

立法會
Legislative Council

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seen by the Administration)

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Panel on Welfare Services

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 14 January 2019, at 10:45 am
in Conference Room 3 of the Legislative Council Complex

Members present : Hon KWONG Chun-yu (Chairman)
Hon SHIU Ka-chun (Deputy Chairman)
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP
Hon CHAN Chi-chuen
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, SBS, MH, JP
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki
Hon KWOK Wai-keung, JP
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH
Hon Alvin YEUNG
Hon Andrew WAN Siu-kin
Hon CHU Hoi-dick
Hon Wilson OR Chong-shing, MH
Hon YUNG Hoi-yan
Dr Hon Pierre CHAN
Hon LUK Chung-hung, JP
Dr Hon CHENG Chung-tai

Members attending : Hon WU Chi-wai, MH
Hon IP Kin-yuen

Public Officers attending : Items III to IV

Dr LAW Chi-kwong, GBS, JP
Secretary for Labour and Welfare
Labour and Welfare Bureau

Item III

Ms Carol YIP, JP
Director of Social Welfare
Social Welfare Department

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

Item IV

Mr David LEUNG, JP
Commissioner for Rehabilitation
Labour and Welfare Bureau

Mr KOK Che-leung
Assistant Director (Rehabilitation and Medical
Social Services)
Social Welfare Department

Miss CHAN Lai-chu
Chief Social Work Officer (Rehabilitation and
Medical Social Services)¹
Social Welfare Department

Item V

Mr Caspar TSUI, JP
Under Secretary for Labour and Welfare
Labour and Welfare Bureau

Ms PANG Kit-ling
Assistant Director (Family and Child Welfare)
Social Welfare Department

Ms Mabel SIU
Chief Social Work Officer (Family and Child
Welfare)¹
Social Welfare Department

**Clerk in
attendance**

: Ms Wendy JAN
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 Nos. CB(2)491/18-19(01), CB(2)541/18-19(01) and CB(2)579/18-19(01) to (02)]

Members noted that the following papers had been issued since the last meeting:

- (a) letter dated 18 December 2018 from Dr Fernando CHEUNG requesting the Panel to discuss the progress of the Special Needs Trust (LC Paper No. CB(2)491/18-19(01));
- (b) joint letter dated 4 January 2019 from Mr KWOK Wai-keung and Mr LUK Chung-hung requesting the Panel to discuss the impact of raising the eligible age for elderly Comprehensive Social Security Assistance ("CSSA") from 60 to 65 on support services for CSSA recipients aged between 60 and 64 and on providers of such services (LC Paper No. CB(2) 541/18-19(01));
- (c) letter dated 10 January 2019 from Mr LEUNG Che-cheung requesting the Panel to discuss urgently about raising the eligible age for elderly CSSA from 60 to 65 (LC Paper No. CB(2) 579/18-19(01)); and
- (d) letter dated 11 January 2019 from Mr Andrew WAN requesting the Panel to discuss welfare of elderly persons aged between 60 and 64 as soon as possible (LC Paper No. CB(2) 579/18-19(02)).

2. The Chairman invited members to express views on members' requests to hold a special meeting to discuss matters in relation to raising the eligible age for elderly CSSA from 60 to 65 ("the new policy") and welfare of elderly persons aged between 60 and 64 ("the young elderly").

3. Mr KWOK Wai-keung said that the new policy should not be introduced in the absence of statutory retirement age and a comprehensive scheme to help elderly persons to achieve self-reliance. He called on the Administration to review the new policy.

4. Mr LUK Chung-hung criticized the Administration for not conducting any consultation exercise on the new policy and being disrespectful to the young elderly. He urged the Administration to shelve the new policy and conduct a comprehensive review of welfare policies for the young elderly.

5. Given that the public had not reached a consensus on the new policy, Mr LEUNG Che-cheung said that the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong considered that the new policy should not be introduced, and that the Administration should conduct consultation exercise on the new policy with a view to forging consensus on it.

6. Mr Andrew WAN said that the Democratic Party had all along objected to the new policy because of its adverse impacts on the young elderly. He considered that the new policy was too harsh on the young elderly and called on the Administration to shelve it.

