

COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Notes of the 31st Meeting
held on 13 August 2013 at 10:00 a.m.
in Conference Room, 33/F, Revenue Tower
Wan Chai, Hong Kong

Present :

Hon Bernard Chan	(Chairman)
Mr Chan Siu-hung	
Dr Ian Chan	
Mr Benjamin Hung	
Mrs Stella Lau	
Ms Lilian Law	
Mrs Miranda Leung	
Mr Leung Wing-mo	
Mr Victor Li	
Mr Lo Sze-ping	
Dr Ng Cho-nam	
Professor Poon Chi-sun	
Professor Nora Tam	
Ms Iris Tam	
Mr Wong Kam-sing	<i>Secretary for the Environment</i>
Mr Jimmy Chan	<i>Deputy Secretary for Development (Works)2 (Acting), Development Bureau</i>
Mr Franco Kwok	<i>Assistant Director 4, Home Affairs Department</i>
Mr Leung Sai-chi	<i>Assistant Director (Estate Management)1, Housing Department</i>
Ms Margaret Hsia	<i>Principal Assistant Secretary for (Secretary) the Environment (Sustainable Development), Environment Bureau (ENB)</i>

In attendance :

Dr Alain Lam	<i>Principal Environmental Protection Officer (Waste Management Policy), Environmental Protection Department (EPD)</i>)	
Mr Jason Leung	<i>Senior Environmental Protection Officer (Waste Management Policy)1, EPD</i>)	
	<i>Programme Director of Public Engagement (PE) on Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) Charging - Hong Kong Productivity Council (HKPC)</i>)	
Ir Kenny Wong	<i>Principal Consultant, HKPC</i>)	<i>For Agenda Item 3 (SDC Paper 02/13)</i>
Dr Keith Choy	<i>Consultant, HKPC</i>)	
Mr Tommy Martin	<i>Associate Consultant, HKPC</i>)	
	<i>Independent Analysis and Reporting Agency of PE on MSW Charging - Social Sciences Research Centre, The University of Hong Kong (SSRC, HKU)</i>)	
Professor John Bacon-Shone	<i>Director, SSRC, HKU</i>)	
Ms Linda Cho	<i>Centre Manager, SSRC, HKU</i>)	
Ms Anissa Wong	<i>Permanent Secretary for the Environment, ENB</i>)	
Miss Katharine Choi	<i>Administrative Assistant to Secretary for the Environment, ENB</i>)	
Ms Elia Wong	<i>Assistant Secretary for the Environment (Sustainable Development)2, ENB</i>)	
Mr Wang Yuen	<i>Senior Environmental Protection Officer (Sustainable Development), ENB</i>)	
Miss Erica Wong	<i>Senior Town Planner (Sustainable Development), ENB</i>)	
Ms Claudia Cheung	<i>Senior Executive Officer</i>)	

(Sustainable Development)1,
ENB

Absent with apologies :

Professor Ho Kin-chung

Ms Betty Ho

Professor Bernard Lim

Professor Joseph Sung

Miss Sherry Tsai

Agenda Item 1 – Matters arising from minutes of the last meeting (7 December 2012)

There was no matter arising from the last meeting.

Agenda Item 2 – Report on the work of the Education and Publicity Sub-committee (EPSC) (SDC Paper No. 01/13)

Members were briefed on the work progress of the EPSC as set out in SDC Paper No. 01/13, which covered the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF), the Sustainable Development (SD) School Award Programme, the School Outreach Programme and the SD Ambassadors programme.

To arouse awareness of the general public and encourage their participation at the SDC's upcoming public engagement process, a 30-second announcement in the public interest (API) on television and radio as well as posters were under preparation.

An interactive micro-film competition entitled "Waste Reduction at Source and Sustainable Development" (「源頭減廢及可持續發展」) was being held to promote waste reduction in the school sector.

Members raised the following concern and comments on the work of the EPSC:

- Noting that some applications received under the SDF appeared quite similar in nature to those submitted for the Urban Renewal Trust Fund, the relevant secretariats could touch base to ensure the items funded under the

two funding schemes would not duplicate.

- Welcomed the initiatives in particular the SD Ambassador programme that helped to nurture young people in practising the principle of SD in their daily lives.
- Looked forward to engaging the SD Ambassadors in the upcoming PE process on municipal solid waste (MSW) charging.
- Suggested EPSC to consider organising activities such as day camps, site visits, forums and competitions etc. to sustain the interest and participation of the youngsters in the ambassador programme.

The meeting noted that:

- EPSC would look into the matter concerning the applications submitted for the SDF and other funding schemes.
- The SD Ambassadors had been engaged to help at the roving exhibitions to be organised in the 18 districts for promoting the upcoming PE. The EPSC had been and would continue to arrange different activities for the SD Ambassadors in the coming year.
- A briefing session was conducted in July 2013 to provide potential participants of the interactive micro-film competition with background information and relevant knowledge on the subject of waste reduction at source. Participants would be encouraged to include waste charging in their submissions in relation to the launch of the engagement exercise.

