

**立法會**  
***Legislative Council***

LC Paper No. CB(2)1863/18-19

(These minutes have been  
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/WS

**Panel on Welfare Services**

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

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

**Members attending** : Dr Hon Junius HO Kwan-yiu, JP  
Hon HO Kai-ming

**Public Officers : Items III & IV  
attending**

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

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

Item III

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

Miss Leonia TAI, JP  
Deputy Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare) 1  
Labour and Welfare Bureau

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

Mr Vincent LIU, JP  
Government Property Administrator  
Government Property Agency

Mr LAM Chik-man  
Chief Property Manager (Acquisition, Allocation &  
Disposal)  
Government Property Agency

Item IV

Mr Johann WONG, JP  
Deputy Secretary for Labour and Welfare (Welfare) 2  
Labour and Welfare Bureau

Ms Michelle LAM  
Assistant Director (Social Security)  
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

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Action

**I. Information paper(s) issued since the last meeting**  
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1552/18-19(01)]

Members noted that a letter dated 27 May 2019 from Dr Fernando CHEUNG requesting the Panel to discuss the work progress of the Commission on Children had been issued since the last meeting.

**II. Items for discussion at the next meeting**  
[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1587/18-19(01) to (02)]

2. Members agreed that a joint meeting of the Panel on Welfare Services and the Panel on Home Affairs would be held on 8 July 2019 to discuss the following items:

- (a) Language support services and dedicated outreach services teams for ethnic minorities;
- (b) Emergency welfare measures and community services for handling typhoons; and
- (c) Support for divorced families and recovery of maintenance payments.

Members also agreed to cancel the next regular meeting of the Panel scheduled for 8 July 2019 at 10:45 a.m.

*(Post-meeting note: On the instruction of the Chairman of the Panel on Welfare Services and the Chairman of the Panel on Home Affairs, the above joint meeting had been cancelled.)*

### **III. Purchase of premises for provision of welfare facilities**

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1587/18-19(03)]

3. The Chairman drew members' attention to Rule 83A of the Rules of Procedures regarding personal pecuniary interest to be disclosed. He reminded members to declare interests in the matter under discussion, if any.

4. At the invitation of the Chairman, Secretary for Labour and Welfare ("SLW") briefed members on the Administration's proposal to purchase premises for the provision of welfare facilities as announced in the 2019-2020 Budget to help address the shortage of welfare facilities and premises.

#### Purchase of premises for welfare uses

5. Mr KWOK Wai-keung and Mr CHAN Chi-chuen expressed concern about whether sufficient premises could be secured for providing 158 welfare facilities as proposed by the Administration. The Chairman, Mr KWOK and Mr CHAN enquired whether suitable premises had already been identified. Noting that the Administration could only acquire 63 premises instead of 86 premises as planned in its previous premises purchase exercise implemented in 1995, Mr CHAN further asked whether the Administration had analysed the reasons why it was unable to purchase the target number of premises in its previous purchase exercise.

6. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung pointed out that as there was limited supply of private properties in some districts such as Tin Shui Wai, it might be difficult to find suitable premises for the provision of welfare facilities in these districts.

7. SLW responded that the Administration would strive to purchase premises for accommodating all the proposed welfare facilities but it might be difficult to find suitable premises for certain types of welfare facilities which were subject to location constraints. Citing sub-bases of Neighbourhood Elderly Centres ("NECs") as an example, SLW said that these sub-bases should not be located far away from the NECs concerned. SLW further said that the Administration would start looking for suitable premises after it had secured the funding approval from the Finance Committee ("FC") and completed the internal procedures. The Administration would not disclose any information on the premises under consideration in order to avoid jacking up of the selling prices by property

owners.

8. Dr CHENG Chung-tai enquired whether the Administration would review the number of premises to be purchased having regard to the provision of welfare facilities under redevelopment projects in the next few years. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen, Mr POON Siu-ping and Mr Michael TIEN also asked whether the Administration had taken account of the demand for and the utilization rate of welfare services as well as the planned provision of welfare facilities when considering the number of premises to be purchased and the types of welfare facilities to be provided.

9. SLW responded that as most redevelopment projects would take more than 10 years to complete, the purchase exercise would enable faster provision of welfare facilities. SLW further said that there would be more than 100 projects in the coming 10 years, involving around 300 welfare facilities. The Administration had taken into account the availability of these welfare facilities, the demographic structure, the demand for and utilization rate of relevant welfare services in various districts when proposing the number of premises to be purchased.

10. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung enquired whether the welfare facilities proposed under the purchase exercise were in addition to those announced in the Chief Executive's Policy Address 2018. SLW responded in the affirmative.

11. Given that the floor area of some proposed NECs under the purchase exercise was rather small, Mr HO Kai-ming expressed concern that these NECs might not satisfy the needs of service users. He further expressed concern that elderly persons might have difficulties in commuting to some of these NECs as they might be located in industrial areas which could not be accessed directly by public transport. Considering that some of the vacant premises of the Link Real Estate Investment Trust ("Link REIT") were located near public rental housing ("PRH") estates and the selling prices of these premises might be lower, Mr HO asked whether the Administration would purchase these premises for provision of NECs.

12. SLW responded that the proposed setting up of the 48 NECs and seven District Elderly Community Centres ("DECCs") in the premises acquired through the purchase exercise were sub-bases for meeting the shortfall of NEC/DECC services in the districts. Given that the sub-bases of these NECs/DECCs should be close to the NECs/DECCs concerned for the convenience of service users and many NECs/DECCs were located in

old residential areas, the Administration would not preclude the possibility of accommodating these sub-bases in the premises of Link REIT. However, the chance of purchasing properties of Link REIT for provision of welfare facilities was slim.

13. SLW further said that premises in revitalized industrial buildings would be used for accommodating office premises of certain welfare facilities, but welfare facilities including elderly service facilities would not be accommodated in these buildings.

14. In the light of the acute shortage of residential care services, Dr Fernando CHEUNG opined that the Administration should consider purchasing premises for such provision. SLW responded that as residential care homes for the elderly and for persons with disabilities as well as other residential child care services usually took up significant floor area with more stringent technical and layout requirements, private premises might not be able to satisfy these requirements. These facilities were therefore not included in the list of welfare facilities for the purchase exercise.

15. The Chairman asked how the Administration would minimize the impact of the purchase exercise on the property market. SLW responded that the premises would be purchased over a period of three years in order to minimize the impact, if any, on the property market. Drawing reference to the total number of sale transactions of non-residential properties in 2018 which were around 400 units, Mr Michael TIEN said that the purchase exercise would account for around a yearly average of 12% of the total sale transactions over the three-year purchase period which was not an insignificant percentage to the whole property market. The Administration therefore should not underestimate the impact of the purchase exercise on the property market.

16. The Chairman considered the information on the shortfall of various welfare services and the distribution of welfare facilities among the 18 districts under the purchase exercise incomprehensive. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that in addition to the list of welfare facilities for the purchase exercise, the Administration should provide information on how the implementation of the Special Scheme on Privately Owned Sites for Welfare Uses ("Special Sites Scheme") and other planned welfare facilities would improve the supply of welfare facilities.

17. SLW responded that in the light of the uncertainties of some factors, it might not be suitable to release information on the planned welfare

facilities beyond 10 years. That said, the Administration would provide FC with the information on the 300 odd welfare facilities to be provided in the coming 10 years as well as the welfare facilities to be provided under Phase One of the Special Sites Scheme.

Operation mechanism of the purchase exercise

18. Dr CHENG Chung-tai opined that the operation mechanism of the purchase exercise should be transparent in order not to give an impression that the Government attempted to prop up the property market through the purchase exercise during economic downturn. In this connection, he enquired about how Members of the Legislative Council could monitor the work of the Steering Committee, which would be set up with the Director of Social Welfare ("DSW") as Chairman and the Government Property Administrator as member to oversee the conduct of the purchase exercise and make collective decisions on the purchase of premises.

19. SLW responded that purchasing premises from the private sector for the provision of public services was not unprecedented, and the Government Property Agency ("GPA") as well as relevant government departments had all along been responsible for such purchases in the past. There were established procedures to ensure procedural propriety in the process of the whole purchase exercise. Besides, all public officers involved in the exercise were required to declare interest.

20. DSW supplemented that a premises valuation committee would be set up under the operation mechanism. Various sub-committees comprising professional staff from the Social Welfare Department ("SWD"), GPA and the Architectural Services Department would also be set up to identify suitable premises, evaluate, make recommendations for and negotiate the purchases, etc. The Independent Commission Against Corruption was consulted on the operation mechanism and took the view that it was impartial and in line with the established regulations.

