

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)2482/07-08
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/SE/1

Panel on Security

Minutes of meeting
held on Thursday, 10 April 2008, at 2:30 pm
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

- Members present** : Hon LAU Kong-wah, JP (Chairman)
Hon James TO Kun-sun (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Dr Hon LUI Ming-wah, SBS, JP
Hon Margaret NG
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Dr Hon Philip WONG Yu-hong, GBS
Hon Howard YOUNG, SBS, JP
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon CHOY So-yuk, JP
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP
Hon Daniel LAM Wai-keung, SBS, JP
Hon Andrew LEUNG Kwan-yuen, SBS, JP
Hon CHIM Pui-chung
- Member attending** : Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
- Members absent** : Hon WONG Yung-kan, SBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
- Public Officers attending** : Item IV
Mrs Jessie TING, JP
Deputy Secretary for Security

Mr Kennon TAM
Assistant Secretary for Security

Mr Austin KERRIGAN
Assistant Commissioner of Police (Support)

Mr Eddy SIT
Senior Inspector (General)1 (Support
Branch)
Hong Kong Police Force

Mr NG Bong-loy, FSMSM
Chief Fire Officer (Headquarters)
Fire Services Department

Mr Corrado CHOW
Assistant Director (Management & Support)
Immigration Department

Mr YAU Chi-chiu
Assistant Commissioner (Operations)
Correctional Services Department

Mr Ferdinand LEUNG, C.M.S.M
Assistant Commissioner (Administration & Human
Resource Development)
Customs & Excise Department

Item V

Mrs Jessie TING, JP
Deputy Secretary for Security

Mrs Apollonia LIU
Principal Assistant Secretary for Security

Mr TANG Kam-moon
Director of Personnel and Training (Acting)/Assistant
Commissioner of Police (Personnel)
Hong Kong Police Force

Mr Clarence TO
Assistant Commissioner of Police (Information Systems
Wing)
Hong Kong Police Force

Mr HUI Kai-ling
Chief Systems Manager (Information Technology
Branch)
Hong Kong Police Force

Item VI

Ms Sally WONG, JP
Commissioner for Narcotics

Mr David WONG
Principal Assistant Secretary for Security (Narcotics)
Special Duties

Mrs Michelle WONG
Principal Assistant Secretary for Education (School
Development)

Mr CHEUNG Hing-wah
Assistant Director (Youth and Corrections)
Social Welfare Department

Dr Cindy LAI, JP
Assistant Director (Special Health Service)
Department of Health

Mr Peter G ELSE
Chief Superintendent (Narcotics Bureau)
Hong Kong Police Force

Mr Ben LEUNG, C.M.S.M.
Head of Customs Drug Investigation Bureau
Customs and Excise Department

Ms Margaret TAY
Chief Manager (Integrated Care Programme)
Hospital Authority

Clerk in attendance : Mrs Sharon TONG
Chief Council Secretary (2)1

Staff in attendance : Mr Raymond LAM
Senior Council Secretary (2) 5

Miss Josephine SO
Council Secretary (2) 1

Miss Helen DIN
Legislative Assistant (2) 1

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I. Confirmation of minutes of previous meeting
(LC Paper No. CB(2)1496/07-08)

The minutes of the special meeting held on 6 December 2007 were confirmed.

II. Information papers issued since the last meeting
(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1337/07-08(01), CB(2)1387/07-08(01),
CB(2)1387/07-08(02), CB(2)1387/07-08(03), CB(2)1462/07-08(01),
CB(2)1479/07-08(01) and CB(2)1501/07-08(01))

2. Members noted that the following papers had been issued since the last meeting -

- (a) Letter dated 3 March 2008 from the Civil Human Rights Front regarding the Police's abuse of power;
- (b) Submission from Midnight Blue regarding protection for sex workers;
- (c) Submission from the United Sex Workers of North Queensland regarding protection for sex workers;
- (d) Submission from the Australian Sex Workers Association regarding protection for sex workers;
- (e) Submission and further submission from Action for REACH OUT on the safety of sex workers;
- (f) Letter dated 27 March 2008 from Ms Audrey EU, Ms Margaret NG and Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG regarding protection for sex workers;

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- (g) Letter dated 2 April 2008 from Mr Albert CHAN regarding enactment of legislation to regulate debt collection practices; and
- (h) Joint submission from Zi Teng and JJJ Association regarding the safety of sex workers.

