

立法會
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Panel on Environmental Affairs

Minutes of special meeting
held on Friday, 20 April 2012, at 10:45 am
in Conference Room 1 of the Legislative Council Complex

- Members present** : Hon CHAN Hak-kan (Chairman)
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon Miriam LAU Kin-yee, GBS, JP
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
Hon LEE Wing-tat
Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, GBS, JP
Hon CHEUNG Hok-ming, GBS, JP
Prof Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP
Hon KAM Nai-wai, MH
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, JP
Hon CHAN Kin-por, JP
Hon IP Wai-ming, MH
Hon Tanya CHAN
- Members attending** : Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, SBS, S.B.St.J., JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, SBS, JP
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon WONG Yuk-man
- Member absent** : Hon WONG Yung-kan, SBS, JP
- Public officers attending** : **For item I**
Mr Edward YAU
Secretary for the Environment

Mr Albert LAM
Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (2)

Ms Linda CHOY
Political Assistant to Secretary for the Environment

Mr Elvis AU
Assistant Director (Nature Conservation &
Infrastructure Planning)
Environmental Protection Department

Dr Ellen CHAN
Assistant Director (Environmental Infrastructure)
Environmental Protection Department

Mr Samson LAI
Assistant Director (Waste Management Policy)
Environmental Protection Department

Prof Paul LAM

Prof Jonathan WONG

Clerk in attendance : Miss Becky YU
Chief Council Secretary (1)1

Staff in attendance : Mrs Mary TANG
Senior Council Secretary (1)1

Miss Mandy POON
Legislative Assistant (1)1

Action

- I. Reduce, Recycle and Proper Waste Management**
(LC Paper No. CB(1) 1628/11-12(01) — Administration's paper on
Reduce, Recycle and Proper
Waste Management)

Relevant paper

(LC Paper No. CB(1) 1369/11-12(01) — Administration's paper on
Reduce, Recycle and Proper
Waste Management)

The Chairman said that further to the meetings on 26 March 2012 at which deputations were invited to express their views on the three-pronged approach (viz. waste reduction at source, modern treatment facilities, and landfill extension) under the action agenda and the actions taken by the Administration in resolving Hong Kong's waste problem, members had requested to hold a special meeting to discuss with the Administration the progress of the action agenda as well as the relevant funding proposals. In view of the limited time for deputations at the meetings on 26 March, Ms Cyd HO suggested holding a further meeting to allow deputations to present their views again taking into account the response from the Administration. The Chairman said that this would be considered at the end of the meeting.

2. The Secretary for the Environment (SEN) briefed members on the Administration's paper on "Reduce, Recycle and Proper Waste Management" which set out the progress of waste reduction and recycling initiatives under the agenda action and details of the proposals to upgrade **5177DR** "Integrated Waste Management Facilities (IWMF) Phase 1", **5163DR** "Northeast New Territories (NENT) Landfill Extension", **5164DR** "Southeast New Territories (SENT) Landfill Extension", and part of **5165DR** "West New Territories (WENT) Landfill Extension" to Category A. Subject to members' support, these proposals would be submitted for consideration by the Public Works Subcommittee (PWSC).

3. Prof Paul LAM, who represented the Advisory Council on the Environment (ACE), said that ACE was fully aware of the need for concerted efforts within the community to tackle the imminent and serious waste problem. Therefore, ACE supported the three-pronged approach of waste management strategy with greater emphasis on waste recycling and advanced waste treatment facilities for bulk waste treatment and disposal in Hong Kong. Prof Jonathan WONG added that the experience in Taiwan showed that municipal solid waste (MSW) charging and increased efforts on waste recycling could reduce waste by 21% and 45% respectively. If the same applied to the Hong Kong, this would mean a reduction in daily generation of MSW from 9 100 tonnes to 2 870 tonnes. Together with the generation of some 3 000 tonnes of construction and demolition waste per day, the total amount of waste to be disposed of at landfills would be around 6 000 tonnes per day. To cope with the demand, there would be a need for landfill extension which was not sustainable in the long run. The waste management policy formulated by the European Union (EU) in 2010 had also put emphasis on waste recycling and reduction as well as the use of biodegradation and thermal technologies to treat waste whereas waste disposal at landfills would only be considered as the last resort. Besides, it had been an international trend to adopt Clean Development Mechanism projects in the treatment of waste. Hence, the application of waste

incineration in Hong Kong would not only treat waste which could not be recovered or recycled but also provide for waste to energy.