21. Dr Fernando CHEUNG considered it unacceptable to have only government representatives serving on the Steering Committee and its sub-committees. He urged that an independent monitoring mechanism should be put in place to prevent any possible corruption practices or conflicts of interests during the purchase exercise and to make sure that all premises were purchased at reasonable price level so as to ensure proper use of public money. He said that unless independent bodies were engaged in monitoring the purchase exercise, he would not support the Administration's funding proposal. In this connection, he requested the

Administration to provide FC with its response to such a request. He also took the view that it would undermine the monitoring role of Members on the use of public funds if the Administration would not seek FC's approval of funding on an item-by-item basis.

22. SLW responded that if the Administration had to secure FC's approval of the required funding for the purchase of individual premises, it was very likely that many of the purchases could not be made. He suggested that the Panel should be briefed on the progress of the purchase exercise on a yearly basis.

23. In response to the enquiry of the Chairman and Mr CHAN Chi-chuen about how the Administration could avoid purchasing the premises at unreasonable price level, Government Property Administrator responded that the professionally qualified valuation surveyors in the premises valuation committee would compare the selling price of the premises under consideration with the market prices of comparable properties in the vicinity and set an acceptable purchasing price for the premises concerned. GPA would not purchase a property at a price which was higher than the acceptable price.

24. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung was concerned that if the process of the purchase exercise was too lengthy, the Administration might need to pay higher prices for its preferred premises. He enquired whether the Administration would consider engaging retired civil servants in identifying suitable premises for accommodating welfare facilities so as to speed up the process. SLW responded that GPA would deploy additional manpower for the purchase exercise.

25. The Chairman enquired whether the Administration would purchase premises through property agencies and if so, the number of agencies the Administration had approached so far. Government Property Administrator responded that GPA would identify suitable premises through property agencies and advertisements in newspapers. GPA would also, through its website, invite property owners to provide GPA with information on suitable premises. Currently, GPA had several dozen licenced property agencies on the list. GPA would also consider inviting licenced property agencies with relevant experience other than those on the list to identify suitable premises.

26. In response to the Chairman's enquiry, Government Property Administrator said that GPA would not pay commission to property agencies for purchase of properties. As regards whether property owners



were required to pay commission to property agencies for selling their properties to the Government, Government Property Administrator said that it would be the arrangements between the sellers and the property agencies.

#### Implementation plan

27. Mr POON Siu-ping opined that the Administration should conduct district consultation exercises on the proposed welfare facilities under the purchase exercise and expedite the implementation of the purchase exercise. SLW responded that if the Administration could secure funding approval from FC in July 2019, SWD and GPA would start preparing for the purchase exercise and conduct district consultation exercises as soon as possible, with a view to starting to purchase the first set of premises in the first quarter of 2020 the earliest.

28. SLW further said that the commencement of new services at the first set of purchased premises was expected to take place by late 2020. The Administration envisaged that the purchase of the last set of premises concerned would take place in around the first quarter of 2023 and commencement of services of the relevant facilities by late 2023 to early 2024. In response to Mr POON Siu-ping's enquiry about the manpower arrangements for implementing the purchase exercise, SLW said that the Administration would secure the necessary manpower resources in accordance with established mechanism.

#### Other means of providing welfare facilities

29. Opining that the Administration should use the funding allocated to the purchase exercise in a gainful manner, Mr KWOK Wai-keung and Mr CHAN Chi-chuen said that the Administration should assess whether it would be more cost effective to rent than to purchase premises for provision of welfare facilities in the long run. SLW responded that the proposed welfare facilities should be accommodated in permanent premises in order to ensure stability of service provision.

30. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung said the Administration should increase the provision of community care services ("CCS") in new PRH estates for the convenience of elderly residents. He also took the view that the Administration should mandate the Urban Renewal Authority ("URA") to reserve some premises under its projects for accommodating welfare facilities. Dr Fernando CHEUNG opined that in addition to URA, the Administration should mandate private developers to provide welfare

facilities in their development projects.

31. SLW responded that the Administration could not direct private developers to provide welfare facilities in their projects unless such provision was included in land sale conditions. SLW added that in December 2018, the Administration reinstated population-based planning ratios in respect of elderly facilities in the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines ("HKPSG"). With these planning ratios, suitable sites and space would be reserved for provision of such facilities in the planning process of new and redeveloped areas. As regards provision of CCS in PRH estates, SLW said that SWD had secured places in some PRH estates for provision of various welfare facilities including DECCs in the past. SWD would continue to liaise with the Housing Department for such provision in PRH estates.