7. Dr KWOK Ka-ki said that the Administration should not implement the new policy before sufficient welfare support for the young elderly had been put in place. He also said that the Administration should conduct consultation exercise on the new policy before its implementation.

8. Mr Alvin YEUNG said that the Panel and various political parties had indicated their objection to the new policy. Besides, Dr LAM Ching-choi, Member of the Executive Council, also considered that there was room for improvement in the new policy. He further said that the Civic Party called on the Administration to put a halt to the implementation of the new policy.

9. Mr POON Siu-ping said that the young elderly might have difficulty in seeking employment and there were divergent views in society on the new policy. Pointing out that the Panel had opposed the new policy, he called on the Administration to reconsider the new policy.

10. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen expressed strong dissatisfaction with the Chief Executive's remark that the new policy had obtained Members' approval as the 2018-2019 Budget which included the relevant proposed arrangement had been approved by the Legislative Council. Mr CHAN and Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung appealed to all Members to vote against the upcoming Appropriation Bill if the Administration continued to bundle new policies with the Appropriation Bill.

11. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said that under the new policy, the young elderly would no longer be eligible for elderly CSSA but would only be

paid the CSSA standard rate for able-bodied adults, which was around \$1,000 less than that for able-bodied elderly persons a month. He was of the view that the Administration had paid no regard to the young elderly.

12. Mr Wilson OR said that it was shameful for the Government to reduce its welfare support for the young elderly notwithstanding it had a huge fiscal surplus. Expressing objection to the new policy, he called on the Administration to withdraw it.

13. Given that the Panel had passed several motions at its previous meetings urging the Administration to shelve the new policy and the Panel would discuss the new policy at its special meeting, Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that the Administration should not implement the new policy on 1 February 2019.

14. The Deputy Chairman remarked that the Administration had not consulted the welfare sector on the new policy and wondered whether it understood the impact of the new policy on the affected families. Given that the Administration had planned to implement the new policy on 1 February 2019, he hoped that the Panel could hold a special meeting as soon as possible.

15. The Chairman concluded that a special meeting would be held on 28 January 2019 at 10:45 am to discuss the new policy and welfare support for the young elderly. The Chairman then invited Secretary for Labour and Welfare ("SLW") to respond to members' views about the new policy.

16. SLW said that it was not the Government's policy to force those who were incapable of working, irrespective of their age, to take up employment. Hong Kong, like many other countries, had no statutory retirement age. In these countries, the age at which a person was eligible for welfare assistance or pension was usually regarded as the retirement age. SLW added that the Administration had enhanced the Employment Programme for the Middle-aged which had become the Employment Programme for the Elderly and Middle-aged in September 2018 to encourage employers to hire persons aged 60 or above. The Administration could not accede to the request for not implementing the new policy on 1 February 2019.

17. In response to the Chairman's enquiry about the Administration's support for the young elderly affected by the new policy, SLW said that the Administration would study the views received on the new policy and explore feasible measures to assist the young elderly in need. The Administration welcomed further views on the CSSA Scheme and

employment support for the young elderly.

18. Given that the public at large and various political parties had objected to the new policy, the Chairman hoped that the Administration would review the new policy and brief members at the special meeting on specific assistance measures for those affected by the new policy.

II. Items for discussion at the next meeting

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)550/18-19(01) to (02)]

19. Members agreed to discuss at the next meeting scheduled for 11 February 2019 the following items:

- (a) Policies on preventing abuse of elderly persons and of persons with intellectual disability; and
- (b) Review of supplements and special grants under the CSSA Scheme.

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20. Regarding the item in paragraph 19(a) above, Dr KWOK Ka-ki requested the Administration to provide information on the latest development of the relocation of the Shine Skill Centre (Kwun Tong).

21. Members also agreed that a special meeting would be held on 22 February 2019 to receive public views on "Support for carers of elderly persons and of persons with disabilities".

III. Proposal to create a Senior Principal Executive Officer post in the Social Welfare Department to head the new Planning and Development Branch

[LC Paper No. CB(2)550/18-19(03)]

22. At the invitation of the Chairman, SLW briefed members on the Administration's proposal to create one permanent directorate post of Senior Principal Executive Officer ("SPEO") (D2), to be designated as Assistant Director (Planning and Development) ("AD(PD)"), to head a new Planning and Development ("PD") Branch of the Social Welfare Department ("SWD") for strengthening the planning, coordination and implementation of capital works projects of welfare premises, and formulating departmental policies and procedures on all matters relating to project planning, implementation as well as management and maintenance for the provision of welfare facilities.