Waste reduction at source

4. Ms Audrey EU was disappointed that many measures, including those related to waste recycling/reduction, producer responsibility schemes (PRS), MSW charging, and landfill disposal ban, pertaining to the Policy Framework for the Management of MSW (2005-2014) (Policy Framework) had yet to be implemented. She stressed the need for Government efforts to create a circular economy and a market for recyclable materials such as waste glass and plastic bottles. In this connection, more land should be provided to facilitate waste recycling. Consideration should also be given to putting in place a licensing mechanism for waste recyclers. Mr IP Wai-ming echoed that apart from the levy scheme on plastic shopping bags, very little had been achieved by the Administration over the past years in reducing and recycling waste. SEN said that efforts had been made to improve waste separation as evidenced by the provision of three-colour waste recycle ~~segregation~~ bins in some 80% of residential developments in Hong Kong. Reference would be made to the successful experience in Taiwan in waste reduction and recycling. It was also worth noting that the Environment and Conservation Fund had provided funding support for over 200 recycling projects in the past four years.

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5. Mr Albert CHAN opined that the three-colour waste recycle ~~separation~~ bins had not been effective in recovering recyclable waste. While the need for waste recycling had been discussed since the 1980s, little progress had been made so far. He was also dissatisfied that the Administration had been using large plastic bags for the collection of yard waste. Referring to the Administration's paper which stated that the MSW recovery rate of Hong Kong stood at 52% as at 2010, Mr LEE Wing-tat requested the Administration to provide the basis upon which the recovery rate was arrived at.

6. Ir Dr Raymond HO enquired about the waste generation per capita in Hong Kong. SEN said that at present, 18 000 tonnes of waste were generated each day or a waste generation rate of two to three kilogrammes of waste per person, which was relatively higher than most advanced countries.

Modern treatment facilities

7. Mr Albert CHAN recalled that following a duty visit to Japan in 1988 by District Council members, there had been repeated calls for the introduction of mandatory waste separation and use of waste-to-energy technologies for waste treatment. However, the Administration had declined to adopt the waste-to-energy policy on the ground that power generation was the responsibility of the two power companies. As a result, Hong Kong had lagged

way behind many cities, including most EU cities which had adopted waste incineration to reduce the reliance on landfills for waste disposal.

8. Ir Dr Raymond HO said that he had visited some waste incinerators in advanced countries and was impressed by their emission performance and ability to convert waste to energy. He therefore urged the Administration to make reference to overseas experience in this respect with a view to dispensing with the need for landfill extension, which in his view was not only non-sustainable but also a nuisance to the neighboring community. Efforts should also be made to expedite the implementation of the proposed IWWMF as further delay would inevitably increase the capital investment significantly.

9. Prof Patrick LAU enquired about the incineration technology to be adopted, the rationale for setting the design capacity of IWWMF at 3 000 tpd, and the feasibility of having an incinerator of smaller scale on a trial basis. The Assistant Director of Environmental Protection (Nature Conservation & Infrastructure Planning) (ADEP(NC&IP)) said that the technology to be adopted for IWWMF would be of state-of-the-art which would meet the most stringent EU emission standards for the protection of public health. The optimal capacity of IWWMF was determined after a detailed analysis of various factors, including the waste problem in Hong Kong and the overall strategy on waste transfer and treatment (i.e. sending local waste for compaction and containerization at refuse transfer stations before transfer to landfills by marine transport). The final recommendation was phased development in an appropriate scale with the capacity of the first phase IWWMF set at 3 000 tonnes per day (tpd). He added that while small-scale incineration facilities were technically feasible, their cost-effectiveness was much lower than large-scale incineration facilities.