3. Members also noted the Administration's paper on the proposed revision of fees and charges under the purview of the Hong Kong Police Force and the Customs and Excise Department. No member suggested discussing the paper at a Panel meeting.

4. Regarding Mr Albert CHAN's letter on the enactment of legislation to regulate debt collection practices, members agreed that the Administration should be requested to provide a paper explaining its policy and way forward in respect of the regulation of debt collection practices, including whether there were plans to enact legislation to regulate debt collection practices.

III. Date of next meeting and items for discussion

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1495/07-08(01) and CB(2)1495/07-08(02))

Regular meeting in May 2008

5. Members agreed that the following items would be discussed at the next regular meeting to be held on 6 May 2008 at 2:30 pm -

- (a) Replacement of Radio Communications System of the Customs and Excise Department;
- (b) Developing the Third Generation of Major Incident Investigation and Disaster Support System; and
- (c) Prison development.

Special meeting on 5 May 2008

6. Members agreed that a special meeting would be held on 5 May 2008 at 2:30 pm to discuss the policy and measures on the protection for sex workers. They also agreed that interested organisations which had submitted views on the subject would be invited to present their views at the meeting.

Implementation of the Fire Safety (Buildings) Ordinance

7. Ms Margaret NG said that the difficulties encountered by owners of old buildings in meeting the requirements under the Fire Safety (Buildings) Ordinance (Cap. 572) were raised at the meeting between Legislative Council

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Members and Wong Tai Sin District Council (DC) members in the same morning. She suggested that the Administration should be requested to provide information on the progress of implementation of the Ordinance, the difficulties encountered by owners of different categories of old buildings, the enforcement difficulties and the measures adopted to address the problems. Members agreed that the Administration should be requested to provide the requested information before the next meeting.

IV. Civil claims against law enforcement agencies
(LC Paper No. CB(2)1060/07-08(05))

8. Deputy Secretary for Security (DS for S) briefed Members on civil claims against law enforcement agencies (LEAs).

9. The Deputy Chairman asked whether the statistics provided in the Annex to the Administration's paper covered both civil claims against LEAs and individual law enforcement officers.

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10. DS for S responded that the statistics provided covered only civil claims against LEAs involving allegation of improper use of powers, but not civil claims against individual law enforcement officers. The Deputy Chairman requested the Administration to provide statistics on civil claims against individual law enforcement officers.

11. The Deputy Chairman said that he was concerned whether there were cases of abuse of power by law enforcement officers which were settled by payment of compensation with the condition of not disclosing the details of the cases concerned. Referring to the Annex to the Administration's paper, he asked whether all the cases dismissed by court were found not substantiated by the court. Referring to the cases settled with compensation paid, he asked about the respective number of cases settled in court and out-of-court. He also asked whether LEAs would, in cases where a case was found substantiated by the court, review the need for instituting disciplinary proceedings against the law enforcement officer concerned.

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12. DS for S agreed to provide a breakdown of cases settled with compensation paid between those settled in court and those settled out-of-court. She said that cases dismissed by the court as shown in the Annex to the Administration's paper could be classified into those which were dismissed by the court after trial and those where the claim was rejected at the pre-trial stage. All civil claims against LEAs were handled in accordance with the advice of the Department of Justice (DoJ). There was no question of settling a case out of court with payment of compensation for the sake of covering up the case. She stressed that LEAs attached great importance to full compliance of their staff with the relevant statutory provisions and departmental instructions.

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LEAs would take follow-up actions against any malpractice identified in respect of their staff, regardless of whether any civil claim was lodged against the LEAs concerned.

13. Dr LUI Ming-wah considered that civil claims against law enforcement officers were in fact claims against the LEA concerned, as the claims arose from the performance of duties by the law enforcement officers. He asked whether all compensation referred to in the Administration's paper was paid by the Government.

14. DS for S responded that regardless of whether a civil claim was lodged, LEAs would take follow-up actions against the staff concerned if any malpractice was identified. She said that all the cases referred to in the Annex to the Administration's paper were civil claims against LEAs involving allegation of improper use of powers, and the compensation concerned, if any, was paid by the Government.

