

LEGCO PANEL ON WELFARE SERVICES

Social Welfare Planning Mechanism

Purpose

This paper summarizes the Government's present social welfare planning mechanism.

Background

2. The Panel on Welfare Services has requested that the issue of social welfare planning mechanism be discussed. This paper summarizes the present position to facilitate Members' discussions.

Planning Mechanism

3. The political and socio-economic situation of Hong Kong has changed significantly in recent years. To address the changing needs of our community, particularly the disadvantaged groups, the welfare planning process would have to be flexible enough to allow the Government and Non-Governmental Organizations to be responsive to the latest requests and situation.

Strategic Direction

4. We engaged the welfare sector in agreeing on the broad strategic direction of the welfare development in the context of the discussions on the Strategic Framework for the Social Welfare in 2004. We came to a view that we should adopt the following approaches in planning for future welfare services and programmes :

- (a) ***Social investment*** : we would continue to invest in strategies that focus on building the capacity of individuals, families and the communities so as to help our disadvantaged groups to be

self-reliant as far as possible; and

- (b) *tripartite partnerships* : we would continue to encourage various forms of partnerships among the Government, the third sector and the business community to work together to solve social problems and build a harmonious society.

Annual Consultation Mechanism

5. With this broad direction set, we introduced the annual consultation mechanism with the welfare sector in 2005 by discussing with the sector and members of the welfare-related advisory committees on the priorities of the coming years. In 2005, two sessions were held. The first one was held in June 2005 for the Administration to gather the views of the sector on their proposed priorities for 2006-07 and beyond. The second one was held in September 2005 for the Administration to briefly outline the likely focus of our work to be announced in the Policy Address in October 2005.

6. While discussions were primarily focussed on the immediate priorities for the coming year, there were also useful exchanges with the sector on the longer-term development. This mechanism can therefore be regarded as an annual rollover exercise to plan for the coming years.

7. Both the Administration and the welfare sector find the new annual consultation mechanism useful in exchanging views and setting the priorities to tie in with the Government's policy and resource planning cycle. The views gathered have been reflected in the Policy Address where appropriate.

8. Given the favourable response, the Administration will continue with the mechanism this year. The first session will be held in late June 2006. The second one will be held after the Policy Address say in November 2006 to debrief the sector of the new initiatives announced in the Policy Address.

District Planning

9. In 2005-06, Social Welfare Department (SWD) introduced the District Welfare Planning Protocol (the Protocol) to set out a standardized planning framework and workflow on how to assess and prioritize district

welfare needs and formulate strategies in the districts to meet such needs. A set of evidence-based social indicators on district needs was also developed for use together with the Protocol to facilitate District Social Welfare Officers (DSWOs) of SWD in district welfare planning. In the process, the DSWOs widely collect views and suggestions on the district welfare planning through various means, including the existing district coordinating committees on individual services and the District Welfare Planning Forum.

10. Starting from 2006-07, a cross-service district welfare co-ordination mechanism will be set up in some districts to further support DSWOs in formulating overall district welfare strategies and planning based on the positive experiences of the pilot project in Kwun Tong – “The Concourse” conducted in 2005.

11. With the above enhancements, the district’s welfare needs are more effectively and timely reflected in the welfare planning process.

Way Forward

12. We will continue with our various new initiatives of enhancing the welfare planning process, such as the annual consultation mechanism and the enhanced district planning mechanism, for some time before considering whether any further enhancements are needed. This has been agreed by the Social Welfare Advisory Committee.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
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