10. Ms Cyd HO opined that before considering waste incineration, more efforts should be made to reduce and recycle waste. These should include, inter alia, MSW charging which had gained more support from the community as a result of increased public awareness on waste reduction. Noting that the proposed design capacity of 3 000 tpd of IWWMF Phase 1 would only treat 17% of waste generated per day, she enquired if this included clinical waste. SEN said that at present, clinical waste of about five tpd on average was treated at the Chemical Waste Treatment Centre. As the proposed IWWMF was expected to treat only 17% of waste, the remaining 83% would have to be treated by other means, including the phased development of the Organic Waste Treatment Facilities to treat some of the food waste. It was expected that with increased efforts to recycle waste, the amount of waste generated would be reduced.

11. Noting from the general layout of IWWMF Phase 1 in Annex B2 to the Administration's paper that there was a narrow watercourse separating the reclaimed site from Shek Kwu Chau (SKC), Prof Patrick LAU questioned the need for the watercourse. He also asked if consideration could be given to

using caverns to house smaller scale incinerators to dispense with the need for land reclamation given its environmental impact on the surrounding. ADEP(NC&IP) explained that the 10 to 40-metre wide watercourse was meant for preserving the coastline and protecting the coral reefs at SKC. He added that while some environmental facilities such as the Island West Refuse Transfer Station was accommodated in a cavern, IWMF Phase 1 with a design capacity of 3 000 tpd would require about 12 hectares of land which were too large to be accommodated in caverns. The artificial island next to SKC was chosen as the site for IWMF Phase 1 following a systematic site selection exercise. To protect the marine environment, a new technology would be adopted to reduce the extent of reclamation and the scale of dredging in the reclamation process. Conservation measures would also be applied to minimize the ecological impacts on the marine ecology.

12. Ir Dr Raymond HO was concerned about the choice of the artificial island next to SKC as the site for IWMF Phase 1 given its close proximity to Cheung Chau. Consideration should be given to identifying other suitable outlying islands further away from Cheung Chau. Proper consultation on the choice of site for obnoxious facilities and the needs for betterment should also be conducted with the districts concerned. Mr Albert CHAN also questioned why SKC could have been selected as the site for IWMF Phase 1 given that an international agreement had been signed on the protection of the coastline of South Lantau which included SKC. Noting that Cheung Chau residents had expressed grave concern about the possible environmental impacts arising from the implementation and operation of IWMF, Mr LEE Wing-tat failed to understand why the Administration should insist to go ahead with the funding proposals despite the strong opposition from Cheung Chau residents and environmental groups. He also supported the provision of compensatory facilities for IWMF Phase 1 for the betterment of the affected community. Expressing similar views, Mr Abraham SHEK enquired about the outcome of consultation on the choice of site of IWMF as he understood that the management of the Drug Rehabilitation Centre at SKC had raised objections to the choice.

13. SEN responded that while it was not easy to take forward new environmental initiatives, there had been policies which did not have public support at first but were subsequently implemented with success. Therefore, the Administration would continue to maintain dialogue with Cheung Chau residents to address their concerns, including the need for betterment. He also agreed to look into the agreement referred to by Mr Albert CHAN and provide a response. ADEP(NC&IP) added that the Drug Rehabilitation Centre at SKC had been included as a sensitive receiver in the environmental impact assessment study on IWMF, and was recently invited to participate in the community liaison group for IWMF Phase 1. Apart from the installation of an advanced air pollution control system to ensure that emissions from the IWMF

stacks would meet the most stringent EU standard for incinerators and the Hong Kong Best Practicable Means for Incinerators, low-noise construction methods would also be applied during the construction period to minimize the environmental impacts of IW MF.

14. Given that waste incineration was widely adopted in many EU countries like Germany, Mr CHAN Kin-por supported the adoption of waste incineration in parallel with waste recycling and MSW charging as part of the package of measures to reduce waste. However, he was concerned that the Administration would stop addressing the needs for betterment or implementing waste reduction measures if the Legislature approved the four funding proposals. To this end, he urged the Administration to work out a holistic package of waste management proposals for members' consideration. Ms Cyd HO echoed that other waste management measures, including those on waste reduction and recycling, should be considered together with waste incineration and landfill extension as a package, or else she was not prepared to support the funding proposals. SEN said that continued efforts would be made to solicit support from Members and the districts concerned for the funding proposals.