Justifications for the proposed post creation

23. Mr POON Siu-ping enquired whether the duties of AD(PD) would overlap with those of other Assistant Directors ("ADs") in SWD and whether there would be a reshuffle of duties among ADs with the creation of the new AD(PD) post. Dr Fernando CHEUNG was of the view that as the relevant ADs in SWD were already undertaking the planning work for various welfare services, the creation of the new AD(PD) post was not necessary.

24. SLW responded that AD(PD)'s duties would not overlap with those of other ADs in SWD. AD(PD) would lead the new PD Branch to implement measures for securing more premises for operating welfare services as well as planning and implementing works projects undertaken by SWD. Other ADs in SWD would focus on the planning, development and implementation of welfare service programmes. In view of the breadth, diversity and complexity of the tasks under the purview of the new AD(PD) post and the need for better coordination with various bureaux/departments ("B/Ds"), the proposed post creation was necessary.

Planning and implementation of welfare facilities projects

25. The Chairman enquired whether AD(PD)'s duties involved securing sites which had not yet entered the planning stage for provision of welfare services. SLW replied that various management levels in the Labour and Welfare Bureau ("LWB") and SWD would be involved in securing suitable sites for such provision. With the creation of the new AD(PD) post, the coordination of capital works projects of welfare facilities would be greatly enhanced, thereby facilitating acquisition of suitable sites or premises for welfare facilities in a more efficient manner.

26. The Deputy Chairman pointed out that there had been substantial delays in the implementation of a number of welfare facility projects. He asked for the reasons for such delays and the number of residential care homes for the elderly ("RCHEs") to be provided in the next 10 years. He also asked how the proposed post creation could enhance the planning and implementation of welfare facility projects. Mr KWOK Wai-keung remarked that the proposed post creation would not be cost-effective if there was no site available for the provision of welfare facilities. In this connection, he sought information on the sites which had been earmarked for provision of welfare facilities in the coming few years.

27. SLW responded that LWB had secured 10 sites in 2017-2018 for the provision of RCHEs. As such, it was essential to strengthen SWD's capability and manpower for taking forward these projects. In addition,

the proposed post creation would facilitate high-level coordination and negotiation with senior management of relevant B/Ds in securing more suitable sites or premises for providing welfare services, as well as bringing about more systematic and efficient project planning and implementation. SLW also said that the Administration recognized that there was room for improvement in the provision of welfare facilities and would strive to expedite the process of acquiring welfare facilities.

28. Pointing out that the Administration was unable to assess the extent to which the proposed post creation would enhance the efficiency in planning and implementing welfare facility projects, Dr KWOK Ka-ki opined that a supernumerary post should be created instead. He also considered it more suitable for an officer from the professional grades (e.g. estate surveyor) to head the new PD Branch. As the proposed new AD(PD) post would be taken up by an SPEO, Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed concern that the officer who took up the post might adopt an administrative and cost-based approach rather than a people-oriented approach in the planning of welfare services.

29. SLW responded that it was difficult to quantify the time saved by the proposed post creation in implementing capital works projects of welfare premises. The workload in relation to planning and development of welfare facility projects had increased substantially and would continue to grow. In addition, the consultation and coordination services which were previously provided by the Policy and Project Co-ordination Unit of the Chief Secretary for Administration's Office to applicant non-governmental organizations ("NGOs") under the Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses ("Special Scheme") had been taken up by SWD. It was imperative for an officer at SPEO level with strong organizational and leadership capabilities as well as rich senior management experience in the civil service to give high-level steer to the new PD branch.

30. Director of Social Welfare ("DSW") supplemented that the new PD Branch, to be headed by the proposed AD(PD), would be underpinned by three work sections, namely Project Planning Section ("PPS"), Architectural Section ("Arch Section"), and Premises Management and Maintenance Section. The workload of the existing PPS and Arch Section was very heavy. The total number of planned projects under the planning and coordination of PPS had increased from 183 in March 2018 to 199 in September 2018, and the Arch Section was providing technical advisory support for about 130 projects. In response to Mr KWOK Wai-keung's concern as to whether the proposed post creation would achieve value-for-money, DSW undertook to brief members, after the creation of the new AD(PD) post for two years, on the development of site

acquisition and the progress of the projects undertaken by PPS and the Arch Section under the new PD Branch.