15. The Deputy Chairman expressed concern that where a member of the public lodged a claim for assault by a law enforcement officer, the LEA concerned might choose to settle the case with payment of compensation in order to cover up the assault. He queried why cases settled by payment of compensation were subject to a confidentiality clause. He asked whether an LEA would, in view of the court ruling that a claim for assault was substantiated, institute disciplinary proceedings against the officer concerned.

16. DS for S responded that in such a case, the LEA would first examine whether there was criminal liability on the part of the officer who was alleged to have assaulted the claimant. She stressed that regardless of whether a civil claim was lodged, LEAs would take follow-up actions against the staff concerned if any malpractice was identified. The settlement of a civil claim against an LEA out of court by payment of compensation was subject to agreement by both the Administration and the claimant. If the claimant so wished, he could insist on pursuing his case in court. There was no question of settling a claim out of court with payment of compensation in order to cover up the case. It was not uncommon to incorporate a confidentiality clause in settlement agreements between private parties. Referring to the case described by the Deputy Chairman, she stressed that a civil claim case might involve other allegations in addition to an allegation of improper use of powers, and that one should not jump to the conclusion that any compensation paid in settlement of the case necessarily related to the allegation of improper use of powers.

17. Mr Albert HO said that he had handled a civil claim against the Police where the complaint involved a number of allegations against the Police, including assault. The complaint was found partially substantiated by the Complaints Against Police Office (CAPO). The claim was settled by payment

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of compensation with a confidentiality clause and a non-admission of liability clause. He queried why there was a need to incorporate a confidentiality clause and a non-admission of liability clause in the settlement agreement. He asked where an allegation in a complaint was found not substantiated by the LEA concerned (or CAPO in the case of a complaint against the Police) but was subsequently found substantiated by the court, whether the LEA concerned would revisit the case to see if there was a case for instituting disciplinary proceedings against the officer concerned.

18. DS for S responded that whether disciplinary proceedings would be instituted against an officer would depend on the specific circumstances of the case. Where CAPO identified any criminal element in a case, it would refer the case to the relevant criminal investigation unit for follow-up.

19. Mr Albert HO asked about the criteria for determining whether a claim should be settled by payment of compensation without court intervention.

20. DS for S responded that when a complainant lodged a civil claim action against an LEA, the LEA concerned would seek the advice of DoJ, which would examine the facts of the case and other factors such as the litigation risk involved, litigation time, and legal aid payable, if any, to the claimant. Mr Albert HO requested the Administration to provide a brief summary for each of the cases settled with payment of compensation in the Annex to the Administration's paper.

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21. DS for S agreed to provide a brief summary of the allegations involved in the cases settled by agreement. She added that whether the reasons for settling the individual claim by payment of compensation could be disclosed would be subject to further advice by DoJ.

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22. The Deputy Chairman asked whether there were cases where the court ruled that a civil claim for assault was substantiated but no disciplinary action was taken on the law enforcement officer concerned. He requested the Administration to provide copies of the court judgments for civil claims involving allegations of improper use of power that were settled in court with payment of compensation in the past 10 years. He also requested the Administration to provide information on the disciplinary proceedings instituted, if any, in the respective cases and whether the findings of the disciplinary proceedings differed from those of the court proceedings. He said that legal aid should not be a major consideration in determining whether a case should be settled by payment of compensation. He queried whether the settlement of a case by payment of compensation was for the purpose of covering up the assault. Ms Margaret NG added that to her knowledge, legal aid was only granted for claims with a high probability of success. She considered that there was insufficient justification for the incorporation of a confidentiality clause in a settlement agreement.

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23. DS for S reiterated that there was no question of settling a case by payment of compensation for the purpose of covering up the case. She added that the legal aid payable to the claimant was only one of the various factors to be considered when determining whether a claim should be settled by payment of compensation.

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24. Ms Margaret NG said that to her knowledge, legal advice provided by DoJ would not deal with the question of whether a claim should be settled by payment of compensation. She requested the Administration to provide information on the reasons for incorporating a confidentiality clause in each civil claim settled out of court by payment of compensation and explain why the principle of transparency was overridden in such cases.

