

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)/13-14
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Panel on Environmental Affairs

**Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 16 December 2013, at 8:30 am
in Conference Room 1 of the Legislative Council Complex**

Members present : Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan (Chairman)
Hon CHAN Hak-kan, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon WONG Ting-kwong, SBS, JP
Hon CHAN Kin-por, BBS, JP
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon Claudia MO
Hon Steven HO Chun-yin
Hon Frankie YICK Chi-ming
Hon WU Chi-wai, MH
Hon Gary FAN Kwok-wai
Hon Charles Peter MOK
Hon CHAN Han-pan
Hon Kenneth LEUNG
Hon Dennis KWOK
Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan
Dr Hon Elizabeth QUAT, JP
Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok, BBS, MH, JP
Hon Christopher CHUNG Shu-kun, BBS, MH, JP
Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen

Member attending : Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP

Members absent : Hon Vincent FANG Kang, SBS, JP
Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN Ka-lok

Public Officers attending : **For item IV**

Mr WONG Kam-sing, JP
Secretary for the Environment

Ms Michelle AU
Political Assistant to Secretary for the Environment

Mr Howard CHAN, JP
Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (2)
Environmental Protection Department

Mrs Alison LAU
Assistant Director (Cross Boundary & International)
Environmental Protection Department

Clerk in attendance : Ms Miranda HON
Chief Council Secretary (1)1

Staff in attendance : Miss Lilian MOK
Senior Council Secretary (1)1

Miss Mandy POON
Legislative Assistant (1)1

IV. Promotion of the recycling industry

(LC Paper No. CB(1)500/13-14(03) — Administration's paper on "Promotion of the recycling industry"

LC Paper No. CB(1)500/13-14(04) — Background brief on "Promotion of the recycling industry" prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat)

The Secretary for the Environment ("SEN") briefed members that the Steering Committee to Promote the Sustainable Development of the Recycling Industry ("the Steering Committee"), which was led by the Chief Secretary for Administration, had been set up in August 2013 to step up concerted efforts in reducing waste at source and promoting the development of the recycling industry. To support the work of the Steering Committee, to liaise with the recycling trade and other stakeholders, as well as to co-ordinate inter-departmental efforts in examining and implementing new initiatives and measures to support the recycling industry, the Administration proposed to set up a new division in the Environmental Protection Department ("EPD") through redeployment of existing manpower and creation of supernumerary posts, including an Assistant Director of Environmental Protection ("ADEP") post, for three years from 2014-2015 to 2016-2017.

Consultancy study on recycling operations

2. The Chairman enquired whether the Administration would consider setting aside a recurrent expenditure to assist the recycling industry. SEN responded that the promotion of the recycling industry was an essential element of Hong Kong's waste management strategy. EPD had commissioned a consultancy study on the detailed operation and situation of different types of recyclables to explore suitable means and points of intervention by the Administration to support the sustainable development of the recycling industry. In the months ahead, the Administration would liaise with the trade and relevant stakeholders to study their operations.

3. In response to the Chairman's further enquiry about the consultancy study, the Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (2) ("DDEP(2)") advised that the Hong Kong Productivity Council ("HKPC") had been commissioned to conduct the study, which would examine in depth the recycling operations of

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different types of recyclables with a view to formulating tailored support programmes and measures for individual recyclable types. The consultancy study had already started and would be completed within January 2014. SEN stressed that the Administration had adopted an open attitude in exploring viable measures to support the recycling industry and would carefully consider the recommendations put forward in the consultancy report.

4. Dr Elizabeth QUAT expressed support for the Government's plan to promote the sustainable development of the recycling industry. She asked whether HKPC would set out a timetable and roadmap for introducing different programmes and measures to assist the recycling operations of different types of recyclables in the consultancy report. DDEP(2) responded that HKPC would examine the recycling operations of different types of recyclables in detail and make recommendations to the Steering Committee for it to develop tailored programmes to address the needs of different recyclers.