Agenda Item 3 – Public Engagement on Municipal Solid Waste Charging (SDC Paper No. 02/13)

Members were recapped with the following background on the SDC's PE and the latest development:

- Upon the Government's invitation, the SDC agreed to conduct a PE on MSW charging at its last meeting held in December 2012.
- The Hong Kong Productivity Council (HKPC) was appointed as the Programme Director (PD) to oversee the conduct of the PE, and the Social Sciences Research Centre of the University of Hong Kong (HKU) was appointed as the Independent Analysis and Reporting Agency (IRA) to collect and analyse views and feedback received during the PE.
- A Support Group (SG) on MSW charging, convened by Professor Nora TAM, was formed to provide professional and expert advice to the SDC on defining the scope and strategies of implementing the PE.

- In February and March 2013, the Strategy Sub-committee (SSC) of the SDC and the SG held three meetings for the purpose. Seven focus group meetings (FGMs) were subsequently conducted in April and May 2013 to solicit advice and views from stakeholders to facilitate the PD in the preparation of the Invitation for Response (IR) document for the PE.
- A press briefing to announce the formal launch of the four-month public involvement stage of the PE would be held in September 2013. Taking account of the views and feedback received during the PE, the SDC would formulate a report of recommendations to the Government.

Members were briefed on the progress of the preparation for the PE, the draft IR document and other related events as set out in SDC Paper No. 02/13. The following was highlighted:

- Over 160 representatives from a broad spectrum of sectors including domestic and residential; commercial and industrial (C&I); waste collection and recycling; green groups; youth and welfare groups; medical and health; professional organisations; academics and district personalities, etc. attended the seven FGMs conducted in April and May 2013.
- The IR document would serve as an important discussion framework to impart information and initiate public dialogue. Views expressed by the stakeholders at the FGMs as well as the advice from the SG had formed a foundation in ensuring that sufficient background information and the right issues were covered and included in the IR document. The draft document had been circulated to SG for comment in end July and their comments had been incorporated in the latest version.
- The four key issues identified in the IR document were - “charging mechanisms”; “coverage of the MSW charging scheme”; “charging level” and “recycling”.
- Following the launch of the PE, a series of engagement events and publicity programmes would be rolled out, which would include five regional public forums, roving exhibitions in 18 districts, consultation sessions and multi-media publicity, etc. to arouse the public interest and awareness in participating in deliberations of the issues.
- Based on the findings of the PE, PD would prepare the draft SDC’s report on recommendations to the Government for SDC’s consideration.

Members had the following enquiries, comments and suggestions related to the proposed MSW charging:

- Enquired whether volume-based charging would be more preferred than weight-based charging given the difficulties to weigh the individual household's garbage.
- Considered that the incentive for waste reduction would be less direct if the charging was to be applied on a building basis while the effectiveness of the volume-based charging mechanism would be affected by the possible use of waste compactors by some buildings that ultimately would not contribute to reducing the actual amount of waste. People living in old buildings without waste compactors might have to pay more MSW charges.
- Shared the concern about the use of waste compactors under 'by-building' charging mechanism, but considered the issue should not be too relevant for charging on the household basis.
- Queried about to what extent should charging on a building/estate-basis be presented as an option for public deliberations as its effectiveness of inducing behavioural changes was in doubt.
- Enquired whether the Administration had assessed which option would be more practicable for implementation.
- Recommended imposing charges on the manufacturers' end for reducing over-packaging.
- Cast doubt on the practicality of applying the Taipei waste charging model in Hong Kong, i.e. individual waste producers to take out their garbage in pre-paid designated bags at agreed time and place for disposal every day, as well as the withdrawal of public litter bins.
- Pointed out that a number of residents living in premises/buildings without building management currently would dump their garbage in the public litter bins.
- Expressed concern over Hong Kong households' usual need of disposing waste every day.
- Considered that although there was no ideal model on waste charging and each option had its pros and cons, there were merits to take forward the waste charging scheme, be it by volume or by weight. The PE exercise would also serve an educational role in disseminating the important message of waste reduction to the community.
- Expressed that youth groups were very supportive of the waste charging scheme as well as the introduction of more stringent measures on waste management. They also proposed a higher MSW charging level to drive behavioural changes.
- Supported the proposal of setting waste disposal threshold under which there would be no charging or rewards/recognitions be given to further incentivise waste reduction and recycling so as to help buy-in the public support for the engagement exercise.
- Supported the idea of establishing a threshold MSW disposal level, which might help to gain some public support for the scheme and avoid creating an

impression to the public that the waste charging scheme was another kind of tax.