V. Redevelopment of the Personnel Information Communal System of the Hong Kong Police Force

(LC Paper No. CB(2)1495/07-08(03))

25. DS for S briefed Members on the Administration's proposal to redevelop the Police's Personnel Information Communal System (PICS) into a new strategic human resources planning and decision-support system.

26. The Deputy Chairman asked about the meaning of "community policing strategies" in paragraph 4(b) of the Administration's paper and how the redeveloped PICS would facilitate the effective implementation of various community policing strategies.

27. DS for S responded that community policing strategies were strategies at the Police district level, which were formulated having regard to the prevailing crime trends and characteristics of individual Police districts. She said that the comprehensive competency-based database covering all Police officers under the redeveloped PICS would facilitate efficient matching of the skills and talents of Police officers with the specific requirements of different posts in different Police districts and divisions. She added that such matching was currently performed manually, which was technically difficult given the large establishment in the Police of more than 20 000 regular officers.

28. Director of Personnel and Training (Acting)/Assistant Commissioner of Police (Personnel) (DPT(Atg)) added that different Police districts/divisions needed Police officers with different skills. For example, the Yuen Long Police Division might need Police officers who could communicate in Nepalese, while the Tin Shui Wai Police Division might need Police officers who had undergone training in handling domestic violence. With about 300 staff in the Police's Personnel Wing handling the personnel matters of more than 27 000 Police officers, the manual matching work was immense and

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performed only upon request from Police districts/divisions. With the redeveloped PICS, the matching work would be performed automatically and reports generated on a regular basis. The redeveloped PICS would also enable regular reports on the retirement and natural wastage of officers with special skills (e.g. bomb disposal skills) to be generated on a regular basis. All these would facilitate better manpower planning.

29. Referring to paragraph 5(a) of the Administration's paper, Ms Emily LAU asked how the succession planning of the Police Force could be facilitated with PICS.

30. DPT(Atg) responded that some posts, such as those involving investigation of technology crime or triad activities, might require special skills which took a long period of time to acquire and be accredited. The redeveloped PICS would facilitate timely development of expertise in specialised fields to meet the succession planning needs of such posts. He added that different skills and training were required of a Police officer for promotion to a higher rank. For example, management and information technology skills were required for officers at management level. The redeveloped PICS would facilitate better monitoring of the skills possessed by such officers and their training needs so that timely development could be arranged. With all newly recruited Police officers at inspector level being degree holders, there might not be a need to provide management and information technology training to certain officers, if the redeveloped PICS indicated that they had acquired training in the relevant areas. The resources thus saved could be redeployed for other uses.

31. Referring to the Administration's response to the issues raised at the meeting on 4 March 2008 on the Police's review of the existing practices of the handling of searches of detainees, Ms Emily LAU asked -

- (a) whether the current technical design of the Communal Information System (CIS) would be modified to enable statistics on strip searches to be recorded;
- (b) about the time needed for the Police to explore the possibility of acquiring equipment to assist Police officers in conducting searches of detainees, with a view to minimising the need for complete removal of clothing; and
- (c) whether the Panel would be provided with the amended documents and new guidelines referred to in paragraph 9 of the Administration's response before they were to be issued in June 2008.

32. DS for S responded that the Police was actively exploring the feasibility

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of modifying the current technical design of CIS so that some standard statistics on searches of detainees involving the complete removal of clothing could be recorded by the system and retrieved when required. She said that the Police was also actively exploring the possibility of acquiring equipment to assist Police officers in conducting searches of detainees, with a view to minimising the need for the complete removal of clothing during body searches. The findings would be reported to the Panel. She also undertook to examine with the Police whether an advance copy of the amended documents and new guidelines (referred to in paragraph 9 of the Administration's letter to the Panel dated 9 April 2008) could be provided to the Panel before implementation.

33. Dr LUI Ming-wah considered that the proposed redevelopment of PICS should be expedited.

34. Referring to Annex C to the Administration's paper, DS for S said that the process of tendering, system design and system development would inevitably take time. Nevertheless, the Administration would seek to expedite the redevelopment of PICS.

35. Dr LUI Ming-wah asked whether the proposed system would be developed in-house or procured from external suppliers. He also asked why most of the estimated non-recurrent expenditure would not be spent until the 2011-2012 financial year.

