

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)1484/16-17
(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/WS

Panel on Welfare Services

**Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 13 February 2017 at 10:45 am
in Conference Room 3 of the Legislative Council Complex**

- Members present** : Hon SHIU Ka-chun (Chairman)
Hon KWONG Chun-yu (Deputy Chairman)
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP
Hon CHAN Chi-chuen
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, BBS, MH, JP
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan
Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH
Hon Alvin YEUNG
Hon CHU Hoi-dick
Dr Hon Junius HO Kwan-yiu, JP
Hon YUNG Hoi-yan
Dr Hon Pierre CHAN
Hon HUI Chi-fung
Hon Nathan LAW Kwun-chung
Dr Hon LAU Siu-lai
- Members absent** : Hon CHAN Hak-kan, BBS, JP
Hon KWOK Wai-keung
Hon Andrew WAN Siu-kin

**Public Officers : Item III
attending**

Miss Annie TAM, GBS, JP
Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare
Labour and Welfare Bureau

Mr Donald CHEN, JP
Deputy Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare) 2
Labour and Welfare Bureau

Mr LAM Ka-tai, JP
Deputy Director of Social Welfare (Services)
Social Welfare Department

Ms PANG Kit-ling
Assistant Director (Elderly)
Social Welfare Department

Ms Lilian CHEUNG Jick-man
Chief Social Work Officer (Elderly)1
Social Welfare Department

Item IV

Mr FUNG Man-chung
Assistant Director (Family & Child Welfare)
Social Welfare Department

Ms Micy LUI Siu-ying
Chief Social Work Officer (Family & Child Welfare)1
Social Welfare Department

Mr Patrick HODSON
Assistant Commissioner of Police (Support)
Hong Kong Police Force

Mr WONG Tak-cheung
Superintendent (Field) (Support Branch)
Hong Kong Police Force

Mr Tom MA Chak-shun
Service Supervisor/Community Project
Salvation Army

Clerk in attendance : Mr Colin CHUI
Chief Council Secretary (2) 4

Staff in attendance : Ms Catherina YU
Senior Council Secretary (2) 4

Miss Alison HUI
Legislative Assistant (2) 4

Action

I. Information paper(s) issued since the last meeting
[LC Paper No. CB(2)749/16-17(01)]

Members noted that a referral from the Public Complaints Office on policy issues relating to employment support for grass-root women (LC Paper No. CB(2)749/16-17(01)) had been issued since the last meeting.

II. Items for discussion at the next meeting
[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)743/16-17(01) to (02)]

2. Members noted that the Administration had proposed to discuss at the next meeting scheduled for 13 March 2017 the following items:

- (a) Progress of the implementation of the Best Practice Manual in non-governmental organizations receiving Lump Sum Grant subvention;
- (b) Implementation of Pilot Scheme on Home Care and Support for Elderly Persons with Mild Impairment; and
- (c) Review of Disability Allowance and the system for processing application thereof.

List of outstanding items for discussion by the Panel

3. The Chairman invited members to consider the Administration's suggestion of deleting "Mechanism for handling abuse cases relating to children from high risk families" and "Retirement protection" from the list of outstanding items for discussion ("the List") by the Panel. The former item was covered by the subjects "Support measures for children from drug abusing families" and "Review on Multi-Disciplinary Case Conference and welfare

Action

plans for children" which were discussed by the Subcommittee on Children's Right at its meetings on 22 December 2016 and 17 January 2017 respectively. As regards the latter item, it would be followed up by the Subcommittee on Retirement Protection. Members raised no objection to the suggestion.

III. Care support services provided for elderly persons discharged from public hospitals after treatment

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)743/16-17(03) to (04)]

4. At the invitation of the Chairman, Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare ("PS(LW)") briefed members on the Administration's plan to invite the Community Care Fund ("CCF") to consider implementing a new pilot scheme to provide the necessary transitional care and support for elderly persons newly discharged from public hospitals after treatment ("Pilot Scheme").