32. The Chairman opined that in addition to purchasing premises, the Administration should make use of vacant school premises for providing welfare services. He further said that there was a view that the Administration should not demolish Hong Kong Christian Service Pui Oi School in Tuen Mun but should convert it into welfare facilities as barrier-free facilities were readily available in the school. In this connection, he asked whether the Administration would consider converting the school into welfare facilities.

33. SLW responded that the Administration had all along endeavoured to convert suitable vacant school premises into welfare facilities. As vacant school premises would also be used for other purposes such as transitional housing and decanting premises for redevelopment projects of non-governmental organizations ("NGOs"), SWD would make its best efforts to secure vacant school premises which had not been earmarked for other projects for provision of welfare services.

#### Provision of Integrated Community Centre for Mental Wellness

34. Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed concern that no Integrated Community Centre for Mental Wellness ("ICCMW") would be provided under the purchase exercise although some of these centres were still operated in temporary premises. DSW responded that 17 of the 24 ICCMWs were providing services at permanent accommodation. Permanent premises had been secured for another five ICCMWs and permanent premises had been earmarked for the remaining two ICCMWs. Noting that it would take several years for all ICCMWs to operate in permanent premises, Dr CHEUNG urged the Administration to plan for

the provision of ICCMWs earlier and reserve premises for ICCMWs in new public facilities. The provision of ICCMWs should also be included in HKPSG.

35. SLW responded that after completion of the review of the Hong Kong Rehabilitation Programme Plan in end-2019, the Administration would reinstate the population-based planning ratios for long term residential care and long term community care services in HKPSG. The relevant planning ratios would help early reservation of suitable sites for rehabilitation services. Given that there might be dissenting views on the provision of sensitive services (e.g. ICCMWs) from local communities, such services had not been proposed under the purchase exercise.

#### Motion

36. Mr Michael TIEN opined that the Administration should first take stock of all vacant government premises and examine whether these premises could be used for accommodating welfare facilities before implementing the purchase exercise. The Administration should also provide information on the total floor area involved in the aforesaid vacant government premises to facilitate members' consideration of whether the purchase exercise was justifiable. In this connection, he moved the following motion:

"本會同意政府多管齊下增加社福設施，回應市民需要，但同時要確保以最嚴謹和有效的方式善用公帑，並盡量避免對私人市場帶來太大影響。就此，本會要求當局先檢視現時政府所有空置物業可否用作社福設施，與其他部門溝通是否可行，最後才考慮在市場購置物業。"

#### (Translation)

"While this Panel agrees on the Government's adoption of a multi-pronged approach for increasing the provision of welfare facilities to meet the needs of the public, the Government should also ensure the optimal use of public funds in the most rigorous and effective manner and avoid bringing excessive impact on the private market as far as possible. In this connection, this Panel requests the authorities to examine whether all the existing vacant government properties can be used for accommodating welfare facilities and communicate with other departments on its feasibility before considering the purchase of properties in the market."

The Chairman put the motion to vote. All members present voted for the motion. The Chairman declared that the motion was carried. The Chairman further consulted members on the submission of the relevant funding proposal to FC for consideration and concluded that most members present supported in principle the relevant submission.

#### **IV. Review of measures to encourage employment under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme**

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1587/18-19(04) to (05)]

37. At the invitation of the Chairman, SLW briefed members on the arrangements and timetable of the Administration's review of measures to encourage employment under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance ("CSSA") Scheme ("the Review").

##### Review of measures under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme

38. Dr Fernando CHEUNG asked why the Employment Support Supplement was only payable to able-bodied CSSA recipients aged 60 to 64. He opined that the Administration should also provide able-bodied CSSA recipients aged 15 to 59 with Employment Support Supplement to enhance employment support.

39. SLW responded that the Employment Support Supplement was introduced to encourage able-bodied persons aged 60 to 64 to join the labour market and remain in employment following the adjustment of eligible age for elderly CSSA from 60 to 65 from 1 February 2019.

40. Pointing out that many CSSA households were paying an actual rent higher than the maximum rates of rent allowance ("MRA") under the CSSA Scheme, the Chairman and Dr Fernando CHEUNG called on the Administration to review MRA. They also considered that the Administration should immediately resume the special grants applicable to able-bodied adult CSSA recipients before the 1999 CSSA Review first, and further examine the components of special grants with a view to including all necessity items (e.g. mobile phone expenses).