36. Chief Systems Manager (Information Technology Branch), Hong Kong Police Force (CSM) responded that suitable software would be procured from the market, if available. Where any specific function was required, contractors would be engaged to develop the relevant system. He said that most of the estimated non-recurrent expenditure would be spent in the 2011-2012 financial year because it was the usual practice to settle payment after the entire system was fully tested and found meeting all the requirements specified.

37. Referring to Annex C to the Administration's paper, the Chairman asked why one year was needed for tender and specification preparation. CSM responded that according to experience, it was the normal time period required for such work.

38. The Deputy Chairman said that the proposed redevelopment of PICS should be expedited, as it would bring about savings of over \$10 million in a year. Referring to paragraph 4(a) of the Administration's paper, he asked whether the negative aspects of an officer, such as psychological problems and disciplinary actions taken, would be recorded in the redeveloped PICS.

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39. DS for S responded that comprehensive information about an officer, including disciplinary records and records on indebtedness, would be stored in the redeveloped PICS.

40. Referring to paragraph 9 of the Administration's paper, the Deputy Chairman asked about the total rent and total number of posts that could be saved as a result of the proposed redevelopment of PICS. He also asked about the manpower equivalent of the notional savings of \$6.125 million referred to in paragraph 9(b) of the Administration's paper.

41. DS for S responded that a total of four posts would be saved with the proposed redevelopment of PICS. The notional savings in manpower referred to in paragraph 9(b) of the Administration's paper would be internally re-deployed for performing other tasks, such as handling public requests on personal data under the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (Cap. 486). DPT(Atg) added that the proposed redevelopment of PICS would reduce paperwork and thus less space would be needed for storage of various records, including performance appraisal records, leave records and quarters application records. Such space was scattered among different police stations and would not result in realisable rental savings. However, it would reduce the need for additional storage space.

42. The Deputy Chairman said that more Members might support the Administration's proposal, if the estimated quantity of trees that could be saved with the proposal was provided in its paper to the Finance Committee.

VI. Youth drug abuse

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1495/07-08(04) and CB(2)1495/07-08(05))

43. Commissioner for Narcotics (C for N) took Members through the Administration's paper which set out the latest youth drug abuse situation and a package of initial measures recommended by the Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse (the Task Force) to be implemented in the short to medium term.

44. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed support for the Task Force's recommendation to use the Chinese term "精神科毒品" to refer to psychotropic substances. He was concerned that many psychotropic substance abusers were "hidden" youths who were not motivated to seek help and remained out of reach of the existing help networks. According to medical literature, if psychotropic substance abusers did not seek treatment until a late stage after having abused drugs for three to four years, they would be at high risk for physical and mental health problems, such as memory impairment. Mr CHEUNG considered that to address the drug abuse problem among the "hidden" youths, the Administration should devise appropriate and effective intervention measures to facilitate early identification of abuse cases. He said

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that according to regulation 54 of the Education Regulations (Cap. 279A), the Permanent Secretary for Education might require any pupil to submit to a medical examination, in order to prevent the outbreak/spread of infectious diseases in schools. He suggested that the Administration should consider the feasibility of applying the Education Regulations, such that the mandatory requirement of conducting medical examination could be applied to students in the case where any of them were suspected of abusing drugs. Mr CHEUNG also enquired about the measures to be taken by the Administration to help enhance parents' knowledge and skills in delivering anti-drug education at home, identifying signs of drug abuse and handling drug-related cases.