Effectiveness of the Pilot Scheme

5. Dr KWOK Ka-ki said there were around 1,670,000 patients discharged from public hospitals last year and over 80% of the attendants of the Accident and Emergency Departments of public hospitals were elderly persons. The 3 200 places to be provided under the Pilot Scheme were therefore far from adequate to meet the demand. Taking the view that the chance of elderly dischargees to be re-admitted to hospital was high, he said that care and attention homes instead of transitional care and support services should be provided for them. He also opined that the deployment of existing service places for the Pilot Scheme would reduce the supply of long-term care service places, thereby affecting those who were in need of long-term care services. Mr Alvin YEUNG said that subsidized residential care homes for the elderly ("RCHEs") should be constructed to meet the demand for residential care services ("RCS") in the long run. He enquired whether the waiting time for the services currently provided by the service providers would be prolonged if they provided services under the Pilot Scheme at the same time.

6. PS(LW) responded that the Integrated Discharge Support Programme for Elderly Patients ("IDSP") provided support services for elderly dischargees from public hospitals who had been assessed by the Hospital Authority ("HA") to be at high risk of unplanned re-admission to hospital. Elderly persons newly discharged from HA hospitals who were assessed to be in need of temporary RCS and/or community care services ("CCS") and were not covered under IDSP would be eligible for the Pilot Scheme. Service providers were required to provide new places in addition to their existing places for the Pilot Scheme and an average of around 600 new places should be provided every cycle of the six-month transitional period throughout the three-year pilot period.

Action

It was estimated that elderly persons participating in the Pilot Scheme would require CCS mostly and the 600 additional places would mainly be for CCS. Temporary RCS would be provided through non-subsidized places by service providers and service providers would be allowed to use unoccupied non-subsidized places for the Pilot Scheme.

7. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that as it was quite likely that elderly persons who received temporary RCS under the Pilot Scheme would continue to stay in RCHE, the Pilot Scheme could not reduce premature institutionalization of elderly persons. In his view, the direction of the Pilot Scheme was wrong. Given the inadequate supply of subvented or contract RCHEs, elderly dischargees who required RCS would have to be admitted to EA1 places under the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme. Besides, private RCHEs were also engaged in providing services under the Pilot Scheme on Residential Care Service Voucher for the Elderly. He took the view that the Administration had attempted to promote the private RCS market by driving elderly persons into private RCHEs.

8. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung said that the Pilot Scheme might be moving towards a wrong direction. He took the view that the Administration had attempted to shift the burden of HA to RCHEs through the Pilot Scheme due to insufficient capacity of HA. To avoid overloading RCHEs, particularly when the Pilot Scheme was regularized, it would be more desirable for elderly persons who were discharged from hospitals to receive outreach services at home.

9. PS(LW) responded that in collaboration with HA, non-governmental organizations ("NGOs") had been providing post-discharge support services for elderly persons through IDSP which was funded by the Labour and Welfare Bureau. Under the Pilot Scheme, HA medical staff would assess whether elderly dischargees required transitional services including temporary RCS. The Centralized Team to be set up by Social Welfare Department ("SWD") would work with HA in planning the post-discharge transitional support services for eligible elderly persons and arrange them to receive services through suitable service providers. Elderly persons who were assessed to be in need of temporary RCS would be notified of the time-limited nature of the service.

10. Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung said that the Administration had attempted to reduce its long-term financial commitments to elderly services by implementing pilot schemes funded by CCF. He took the view that assessment made by HA of elderly persons' needs for post-discharge transitional services might not be in the best interests of the elderly persons and asked whether HA would follow up the conditions of elderly persons who received RCS under the Pilot Scheme.

Action

He also doubted whether these elderly persons would have any incentive to return home once they were admitted to RCHE. PS(LW) reiterated that the Pilot Scheme sought to avoid premature admission of elderly persons to RCHEs so that they could age in place and was not to replace IDSP. If the Pilot Scheme was to be regularized, it would be operated under the Administration's recurrent expenditure account.

11. Mr Alvin YEUNG asked whether there would be any waiting period for elderly persons who wished to use the services under the Pilot Scheme again if they were re-admitted to hospital while using the post-discharge transitional services. PS(LW) responded that these elderly persons would be regarded as new applicants and had to undergo HA's assessments afresh. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen enquired about the selection criteria for temporary RCS under the Pilot Scheme and whether an elderly person's position on the central waiting list ("CWL") for subsidized RCHEs would be affected if he/she received RCS under the Pilot Scheme. PS(LW) responded that HA would make assessments of elderly persons prior to or around the time of discharge and refer eligible dischargees to participate in the Pilot Scheme. The participation of elderly persons in the Pilot Scheme would not affect their position on CWL or other CCS which they were using.

12. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung enquired whether the Pilot Scheme was confined to elderly persons who had not been admitted repeatedly to hospitals and whether services under the Pilot Scheme would be recommended to elderly persons according to the assessments made by HA or the views of family members of the elderly persons. PS(LW) responded that the service targets of the Pilot Scheme were elderly persons who were not covered by IDSP and mainly required CCS. The Centralized Team would discuss with the elderly persons and their family members in selecting service providers and packages that suited their needs.

13. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung enquired about the criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of the Pilot Scheme and whether the Pilot Scheme would be regularized upon the completion of the evaluation. PS(LW) responded that an evaluation on the effectiveness of the Pilot Scheme would be completed by end-2019. The evaluation would mainly cover whether the Pilot Scheme could effectively reduce premature institutionalization of elderly persons. Feedback of service providers and users would also be analyzed. The Administration would consider the way forward for the relevant services depending on the results of the evaluation.

14. In response to Dr Fernando CHEUNG's enquiry about whether elderly persons were consulted on the Pilot Scheme, PS(LW) said that enhancing

Action

transitional care support for elderly persons discharged from hospitals was one of the initial recommendations of the Elderly Services Programme Plan ("ESPP") and public engagement exercises had been conducted for ESPP. The Chairman and Dr Fernando CHEUNG were of the view that soliciting public views on ESPP and consulting elderly persons on the Pilot Scheme were two separate matters.

Monitoring of service providers

15. Dr LAU Siu-lai opined that there were many defects in the provision of RCS or CCS through the use of vouchers. Many voucher holders had to top up the difference between the voucher value and the service fees as some private service providers would charge voucher holders a higher fee. She wondered whether the Administration would be able to monitor the quality, quantity and types of services to be provided by private service providers.

16. PS(LW) responded that the "money-following-the-user" approach would offer elderly persons a wider choice of services. SWD would invite the existing Recognized Service Providers ("RSPs") under the Pilot Scheme on CCS Voucher for the Elderly ("CCS Voucher Scheme") to participate in and serve as RSPs under the Pilot Scheme. A mechanism for monitoring performance of RSPs was in place and the Centralized Team would help review the post-discharge support for elderly persons. Six service packages would be provided under the Pilot Scheme with the monthly voucher value ranging from \$3,600 to \$8,600. Of the some 120 RSPs participating in the CCS Voucher Scheme, only three were private organizations and the remaining RSPs were NGOs. NGOs and private organizations were required to satisfy the same requirements in order to become RSPs and were subject to the same monitoring criteria. Given that many RSPs of the CCS Voucher Scheme were unable to cope with the service demand, Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung was concerned about engaging the same group of RSPs in providing services for the Pilot Scheme. In light of controversial views on the CCS Voucher Scheme in society, the Chairman expressed concern about rolling out the Pilot Scheme while the CCS Voucher Scheme was still at its pilot stage. PS(LW) said that RSPs were required to provide new service places for the Pilot Scheme on top of the places provided under the CCS Voucher Scheme.

17. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that under the Lump Sum Grant Subvention System, services provided by NGOs had become commercialized and rather expensive. Elderly persons in effect had no choice but to use expensive services. He opined that as RSPs were required to reserve places for the Pilot Scheme, these places would be idle until they were taken up, which would be a waste of resources. PS(LW) responded that earmarked grant instead of Lump Sum Grant would be provided for launching the Pilot Scheme. Drawing

Action

reference from the CCS Voucher Scheme, the Pilot Scheme would have six co-payment categories on a sliding scale. The Administration would subsidize service users at least 60% and up to a maximum of 95% of the voucher value. As regards the provision of temporary RCS under the Pilot Scheme, RSPs were expected to deploy their non-subsidized places flexibly. The Administration would discuss with RSPs in this regard.

