

立法會
Legislative Council

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LC Paper No. CB(2)1449/19-20
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Panel on Home Affairs

Minutes of meeting
held on Monday, 8 June 2020, at 4:30 pm
in Conference Room 2 of the Legislative Council Complex

- Members present** :
- Hon LAU Kwok-fan, MH(Chairman)
 - Hon CHAN Chi-chuen (Deputy Chairman)
 - Hon Claudia MO
 - Hon MA Fung-kwok, SBS, JP
 - Hon Christopher CHEUNG Wah-fung, SBS, JP
 - Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
 - Hon IP Kin-yuen
 - Hon Alvin YEUNG
 - Hon Andrew WAN Siu-kin
 - Hon CHU Hoi-dick
 - Hon Jimmy NG Wing-ka, BBS, JP
 - Hon SHIU Ka-fai, JP
 - Hon SHIU Ka-chun
 - Hon Wilson OR Chong-shing, MH
 - Hon YUNG Hoi-yan, JP
 - Dr Hon Pierre CHAN
 - Hon LUK Chung-hung, JP
 - Hon Kenneth LAU Ip-keung, BBS, MH, JP
 - Hon KWONG Chun-yu
 - Hon Vincent CHENG Wing-shun, MH, JP
 - Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen, BBS
- Member attending** :
- Hon Dennis KWOK Wing-hang
- Members absent** :
- Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP
 - Hon Steven HO Chun-yin, BBS
 - Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, SBS, MH, JP
 - Hon KWOK Wai-keung, JP

Dr Hon Junius HO Kwan-yiu, JP
Hon Holden CHOW Ho-ding
Hon HUI Chi-fung

Public Officers : Item III
attending

Dr LAW Chi-kwong, GBS, JP
Chairperson of the Community Care Fund Task Force
under the Commission on Poverty
Secretary for Labour and Welfare

Mr Patrick LI Pak-chuen, JP
Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs (1)

Ms Carmen KONG Ka-man
Principal Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs (Civic
Affairs)2

Mr Keith GIANG Tsz-sheung
Principal Assistant Secretary for Commerce and Economic
Development (Communications and Creative
Industries)A

Ms May CHAN Wing-shiu, JP
Deputy Secretary for Education (6)

Mr Derek LO Chi-yung
Senior Project Manager 1
Transport and Housing Bureau

Mr Alex LAI Chun-fai
Senior Project Manager 2
Transport and Housing Bureau

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

Ms Ivis CHUNG
Chief Manager (Allied Health)
Hospital Authority

Item IV

Mr Caspar TSUI Ying-wai, JP
Secretary for Home Affairs

Mrs Angelina CHEUNG FUNG Wing-ping, JP
Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs (2)

Mr Frederick YU Wai-shing
Principal Assistant Secretary (Culture)1
Home Affairs Bureau

Clerk in attendance : Ms Joanne MAK
Chief Council Secretary (2) 3

Staff in attendance : Miss Connie AU
Senior Council Secretary (2) 6

Mrs Fonny TSANG
Legislative Assistant (2) 3

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I. Information paper(s) issued since the last meeting
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1072/19-20(01)]

Members noted that a joint letter dated 21 May 2020 from Hon Andrew WAN and Hon KWONG Chun-yu had been issued after the last meeting.

II. Items for discussion at the next meeting
[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1119/19-20(01) and (02)]

2. The Panel agreed to discuss the following items proposed by the Administration at the next regular meeting on 13 July 2020 at 4:30 pm:

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- (a) Hong Kong Football Association Strategic Plan; and
- (b) review of the Sports Subvention Scheme and the governance of "national sports associations".

(Post-meeting note: Members were informed vide LC Paper No. CB(2)1306/19-20 issued on 6 July 2020 that the Panel meeting on 13 July 2020 was re-scheduled to be held from 9:30 am to 11:30 am on the same day.)

III. Community Care Fund

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1119/19-20(03) and (04)]

3. At the invitation of the Chairman, the Chairperson of the Community Care Fund Task Force ("C of CCF Task Force") briefed members on the salient points of the Administration's paper [LC Paper No. CB(2)1119/19-20(03)].