15. Noting that the Administration was still in the process of engaging the Island District Council on the provision of betterment for the community in exchange for support on the proposed construction of IW MF Phase 1, Ms Audrey EU said that the time might not be ripe for the Administration to seek funding for the project at this stage. She also had reservations on the policy on waste incineration as the incineration process was not only hazardous to the community but also like burning resources when there was no mandatory waste separation. She supported that more efforts should be made to reduce and recycle waste. Expressing similar concerns, Mr IP Wai-ming noted that many questions raised during the consultation on MSW charging and incineration had remained unanswered. He was concerned that the reliance on waste incineration might undermine the efforts on waste reduction and recycling. Given the many uncertainties, the Administration should not push ahead with the funding proposal on IW MF. He asked if the Administration was prepared to withdraw all the funding proposals and leave them to the new term of Government. SEN said that if the Administration were to back out on controversial issues with much contention, the legislation on the environmental levy on plastic shopping bags, ban on idling engines and building energy efficiency schemes would not have been passed. As a lot of time had been spent on developing and discussing on various initiatives, there was a need to identify the way forward.

Landfill extension

16. Ms Miriam LAU said that Members belonging to the Liberal Party (LP) were opposed to the reliance on landfills for waste disposal in view of the

associated environmental nuisances as well as the long lead time and cost incurred from for restoration of landfills. Instead of extending existing landfills, LP Members supported the adoption of modern incineration technologies to treat waste. However, there was a need for the Administration to address public concerns on emissions. Betterment should be provided to affected residents within the vicinity of the obnoxious IWWMF, including reduction in electricity tariff taking into account the energy recovered from waste incineration. The Administration should also provide a concrete plan on measures to reduce and recycle waste.

17. Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming said that Members belonging to the Democratic Alliance for Betterment and Progress (DAB) had all along been advocating the need for a holistic package of measures (including waste reduction, separation, and recycling) to tackle the waste problem. It was disappointed that the Administration had only adopted stop-gap measures as in the case of the current proposals on landfill extension and IWWMF. He reminded the Administration that it had to withdraw the previous proposal on extension of the Tseung Kwan O Landfill as a result of strong public opposition. He said that in the absence of adequate public consultation and consensus, DAB Members would have reservation in supporting the funding proposals.

18. Ms Audrey EU opined that the use of landfills for waste disposal was not sustainable in the long term let alone the nuisance associated with landfills which was a cause for concern. Given that district concerns on landfill extension and IWWMF had yet to be addressed, Mr Abraham SHEK said that the Administration should not submit the funding proposals in haste. Prof Patrick LAU also questioned why funding for IWWMF and landfill extension had to be sought so soon, when a similar scale of funding for West Kowloon Cultural Project had to undergo an extended consultation process.

19. While appreciating the Administration's efforts in providing justifications for the funding proposals, Miss Tanya CHAN said that it had failed to address the concerns raised by Members belonging to the Civic Party (CP), particularly on the little progress made since the introduction of the Policy Framework in 2005. She shared other members' concern that the Administration would stop making efforts to reduce and recycle waste once approval had been given to IWWMF and landfill extension. She stressed the need for more efforts to separate waste at source, with the Administration taking the lead. These included expediting the implementation of the PRS on Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment as well as the second stage of consultation on MSW charging. Mr Jeffrey LAM also supported waste separation at source as this would not only reduce the amount of waste to be disposed of at landfills, but also address the objection against landfill extension from affected residents. Noting that the Administration would need to provide more information on the justifications for waste incineration and the choice of incinerators, he enquired if the funding

proposals for IWWMF and landfill extension could be dealt with by phases. SEN said that while the Administration would endeavour to implement initiatives to reduce and recycle waste, waste separation at source alone could not resolve the waste problem. Prof Jonathan WONG said that as the remaining landfill capacity would be depleted in six years' time, there was an imminent need for measures to tackle the waste problem, including waste reduction and recycling as well as timely provision of at least one incinerator to deal with the waste which could not be recycled. Prof Paul LAM said that ACE shared the view that the reliance on waste reduction and separation alone could not resolve the waste problem.

