. He considered that the provision of nine-year free education was an essential public policy which should not be regarded as a policy to alleviate poverty.

50. Mr Ronny TONG shared the concern that it had become increasingly difficult for the Subcommittee to monitor the work of CoP and the Administration in alleviating poverty. Nevertheless, he agreed that it might not be necessary to devise a uniform benchmark for granting assistance or subsidies under the various schemes.

51. Mr Albert HO said that members would need to understand what were regarded as the basic needs and the opportunity costs, in order to assess whether the subsidies or assistance provided under the various schemes were adequate. Mr HO requested the Administration to explain the rationale for adopting the existing benchmarks, e.g. the residency requirements under the different schemes.

52. Research Officer 3 of RLSD informed members that the residency requirement under CSSA and Student Travel Subsidy Scheme was seven years and three years respectively. However, there was no residency requirement for the subsidised health care services.

53. Chief Manager/Management (Support Services) of Housing Department added that for the allocation of a public housing unit, half of the family members concerned should have resided in Hong Kong for seven years when a unit was allocated.

54. In response to Mr Albert HO, PAS(ES&SS) responded that the Director of Social Welfare had discretion to waive the residency requirement for granting CSSA under special circumstances, e.g. change of family circumstances such as the death of spouse for a new arrival. She added that the subject had been discussed in detail at the subcommittee formed under the Panel on Welfare Services.

55. Dr Fernando CHEUNG agreed with Mr Albert Ho that it was important to study what were regarded as the basic needs and what was the lowest acceptable standard of living. In this connection, he had been urging the Administration to draw up a poverty line. Dr CHEUNG informed members that the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS) had conducted a study on basic needs and provided the draft report to the Administration. However, the Administration's response was rather negative as it was only concerned about the possible increase in financial commitments under the CSSA Scheme. He hoped that the Administration would give a positive response to the final report of HKCSS when it was released.

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56. Dr Fernando CHEUNG further said that the research report prepared by RLSD had revealed that different benchmarks and philosophy had been adopted for granting assistance under the various schemes. He considered that a common set of benchmarks would make it easier for the public to understand and would facilitate the operation of the various schemes. He considered that CoP should follow up the research findings of HKCSS and conduct detailed studies on the specific needs of the disadvantaged groups in rationalising the various benchmarks. He suggested that CoP should conduct public hearings in this respect and provide an overall response to the report of HKCSS.

57. Secy/CoP said that while she appreciated that a uniform benchmark would make it easier for the public to understand, the issue was whether the present benchmarks were still reasonable and whether they were designed to meet different needs. If the present benchmarks were considered reasonable and could still meet the needs of the target groups, it would not be necessary to revise the benchmarks for the sake of uniformity.

58. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that CoP should urge the relevant bureaux and departments to provide information on the rationale and justifications for adopting the different benchmarks under the various schemes covered by RLSD's research report. The Chairman said that in the absence of information on the philosophy or rationale behind these benchmarks, the Subcommittee would not be able to study the reasonableness of these benchmarks. The Chairman requested the Administration to provide the information after the meeting, and the LegCo Secretariat would compile a list of these outstanding issues for a response from the Administration.

Clerk/
Admin

59. The Chairman further said that CoP should review the current policies and benchmarks for granting assistance and subsidies to different categories of people in need, and identify areas for improvements.

Way forward of the Subcommittee

60. Ms Emily LAU and Mr Ronny TONG considered that the Subcommittee should start to work on specific topics with a view to putting forward concrete proposals to the Administration. Ms Emily LAU suggested that the Subcommittee should hold an internal meeting to discuss the way forward.

61. Miss CHAN Yuen-han commented that the Subcommittee was now facing a problem that the Administration did not have a coordinated approach in combating poverty. Miss CHAN said that at the request of other Panels, LegCo Secretariat had prepared information/research papers on other subjects relating to poverty, such as the social security systems in support of the elderly in poverty in other places, and employment measures in Ireland. Miss CHAN considered that issues such as working poverty and retirement protection should be followed up by the Subcommittee as these issues straddled the work of various bureaux.

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62. The Chairman said that unlike Panels and other subcommittees, this Subcommittee did not have a corresponding bureau, and that the Administration did not have a policy on poverty. It was therefore difficult for this Subcommittee to follow up with the Administration subjects relating to poverty. The Chairman further said that the information papers and research reports prepared by LegCo Secretariat in previous months aimed to provide the background and necessary information to enable members to better understand the various issues relating to poverty, so that members could put forward recommendations for further discussion. The Subcommittee would in the coming months focus on specific topics as proposed in the previous paper on “Work Plan of the Subcommittee”.

63. The Chairman suggested that the Subcommittee could work on the following topics in the coming months –

- (a) Problem of unemployment (including employment assistance for young people);
- (b) Working poverty; and
- (c) Women in poverty.

64. The Chairman said that to facilitate the work of the Subcommittee, he would expect Secy/CoP to coordinate the discussion papers and attendance of the bureaux concerned.

65. Secy/CoP said that CoP would focus on those areas which the Commission had allotted priorities, i.e. unemployment and intergenerational poverty, in the next six to nine months. If the issue to be discussed by the Subcommittee was clearly within the purview of a particular bureau or was outside the work programme of the Commission, it would be more appropriate for the Subcommittee to liaise with the relevant bureaux concerned.

66. The Chairman suggested that an internal meeting be held on 12 July 2005 to discuss the work plan of the Subcommittee. Members agreed.

V. Any other business

67. The Chairman informed members that the Subcommittee would conduct a duty visit to the United Kingdom and Ireland from 18 to 24 September 2005, and a paper would be submitted to the House Committee on 24 June 2005 for approval.

68. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 5 pm.