Discussion

Subsidies for transitional housing projects

4. Mr Kenneth LAU expressed support for the launch of the Subsidy for Refurbishment of Property of the MTR Corporation Limited for "T-Home" Transitional Housing Scheme – Trackside Villas. Noting that the Trackside Villas were let to the Hong Kong Housing Society for a period of five years for use as transitional housing, Mr LAU enquired what arrangements would be made for tenants concerned who were not yet allocated Public Rental Housing ("PRH") flats upon the end of the five-year period or expiry of their tenancy agreement. He also enquired whether the non-government organizations ("NGOs") had encountered any difficulties in taking forward the transitional housing projects and had withdrawn their proposals. Mr Tony TSE enquired about the reasons for the differences in the eligibility criteria among the six transitional housing projects (i.e. items 25, 26, 27, 30, 31 and 33 of the Annex to the Administration's paper) and the implementation progress of these projects.

5. C of CCF Task Force said that to be eligible for transitional housing, applicants should generally have queued up for PRH for not less than three years. In the case of the Trackside Villas, it was expected that most tenants should have received their first flat offer by the time they had to move out of the transitional housing. With regard to the eligibility criteria of the applicants for transitional housing, the Senior Project Manager 1 of the

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Transport and Housing Bureau ("SPM1/THB") said that for transitional housing projects funded by the Government, a major portion of the units should be open for application by applicants who had queued for PRH for not less than three years. The NGO concerned might reserve the remaining units for other types of applicants to meet its organizational aims. SPM1/THB further said that the Commission on Poverty ("CoP") had given funding approval to all the six transitional housing projects. As announced by the Chief Executive ("CE") in January 2020, the Government would increase the transitional housing supply by raising the three-year target to 15 000 units.

6. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that the main function of CCF was to plug gaps in the existing system. He considered that the Administration should secure funding through the established mechanism in taking forward transitional housing projects instead of tapping into CCF. He also queried that there might be a role conflict for the Secretary for Labour and Welfare to be the Chairman of the CCF Task Force. C of CCF Task Force explained that in view of the time required to seek funding approval from the Finance Committee ("FC"), CCF had provided funding support for six transitional housing projects with a view to facilitating their early implementation to meet urgent needs. C of CCF Task Force said that with FC's approval in March 2020 of a commitment of \$5 billion to implement the funding scheme to support transitional housing projects by NGOs, further funding support from CCF for other transitional housing projects would not be required. C of CCF Task Force further said that the CCF Task Force was set up to advise CoP on, among others, the formulation of CCF's assistance programmes having regard to the ideas or suggestions provided by members of the public, government departments and stakeholders. C of CCF Task Force said that that it would not matter who chaired the CCF Task Force.

Provision of assistance to people affected by the coronavirus disease 2019 ("COVID-19") pandemic

7. The Chairman said that many people were not able to benefit from the two rounds of relief measures launched under the Anti-epidemic Fund ("AEF"). In line with CCF's objective of plugging gaps in the existing system, he suggested that CCF should introduce programmes to assist those people. Mr SHIU Ka-fai enquired if CCF could provide any assistance to the prospective tenants of the Chun Yeung Estate, which was being used as a quarantine centre, to cope with difficulties arising from the deferred intake. He considered that the one-off ex-gratia allowance of \$6,000 per household granted to them under AEF was inadequate.

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C of CCF
Task
Force

8. C of CCF Task Force explained that AEF was established to, among others, provide assistance or relief to enterprises and members of the public hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic or affected by the anti-epidemic measures. A contingency sum was available in AEF for the Steering Committee of AEF to respond to the needs that fell within the ambit of the Fund but could not be anticipated at the time of funding approval. Moreover, the Administration had been setting up additional quarantine facilities and THB would keep in view when the Chun Yeung Estate could cease to be used as a quarantine centre. That said, C of CCF Task Force undertook to relay the views and concerns of Mr SHIU Ka-fai to the Secretary for Transport and Housing for consideration.

9. Mr Vincent CHENG and Mr Andrew WAN suggested that CCF should introduce measures to provide short-term assistance to the unemployed amidst the prevailing economic downturn. Mr WAN said that many unemployed people were not eligible for the time-limited unemployment support assistance under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance ("CSSA") Scheme nor could they get any assistance from other anti-epidemic relief measures.