IV. Support for street sleepers

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)743/16-17(05) to (06) and CB(2)802/16-17(01)]

Government officers' attendance for the discussion of support for street sleepers

18. The Chairman said that the Panel had invited the Hong Kong Police Force, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department ("FEHD") and the Home Affairs Department ("HAD") to attend the discussion of this item but HAD and FEHD had refused to attend. He said that he had contacted Under Secretary for Home Affairs ("USHA") and Political Assistant to Secretary for Food and Health ("PA to SFH") regarding the attendance of HAD and FEHD to the meeting. He referred members to the following remarks made by the Home Affairs Bureau ("HAB") for "Support for street sleepers" which was set out in item 2 of the List of the Panel: "while the item does not fall within the policy of HAB, it is prepared to provide inputs where appropriate together with other bureau such as LWB, depending on the specific issues which the Panel may wish to discuss under this broad subject". He said that according to USHA, HAD was not the subject department for issues relating to support for street sleepers. PA to SFH advised that the role of FEHD was to maintain environmental hygiene in public places. HAD and FEHD would not join the discussion on support to street sleepers.

19. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that the Panel should hold another meeting to discuss how problems faced by street sleepers could be addressed and HAD should not refuse to attend the meeting again. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that the Panel should receive deputations' views on policies on street sleepers and HAD and FEHD should be invited to join the discussion. Dr Helena WONG said that the refusal of HAD and FEHD to attend the meeting was unacceptable. She, as the Chairman of the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene ("FSEH Panel"), suggested that, subject to the view of the Chairman of the Panel on Home Affairs ("HA Panel"), the Panel should hold a joint meeting with the FSEH Panel and the HA Panel to receive deputations' views on comprehensive review of policies on and support for street sleepers. Relevant government departments should be invited to the joint meeting. In response to the Chairman's invitation of views, members agreed that a joint meeting should be held to receive deputations' views on

Action

matters relating to policies on and support for street sleepers ("the Joint Meeting").

(Post-meeting note: After discussion with the Chairman of the three relevant Panels, a joint meeting of the Panel and the FSEH Panel was held on 27 March 2017 to receive public views on the subject.)

Motion

20. Dr LAU Siu-lai said that the refusal of HAD and FEHD to attend the meeting was irresponsible. In this connection, she moved the following motion:

"本委員會對於民政事務總署及食物環境衛生署拒絕出席'為露宿者提供的支援'之討論表示強烈譴責及遺憾。"

(Translation)

"This Panel strongly condemns and expresses regret that the Home Affairs Department and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department refuse to attend the discussion of 'support for street sleepers'."

21. The Chairman put the motion to vote. The majority of members present voted for the motion. The Chairman declared that the motion was carried.

Discussion

22. At the invitation of the Chairman, Assistant Director (Family & Child Welfare) ("AD(Family & Child Welfare)") briefed members on the social welfare service support for street sleepers. Mr Tom MA, Service Supervisor/Community Project of Salvation Army, took members through the services provided by the Integrated Services Team for Street Sleepers ("IST") and the service contents of "Health & Care Express – Mobile Service Station for Street Sleepers" programme implemented by IST.

23. Mr Tom MA said that four community organizations that provided services to the homeless had launched Homeless Outreach Population Estimation Hong Kong ("HOPE") jointly with several local universities in 2013 and 2015. The recommendations to address basic needs of the homeless put forward in the "Homeless Outreach Population Estimation Hong Kong 2015" included (a) providing integrated support services on accommodation; (b) immediately increasing the number of subsidized hostel places and extending the accommodation period of subsidized hostels; (c) formulating policies on

Action

transitional housing and constructing temporary housing; (d) paying attention to the health conditions of the homeless and introducing services of mobile dispensaries with medical staff; (e) conducting territory-wide homeless head counts on a regular basis; (f) drawing up policies for the homeless; and (g) formulating policies on rental control.

24. The Chairman thanked the Society for Community Organization ("SOCO"), the Salvation Army, St. James' Settlement and the Christian Concern for the Homeless Association for inviting the Panel to visit street sleepers on 6 February 2017 ("the Visit").

Statistics on street sleepers and homeless people

25. Mr Michael TIEN wondered why there was a big difference in the number of homeless people provided in the survey conducted by SOCO and those provided by SWD. The number provided by the former was 1 600 while the latter was 908. The Chairman asked whether SWD had ceased conducting the annual survey on street sleepers since 1999. AD(Family & Child Welfare) responded that the Street Sleepers Registry ("SSR") set up by SWD registered the number of street sleepers collected by SWD and the NGOs specialized in serving street sleepers. Since SSR covered mainly street sleepers while HOPE 2015 had included homeless people who were street sleeping, living temporarily in hostels for street sleepers or urban hostels for single persons, temporarily staying in fast food restaurants which were operated 24 hours a day, etc., there was a difference in the criteria of the two sets of numbers noting that entries on the SSR were those confirmed to be street sleeping while HOPE included those being found in fast food restaurants, etc. on the night of counting yet with confirmation of their homelessness upon contact not being a must. Meanwhile, HOPE also included all 578 persons who were living in hostels in their survey. The Chairman took the view that SSR should include people who had been living in 24-hour fast food restaurants for many years. AD(Family & Child Welfare) responded that having discussed with the NGOs concerned, SWD had included the aforesaid homeless people in SSR if they were confirmed, upon contact, to be homeless. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that the Administration should provide information on the number of street sleepers and the number of homeless people.