41. The Chairman enquired whether the Administration would abolish the arrangement under which \$200 per month would be deducted from the CSSA payments payable to CSSA recipients aged 60 to 64 ("the deduction

arrangement") who failed to comply with the requirements under the Integrated Employment Assistance Programme for Self-reliance ("IEAPS").

42. SLW responded that the scope of the Review would cover, inter alia, supplements, special grants and the disregarded earnings ("DE") arrangement. The Administration would also review MRA having regard to the implementation of the enhanced programme entitled "Subsidy for Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Recipients Living in Rented Private Housing" launched by the Community Care Fund ("CCF").

43. Mr POON Siu-ping enquired whether frontline staff of SWD and social welfare organizations would be invited to participate in the Review and whether the Review would cover the recommendations made in the Director of Audit's Report No. 72 on employment services provided by the Labour Department ("LD").

44. SLW responded that the Administration planned to gauge views from NGOs that provided services under IEAPS in the third quarter of 2019 about the employment support services under CSSA. SLW also responded that the Administration aimed to complete the Review by end-2019. As for the enquiries of the Chairman and Dr Fernando CHEUNG about the timetable for implementing the enhancement measures in relation to the CSSA Scheme, SLW replied that the relevant enhancements, if any, would take effect in the first quarter of 2021 the earliest.

#### Employment support measures for recipients of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance

45. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that unemployed CSSA able-bodied recipients aged 15 to 59 were required to participate in IEAPS. If they refused to sign the Job Seeker's Undertaking Form of IEAPS or failed to comply with any of the requirements stated in the Undertaking Form, SWD would deduct their CSSA payments. Taking the view that such an arrangement had failed to encourage unemployed CSSA recipients to seek employment, Dr CHEUNG asked how the Administration would encourage these CSSA recipients to seek employment.

46. SLW responded that the DE arrangement under the CSSA Scheme had been an important factor to encourage CSSA recipients to join the employment market. In addition, temporary financial aid, which was capped at \$2,000 during the extended period of IEAPS from April 2019 to

March 2020, would be provided for each IEAPS participant on a reimbursement basis to help them meet additional expenses incurred in seeking employment or at their initial stage of employment. Recognizing the importance for CSSA recipients to have mobile phone for seeking employment, SLW said that the Administration would take that into account when reviewing the measures to encourage employment under the CSSA.

47. Noting that a three-year pilot scheme under CCF was launched in 2016 to encourage disabled CSSA recipients to engage in employment by raising the maximum level of DE, Mr POON Siu-ping enquired about the DE arrangement for disabled CSSA recipients upon the completion of the pilot scheme. SLW responded that the Review would also cover the DE arrangement.

48. Mr POON Siu-ping sought information on the number of unemployed middle-aged persons participated in the thematic job fairs and district-based job fairs conducted by LD, the number of these participants who had secured employment through these job fairs and the types of employment involved. SLW responded that the Administration did not have the required information at hand.

Statistics on participants of Integrated Employment Assistance Programme for Self-reliance aged 60 to 64

49. Dr Fernando CHEUNG sought information on:

- (a) the number of CSSA recipients aged 60 to 64 who were invited to participate in IEAPS since 1 February 2019;
- (b) the number of CSSA recipients in (a) above who had/had not participated in IEAPS in response to the invitation;
- (c) the number of IEAPS participants aged 60 to 64 who had successfully secured employment; and
- (d) whether the Administration had gathered information on the health conditions and family situations of CSSA recipients aged 60 to 64, the number of CSSA recipients aged 60 to 64 who had worked in the past and the types of employment they could take up having regard to their health conditions and skills.

50. DSW responded that between 1 February 2019 and early June 2019,

around 800 new applications for CSSA were received from persons who were aged 60 to 64. The Administration had not completed the assessments of all the applications received but, as at early June 2019, around 300 applicants were categorized as disabled or in ill-health. All able-bodied CSSA applicants aged 60 to 64 were invited to join the IEAPS. In the same period, among the 1 100 existing CSSA recipients who turned to 60 years old on or after 1 February 2019, 70% of them were disabled or in ill-health.

**V. Any other business**

51. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:32 pm.

Council Business Division 2  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
12 August 2019