10. C of CCF Task Force said that CE also announced in January 2020 that a time-limited cash allowance would be provided for the unemployed and the under-employed who met the prescribed criteria. In this connection and with a view to providing timely support to them, the Administration would provide a one-off allowance to eligible Working Family Allowance ("WFA") households and Student Financial Assistance households, regardless of whether these low-income households were unemployed or under-employed. For a WFA household, the allowance was generally equivalent to two months of WFA payment based on the highest monthly amount it received in its most recently submitted and approved application between 1 April 2019 and 21 February 2020. Disbursement of the one-off allowance would commence in batches from June 2020.

11. Regarding the suggested provision of short-term unemployment benefits by CCF to persons with financial difficulties, C of CCF Task Force said that this would duplicate the efforts of CSSA's unemployment support scheme. In addition, it would be very costly for CCF to implement such a programme. According to the preliminary estimate, it would cost as much as \$1 to make a disbursement of \$2 to the beneficiary.

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One-off Allowance for New Arrivals from Low-income Families ("One-off Allowance for New Arrivals")

12. Mr Vincent CHENG suggested that CCF should expedite the launch of the One-off Allowance for New Arrivals and streamline the relevant application procedures. C of CCF Task Force responded that the One-off Allowance for New Arrivals would be open for application around September 2020. Depending on the implementation progress of the Cash Payout Scheme, consideration might be given to advancing the launching date of the One-off Allowance for New Arrivals where practicable. However, it was not desirable to roll out the Cash Payout Scheme and the One-off Allowance for New Arrivals concurrently in order to avoid causing confusion to the public.

13. Mr KWONG Chun-yu expressed concern about the high administrative cost for certain CCF programmes. He considered that CCF should endeavour to reduce the administrative costs for the One-off Allowance for New Arrivals and the One-off Living Subsidy for Low-income Households Not Living in Public Housing and Not Receiving CSSA Programme ("One-off Living Subsidy Programme"), which were estimated at about \$100 million and \$90 million respectively. Mr KWONG was of the view that as CCF had implemented the One-off Living Subsidy Programme for several times already, it should be able to bring down the relevant administrative cost with the accumulation of experience. C of CCF Task Force responded that CCF had to pay an administrative fee to the implementing agencies to cover their staffing and administrative expenses in relation to the CCF programmes concerned (such as the setting up of a dedicated programme secretariat and deployment of staff to check and vet the applications). C of CCF Task Force said that the vetting procedures of the One-off Allowance for New Arrivals were more complicated than the Cash Payout Scheme due to the differences in the eligibility criteria.

Provision of Subsidy to Needy Primary and Secondary Students for Purchasing Mobile Computer Devices to Facilitate the Practice of e-Learning ("MCD Subsidy")

14. Mr IP Kin-yuen said that as the MCD Subsidy was only available to eligible students studying in schools and classes implementing e-learning and adopting "Bring Your Own Device" ("BYOD"), students from grassroots families studying in non-BYOD schools had suffered from the lack of computer devices and Internet access at home during class suspension period. C of CCF Task Force said that CCF was aware of the issue and had already expanded the programme so that all public sector

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schools implementing e-learning during the class suspension period could submit applications to the Education Bureau for the MCD Subsidy for their students who met the relevant eligibility criteria. That apart, a household-based subsidy for Internet access charges was available under the CSSA Scheme and the Financial Assistance Schemes for Primary and Secondary Students.

Financial position of the Community Care Fund

15. Referring to the footnote to paragraph 9 of the Administration's paper, the Deputy Chairman enquired whether any administrative fee or handling fee would be incurred due to the early withdrawal of \$7 billion principal from the Hong Kong Monetary Authority ("HKMA") in late 2020 to meet the required cash flow of CCF's assistance programmes to be implemented from the second half of 2020. He also enquired if the withdrawal would affect the investment returns on the seed capital of CCF and whether a further injection of funds into the seed capital would be necessary. C of CCF Task Force said that a number of new large-scale assistance programmes would be implemented from the second half of 2020 (such as the launch of two rounds of the One-off Living Subsidy Programme in 2020 and 2021 respectively) which could not be envisaged at the time CCF extended the placement of \$7 billion with HKMA in July 2019 upon maturity of the previous placement. He said that CCF would liaise with HKMA regarding the withdrawal arrangements, which would likely be made in phases with reference to the cash flow requirement. He understood that HKMA would not impose any administrative fee for the early withdrawal of the principal. C of CCF Task Force added that the financial position of CCF remained healthy and the Administration had no plan to inject additional funding into the Fund's seed money. The Deputy Chairman hoped that CCF and the Administration could strengthen their coordination in future to facilitate better cash flow management.