5. Dr Elizabeth QUAT further enquired whether the Steering Committee would roll out a blueprint on waste management. SEN explained that the Steering Committee was established for the purpose of co-ordinating efforts within the Government in reducing waste at source and promoting the development of the recycling industry in a more systematic and effective manner. As the Steering Committee had been set up for only a few months, it would need time to review the current situation of local recyclables' collection and disposal and the relevant policies and support measures before making any recommendations on future waste management strategies.

Recycling of recyclables of low commercial values

6. Mr WU Chi-wai expressed concern that recyclables of low commercial values (e.g. waste plastics) did not have sufficient market outlets and ultimately ended up in landfills. To reduce the pressure for waste treatment, the Administration should develop markets for different types of recyclable materials. The Administration should also invest in recycling operations by providing subsidies to waste recyclers in the recycling of recyclables with low commercial values. Mr WU asked whether the Administration had worked out a clear timetable and roadmap for formulating a comprehensive waste recycling policy to tackle the imminent waste problem of Hong Kong.

7. SEN acknowledged that while recyclables of higher values were collected and processed by recyclers under open market forces and direct government assistance was not essential, there were recyclables of low commercial values that required the Government's assistance to make their collection and recycling viable. With the introduction of a quantity-based municipal solid waste ("MSW") charging in Hong Kong in 2016, the public would have stronger

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economic incentives to separate recyclable waste at source. To deal with the possible increase in the quantity of recyclable materials to be collected, the Steering Committee would be reviewing the collection and disposal of recyclables and exploring viable measures to support the operation of the recycling industry.

Support and assistance to the recycling industry

8. Mr CHAN Kin-por opined that the Administration should not only encourage the public to separate waste at source for collection and processing by local recyclers, it should also identify new approaches to drive the sustainable development of the recycling industry. For instance, the Administration should consider providing subsidies to support the operation of local recyclers by setting up a "Recycling Fund".

9. Mr Albert CHAN was of the view that the Administration should legislate for source separation of waste in Hong Kong as this would be more cost-effective than introducing different schemes and programmes to encourage the public to separate waste at source. Taking into consideration that some recycling operations might cause environmental nuisance to nearby residents, the Administration should help identify suitable sites for local recyclers to develop their business. The Environment Bureau ("ENB") should also work closely with relevant policy bureaux and government departments to facilitate different recycling operations and create a favourable business environment for the recycling sector.

10. Mr Christopher CHUNG pointed out that MSW charging might not be an effective way to reduce waste at source in the long run because the public might become insensitive to the MSW charge over time and continue to generate waste. The problem of growing wasteload in Hong Kong would remain unresolved. Whilst educational programmes and promotion activities could arouse public awareness on waste reduction and recycling, it took time to instill changes in behaviour. Rather, the Administration should consider providing direct or indirect support and assistance to waste recovery or treatment, including introducing supportive measures in terms of taxation, technology, land, funding or regional collaboration with some Mainland cities.

11. On the recycling of waste glass bottles, Mr Christopher CHUNG opined that the Administration should provide adequate incentives to encourage local recyclers to use the waste glass bottles collected by them to produce glassware products, so as to minimize the material loss arising from the process of turning waste glass into works materials or other types of recycled products such as eco-pavers. Consideration should also be given to promoting glass art which would be an outlet for waste glass materials.

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12. SEN agreed that it was necessary to formulate measures on multiple fronts with the primary focus on creating a better business environment for the recycling industry. To this end, the Administration proposed to strengthen the manpower support in EPD with a view to formulating and implementing enhanced measures to assist waste recycling enterprises to develop their business in Hong Kong. In addition, the Steering Committee would work out policies and measures and identify new approaches to support the development of the local recycling industry after consultation with the trade.

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13. Noting that the local recycling industry relied heavily on the export of recyclables collected and the provision of berths for waste exporters was a key factor for sustaining their operation, Mr Tony TSE requested for information on the current use of berthing facilities by waste exporters and details of the arrangements for allocating suitable berths in the Public Cargo Working Areas ("PCWA") for the exclusive use of the recycling industry upon expiry of the current PCWA leases in 2016. He further requested the Administration to advise how it monitored the use of the Environment and Conservation Fund ("ECF") by the 200 ECF-funded projects and whether the recycling industry could seek funding support from ECF for organizing training programmes for existing practitioners to enhance their knowledge of handling different types of recyclable materials, including toxic materials.

