

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

Notes of the 24th Meeting Held on 27 November 2009

Present

Prof. Wong Ming-hung	(Chairman)
Mr. Edwin Lau	
Mr. Tsang Kam-lam	
Dr. Yau Wing-kwong	
Mr. Simon Wong	
Mr. Samson Lai	(Secretary)

Absent with Apologies

Prof. Lam Kin-che
Dr. Man Chi-sum

In Attendance

Mr. Albert Lam	Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (2)
Ms. Margaret Hsia	Assistant Director of Environmental Protection (Waste Management Policy)
Mr. Vincent Tang	Assistant Director of Environmental Protection (Nature Conservation and Infrastructure Planning) [Agenda Item 3 only]
Dr. Derek Wong	Environmental Protection Officer (Waste Management Policy Division)

Action

Agenda Item 1: Confirmation of Minutes of the Last Meeting

1. Subject to the editorial amendments to the heading under paragraph 15 in response to the comment of a Member, the draft minutes were confirmed.

Agenda Item 2: Matters Arising

2. Upon invitation by the Chairman, the Secretary briefed the meeting that the Secretariat followed up on the enquiry raised at the 23rd meeting about the planned wood recycling plant in EcoPark. The supplementary information had been set out in the post-meeting notes under paragraph 15 of the minutes. Noting that a Member was interested in knowing more about the flakewood production, the Secretary undertook to arrange the subject officers to brief the Member direct.
3. The Secretary further reported that a Member lodged an enquiry through the Chairman about the number of waste separation bins and refuse bins placed in public areas. Having collated information from various parties, a consolidated response had been provided to this Member and was tabled for Members' general reference. Having compared the statistics generally, a Member asked whether more waste separation bins could be placed in certain locations say FEHD-managed sites. Mr. Albert Lam responded that EPD has been doing so in conjunction with the relevant departments but there could be practical constraints in some cases (e.g. lack of space). In general, however, members of the public could conveniently deposit recyclable waste using existing facilities.

Agenda Item 3: Public Education Programme of the “Policy Framework for the Management of Municipal Solid Waste (2005-2014)” (Paper WMSC 09/09)

4. The Chairman reminded members that the funding application was previously considered at the Subcommittee meeting held on 5 June 2009. Dr. Man Chi-sum was one of the advisors of the project. He invited Dr. Carol Ma and Ms. Jenny Chin of Office of Service-Learning, Lingnan University (“Lingnan”) to present the proposal.
5. After the presentation, members sought a few clarifications about the project. A Member noted that the project would involve a number of public housing estates and he asked how they would be lined up under Lingnan.

Dr. Carol Ma advised that over their previous activities, some contacts had already been established with these estates. Collaborating NGOs and schools were indeed located in the relevant housing estates. A Member suggested that the survey could provide a more useful reference if it could also include questions concerning territory-wide issues. Dr. Carol Ma agreed.

6. In response to a Member, Dr. Carol Ma said that only one single kick-off ceremony would be arranged. After the kick-off and with some training, participants would be assigned a target group (being a housing estate or a school) in which they would strive to promote waste management. The Chairman asked how the training would be designed to enable participants of different background to understand the subject. Dr. Carol Ma said that they would primarily recruit students at Form 4 or above who should be competent in performing tasks expected of the green leaders in the project. In general, the project coordinator would provide support during the training which could help facilitate the learning process.
7. A Member asked about the detailed programme for the study tour to Taiwan. Dr. Carol Ma said that the delegation would be formed from 20 green leaders, 5 community leaders and 3 staff members who would be selected on the basis of their performance in the project activities. The tour would last for 6 days during which they would visit local government departments and waste treatment facilities. They would also attend experience sharing sessions with representatives from local universities and organisations. A Member supported the study tour for reason that sharing various similarities with our community, Taiwan could provide a useful reference for Hong Kong.
8. Mr. Vincent Tang enquired how community leaders would be recruited. Dr. Carol Ma said that Lingnan had obtained support from the Home Affairs Department and the District Council. For example, she envisaged that the district council members representing the participating public housing estates would render their support and consider joining the scheme. The Tuen Mun District

Office would also help publicise the project and engage local participation.

9. Dr. Carol Ma and Ms. Jenny Chin left the meeting at this juncture. After some discussions, Members unanimously supported this project application. The Chairman concluded that this project would be recommended to the Environment and Conservation Fund (“ECF”) Committee for endorsement. He asked that the Secretariat suitably reflect the Subcommittee’s considerations on the proposed budget and the proposed overseas visit for reference by the ECF Committee.

Agenda Item 4: The Environmental Levy Scheme for Plastic Shopping Bags – Related Statistics (Paper WMSC 10/09)

10. The Chairman invited Ms. Margaret Hsia to present the paper. He also asked Members to note the written submission from the Hong Kong Retail Management Association (“HKRMA”) which was circulated through email before the meeting.
11. A Member asked whether there was any increase in the use of reusable bags following the implementation of the levy scheme. He opined that the disposal figure might not necessarily reflect the actual usage which according to his observation increased considerably after the implementation. In response, Ms. Margaret Hsia said that at this stage only pre-levy disposal figure was available. Future landfill surveys would facilitate comparison of the disposal situations pre- and post-levy. Mr. Albert Lam supplemented that statistics other than disposal figures should be read with caution. For example, increased production to meet the demand surge in the short term would unlikely sustain over time. But to avoid wastage, EPD had been distributing reusable bags to those in need of them. A Member agreed that excessive distribution of reusable bags was not environmentally friendly. A Member added that non-woven bags should be avoided as far as possible.

12. On the way forward of the levy scheme, a Member opined that owing to hygienic concern, some form of exemption was necessary and should be given due consideration when mapping out the second phase. A Member said that retail sectors distributing more plastic shopping bags should be given priority consideration for the purpose of the second stage. Noting that wet market was a significant sector not covered by the levy scheme, A Member cautioned that the compliance costs for small retailers should also be given due consideration. Another Member concurred. He considered that any extension of the levy scheme should not lead to significant impact on the livelihood of the general public. In response to the Chairman's enquiry, Mr. Albert Lam said that individual retailers opted to distribute paper bags after the implementation of the levy scheme but there was no apparent evidence of a significant switching effect.
13. After some deliberation, the Chairman concluded that the Subcommittee noted the latest statistics relating to the environmental levy scheme for plastic shopping bags. Members appreciated that the levy scheme achieved a significant impact in reducing the use of plastic shopping bags in prescribed retailers. On the way forward of the levy scheme, the Subcommittee did not consider the scheme should be extended to all retailers across the board and suggested the Government consider a selective approach. Among other things, the Subcommittee remarked that in line with international experience, exemption for food hygiene reasons should apply in Hong Kong. Practicality (including compliance costs) would also be an issue for small and medium enterprises (SME) and this might render extending the scheme to these SMEs impracticable. In those sectors where a levy might not be a suitable tool to promote waste reduction, the Government should continue to devise appropriate public education.

Agenda Item 5: Any Other Business

14. In response to an enquiry from a Member, Mr. Albert Lam advised that the baseline study regarding the municipal

solid waste charging was close to completion. Findings and recommendation of the study would be reported to the Subcommittee once available.

Agenda Item 6: Date of Next Meeting

15. The Secretariat would contact individual member shortly to arrange the meeting dates for 2010.

**ACE Waste Management Subcommittee
Secretariat
January 2010**