

**Extract from the draft minutes of meeting of the
Panel on Home Affairs held on 21 March 2005**

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IV. Provision of leisure and cultural services facilities

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1083/04-05(01) to (06)]

4. At the invitation of the Chairman, Deputy Director of Leisure and Cultural Services (Administration) (DDLCS(A)) briefed members on the salient points of the Administration's paper provided for the meeting.

5. Referring to the Administration's paper, Mr Albert CHAN expressed disappointment at the delay in the implementation schedule in respect of the leisure and cultural services (LCS) projects of the two former Municipal Councils (ex-MCs). He said that the previous Subcommittee to Follow Up the Outstanding Capital Works Projects of the Former Municipal Councils (the Subcommittee) had held discussions with the Administration for over three years urging the Administration to take forward the ex-MC projects as originally planned and scheduled. He said that the occurrence of the Tin Shui Wai family tragedy in April 2004 had also revealed the pressing need for timely provision of community facilities in Tin Shui Wai to meet residents' needs. He further said that although the Chief Executive (CE) had stated in his Policy Address 2005 that the Administration noted people's concern about the planned ex-MC projects, the implementation of these projects had not been much expedited as shown in the Administration's paper.

6. Referring to Annex 1 to the paper, Mr Albert CHAN said that the "District Open Space Area 107 Tin Shui Wai" project and the "Tin Shui Wai Public Library cum Indoor Recreation Centre" project were long awaited by local residents, and the former Regional Council had actually scheduled the latter for commencement in 2001 and for completion in 2005. Mr CHAN further said that despite the availability of a vacant site in Tin Shui Wai south for the provision of a public library, the Administration had been spending some \$7 million each year to rent premises at a private shopping mall in Tin Shui Wai to serve as a temporary library. As regards Tin Shui Wai north, Mr CHAN was dissatisfied that the Administration was going to provide only a temporary 7-a-side soccer pitch first, pending the completion of the "District Open Space Area 107 Tin Shui Wai" project. He pointed out that there were about 200 000 residents in Tin Shui Wai north and yet no sports facilities were provided there. He added that it was also unacceptable that the Administration, instead of providing sports facilities to meet urgent needs, was going to spend \$66 million for the development of open space in Tin Shui Wai mid-south at the end of 2005. He criticised the Administration for failing to prioritise the

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implementation of LCS projects in accordance with the pressing needs of the local communities.

7. DDLCS(A) responded that the Administration had given due regard to the needs for LCS facilities in the new towns, such as Tin Shui Wai, with significant population growth in recent years. Thus, of the 25 LCS projects for priority implementation, three were proposed for Tin Shui Wai and Yuen Long. She said that the “District Open Space Area 107 Tin Shui Wai” project, including the provision of a 7-a-side soccer pitch which would be funded by additional resources allocated under the minor works programmes, was aimed at meeting the needs of residents in Tin Shui Wai north.

8. DDLCS(A) pointed out that the “Local Open Space in Areas 25, 25A and 25B, Tin Shui Wai” project referred to by Mr Albert CHAN had been proposed after thorough consultation with the DC concerned. She explained that in accordance with planning guidelines and standards, there was a serious shortage of open space in Tin Shui Wai. She added that the Administration would further consult the DC concerned on the priorities of the LCS projects for Tin Shui Wai and Yuen Long.

9. On the provision of public library facilities in Tin Shui Wai, DDLCS(A) said that the Administration had planned to re-deploy resources to provide a mobile library for Tin Shui Wai north. As to Tin Shui Wai south, the Administration intended to seek funding approval for the “Tin Shui Wai Public Library cum Indoor Recreation Centre” project in 2006 in order to proceed with the early implementation of the project. She added that the Administration was going to consult the DC concerned in due course.

10. Mr Albert CHAN pointed out that the design of the public library cum indoor recreation centre in question had already been approved by the former Regional Council and was originally scheduled for commencement in 2001 and for completion in 2005. He expressed strong dissatisfaction with the late completion dates planned for the “District Open Space Area 107 Tin Shui Wai” project, the “Tin Shui Wai Public Library cum Indoor Recreation Centre” project, and the “Public Library and Indoor Recreation Centre, Area 3 Yuen Long” project, which were tentatively scheduled for completion in mid 2010, late 2011 and late 2014 respectively. He reiterated that there was a pressing need for provision of sports facilities in Tin Shui Wai north and he urged the Administration to advance, in particular, the commencement date for the “District Open Space Area 107 Tin Shui Wai” project. He also considered it necessary to expedite the implementation of the “Tin Shui Wai Public Library cum Indoor Recreation Centre” project in order to save the public money spent on renting private premises for provision of a temporary library in Tin Shui Wai south.