Admin

(Post-meeting note: The Administration's response was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(2)1145/16-17(01) on 6 April 2017.)

Action

Resettlement of street sleepers staying in Tung Chau Street

26. Dr Helena WONG said that the cloth hawkers of Yen Chow Street Temporary Hawker Bazaar were unwilling to relocate to the new cloth market in Tung Chau Street because of possible conflicts between the cloth hawkers and the street sleepers living in the vicinity of Tung Chau Street. She enquired about the number of street sleepers staying underneath the flyover in Tung Chau Street and the progress of the resettlement for these street sleepers. AD(Family & Child Welfare) responded that the required information was not available at hand. The IST concerned, District Officer (Sham Shui Po) of HAD and other relevant government departments had provided follow up to the cases. The Chairman said that District Officer (Sham Shui Po) should be invited to attend the Joint Meeting.

Actions taken by the Police during eviction of street sleepers

27. Dr LAU Siu-lai said that some street sleepers had reflected to her that they were threatened by the Police and FEHD, and were forced to move to the pedestrian subway near Nam Cheong Estate. During the eviction exercises, the Police and FEHD had seized their personal belongings including identity cards, money, clothing, blankets and medication. Some street sleepers had to use newspapers to keep themselves warm. One of the street sleepers who had emotional illness had refused to receive treatment after his medication was taken away. She queried whether the Police and FEHD had the rights to snatch the property of street sleepers.

28. Assistant Commissioner of Police (Support) ("ACP(Support)") responded that under the District-led Action Scheme, the responsibility of the Police was to provide support to the relevant government departments when clearance operations were conducted to ensure there was no breach of peace or any danger posed to any person during the operations. In terms of law and order, the Police's role was to address any issues of concern to the community or to the street sleepers in the area. The Police's duty was not to clear street sleepers but to assist the relevant government departments in the District-led Action Scheme. The Police did not seize the properties of street sleepers during the operations. Dr LAU Siu-lai said that FEHD had seized street sleepers' property on many occasions. She queried why the Police did not stop such seizure. ACP(Support) responded that properties abandoned by street sleepers during the operations would not be handled by the Police but other relevant government departments. The NGOs concerned would inform street sleepers of the operations so that they would have an opportunity to pack up their personal belongings beforehand.

Action

29. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that the relevant government departments should not be violent towards street sleepers during street cleansing and eviction exercises. He considered that SWD should arrange staff to be present at eviction sites to offer assistance to street sleepers. AD(Family & Child Welfare) responded that prior notice about the operations would be given to ISTs which would inform affected street sleepers of the date and time of the operations and provide support for them as appropriate prior to the operations.

30. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that some street sleepers had mentioned that the Police had threatened to put drugs in their pockets and charge them for possession of drugs if they refused to leave the eviction sites. He said that the Police must stop the intimidation. ACP(Support) responded that the Police had not done such thing. All new recruits attending the Hong Kong Police College were required to take the Oath of Office to solemnly declare that they would execute their powers and duties honestly, faithfully and diligently without fear of or favour to any person and with malice or ill-will towards no one. Police Force Values, which included the need to respect the rights of members of the public irrespective of their societal or economic circumstances, were inculcated into all new recruits during foundation training. From foundation training every police officer was imbued with these values which were stated in the Force Vision and Statement of Common Purpose. Respect of rights of members of the public, fairness, impartiality and compassion in all dealings were core principles that police officers had to follow in discharging their duties. The Police's assistance in inter-departmental joint operations in respect of street sleepers largely focused on ensuring no crime or breach of peace during the operations. Dr Helena WONG declared that she was a former member of the Independent Police Complaints Council ("IPCC"). She said that it would be more suitable for a grievance of such nature to be dealt with in the form of a complaint with IPCC or the Complaints Against Police Office instead of a discussion of the case at the meeting.