45. C for N responded that -

- (a) the Administration was aware of the changing drug trends that many psychotropic substance abusers were "hidden" and they chose to take drugs on private premises (e.g. in friends' homes and their own homes) or upstairs mini-discos and karaokes. To enhance enforcement efforts, the Police would set up a Narcotics Intelligence Team focusing work on the internet which was frequented by many hidden youths. The Administration would also work closely with the Hong Kong Medical Association to arrange for the provision of training for private medical practitioners to enhance their awareness and knowledge of the problem, so that they might participate in preventive education programmes or provide medical advice and treatment and referral services should they encounter patients who had drug abuse problems;
- (b) as there were privacy and legal implications relating to compulsory drug tests, the Administration needed to consider the issue carefully before taking a decision. Meanwhile, as a first step, the Task Force would consider the feasibility of voluntary drug tests for students, with parental consent, in the coming months. Regarding the suggestion made by Mr CHEUNG to make possible use of the Education Regulations, the relevant provisions were archaic and unlikely to be applicable in present day circumstances; and
- (c) the Administration recognised the important role of parents in anti-drug work. It would disseminate anti-drug messages to parents through different channels such as television, radio and newspapers. A large-scale territory-wide campaign would be launched in June 2008 to correct the misconceptions and change the wrong attitudes about psychotropic substance abuse, and to foster a drug free culture among the youth and mobilise the whole community against youth drug abuse. At the district and

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community level, the Administration would appeal to various sectors for support for the campaign and seek collaboration with stakeholders including District Councils, District Fight Crime Committees, private sector firms, professional and community organisations, non-government organisations (NGOs), etc to organise anti-drug activities and public education programmes to complement the central publicity efforts.

46. Ms Emily LAU supported the use of the new Chinese term "精神科毒品". She asked about the translation of the term "psychotropic substances" in other countries. Ms LAU said that when the Chief Executive announced in his 2007-2008 Policy Address the establishment of the Task Force, Members had expressed concern whether there would be duplication in the role and work of the Task Force and other narcotics-related bodies, such as the Action Committee Against Narcotics (ACAN). With the Task Force having started its work for some six months, she enquired whether it was necessary for the Task Force to co-exist with ACAN. Expressing concern about the increasing number of young people crossing the boundary to abuse drugs, Ms LAU asked about the measures taken by the Administration to combat the problem. She said that the problem should be addressed without further delay.

47. In response, C for N made the following points –

- (a) the terms "新型毒品" and "合成毒品" were used in the Mainland and Singapore respectively to refer to psychotropic substances. The Task Force recommended the adoption of the Chinese term "精神科毒品" to refer to psychotropic substances since it could convey the same degree of seriousness as the reference to "吸毒", thereby a strong and clear message to the public about the harmful effects caused by psychotropic substances;
- (b) ACAN was the Government's sole advisory body on anti-narcotic matters, comprising experienced community personalities from various fields including youth, social work, education, medicine and community service. The Task Force led by the Secretary for Justice was, however, a high level inter-departmental committee established within the Administration for tackling the youth drug abuse problem from a holistic perspective. Its main purpose was to make use of the existing anti-crime and anti-drug networks to consolidate strategies. It was not a standing committee and was not intended to replace ACAN. There was little overlap between these two bodies. The Task Force would continue its deliberations in the coming months with a view to drawing up further proposals to be implemented in the longer term. It

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planned to sum up its work in around October 2008; and

- (c) the Task Force was very concerned about the increasing number of young people crossing the boundary to abuse drugs. Following in-depth examination of the youth drug abuse problem over the past few months, the Task Force had devised a series of initial measures to be implemented in the short to medium term. These measures included enhancing the detector dog services at the boundary control points and stepping up anti-drug publicity targeting young people at the boundary. Additional resources of about \$53 million had been earmarked in 2008-2009 to support the package of initial measures recommended by the Task Force. On the other hand, the Administration would continue liaison with the Mainland authorities with a view to drawing up long-term measures to combat the problem. The issue of tackling cross-boundary drug abuse would be one of the issues to be studied by the Task Force in the coming months.

48. Ms Audrey EU considered that there was a pressing need to put in place a piece of legislation to impose a mandatory requirement of medical examination in schools to facilitate early identification of drug abuse among students, particularly those aged below 18. She asked whether the Administration had studied the cases in other countries to find out what other measures could be implemented. She strongly requested the Task Force to formulate a proposal for public consultation as early as possible.

49. C for N responded that unlike the Mainland, Malaysia and Singapore where drug tests were mandatory, there was no legislation in Hong Kong that empowered the Administration to require any person to submit to a medical examination for the purpose of identifying drug abuse. Despite the difficulties, the Task Force would look into the possibility of compulsory drug tests. It would, first of all, consider the feasibility of making the test available in a voluntary sense and with parental consent, or facilitating the availability of the test. The Task Force would take into consideration the example of some international schools.

