

**Advisory Council on the Environment
Waste Management Subcommittee**

**Notes of the Fifteenth Meeting
Held on 24 September 2007 at 2:30 pm**

Present

Professor Poon Chi-sun (Chairman)
Mr. James Graham
Mr. Edwin Lau
Mr. Tsang Kam-lam
Dr. Yau Wing-kwong
Mr. Te Chi-wang (Secretary)

Absent with Apologies

Professor Howard Huang
Dr. Man Chi-sum
Dr. Ng Cho-nam
Mr. Simon Wong

In Attendance

Ms. Anissa Wong	Permanent Secretary for the Environment / Director of Environmental Protection [for Item 5]
Mr. Raymond Fan	Deputy Director of Environmental Protection
Mr. Alfred Lee	Assistant Director of Environmental Protection (Waste Management Policy)
Mr. Vincent Tang	Assistant Director of Environmental Protection (Nature Conservation & Infrastructure Planning)
Mr. Patrick Lei	Principal Environmental Protection Officer
Dr. Cherie Lee	Environmental Protection Officer
Mr. Rayson Chan	Administrative Officer

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Opening Remarks

1. The Chairman welcomed Mr. Vincent Tang, the new Assistant Director (Nature Conservation & Infrastructure Planning), to the

meeting. Mr. Tang briefed Members on his portfolio, which included the policy of nature conservation and the development of waste treatment facilities. He looked forward to working closely with the Subcommittee on waste management-related initiatives.

Agenda Item 1: Confirmation of Minutes of the Last Meeting

2. The minutes of the fourteenth meeting held on 28 June 2007 were confirmed.

Agenda Item 2: Matters Arising

Visit to EcoPark

3. The Secretary reported that tenants of the EcoPark would be in operation in the first half of 2008, and a visit to the EcoPark could be arranged then.

Agenda Item 3: Proposed Themes for the Public Education Programme of the “Policy Framework” (Paper WMSC 11/07)

4. Mr. Alfred Lee reported that the three projects recommended by the Subcommittee were approved by the Environment and Conservation Fund Committee and would be launched shortly. To ride on the positive momentum, he suggested inviting the second round of funding applications. Having regard to Members’ views expressed in earlier meetings and the initial contacts with green groups, the Administration proposed two themes for the programme, namely i) producer responsibility schemes (PRS’s), particularly with respect to reuse and recovery of plastic shopping bags; and ii) integrated waste management facilities, particularly with respect to public buy-in and awareness on food waste problem.
5. On PRS’s, the Chairman suggested PRS’s for packaging materials, beverage containers and electrical and electronic equipment could be covered in the public education programme

as well. On food waste, a Member suggested that food waste separation and collection in rural villages could be encouraged as the compost would have ready outlets in those villages. The Chairman and a Member added that educational activities could also focus on food waste reduction, separation and collection at commercial and industrial sources, such as fast food chains and restaurants.

Agenda Item 4: Progress of Key Initiatives in the “Policy Framework for the Management of Municipal Solid Waste (2005-2014) (Paper WMSC 12/07)”

6. Mr. Alfred Lee briefed Members on the progress of key initiatives in the Policy Framework. In particular, he noted that the Product Eco-responsibility Bill was on schedule to submit to the Legislative Council in this legislative session, and the source separation of domestic waste programme was on target in securing the participation of housing estates. On PRS for electrical and electronic equipment, a voluntary scheme had been worked out with the participation of major players in the computer trade. Subject to finalization of details, the voluntary scheme could be launched in early 2008. On Integrated Waste Management Facilities (IWMF), Mr. Vincent Tang added that a public engagement process would be launched later this year, and depending on the public response, seminars and visits to similar facilities overseas could be arranged for key stakeholders.

7. A Member enquired about the proposed amendments to the Building Regulation to mandate the provision of waste separation facilities on a floor-to-floor basis. A Member considered it important to have the amended regulation in place and to have a timetable for implementation. The Chairman suggested, and Members agreed, to put this on the agenda for the next meeting and invite responsible officers to brief the Subcommittee.

8. On PRS, the Chairman noted that the imminent launch of the

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voluntary computer recycling programme (CRP) represented a welcoming move in achieving the targets set out in the Policy Framework. With the introduction of the plastic shopping bag levy and the CRP, consideration should be given to according packaging materials a higher priority. A Member suggested that we should allow market players, for instance importers and distributors, to ensure the recovery and recycling of packaging materials, similar to the “green dot” system in Germany. Mr. Alfred Lee observed that the packaging guideline for moon cakes was generally well received, and similar voluntary guidelines could perhaps be extended to other products. On the mandatory side, the Administration needed to conduct impact assessment carefully as Hong Kong was no longer a manufacturing base.

9. On IWMF, the Chairman enquired about the progress of the site search. Mr. Vincent Tang said that the site search was being finalized, and the result would form the basis for the forthcoming public engagement process.

Agenda Item 5: Brainstorming on Municipal Solid Waste Charging

10. Mr. Alfred Lee gave a presentation on municipal solid waste (MSW) charging. It was observed from the findings and feedback from the earlier trial scheme on designated bags, as well as the experiences elsewhere, that a volume-based scheme such as a pay-per-bag system would unlikely to be feasible in Hong Kong in view of the inherent difficulties in tracing MSW to its source in our multi-storey, multi-tenant housing setting. It was necessary to consider other practicable options that could achieve our waste reduction objective. Mr. Raymond Fan added that public support was important for the rollout of MSW charging, and Members’ advice was welcomed on how to build the necessary public consensus.
11. A Member opined that on fairness ground, both domestic waste and commercial and industrial (C&I) waste should be covered.

A Member added that given the differences in domestic and C&I settings, it would not be unimaginable to have differing MSW charging modes for domestic waste and C&I waste.

12. For domestic waste, a Member said that a flat rate approach, coupled with incentives for waste reduction and recycling, could be further explored. The Chairman suggested a discounted flat rate could be imposed for those who participated in source separation or had documentary proofs on waste reduction and recycling. For C&I waste, the Chairman considered that a variable-rate approach might be considered as C&I waste was handled by private waste collectors. Riding on the existing collection system, a Member added that a gate fee approach could perhaps be considered. A Member agreed that a variable-rate approach, based on volume, weight or collection frequency, for C&I waste would be fairer. A Member cautioned that a gate fee approach could encourage fly-tipping, and the views of private waste collectors and property management companies should be taken into account. A floor-based or building-based system might be relatively easier to implement should a variable rate system be considered. To better understand the waste-arising situation, the Subcommittee agreed that a comprehensive baseline survey should be conducted.

13. Mr. Alfred Lee thanked Members for their views and suggestions, which the Administration would take into account in further developing proposals on MSW charging.

Agenda Item 6: Date of Next Meeting

14. The next meeting would be held on 3 December (Monday), in accordance with the 2007 meeting schedule.

ACE Waste Management Subcommittee
Secretariat
October 2007