Provision of welfare services in non-residential premises

31. Noting that the Food and Health Bureau would set up a public market with floor area of around 100 000 square feet in a commercial building in Tung Chung, Mr CHU Hoi-dick asked whether SWD would also actively explore the setting up of large welfare facilities in non-residential premises. SLW responded that large welfare facilities, such as RCHEs, required large footprint, say around 20 000 square feet, which made it difficult to identify suitable non-residential premises for such provision. Moreover, it might be more convenient for RCHEs to be located in residential areas. As regards community service facilities which required smaller footprint, the Administration could explore the provision of such services in commercial or industrial premises. Dr Fernando CHEUNG opined that instead of constructing large RCHEs, the Administration should consider setting up small and homely RCHEs.

32. Noting that the Administration would explore the feasibility of purchasing premises for the operation and provision of elderly and rehabilitation services, Dr CHENG Chung-tai was concerned that the purchase of commercial premises might give rise to possible transfer of benefits between the Government and the owners of the premises concerned. It would also be awkward for the Government to buy back the properties which it had sold to the Link Real Estate Investment Trust. In this connection, he enquired about the directions and guidelines for selecting the premises to be purchased.

33. SLW responded that the Government had purchased commercial premises for provision of public services in the past. As it would take a considerable long time to construct welfare facilities, purchase of premises for such use could enable faster provision of welfare services. The feasibility study on purchase of premises for provision of welfare facilities was nearly completed and relevant information would be available upon completion of the study. The Administration would consider setting up a working group comprising representatives from SWD, the Government Property Agency, etc., and with the advice from the Independent Commission Against Corruption, to ensure that the purchase of premises adhered to the principles on the proper use of public money.

Progress of the Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses

34. Mr LUK Chung-hung was concerned that 48 out of 60 projects under the Special Scheme were still at the planning stage. He enquired about the progress of these 48 projects, how the proposed post creation would help speed up the implementation of the projects under the Special Scheme and whether key performance indicators would be set for addressing the shortage of premises for provision of welfare services after the post creation.

35. SLW responded that as the number of welfare facility projects, including the projects under the Special Scheme, funded by the Lotteries Fund ("LF") had increased by several folds in 2019, the officers responsible for implementing such projects were already overloaded. The setting up of the new PD Branch would enhance the efficiency of securing sites for providing welfare services. As regards the projects under the Special Scheme, the progress would be affected when NGO applicants needed to revise or engage pro-bono professional services in preparing their proposals. The process would also be prolonged if applications for modification of lease conditions or amendments of plot ratio, etc. were required. It was therefore difficult to assess the reduction of time in implementing the projects under the Special Scheme as a result of the creation of the new AD(PD) post.

36. Mr LUK Chung-hung further urged LWB to liaise with relevant B/Ds to relax certain requirements, particularly the requirement for plot ratio, so as to expedite the implementation of the projects under the Special Scheme. SLW responded that the Administration had encountered difficulties in obtaining support from some District Council members in increasing the plot ratio for welfare facilities because they were concerned about the impact of the projects on transport facilities in the districts.

Imposing land sales conditions for provision of welfare facility projects

37. Noting that the Administration would impose land sale conditions on suitable land sale site projects to require developers to design and construct bare-shell premises for the proposed welfare facilities, Mr CHU Hoi-dick sought examples of site projects in the 2018-2019 Land Sale Programme which had been imposed with the aforesaid land sale conditions. SLW responded that such land sale conditions had been incorporated in three land sale site projects in Tai Po and Kai Tak Development area respectively. SWD would continue to maintain close contact with the Development Bureau and propose provision of welfare

facilities in suitable land sale site projects.

Slippage of the project in converting ex-Kei Leung Primary School into an integrated welfare services complex

38. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen said that according to a media report, the Administration planned to convert ex-Kei Leung Primary School ("KLPS") at Leung King Estate, Tuen Mun into an integrated welfare services complex ("conversion project") in 2011. While the service complex was expected to commence service in 2018, the relevant works was substantially delayed because SWD had failed to obtain the approval of the Owners' Corporation of Leung King Estate ("the OC concerned"), which was a Tenant Purchase Scheme ("TPS") estate, at the early stage of the consultancy study for using the parking spaces as loading zone. He wondered whether the proposed post creation would help avoid recurrence of similar incidents in the future.

39. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that Leung King Estate had become a TPS estate in 2001 and the OC concerned had already given its consent to the conversion project in 2013. SWD should have sought the approval of the OC concerned regarding the loading zone at the initial stage. In his view, the serious slippage of the construction of the welfare service complex was due to SWD's dereliction of duty. He said that he would not support the proposed post creation unless LWB and SWD could ensure that cases similar to that of KLPS would not recur in the future.

40. DSW responded that SWD had already obtained the consent of the OC concerned in January 2018 and the Housing Department ("HD") had applied to the Lands Department in March 2018 for waiver from the stipulated uses on the land lease. The Lotteries Fund Advisory Committee had given its support for the funding in respect of the conversion project in December 2018. SWD had endeavoured to take timely follow-up actions. However, as many parties were involved, considerable time was required to sort things out. SLW added that, as the proposed post creation would enhance coordination and negotiation with senior management of relevant B/Ds on the implementation of capital works projects of welfare premises, recurrence of cases similar to that of KLPS could be minimized.

Conclusion

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41. Dr Fernando CHEUNG requested the Administration to provide a detailed account of the delay in the conversion project to the Panel before submitting the staffing proposal to the Establishment Subcommittee ("ESC"). The Chairman concluded that most members present supported

in principle the submission of the relevant staffing proposal to ESC for consideration.

IV. Evaluation Study of the Pilot Scheme on On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)550/18-19(04) to (05)]

42. At the invitation of the Chairman, SLW briefed members on the major findings and recommendations of the evaluative study on the Pilot Scheme on On-site Pre-school Rehabilitation Services ("OPRS").

Provision of service coordinators for kindergartens

43. Mr IP Kin-yuen said that according to the final report of the evaluative study, one of the key success factors of OPRS was effective coordination among inter-disciplinary service teams, kindergartens ("KGs")/teachers and parents. However, KGs did not have sufficient manpower, in particular service coordinators, to ensure smooth coordination and communication among various parties. He asked how the Administration would address this issue.

44. SLW responded that the Administration had studied the provision of service coordinators for KGs. Given the great variance in the size of student population in KGs, ranging from a few to over 1 000, the Administration had difficulty with the proposal of providing service coordinators for KGs at this stage. In addition, the Administration had already announced that SWD would launch a new Pilot Scheme on Social Work Service for Pre-primary Institutions ("the Pilot Scheme") by phases in all subsidized/aided KGs, KG-cum-Child Care Centres ("CCCs") and CCCs for early identification and provision of assistance to pre-primary children and their families with welfare needs. Social work services would be provided for all children of pre-primary institutions (including those with special needs) having matched by service operators under the Pilot Scheme. The Administration would examine interface of this new Pilot Scheme with other services (including service for children with special needs), and decide the future service mode having regard to the experience gained during the implementation of the new Pilot Scheme.

45. Taking the view that service coordinators played a vital role in coordinating OPRS and monitoring the progress of children, Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that additional resources should be allocated to KGs for engaging service coordinators irrespective of the size of student population at individual KGs.

46. Regarding the Chairman's enquiry about whether service operators and allied health staff had been consulted on OPRS, SLW replied in the affirmative.

Rent subsidies and mobile training centres

47. Whilst welcoming the regularization of OPRS by the Administration, Mr Michael TIEN was concerned that some service operators had to rent additional places on their own expenses for providing OPRS. He suggested that the Administration should either subsidize their rental or provide them with training venues so as to relieve their financial burden and enable them to continue to provide OPRS. SLW responded that service operators were already provided with rent allowance. The Administration was exploring the option of purchasing premises for OPRS, so that such services could be provided in permanent venues.

48. Dr Fernando CHEUNG enquired about how mobile training centres would help ease the space constraint of service operators. SLW said that as some parents were unable to take their children to attend centre-based training and some KGs/KG-cum-CCCs did not have adequate space or equipment for activities such as fine motor skills training, mobile training centres could help overcome these constraints. Mr Michael TIEN further enquired about the timetable for establishing mobile training centres. SLW replied that the Administration had secured the necessary resources for service operators to implement the initiatives from 2019-2020 onwards if they were ready.