- Expressed concern over the practical difficulties in defining the threshold level of waste disposal and the size of designated bags to be provided to households for disposing waste as the domestic waste in Hong Kong was perishable.
- Agreed with the views that the threshold level should be a moving target, and reference could be made to the waste reduction targets as set out in the Government's "Hong Kong Blueprint for Sustainable Use of Resources 2013-2022".
- Considered that waste reduction should be the responsibility of all citizens, and it would be arguable if certain groups could be exempted from the scheme in respect of the relief issue as mentioned in the IR document. The needs of low income groups might be looked after through other means.
- Advised the Government to be mindful of further enhancing the provision of recycling facilities and other relevant measures to complement the implementation of the MSW charging scheme.

Members raised comments and suggestions regarding the implementation of the PE as follows:

- Supported the idea of educating the public on good waste reduction practices, such as donating recyclables, and the public education should go hand in hand with the engagement process.
- Proposed arranging online views submission to facilitate the public in submitting their views.
- Suggested holding some of the regional forums in the evenings and in housing estates where possible for reaching out to the general public as far as possible.
- Enquired whether there was any lobbying plan, and suggested that Members should assist in conducting briefings at the engagement events, and a song sheet and questions-and-answers brief be made available for Members' reference.

Members raised comments and suggestions on the draft IR document as follows:

- Agreed that sufficient information should be provided in the IR document to facilitate informed discussions by the public.
- Remarked that the content of the IR document was comprehensive.
- Suggested further highlighting and emphasizing the purpose of MSW charging which was to incentivise waste reduction and not for cost recovery as the key message in the IR document.
- Suggested that the public should be given an overall picture of the initiatives

and measures taken on waste reduction and management apart from the MSW charging.

- Suggested adding more information on the unique characteristics of Hong Kong, as differed from other cities such as Taipei City and Seoul, and the experience of some cities e.g. New York that decided not to implement waste charging.
- Suggested that more analysis about the pros and cons of applying the radio-frequency identification (RFID) technology in Hong Kong could be further explained in the document.
- Enquired whether the FGMs had discussed about the threshold level on waste disposal as it was believed the public would probably favour the threshold proposal, and how this should be framed as a question in the IR document.
- Supported mentioning the threshold proposal at the beginning of the document.
- Suggested refining the presentation of tonnes of waste and landfilling rate in the draft IR document for better clarity in reading.
- Suggested visualising the “domestic waste disposal per capita per day of 0.8 kg” for easier comprehension by the general public.
- Suggested fine-tuning the presentation of the document.
- Suggested adding an executive summary in the document to facilitate reading by the general public.
- Suggested adding some practical tips or best practices of waste reduction in the IR document to convey the message that choices and alternatives were available to the public other than paying the MSW charges for public relations purpose and to drive for behavioural change.
- Suggested providing relevant links on the waste reduction tips in the document to help limit its length.
- Commented that questions one and two in the questionnaire appeared limited in scope, and suggested that the overall tone of the questions should avoid giving the impression of any pre-determined stance.
- Suggested dividing the questionnaire into two broad categories, addressing the C&I and domestic waste producers respectively.
- Suggested that the questionnaire should be categorised to address different target respondents.
- Suggested re-phrasing the question on coverage of the charging scheme as “whether the charging scheme should be implemented to all sectors in one go or be implemented to different sectors by phases”.
- Suggested fine-tuning the title of the IR document to - “*Waste Reduction by Waste Charging - How to implement?*”.
- Suggested revising the tagline on the IR document to - “*Waste Less Pay Less*” to call for behavioural changes in the community.

Members noted the following responses/clarifications to the enquiries/comments raised on the proposed MSW charging and PE:

- The objective of MSW charging was to induce behavioural changes and it would not be a single-goal exercise. MSW charging would be a necessary step to drive the community towards sustainable waste management.
- It was considered that behavioural changes would not possibly happen immediately. Given there was no preferred option on waste charging, the different charging mechanisms together with their pros and cons as discussed at the FGMs should be put up for the public and stakeholders for more in-depth deliberations.
- Three possible quantity-based charging mechanisms for domestic waste, including “household by volume”, “building by weight” and “building by volume”, were set out in the IR document for deliberation in the engagement process with no pre-determined stance.
- There were views at the FGMs that charging by volume on the building level might be administratively easier and quicker for rolling out for implementation, compared with charging individual households’ garbage by weight.
- There were some concerns raised at the FGMs on waste compactors but the issue was not considered significant by the stakeholders including the property management sector. Compactors would reduce the volume of waste and probably the odour during waste transportation.
- Waste compactors were installed in all the buildings of new public housing estates.
- A hybrid waste charging system on both building and household levels should be looked into given the unique characteristics and settings of Hong Kong.
- Taipei City adopted a hybrid system whereby households in the multi-storey buildings were charged on a building basis while residents in low density premises would use pre-paid designated garbage bags and charged on the household level. From the experience of Taipei City, arrangements could consider to be devised between the building management and residents to share out the cost of charging to enhance the waste reduction incentive, e.g. requiring the residents to procure designated bags from the building management.
- A hybrid waste charging system was adopted in other cities such as Taipei City and Seoul, to suit the different residential types and settings. One of the unique characteristics of Hong Kong was that over 90% of housing was managed by building management. In this context, Members’ attention was drawn to the relevant section in the draft IR document about the “possible need for additional arrangements to be devised and agreed between the building management and residents to enhance the waste