16. The Chairman enquired whether the drop in donations to CCF from the business sector in recent years would impede the launch of new assistance programmes. C of CCF Task Force reiterated that the financial position of CCF remained healthy with a balance of around \$18.869 billion as at the end of April 2020. Members and stakeholders were welcome to provide suggestions to the CCF Task Force on the formulation of new assistance programmes.

Regularization of assistance programmes

17. Noting that the evaluation study on the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Carers of Elderly Persons from Low-income Families ("Pilot

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Scheme for Elderly Carers") and the Pilot Scheme on Living Allowance for Low-income Carers of Persons with Disabilities commissioned by the Social Welfare Department had already completed, Mr SHIU Ka-chun enquired if the Administration had a timetable for regularizing the two pilot schemes. Dr Fernando CHEUNG questioned why the Administration did not regularize those assistance programmes which had been implemented by CCF for years and extended for several times (such as the Pilot Scheme for Elderly Carers and the Subsidy for CSSA Recipients Living in Rented Private Housing programme ("the Subsidy programme")).

18. C of CCF Task Force said that the Administration had launched a study on carer policy with a view to mapping out the way forward for the support services for carers. The preliminary findings were expected to be available in mid-2021. With regard to the Subsidy programme, C of CCF Task Force said that further to a recent one-off increase in the maximum rent allowance ("MRA") under the CSSA Scheme, the Administration would assess the overall impact on the coverage rate of MRA (i.e. the percentage of households whose rent could be fully covered by MRA) before determining whether the Subsidy programme should be continued after expiry in October this year.

19. Referring to paragraph 25 of the Administration's paper [FCR(2019-20)41] submitted to FC earlier on, Mr SHIU Ka-chun said it seemed that the Administration was blaming some CSSA households for renting more expensive units with the subsidy received from the Subsidy programme. He considered it unfair for the Administration to have made such comments. Mr SHIU enquired whether the Administration would cap the percentage of CSSA recipients living in private housing and paying a rental amount which exceeded MRA in its review of the Subsidy programme. C of CCF Task Force responded that the Administration had made the observation based on statistical data. He said that the Administration would assess the overall impact of the one-off increase in MRA under the CSSA Scheme on the coverage rate of MRA when considering the way forward for the Subsidy programme.

20. In response to the Chairman's enquiry, C of CCF Task Force said that the public consultation sessions of CCF originally scheduled for early 2020 were suspended due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. CCF would arrange the public consultation sessions again when the epidemic abated.

IV. Art Development Matching Grants Scheme

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1119/19-20(05) and (06)]

21. At the invitation of the Chairman, the Secretary for Home Affairs ("SHA") briefed members on the implementation of the Art Development Matching Grants Scheme ("ADMGS") and the Administration's proposal to allocate an additional \$900 million to ADMGS [LC Paper No. CB(2)1119/19-20(05)].

Discussion

22. Mr SHIU Ka-chun declared that he was a member of the Board of Directors of a local small and medium-sized theatrical troupe. He said that the ability of small and medium-sized arts groups to raise private donations and sponsorships had been adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Notwithstanding the new measures to relax the matching parameters for the fourth round of ADMGS in 2019-2020 and increase the matching ratio for arts groups as set out in paragraph 11 of the Administration's paper, Mr SHIU considered that there was still a need to further increase the matching ratio for small and medium-sized arts groups to help them cope with this difficult time.

23. SHA responded that in the face of the difficulties arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Administration had introduced a number of measures to assist arts groups and freelance arts workers, such as the \$150 million Arts and Culture Sector Subsidy Scheme ("the Subsidy Scheme") established under AEF. SHA said that under the Subsidy Scheme, the Hong Kong Arts Development Council ("HKADC") was entrusted to implement the \$50 million Support Scheme for Arts and Culture Sector ("the Support Scheme") and year grantees of HKADC would be given a subsidy of \$80,000, while each eligible arts and cultural project (including those funded or commissioned by HKADC and those not) would be provided with a subsidy of \$15,000. Besides, arts and culture freelancers could apply for up to \$7,500 subsidies from HKADC for arts and culture jobs affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. It was estimated that about 630 arts groups/projects and 4 600 arts workers would benefit from the Support Scheme.