11. Mr Albert CHAN further said that although there was a shortage of open

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space in Tin Shui Wai, what was much needed in the district was active open space and not parks or passive open space. He pointed out that in fact, the location of the “Local Open Space in Areas 25, 25A and 25B, Tin Shui Wai” project was very near to Tin Shui Wai Park. He considered that the Administration should accord priority to developing active open space in Tin Shui Wai.

12. Mr Albert CHAN further suggested that the Administration should change its mode of consultation with DCs on the provision of district LCS facilities. He considered that the Administration should inform a DC of the annual budget for provision of such facilities in the district concerned and seek the DC’s advice on what LCS facilities should be provided within the budget.

13. DDLCS(A) responded that the Administration had accorded high priority to implementing the “District Open Space Area 107 Tin Shui Wai” project and the “Tin Shui Wai Public Library cum Indoor Recreation Centre” project, for which the Administration would seek funding approvals in 2005 and 2006 respectively. She said that the usual timetable for construction of a capital works project was three years. However, the Administration would try to advance the completion dates for these works projects by taking forward the preparatory works as far as possible before the funding was allocated in the Resource Allocation Exercises.

14. DDLCS(A) pointed out that the Administration had thoroughly consulted the DC concerned in 2003 and 2004 on the “Local Open Space in Areas 25, 25A and 25B, Tin Shui Wai” project and the 7-a-side soccer pitch project in Tin Shui Wai north. She said that the relevant DC had expressed support for giving priority to implementing these projects having regard to the prevailing resources constraints and other relevant factors. She added that the Administration would consider consulting the relevant DC again on the need to re-prioritise the implementation of these projects, taking into consideration Mr Albert CHAN’s view that there was a more urgent need for provision of sports facilities in Tin Shui Wai north.

15. In response to The Deputy Chairman, DDLCS(A) said that the Administration had no plan to provide a permanent public library in Tin Shui Wai north but it would give thought to the suggestion in its long-term plan.

16. Mr LAM Wai-keung expressed strong dissatisfaction with the Administration’s failure to live up to its promise made when it abolished the two former MCs that it would implement the ex-MC projects as planned and scheduled by the two former MCs. He pointed out that there was a serious delay in the implementation of these 25 LCS projects for priority treatment and it was unacceptable that the Administration still had to waste time to consult the relevant DCs on these projects again instead of commencing their construction as early as possible. Citing Tung Chung as an example, Mr LAM

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said that the population there would very soon increase to some 100 000 and yet no public swimming pool was provided there. He took the view that there should be no delay in the implementation of those outstanding ex-MC capital works projects which had been upgraded to Stages 1, 2 and 3 by the former Provisional Urban Council or to Categories I, II and III by the former Provisional Regional Council before the abolition of the former MCs, because the upgrading already reflected that there were recognised urgent needs for the implementation of those projects.

17. Mr Patrick LAU asked why the commencement dates for the 25 LCS projects had to be so late ranging from 2008 to 2011 since the Administration had supposedly undertaken the necessary early stage planning of the projects already. Referring to paragraph 12 of the paper, he expressed concern as to what the Administration was going to do with the 70 projects proposed to be put under further review.

18. DDLCS(A) responded that the Administration would bid for the necessary resources in the 2005 and 2006 Capital Works Resource Allocation Exercises for 15 of the LCS projects proposed for priority implementation. She further briefed members on the technical issues involved in the early stage planning of these projects and the substantial planning and coordination needed to address such issues. She explained that some of these projects would have greater complexity if sea-bed engineering works were involved or environmental impact assessments needed to be conducted.