Enhancing support for children with special needs

49. In response to Mr POON Siu-ping's enquiry about the basis for increasing the number of OPRS places to 7 000 in October 2019, SLW said that the number of additional service places was set taking into account the manpower supply of allied health professionals when the Pilot Scheme on OPRS was launched in 2015. The Administration would consider the need for further increasing the number of service places having regard to the prevailing demand for OPRS and the manpower situation of the relevant allied health professionals.

50. Expressing concern that the unduly long waiting time for assessment might result in delay of timely intervention of children in need, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung urged the Administration to reduce the waiting time for assessment. Mr LEUNG and the Deputy Chairman also asked about the services provided for children with special needs who were waiting for assessment.

51. SLW responded that OPRS service operators might exercise flexibility to provide service for children with special needs who were waiting for assessments, but the number of those children served should not be more than 10% of the total number of children serviced. The Administration would implement through LF a pilot project to provide support for children in KGs or KG-cum-CCCs who showed signs of special needs and were waiting for assessment. The Administration would commence the study on the pilot project in 2019-2020. SLW also said that, in the 2018-2019 school year, SWD and the Education Bureau ("EDB") had enhanced the mechanism for information transfer from pre-school rehabilitation services ("PRS") units to primary schools, so that children identified as having special needs would continue to receive special attention and appropriate services when they proceeded to receive primary education. The Administration would explore whether and how transitional support for children from KGs to primary schools could be further strengthened.

Admin

52. In response to Mr POON Siu-ping's enquiry about the timetable for studying the interface issues between OPRS and early education and training centre ("EETC") service, SLW said that the study would be conducted when the waiting time of SWD's pre-school rehabilitation services had been substantially shortened. At the Deputy Chairman's request, SLW undertook to provide information on the number of children with special needs aged between two and six.

53. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung enquired about the collaboration between LWB and EDB in addressing the manpower shortage problems in primary and secondary schools for providing support for students with special needs. SLW responded that while EDB was responsible for the planning and provision of school-based educational psychology service for ordinary primary and secondary schools, SWD was concerned about the manpower supply of occupational therapists and physiotherapists in the welfare sector. In the light of acute manpower shortage of physiotherapists and occupational therapists in the welfare sector, SWD had implemented a training sponsorship scheme to provide funding for welfare NGOs to offer full tuition fee sponsorship to students enrolled in the master programme in Occupational Therapy and master programme in Physiotherapy launched by the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. The sponsored students must work in the NGOs concerned for at least three years upon graduation.

54. Dr Fernando CHEUNG took the view that the Administration should draw up plans for achieving zero waiting time for PRS. Given that OPRS could not meet the needs of children who were waiting for special training and care services provided by special child care centres

("SCCCs"), he urged the Administration to speed up the provision of SCCC places. Separately, as children with special needs could not continue to use OPRS when they went to primary school, he also urged the Administration to extend OPRS to primary school students with special needs.

55. SLW responded that the review of the Hong Kong Rehabilitation Programme Plan covered issues related to the long-term planning for rehabilitation services for pre-school children. According to the preliminary study on the supply and demand for PRS, with the additional supply of OPRS places, the Administration would be better placed to achieve zero waiting time for EETC services. However, the waiting time for SCCC services which targeted for children with moderate or severe disabilities could not be reduced substantially within a short period of time, as OPRS could only provide transitional support for these children and the setting up of SCCC would take time. As such, the Administration would consider if the planning and provision of service places for EETCs and SCCC could be adjusted to better meet the overall service demand.

(At 12:35 pm, the Chairman extended the meeting for 15 minutes beyond the appointed ending time to allow sufficient time for discussion.)

56. In response to the Chairman's enquiry about whether service operators were allowed to use the resources provided by the Administration to procure services, such as speech therapy services, SLW said that while most service providers provided such services direct, some of them might procure outside services to alleviate manpower shortage when necessary.

57. Mr KWOK Wai-keung enquired when the number of parents/relatives resource centres ("PRCs") would be increased from six to 19. Assistant Director (Rehabilitation and Medical Social Services) responded that an additional six PRCs would be provided in 2019 and another seven PRCs would be provided in 2020.