Policies on and support for street sleepers

31. Dr Pierre CHAN thanked the Clerk to the Panel and other supporting staff for accompanying members throughout the Visit which ended after mid-night. He also expressed gratitude to the social workers who were present at the Visit. He said that government officers would not be able to understand the problems faced by street sleepers unless they reached out to them and took a good look at their living environment. He also took the view that remunerations for social workers who assisted street sleepers and staff members of hostels for street sleepers were not commensurate with their hard work and should be improved.

Action

32. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that many street sleepers could not afford to rent a reasonable dwelling because the rent allowance under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance ("CSSA") Scheme was inadequate to cover their rental expenses. The hygiene and living conditions of the cubical apartments which members had visited were very bad. Moreover, many street sleepers were physically handicapped and some of them had mental problems or were drug addicts. He further said that the accommodation period of hostel places for street sleepers was less than six months which was too short for street sleepers to get themselves back into shape and return to society. Taking the view that the Administration did not provide street sleepers with the basic support such as housing and healthcare, he enquired about the actions the Administration would take to address the problems faced by street sleepers.

33. AD(Family & Child Welfare) responded that the maximum rent allowance ("MRA") under the CSSA Scheme was adjusted annually according to the movement of the Consumer Price Index (A) rent index for private housing. The cumulative increase in MRA from 2012 to 2017 was 43% and MRA for one-person household would be increased to \$1,810 a month in 2017. CCF had re-launched the "Subsidy for CSSA Recipients Living in Rented Private Housing" programme in 2016 to provide one-off payment for CSSA households living in rented private housing and paying a rent exceeding MRA so as to relieve their financial burden in the face of periodical rent increase. The issue of rent allowance should be carefully handled as an increase in the rent allowance might trigger a rise in the rental level in private housing.

34. AD(Family & Child Welfare) further said that 20 additional accommodation places had been provided in urban hostels for single persons and emergency shelters through reallocation of resources in 2016-2017. The current average utilization rate of these hostels/shelters was 82%. Given that a longer accommodation period would impact the turnover of hostel places, the Administration would monitor the hostel placement with the NGOs concerned and take necessary action, if necessary.

35. In response to the Chairman's invitation of views on hostel placement and the utilization rate concerned, Mr Tom MA said that the Administration should consider extending the accommodation period to cater for the need of some street sleepers, provided that the supply of the existing hostel places would not be affected. The average utilization rate of the hostel operated by the Salvation Army was 90% which had excluded places allocated but not yet been taken up pending completion of the necessary formalities.

36. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that while there were vacancies in hostel places for street sleepers, it did not mean that there was sufficient supply of such places. As many street sleepers who were aged or had mobility

Action

inconvenience did not prefer the upper deck of bunk beds, many such places were unoccupied. He asked whether the Administration would increase the supply of hostel places. AD(Family & Child Welfare) responded that in addition to the 20 additional accommodation places provided in October 2016 by the Administration, some NGOs had increased their self-financing accommodation places for street sleepers with some of these places being in Tuen Mun. The total number of subvented/self-financing places providing temporary accommodation for street sleepers was 630. The Administration would keep in view the situation and, subject to availability of resources, consider providing additional hostel places. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that hostel places should be provided in urban areas as many street sleepers might be reluctant to move to Tuen Mun.

(At 12:37 pm, the Chairman extended the meeting for 15 minutes beyond the appointed ending time to allow sufficient time for discussion.)

37. Mr Nathan LAW said that although the Panel had passed a motion in 2013 urging the Administration to adopt a humane and friendly attitude towards street sleepers, improvements had not been made in this regard. Many street sleepers' possessions were removed or got wet during street cleansing exercises, ammonia powder was sprinkled at their dwelling places and fences and peddle paths were constructed in areas under flyovers so that street sleepers could not sleep there. The Administration had treated street sleepers as nuisance rather than victims. He said that many street sleepers were inadequately housed as they could not afford high rental of private housing. Some street sleepers were unemployed because they could not provide proof of address for prospective employers. He called on the Administration to formulate inter-departmental policies to protect the rights of street sleepers and ensure all relevant government departments would treat street sleepers with respect. A cross-departmental unit should be set up to coordinate support for street sleepers.