24. The Deputy Chairman expressed concern as to whether small and medium-sized arts groups were at a less favourable position when compared to well-established arts groups in receiving matching grants under ADMGS. He suggested that the eligibility criteria for small and medium-sized arts

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groups should be relaxed so that they could apply for ADMGS more easily. Referring to the Annex to the Administration's paper, the Deputy Chairman enquired about the reasons for the large increase in the matching grants provided to HKADC under ADMGS from \$3.96 million in the first round to \$38.68 million in the fourth round. He further asked whether there was any prescribed proportion of matching grants to be provided to each of the four categories of arts groups/organizations referred to in paragraph 5(a) to (d) of the Administration's paper.

25. SHA said that the Administration had strengthened the support to different arts groups in the recent years. The resources for small and medium-sized arts groups had increased from \$120 million in 2017-2018 to \$170 million in 2019-2020, representing a large increase of 40%. The Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs (2) ("DSHA(2)") pointed out that at present, arts groups/organizations that were eligible for ADMGS included HKADC itself and the small and medium-sized arts groups which applied for the Matching Fund Scheme ("MFS") launched by HKADC. HKADC would make a consolidated application to the Home Affairs Bureau on behalf of the small and medium-sized arts groups. In 2019-2020, 31 arts groups applied for matching grants through HKADC's MFS.

26. DSHA(2) further said that the Administration did not prescribe the proportion of matching grants to be provided to different categories of arts groups/organizations. Arts groups of different sizes and at various stages of development were subject to different matching parameters, so that smaller arts groups would not be too disadvantaged in their attempts to seek sponsorship under ADMGS. For instance, the floor amount eligible for matching for small and medium-sized arts groups applying for HKADC's MFS was \$30,000 while that for major performing arts groups was \$400,000.

27. SHA further said that the amounts of grants provided under ADMGS to each of the four categories of arts groups/organizations referred to in paragraph 5(a) to (d) of the Administration's paper had been on the increase since the first round of matching exercise. This showed that ADMGS was able to encourage arts groups/organizations to solicit donations and sponsorships and promote the culture of private donation for arts and culture development.

28. Mr SHIU Ka-chun considered that the Administration should provide incentives by way of tax concession to encourage the private sector to make donations or provide sponsorships to local arts groups. The Chairman suggested that the Administration should consider providing an online

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platform to facilitate matching of arts groups with private donations/sponsorships. Mr SHIU also suggested that the Administration should subsidize arts groups in providing complimentary tickets to the public so as to help them widen their audience base.

29. SHA explained that donations to many arts groups in Hong Kong were already eligible for tax exemption under section 88 of the Inland Revenue Ordinance (Cap. 112). In addition, if a commercial entity sponsored cultural activities to promote its own business, the sponsorship could be treated as an expense and was deductible for tax purpose. SHA said that the Administration had made reference to the situation of arts development in other places, such as London, New York and Japan, and considered that reliance on public subvention as the main source of income might not be most desirable in the context of Hong Kong. SHA further said that to provide assistance to arts groups for securing donations and sponsorships from other sectors of the community to expand their sources of funding was conducive to the sustainable growth and healthy development of the arts sector. SHA added that the Administration would keep under review the implementation of ADMGS and would seek improvements where appropriate.

30. The Chairman asked whether the Leisure and Cultural Services Department ("LCSD") would reopen more of its venues, such as the indoor multi-purpose arenas, for use by arts groups for rehearsals. SHA responded that in view of the latest situation of COVID-19, some LCSD performance venues had already been reopened for use by arts groups for rehearsals to prepare for production resumption when the epidemic abated. SHA said he noted that the arts and culture sector wanted to resume staging of performances as soon as practicable. That notwithstanding, SHA stressed that public health remained the Administration's priority consideration. The Administration would continue to monitor the situation closely and review the relevant arrangements in a timely manner. SHA said that the Administration would consider drawing up guidelines on necessary precautions for adoption when live performances resumed, with a view to minimizing the risk of infection. In addition, the Administration would explore possible ways to facilitate the live streaming of performances of arts groups.

31. The Chairman concluded that members raised no objection to the submission of the funding proposal to FC for consideration in accordance with the established mechanism.

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V. Any other business

32. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 5:50 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
21 August 2020