Staffing enhancement for inter-disciplinary service teams

58. Noting that the Administration would strengthen the establishment of inter-disciplinary service teams for providing OPRS, the Deputy Chairman and Mr POON Siu-ping sought information on (a) the number of additional speech therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, social workers, programme assistants and drivers to be provided for each inter-disciplinary service team; and (b) the number of staff in each of the grades mentioned in (a) above in an inter-disciplinary service team before and after the staffing enhancement for inter-disciplinary service teams.

Admin SLW undertook to provide the required information when available.

V. Review of Compassionate Rehousing

[LC Paper No. CB(2)550/18-19(06)]

59. At the invitation of the Chairman, Under Secretary for Labour and Welfare ("USLW") briefed members on the progress of the review conducted by SWD on Compassionate Rehousing ("CR") case processing of social welfare service units ("SSUs").

Number of Compassionate Rehousing cases

60. Mr KWOK Wai-keung and Dr Fernando CHEUNG pointed out that although the rents for private housing had continued to rise and the waiting time for public rental housing ("PRH") had become increasingly longer in recent years, the number of CR cases had dropped from around 2 300 cases in 2012-2013 to around 1 200 cases in 2016-2017. Mr KWOK opined that the reduction in the number of CR cases was a result of higher assessment standards and tighter vetting requirement of CR cases.

61. Assistant Director (Family and Child Welfare) ("AD(Family and Child Welfare)") responded that the Administration had not tightened the vetting requirement of CR cases. SWD and HD had formed liaison groups to discuss how the Administration could assist needy families or individuals in addressing their housing needs by other means apart from CR. Given that the supply of PRH in both the extended urban and urban areas had increased in recent years, some families or individuals who had requested for CR in these areas had been allocated PRH through the Central Waiting List system. USLW added that the provision of other services, including financial assistance and referrals to suitable residential services or social housing schemes, such as the Community Housing Movement, had helped solve the accommodation problems of some families or individuals in need, thereby causing a reduction in the number of CR cases.

62. Noting that the number of CR cases recommended by SWD were around 1 900 in 2013-2014 and 852 in 2017-2018, Mr CHU Hoi-dick enquired about the number of CR applications received by SWD in the same period. AD(Family and Child Welfare) responded that the number of CR cases received by SWD in 2013-2014 and 2017-2018 were 2 206 and 990 respectively. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that to his understanding, the 990 cases did not include cases which had been rejected by social workers. AD(Family and Child Welfare) clarified that

the social workers concerned were required to report to SWD all CR cases, including those rejected cases.

Processing and assessments of Compassionate Rehousing cases

63. Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed concern that CR was not open for application by families or individuals who had imminent housing needs but were unable to solve their accommodation problems themselves, and that their requests for CR were subject to social workers' recommendations. Mr Michael TIEN said that some social workers of SSUs had relayed to him that more weight was given to medical factors in the CR assessment. He opined that social and family factors were also important factors in the assessment. Mr KWOK Wai-keung was worried that if the accommodation problems of CR applicants were left unresolved, it might result in health and family problems. Noting that the quota of CR had not been used up, he called on the Administration to arrange CR for eligible applicants as soon as possible. Mr CHU Hoi-dick enquired whether the Administration would aim at exhausting the quota of CR so as to assist more families or individuals in need.

64. AD(Family and Child Welfare) responded that in assessing CR cases, social workers would consider applicants' medical factors in tandem with their social factors. To facilitate CR case processing, the Administration would deploy additional manpower to each district in the second quarter of 2019 to review the CR cases and collect social workers' difference in views on processing CR cases, if any, with a view to aligning the assessment standards.

65. Dr Fernando CHEUNG was dissatisfied that the Administration commenced the review of CR in 2016, and yet, there were still inconsistencies in assessing CR cases. He called on the Administration to compare CR cases handled by social workers in various districts in the past few years and analyse the reasons for the inconsistencies. Mr CHU Hoi-dick urged the Administration to consider processing CR cases under a centralized mechanism so as to avoid inconsistencies in assessment.