50. Mr HO Chun-yan was pleased to note that the Administration was determined to combat the drug abuse problem in a holistic and sustainable manner. He shared the view that a regulatory framework should be put in place to enable the implementation of compulsory medical examination. He, however, considered that the suggestion involved individuals' privacy and would impact on the existing policy on the provision of free education, thus warranted very careful consideration and thorough consultation. While expressing support for the proposed measure to enhance the day and overnight outreaching services and early intervention work, he was concerned about the adequacy of resources allocated for the provision of these services.

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51. Assistant Director (Youth and Corrections), Social Welfare Department (AD/SWD) said that at present, there were 16 district youth outreaching social work teams operated by NGOs on subvention to reach out to young people, in particular those who were at risk and who did not normally participate in conventional social or youth activities. Separately, 18 Integrated Children and Youth Services Centres operated by NGOs on subvention provided overnight outreaching services to young night drifters. Cross-sector collaboration had been commonly adopted in outreaching services for some years in that NGOs and District Social Welfare Officers, through building up a cooperation and support network with various government departments, strived to provide services to the youth in an integrated approach.

52. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that medical examination and early treatment services to young people abusing psychotropic substances were first provided under an early screening programme at Kwai Chung Hospital. The substance abuse clinics (SACs) of the Hospital Authority mainly provided treatment to persons with mental health problems caused by substance abuse including drug abuse. Although these clinics were not meant for providing physical check-up and health assessment in general, Kwai Chung Hospital applied and received funding support from the Beat Drugs Fund to launch a programme from September 2002 to February 2004 to provide body check-up and early treatment services for young people aged under 25. Despite its effectiveness, the early screening programme had ceased operation due to resource constraints. Dr CHEUNG considered that while the Task Force would study the feasibility of compulsory drug tests in the coming months, the Administration should re-introduce the early screening programme as a stop-gap measure to address the current psychotropic substance abuse problem among the youth.

53. C for N responded that the Administration attached great importance to anti-drug work, and had invested significant resources in helping high-risk youths. As young drug abusers in Hong Kong generally did not seek treatment until a late stage after having abused drugs possibly for three to four years, a new pilot collaboration scheme seeking to strengthen the cooperation between social workers and private medical practitioners for the provision of body check service and motivational interviews to young substance abusers would be launched shortly. The Administration would announce the details of the scheme by end of April 2008. The Chairman requested the Administration to provide the Panel with background information on and details of the scheme before making the announcement.

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54. Dr Fernando CHEUNG noted that as part of the downstream support services, the Administration planned to set up two additional Counselling Centres for Psychotropic Substance Abusers (CCPSAs) and provide more

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subvented places in drug treatment and rehabilitation centres (DTRCs), he enquired about the details of these proposals.

55. AD/SWD responded that in the light of the rising trend of youth drug abuse, SWD had since 2005 allocated additional recurrent provision of about \$28 million to strengthen CCPSAs, DTRCs, outreaching teams and other services, involving creation of some 94 additional social worker posts. To further enhance the drug treatment services, some \$30 million had been earmarked in 2008-2009, involving a total of 101 additional residential places in subvented DTRCs and 54 social worker posts, among other things. As implementation of the measures recommended by the Task Force, including the setting up of two additional CCPSAs, was subject to the passage of the 2008-2009 Budget, the Administration was not in a position to announce the details at this stage. However, it would start discussion with the relevant bureaux and concerned stakeholders, including NGOs operating the existing CCPSAs, as soon as funding approval was given. Initially, the Administration considered that it would be appropriate to set up the new centres in districts where the various youth at-risk factors including the problem of youth drug abuse were more serious, such as Tin Shui Wai, Tsuen Wan/Kwai Ching, Sha Tin and Southern.

56. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that the social welfare sector generally considered that the number of youngsters actually abusing drugs was grossly underestimated. He pointed out that according to the 2004 Survey of Drug Use among Students, some 0.8% (i.e. 4 300) of secondary students covered by the survey had abused drugs in the 30 days prior to the survey. There was a considerable discrepancy between the findings of the survey and the figures shown in the Central Registry of Drug Abuse (CRDA) which recorded a number of 2 919 in 2007. Dr CHEUNG cast doubt as to whether the existing reporting mechanism of CRDA could reflect accurately the problem of drug abuse. He said that it would be difficult to obtain latest information in respect of youth drug abuse with the Administration's practice of conducting survey among students once every four years. The problem would still exist even if the time gap was shortened to three years. He considered that the survey should be conducted at shorter intervals, at least once a year. The Chairman asked whether a smaller-scale survey could be conducted annually.