Community Recycling Network

14. Mr Frankie YICK commented that the Administration had yet to propose concrete measures to comprehensively address the problems that the local recycling industry was facing. He expressed concern about the effectiveness of the Community Recycling Network ("CRN") in waste recycling (e.g. the amount of recyclable materials collected at different collection points).

15. SEN responded that in 2011, the recycling rate of Hong Kong was 48%. DDEP(2) supplemented that EPD had launched a territory-wide Programme on Source Separation of Domestic Waste since 2005 to encourage people to separate their waste for recycling. Under the Programme, three-colour waste separation bins were placed in each residential block of participating housing estates to facilitate source separation of waste by residents. To further promote source separation of waste, EPD had set up CRN in the 18 districts to increase public awareness on recycling and to facilitate public participation in recovering recyclables of lower commercial values in 2011. At present, over 530 collection points were operating under CRN and more than 200 housing estates throughout the territory had signed up for the network. DDEP(2) undertook to provide more detailed information on the effectiveness of CRN for members' reference.

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16. Mr Tony TSE further requested the Administration to provide information on the measures to be implemented to facilitate source separation of waste in single-block residential buildings.

Food waste management

17. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan commented that the Administration did not have a comprehensive waste management plan, in particular on how to tackle the food waste problem. He doubted whether the Administration was using the setting up of the Steering Committee and a new division in EPD as an excuse for not taking timely measures to deal with the challenges and problems encountered by local recyclers. Taking into consideration that the current practice of disposing of food waste at landfills was environmentally undesirable as it would create odour nuisance and generate leachate that required further mitigation measures to deal with, Mr LEE urged the Administration to consider the suggestion of the Labour Party to set aside a recurrent expenditure of \$2 billion per year to promote food waste reduction, source separation and recycling in different sectors and districts.

18. SEN responded that Hong Kong generated different types of waste every day. While food waste was a major constituent of MSW in Hong Kong, there were other types of waste which had their own requirements for processing and recycling. He said that the Administration had been adopting a multi-pronged approach to tackle the food waste problem in Hong Kong. A comprehensive strategy and action plans which sought to reduce, separate and recycle food waste would be rolled out shortly.

Proposed creation of a new Waste Reduction and Recycling Division

19. While expressing support for promoting the sustainable development of the recycling industry, Mr Tony TSE expressed concern about the additional manpower required to handle the work of the Steering Committee as well as to implement new initiatives to support the industry. DDEP(2) explained that under the current establishment of EPD, the Environmental Infrastructure Division was responsible for the development and management of waste facilities as well as the implementation of programmes to reduce, recover and recycle waste. Besides, there were two other divisions in EPD which were responsible for policies and programmes on waste management. Since the responsibilities for overseeing and implementing policies and programmes relating to waste reduction/recycling were distributed amongst different divisions in EPD, the Administration proposed to create a new Waste Reduction and Recycling Division ("WRRD") to be led by an ADEP and underpinned by a team of 55 non-directorate posts with an aim to better co-ordinate efforts in

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examining and implementing new initiatives and measures to support the recycling industry.

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20. Mr WU Chi-wai said that in view of the lack of sufficient information on future waste management strategies, he would not support the establishment of WRRD in EPD and the relevant staffing proposal. The Chairman and Mr Tony TSE requested the Administration to provide more information to justify the setting up of WRRD, including the current divisions and duties of the 33 posts to be redeployed from other divisions and whether their redeployment would affect the work of their original divisions, and the reason for setting the duration of the 22 time-limited posts at three years.

21. The Chairman put the staffing proposal to vote. Three members voted in favour of the proposal, three voted against it and three abstained. The Chairman said that the Administration should proactively formulate timely measures to address public concerns on waste management and recycling operation, and have them unveiled in the coming Policy Address of the Chief Executive in January 2014. Otherwise, the extension of the three strategic landfills might not receive support from Members when the relevant funding proposals were re-submitted to the Legislative Council for consideration in the first quarter of 2014. She further urged the Administration to provide relevant information as requested by members as early as possible.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
22 January 2014