66. USLW responded that the proposed enhancement measures sought to improve CR case processing. These measures included reviewing the workflow and guidelines in processing CR cases as well as defining the role and duties of various staff, and enhancing the understanding of various stakeholders and the public on the purpose and nature of CR. The Administration would also align the assessment standards and additional manpower had been allocated to the SWD's district offices for processing CR cases.

67. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung expressed concern about the unprofessional attitude of some social workers in handling CR cases. He said that neither did they inform the applicants of the reasons for rejecting their applications nor did they make any attempt to offer the applicants assistance. He was also given to understand that HD applied stringent requirement in approving CR cases. He urged the Administration to tackle the problem. AD(Family and Child Welfare) responded that SWD would take necessary actions for cases concerning the attitude of social workers in handling CR cases, if any.

(With the consent of all members present, the Chairman extended the meeting at 12:56 pm for 15 minutes beyond the extended ending time.)

Setting up of specialized teams for processing Compassionate Rehousing cases

68. The Deputy Chairman opined that the Administration did not collect the views of social workers on CR case processing in a proper manner. According to Hong Kong Social Workers' General Union, SWD had seriously distorted their views about the setting up of specialized teams ("STs") for processing CR cases and SWD had further refused to discuss the feasibility of setting up STs on the basis that social workers had divergent views on it. He also said that social workers of NGOs who were responsible for processing CR cases were currently under great pressure as some CR applicants had lodged complaints against the social workers who had rejected their applications and some of these complaints were found substantiated. In this connection, he asked how the Administration would assist these social workers in relieving their stress arising from handling CR cases.

69. USLW responded that SWD conducted focus group meetings in March 2017 and January 2018 to collect views from social workers of NGOs and of relevant service units under SWD who were required to process CR cases. Participants of these focus group meetings had divergent views on forming STs. AD(Family and Child Welfare) supplemented that from September to November 2018, SWD consulted relevant stakeholders including relevant SWD staff again on the proposed enhancement measures and the setting up of STs. During the consultation exercise, stakeholders did not make specific recommendations on the mode of operation of STs and most of the views collected were against the setting up of STs. Nevertheless, SWD adopted an open attitude towards NGOs using their available resources to set up STs.

Allocation of public rental housing to eligible compassionate rehousing applicants

Admin 70. Mr Michael TIEN was of the view that families or individuals in need of CR should be given priority in PRH allocation and a maximum waiting period for allocating PRH to eligible CR applicants should be set. AD(Family and Child Welfare) responded that the waiting period of eligible CR applicants for PRH varied from case to case, depending on the circumstances of each case. HD would arrange CR for eligible applicants as early as practicable after receiving recommendations from SWD. USLW said that SWD would make recommendation to HD on cases warranting CR in around three weeks upon receipt of the necessary documents. At Mr TIEN's request, the Administration undertook to provide information on the time taken by HD in allocating PRH to eligible CR applicants.

Provision of revised paper on the review of Compassionate Rehousing

Admin 71. Mr Michael TIEN, Dr Fernando CHEUNG and the Deputy Chairman took the view that the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)550/18-19(06)) was too flimsy failing to provide concrete measures to facilitate the processing of CR. Mr TIEN requested the Administration to provide a revised paper on the review of CR which should include the assessment standards of and the workflow and guidelines for processing CR cases. The Deputy Chairman said that the revised paper should also include the number of CR cases received and recommended by SWD as well as the number of CR cases approved by HD in the past few years.

Motion

72. Mr Michael TIEN moved the following motion:

"體恤安置為有迫切房屋需要的市民提供房屋援助，然而政府當局提交的檢討文件內容空泛，欠缺具體優化措施，難以讓委員作詳細討論及提出改善建議。本委員會促請政府提供詳細的體恤安置評估準則，以及處理這些個案的流程和指引。"

(Translation)

"Compassionate rehousing ("CR") aims to provide housing assistance to members of the public who have imminent housing needs. However, the paper provided by the Administration on the review of CR is vague in content and fails to provide any concrete

enhancement measures, rendering it difficult for members to have thorough discussions and put forth improvement proposals. This Panel urges the Government to provide details on the assessment standards of CR cases as well as the workflow and guidelines for processing these cases."

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

VI. Any other business

74. The Chairman suggested and members agreed that a special meeting would be held on 19 January 2019 to discuss and receive public views on "Consultancy Study on the Long-term Development of Child Care Services".

75. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:11 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
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