(The Deputy Chairman took the chair at this juncture in the absence of the Chairman.)

38. Dr KWOK Ka-ki said that evicting street sleepers was not a solution to the problem of street sleeping. It would deteriorate the problem and cause tension between street sleepers and the Police. The Administration should formulate a holistic and comprehensive policy and enhance support services for street sleepers on various fronts, which should include accommodation, health care and regular subvention for the NGOs concerned. AD(Family & Child Welfare) responded that different government departments tackled the problem of street sleeping collaboratively from different perspectives. On the social welfare front, support for street sleepers was mainly provided by ISTs, the NGO

Action

units specialized in serving street sleepers. Dr KWOK Ka-ki was of the view that the Chief Secretary for Administration or Secretary for Labour and Welfare should be invited to attend the Joint Meeting.

(The Chairman took the chair at this juncture.)

39. The Deputy Chairman said that the Administration should regard street sleepers as human beings and treat them with respect. In Japan it was a criminal offence to snatch belongings of street sleepers while in the United States of America matters relating to street sleepers were dealt with inter-departmentally. He urged the Administration to adopt long-term street sleeper friendly policies. AD(Family & Child Welfare) responded that relevant government departments would discuss how support for street sleepers could be strengthened and representatives from ISTs would also be invited to give views in this regard. Concerted efforts of relevant government departments were made to protect the interests of street sleepers during inter-departmental joint operations.

Motion

40. Mr Michael TIEN said that given that hostel places were under-supplied, a substantial number of street sleepers were unable to give up street sleeping. The short accommodation period of hostel places also made it difficult for social workers to develop rapport with street sleepers and help them with their problems. Furthermore, 60% of street sleepers received a monthly CSSA allowance amounting to \$2,400 a month which was insufficient to cover their basic living expenses of around \$2,900 a month. Many street sleepers who lived in sub-divided units had reverted to street sleeping because they could not afford the high rent. In this connection, he moved the following motion:

"根據社會福利署的紀錄，露宿者的人數由2011年的487人升至2016年12月底的908人，增幅高達九成。據政府的支援政策，現時全港共有630個資助或自負盈虧的宿位，可供所有單身人士申請入住。然而，只能惠及三分之二的露宿者。露宿者宿位長期不足，而且宿期過短，上限只為半年，社工難以在短時間內協助露宿者脫離露宿生活。與此同時，1999年因經濟下滑，政府將綜合社會保障援助("綜援")津貼大幅削減11%，但一直未有補回。另外，領取綜援並曾在獲得租金津貼下入住過私人劏房的露宿者，有六成因業主加租而未能繼續承擔高昂租金，最終重回街頭露宿。

就此，本委員會要求政府：

- (一) 增加露宿者宿舍的資助宿位數目；
- (二) 延長露宿者宿舍的宿期至一年或以上；
- (三) 補回1999年曾削減的11%綜援津貼；
- (四) 研究局部租務管制。"

(Translation)

"According to the record of the Social Welfare Department, the number of street sleepers rose from 487 in 2011 to 908 at the end of December 2016, representing a substantial increase of 90%. Under the Government's support policy, a total of 630 subsidized or self-financing hostel places are currently available in Hong Kong for application by all singletons. However, they enable only two-thirds of the street sleepers to benefit. The persistent shortage of hostel places for street sleepers, as well as the excessively short accommodation period which is capped at merely half a year, makes it difficult for social workers to help street sleepers give up street sleeping within a short period of time. Meanwhile, the Government has never made up for the substantial cut of 11% in the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance ("CSSA") allowances due to the economic downturn in 1999. Moreover, 60% of the street sleepers who were on CSSA, received rent allowance and lived in sub-divided units have eventually reverted to street sleeping because they can no longer afford the high rent as a result of the rent increase by the landlord.

In this connection, this Panel requests the Government to:

1. increase the number of subsidized hostel places for street sleepers;
2. extend the accommodation period of the hostels for street sleepers to one year or more;
3. make up for the 11% cut in the CSSA allowances in 1999; and
4. study partial rent control."

41. The Chairman put the motion to vote. All members present voted for the motion. The Chairman declared that the motion was carried.