Communication between the current and new term of Government

20. Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming recalled that at a forum on environmental protection, the Chief Executive-elect (CE-elect) had stated his stance that waste incineration might not be necessary and that waste reduction and recycling would be the way forward for resolving the waste problem. He therefore enquired if the Administration would consider withdrawing the funding proposals and re-submitting them at an opportune time after the new term of Government assumed office. Ms Miriam LAU also agreed that there was a need to ascertain whether the new term of Government would support the existing waste management policy, given that the current term of Government had not been performing well in waste recycling and reduction. Expressing similar concerns, Mr KAM Nai-wai noted that if funding was approved within the current term of Government, the projects would have to be carried out by the next term of Government. To avoid confusion, consideration should be given to submitting these proposals at a later stage after the new term of Government assumed office. He enquired if SEN had a direct dialogue with the CE-elect on these proposals, and whether there would be serious consequences if these proposals were to be submitted later this year. Ms Cyd HO and Ms Audrey EU echoed that there should be communication between the current and new term of Government on environmental policies, particularly the need for incineration.

21. In response, SEN said that the three-pronged approach on waste management had been subject to extensive discussion by the community at large over an extended period of time, and would remain valid in the next term of Government. Besides, the pledges made by the CE-elect that more efforts would be made to reduce waste at source, that waste incineration using advanced technologies would be adopted when necessary, and that compensatory facilities should be provided in parallel for the betterment of the community were actually in line with existing waste management policies. There was close liaison between the current and new term of Government in implementing policies, including those related to environment portfolio, to ensure smooth transition. However, the current term of Government had a constitutional obligation to continue with its work until the end of the term of office. Therefore, there was

no reason why these measures should be halted. As regards the effect of delay in extending landfills, Prof Jonathan WONG said that this would further aggravate the waste problem as wastes which could not be recycled still had to be disposed of at landfills.

22. Given the many uncertainties (including the interface between the current and new term of Government, the need for betterment to address concerns of affected residents etc.) and the fact that there would not be serious consequences if the funding proposals were to be submitted later this year, Mr KAM Nai-wai said that Members belonging to the Democratic Party would not support the submission of the funding proposals to PWSC. In the absence of a holistic package of waste management measures and means to address district concerns and local needs for betterment, Ms Audrey EU said that CP Members could not support the funding proposals. Mr IP Wai-ming agreed to the need for holistic package of waste management measures, and that waste incineration should be adopted as a last resort. He therefore was not prepared to support the funding proposals, particularly during the interface between the current and new term of Government. Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming also said that DAB Members would have reservations in supporting the funding proposals. Mr Albert CHAN said that he was opposed to the funding proposals on IWMF and landfill extension.

23. In reply, SEN emphasized that the package of waste management measures was not confined to landfill extension and IWMF. Continued efforts would be made to implement other waste management measures in tandem. On the provision of betterment facilities, SEN said that there was a need to address the concerns of residents in the first place. For example, community facilities were provided in Tuen Mun for the provision of Sludge Treatment Facility after consultation with the District Council concerned. Similar arrangements would be made with the Island District Council, and a 17-member working-group had been set up to address the concerns of the community and facilitate discussion with the Administration, including the provision of compensatory facilities for IWMF Phase 1. At members' request, the Administration would provide information on the community betterment facilities for IWMF Phase 1.

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24. In concluding, the Chairman said that members acknowledged the urgency of the proposals, but emphasized the need for communication between the current and new term of Government. Given the obnoxious nature of landfill extension and IWMF, these might not be the best way to deal with the waste problem. Besides, the nuisances associated with landfills remained a cause of concern to members and affected residents. Hence, more should be done to facilitate the development of recycling industries and promote waste separation at source, particularly food waste. As members present had not indicated support for the funding proposals, the Chairman said that the Panel did not support the submission of the proposals to PWSC.

II. Any other business

25. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:10 pm.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
11 June 2012