19. Mr Patrick LAU remained unconvinced that the early stage planning of these LCS projects had to take such a long time and suggested that the Administration should provide information on what major difficulties were anticipated in taking forward these projects so that the Legislative Council (LegCo) could consider whether any procedures could be streamlined to expedite the implementation of the projects. Ms Emily LAU also considered that there was a need to expedite the implementation of the ex-MC capital works projects. She proposed to set up a subcommittee to follow up the outstanding capital works projects of the former MCs. She also suggested that the Panel Chairman should consider moving a motion on the subject for debate at a Council Meeting, if the Subcommittee came up with recommendations on the implementation of these projects. She added that it was necessary to make clear what the Administration had promised on the implementation of these projects when it abolished the former MCs and whether it was really necessary for the Administration to conduct a new round of consultations with DCs again on these projects.

20. Principal Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs (Recreation and Sport) (PASHA(R&S)) responded that while the Administration would strive to take the 25 LCS projects forward at full speed, it was necessary for it to comply with the necessary administrative procedures for the implementation of these

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projects. He added that the Administration welcomed any views and suggestions from members as to how these procedures could be streamlined in order to expedite the implementation of the 25 LCS projects. DDLCS(A) clarified that the Administration was not starting everything from scratch in taking forward these LCS projects. Regarding those projects for which the necessary advance works had already been undertaken, the Administration would start from that point onward in following up those projects. She added that the Administration was also obliged to consult the DC members on these projects at the various stages of planning works.

21. Mr Albert CHAN requested to put on record that it was not entirely accurate for the Administration's representatives to say that due to administrative procedures, the implementation of the 25 LCS projects could not be expedited. He pointed out that while the "District Open Space Area 107 Tin Shui Wai" project was scheduled for commencement in 2008, the Administration had now decided to first provide a 7-a-side soccer pitch in Tin Shui Wai north in 2006 to cater for pressing needs. He said that this had reflected that whether or not the implementation of any of the 25 LCS projects could be expedited all depended on how the Administration prioritised the projects.

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22. The Chairman suggested that while the Administration should look at all previous records which would shed light on what the Administration had undertaken regarding the implementation of the outstanding ex-MC capital works projects, the LegCo Secretariat could also retrieve the relevant records of the former Subcommittee for members' reference. He also requested the Administration to provide information on the capital and recurrent costs required for the implementation of all those outstanding ex-MC capital works projects which had been upgraded to Categories I, II and III / Stages 1, 2 and 3 before the abolition of the former MCs. He said that the provision of the requisite information would facilitate further discussion of the subject.

23. Mr Albert CHAN expressed support for setting up the subcommittee as proposed by Ms Emily LAU to review the priorities of these projects in the light of pressing needs, and to identify projects which should be given high priority for consideration by the Public Works Subcommittee and the Finance Committee.

24. Mr WONG Yung-kan said that he was a member of the former Subcommittee. He pointed out that compared with the original plan submitted to the Subcommittee, there was a delay in the schedule of implementation of some of these 25 projects. He added that while he also supported early implementation of these projects, he was not in favour of setting up the proposed subcommittee as he was worried that further discussions might cause further delay. In response, DDLCS(A) reiterated that the Administration would take all possible steps to compress the lead time required in order to expedite

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the implementation of these 25 LCS projects.

25. Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming said that children and young people in Tin Shui Wai had long suffered from a lack of recreation and cultural facilities in the district and they could not easily use such facilities in other districts as they could not afford the costly traveling expenses. He said that since CE had particularly mentioned “Tin Shui Wai” in his Policy Address 2005, the residents there had high expectations of early delivery of LCS facilities. He requested the Administration to accord high priority to the LCS project planned for Tin Shui Wai north to meet pressing needs. He further said that it was unacceptable that the earliest commencement date for these 25 LCS projects was as late as 2008. He pointed out that the large majority of these projects had already gone through thorough consultations with the relevant DCs. He asked the Administration to further explain what administrative procedures were involved for the implementation of these projects.

26. Chief Project Manager of the Architectural Services Department briefed members on the procedures involved in seeking funding approvals for these 25 LCS projects. She explained that in general the lead time required for projects like the provision of a park was shorter whereas that for projects involving construction of building, such as in the case of provision of a public library or swimming pool, would be longer because more planning work and longer construction process would be involved.

27. Members noted that –

- (a) projects related to environmental hygiene facilities fell under the purview of the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene; and
- (b) the Rules of Procedure and the House Rules did not provide for two or more Panels to jointly appoint a subcommittee to study a subject which straddled the policy areas of the Panels concerned.

After discussion, members agreed to set up a subcommittee under the Panel to follow up only the outstanding ex-MC LCS projects.

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