reduction/recycling incentive by individual households, e.g. household to procure bags from building management for waste disposal". Such arrangement might possibly suit the Hong Kong context and provide incentives to individual households to reduce waste.

- From the experience in Taipei City, the households would not need to dump waste on a daily basis after sorting out the recyclables and food waste from the garbage.
- The issue of threshold had not been thoroughly discussed in detail at the FGMs. There was no international benchmark on this, and different people might have different expectations on the optimal level of threshold. It was considered that the Government's target waste disposal rate per capita might serve as a reference point, and the purpose of the threshold proposal should also be clearly explained in the IR document.
- The Government's initiatives on recycling would need to be taken into account when the SDC drew up its recommendations on the MSW charging scheme.
- The Government had been acting on different fronts to reduce waste such as the Producer Responsibility Schemes and waste reduction programmes on food waste. The suggestion of providing a quick reference guide for waste reduction at home in the IR document was agreed.
- The MSW charging would be a complicated exercise in Hong Kong given the existence of many different types of buildings, and there would possibly be a need to adapt and make conversions to the Government's refuse collection points (RCPs) arising from the charging scheme.
- One of the proposed measures to address the problem of fly-tipping was the reduction of the number of public litter bins. Nonetheless, its impact on tourists had to be looked into.
- One regional forum was currently planned for the evening and another on the weekend. More evening sessions would be arranged.
- All Members were appealed for their support and participation in the upcoming PE events so as to help promote the PE.

Members also noted the following responses/clarifications to the enquiries/comments on the draft IR document:

- Members were thanked for their valuable comments which represented a spectrum of views and were very useful in facilitating the refinement of the IR document.
- There was a need to strike a balance in respect of Members' suggestions of providing more information and questions in the IR document, lest the public found the document too lengthy for consumption.
- The information regarding conversions of the RCPs into facilities that were manned and/or machine-equipped as well as the Government's initiatives in

- waste reduction and management were already included in the IR document.
- While Members' comments on beefing up the IR document was agreeable, adding different threshold levels for different charging mechanisms would make the IR document very complicated. It was suggested asking the question on the threshold proposal in a more open-ended approach to gauge the public's views.
 - It was the responsibility of the whole community to reduce waste and every citizen should be involved in the MSW charging. Setting a threshold was not common in those cities that had implemented waste charging. It was suggested highlighting the objectives of MSW charging at the beginning of the questionnaire to minimise any misconception of the public.
 - The purpose of the upcoming PE was to develop a MSW charging system that would help drive behavioural changes. The scope and level of the technical details of the scheme was vast. It was noted that the best incentive on waste reduction and recycling could be achieved if the charging was anchored at the household level. However, given the unique settings of Hong Kong, charging by household might not be practically feasible for implementation across the board. It was expected that through the upcoming PE, the general public would give views on how to implement the quantity-based MSW charging system. As the issue of threshold had been embedded in one of the questions in the IR document, the issue might be flagged up and presented in the current manner in the IR document, and there would be room for developing the level of threshold in the future charging scheme if deemed appropriate.
 - The idea of providing households with some practical guidelines of waste reduction at home was welcomed.
 - The following responses and suggestions were made in light of Members' comments on the questionnaire -
 - (a) to categorise the questions for addressing more clearly the three main target groups of respondents, namely C&I waste producers, waste producers in premises with building management and waste producers in premises without building management;
 - (b) to re-phrase question two by stating that the specified collection point for disposal might be referred to the refuse collection room of a building;
 - (c) currently there was no question proposed to specifically ask about the issue of relief measures;
 - (d) the threshold level of waste disposal should be a moving target for inducing behavioural changes; and
 - (e) should the range of charge level include "below \$30" for the domestic sector, and "below \$400" for C&I sector, it would imply any rates including zero charge which would not meet the objective and purpose of the charging scheme.

- Member's suggestion of using the tagline "*Waste Less Pay Less*" for the IR document and publicities of the engagement was concurred.

Agenda Item 4 – Any other business

There was no other business raised.

Agenda Item 5 – Date of the next meeting

The Secretary would confirm the date of the next meeting nearer the time.

Secretariat
Council for Sustainable Development