57. C for N responded that as the scope of the survey was broad, much time and resources were required for conducting the survey. Given the scale and complexity of the exercise, it would be very difficult to conduct survey at shorter intervals. Launching smaller-scale survey annually without an effective sample size might defeat the purpose of the study.

58. Dr LUI Ming-wah said that to his knowledge, acupuncture was widely adopted in drug treatment programmes on the Mainland. According to research studies published in the Mainland, acupuncture therapy (AP) was very effective.

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He asked whether the Administration had considered the possibility of introducing AP in Hong Kong. He suggested that the Administration should collaborate with the universities to commence a research study on the efficacy and safety of AP in drug treatment.

59. Assistant Director (Special Health Service), Department of Health responded that the Administration adopted a multi-modality approach in providing treatment and rehabilitation services to cater for different needs of drug dependent persons from different backgrounds. Amongst the various treatment modalities, the Department of Health provided voluntary out-patient methadone treatment programme; the five SACs of HA provided tertiary drug treatment service; and voluntary in-patient programmes run by NGOs provided residential detoxification and treatment services. Some NGOs assisted drug abusers to abstain from drugs through religious belief.

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60. C for N supplemented that the Research Advisory Group under the Narcotics Division of the Security Bureau had engaged a group of experts two years ago to conduct a systematic review and meta-analysis of AP. One of the main objectives of the study was to evaluate the efficacy and safety of acupuncture in treatment of heroin withdrawal syndrome. The findings suggested that AP was statistically more favourable than medication therapy (MT) in relieving heroin withdrawal syndrome, and AP combined with MT might be more effective in clinical application. However, more trials with high quality of study design should be conducted to further verify the evidence in this study. In the light of the suggestion made by Dr LUI Ming-wah, C for N undertook to refer to the Research Advisory Group for its consideration of the need to conduct a further review on AP, particularly its effectiveness in the treatment of psychotropic drug abuse, and revert to the Panel. C for N further said that to actively involve various sectors of the community in the anti-drug cause, the Beat Drugs Fund provided funding support to innovative anti-drug projects every year. Besides anti-drug activities covering preventive education and publicity, treatment and rehabilitation and research also fell within the ambit of the Fund.

61. The Deputy Chairman agreed with Dr Fernando CHEUNG that the number of youngsters actually abusing drugs was grossly underestimated. As a former member of ACAN, he could not see any reason why the work of the Task Force could not be taken up by ACAN. He strongly requested that the Administration should dissolve the Task Force right away. Regarding the territory-wide campaign to be launched in June 2008, he said that anti-drug activities and programmes, such as Announcements of Public Interest to be produced by the Administration, should carry a well-defined theme and be focused to highlight the harmful effects caused by psychotropic drug abuse. He also held the view that any study on the effectiveness of AP in the treatment of psychotropic drug abuse should be based on evidence and scientific assessments.

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62. The Chairman expressed support for the use of the Chinese term "精神科毒品" as it conveyed a clear message to the public about the level of harm caused by psychotropic substances. He disagreed with the suggestion to dissolve the Task Force, since the Task Force could enhance the policy interface and synergy among different bureaux and departments, and helped coordinate their efforts in combating youth drug abuse. He hoped that the Task Force could complete its study on the matter of compulsory drug tests in the next few months and revert to the Panel on its thinking and initial proposals as early as possible. The Chairman also suggested that arrival checking could be conducted at boundary control points to identify Hong Kong residents who had abused drugs on the Mainland.

63. C for N pointed out the difficulties in terms of legal consideration to make drug tests compulsory. However, she assured Members that the Task Force would continue its deliberations, including the feasibility of compulsory drug tests, in the coming months before it summed up its work in October 2008. Further proposals to be implemented in the longer term would be drawn up.

64. The meeting ended at 5:10 pm.

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