42. Dr Fernando CHEUNG moved the following motion:

"本委員會同意由大學及4個服務無家者的民間組織在'全港無家者人口統計行動(HOPE)2015'提出的7項建議，包括設立綜合支援住宿服務、即時增加資助宿位及延長資助宿舍住宿期、制訂過渡房屋政策及興建臨時房屋、關注無家者健康及增設有醫護人員的流動醫療車服務、定期進行全港無家者人口統計、制訂無家者政策，以及制訂租金管制政策等，以回應無家者的基本需要。"

(Translation)

"This Panel agrees to the seven recommendations put forward in the 'Homeless Outreach Population Estimation Hong Kong 2015' by universities and four community organizations that provide services to the homeless, which include providing integrated support services on accommodation; immediately increasing the number of subsidized hostel places and extending the accommodation period of subsidized hostels; formulating policies on transitional housing and constructing temporary housing; paying attention to the health conditions of the homeless and introducing services of mobile dispensaries with medical staff; conducting territory-wide homeless street counts on a regular basis; drawing up policies for the homeless; and formulating policies on rental control, etc., so as to address basic needs of the homeless.

43. The Chairman put the motion to vote. All members present voted for the motion. The Chairman declared that the motion was carried.

44. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that the Administration should include its response to the carried motions moved by Mr Michael TIEN and him in its paper for the Joint Meeting.

45. Dr LAU Siu-lai moved the following motion:

"本委員會要求警方及食物環境衛生署在採取驅趕露宿者之行動時，未得露宿者同意下不得清走及搶奪露宿者之財物。"

(Translation)

"This Panel requests the Police and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department not to remove or snatch belongings of street sleepers without

their consent during eviction exercises against them."

46. The Chairman put the motion to vote. All members present voted for the motion. The Chairman declared that the motion was carried.

47. Dr LAU Siu-lai said that sprinkling of ammonia powder during street cleansing operations at the dwelling places by FEHD caused nuisance to street sleepers and ammonia powder did not serve any cleansing purpose. In this connection, she moved the following motion:

"本委員會要求食物環境衛生署停止灑臭粉於露宿者棲息的地方。"

(Translation)

"This Panel requests the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department to stop sprinkling ammonia powder at the dwelling places of street sleepers."

48. The Chairman put the motion to vote. The majority of members present voted for the motion. The Chairman declared that the motion was carried.

49. Dr LAU Siu-lai said that the relevant government departments should reach out to street sleepers in order to understand their needs. In this connection, she moved the following motion:

"本委員會提議社會福利署、警方及食物環境衛生署相關工作人員往露宿者聚居地視察及露宿一晚，以理解及體驗露宿者苦況，以及建立同理心，適切地向露宿者提供支援。"

(Translation)

"This Panel suggests that the relevant staff of the Social Welfare Department, the Police and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department should visit and stay overnight at the dwelling places where street sleepers usually gather, so as to understand and experience the plight of street sleepers, and show empathy and provide them with appropriate support."

50. The Chairman put the motion to vote. The majority of members present voted for the motion. The Chairman declared that the motion was carried.

Action

51. Dr LAU Siu-lai said that the Administration should not evict street sleepers in the absence of appropriate support. In this connection, she moved the following motion:

"本委員會要求社會福利署、食物環境衛生署及警方建立溝通平台；在驅趕露宿者之同時，向他們提供充分支援及臨時棲息地；在沒有適切支援時，停止驅趕露宿者。"

(Translation)

"This Panel requests the Social Welfare Department, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the Police to establish a communication platform, provide street sleepers with adequate support and temporary accommodation at the same time of eviction, and stop evicting them in the absence of appropriate support."

52. The Chairman put the motion to vote. All members present voted for the motion. The Chairman declared that the motion was carried.

53. Dr LAU Siu-lai said that she had received complaints from some street sleepers that they were assaulted by the Police during eviction. In this connection, she moved the following motion:

"本委員會要求警方在巡查及驅趕露宿者行動時停止使用不必要之武力/暴力。"

(Translation)

"This Panel requests the Police to stop using unnecessary force/violence during their inspections and eviction exercises against street sleepers."

54. The Chairman put the motion to vote. The majority of members present voted for the motion. The Chairman declared that the motion was carried.

V. Any other business

55. In light of the MTR arson attack happened on 11 February 2017, the Chairman suggested that the Panel should hold a special meeting to discuss "Looking into mental health services and relevant welfare issues in light of the MTR arson attack". Members agreed.

56. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:59 pm.

Action

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
24 May 2017