

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

**Notes of the 26<sup>th</sup> Meeting Held on 26 March 2010**

**Present**

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

**Absent with Apologies**

Mr. Tsang Kam-lam  
Mr. Oscar Chow  
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)  
Dr. Derek Wong                 Environmental Protection Officer (Waste  
   Management Policy Division)1

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Dr. Alain Lam                   Principal Environmental Protection Officer  
   (Waste Management)  
Ms. Heidi Yung                 Senior Environmental Protection Officer (Waste  
   Management)1  
Mr. Frank Wan                 Environmental Resources Management  
Ms. Sarah Sanders Hewett    Environmental Resources Management

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**Agenda Item 1: Confirmation of Minutes of the Last Meeting**

1. The draft minutes of the 25<sup>th</sup> meeting held on 26 January 2010 were confirmed without amendment.

**Agenda Item 2: Matters Arising**

Public access to presentations for the Subcommittee

2. Upon invitation by the Chairman, the Secretary briefed members on the follow-up actions since the last meeting. He said that when apprised of the gist of the 25<sup>th</sup> subcommittee meeting, the Council Chairman suggested that it would facilitate further consideration at the full Council if this Subcommittee could put up a specific proposal with detailed pros and cons deliberations. He recapitulated the relevant arrangements currently in force for the full Council and its subcommittees.
3. A Member said that this Subcommittee would not normally handle issues of significant sensitivity. On balance, allowing public access to presentations for the Subcommittee could enhance transparency. He found it relevant to refer to the existing arrangements for the ACE Environmental Impact Assessment Subcommittee.
4. Noting that papers and minutes of the Subcommittee would be made available to the public, a Member wondered whether transparency was perceived to be in lack in the public's eyes so that a change in the current arrangements was justified. A Member considered that the current arrangements reflected a proper balance between transparency and the need of a suitable meeting environment to facilitate candid deliberations. He also noted that at times it would be more appropriate for the full Council to adequately deliberate a policy issue before presenting any views to the public. A Member concurred that premature disclosure of the Subcommittee's views to the public might pre-empt deliberations at the full Council. He added that even confining public access to the presentation session might not help since what the consultants said could often be misinterpreted as the Subcommittee's views.
5. A Member said that from another perspective, allowing more public access to materials considered by the

Subcommittee could achieve education purposes since the public would then have an opportunity to appreciate the different issues at stake. He agreed that deliberations of the more sensitive agenda items could be kept closed door. Citing from experience in other institutions, a Member cautioned that meeting under the camera could unnecessarily politicize the deliberations. Members might be subject to pressure to withhold ideas and opinions which they would otherwise feel comfortable to share.

6. Mr. Albert Lam said that the full Council deliberated the same issue of public transparency on a few occasions since 1998 and the current arrangements should reflect the broad consensus over the years. He invited members to fully deliberate the issue so as to ascertain whether there should be changes now and why as well as how. After some further discussions, the Chairman concluded that there would be pros and cons irrespective of how the system might be. He thanked members for their thoughts and asked the Secretary to consolidate the relevant considerations in the form of a paper for the Subcommittee to formally consider the matter at a future meeting.

*Letter from the Hong Kong Retail Management Association (HKRMA)*

7. The Chairman invited members to note that HKRMA made a written submission to EPD which contained comments regarding the Subcommittee's deliberations on the Environmental Levy Scheme on Plastic Shopping Bags. The letter was circulated to members earlier on through email and it was also tabled at the meeting. A Member observed that the way HKRMA paraphrased the Subcommittee's views was not exactly in line with the conclusion of the Subcommittee's deliberations. A Member said that HKRMA had a clear objective to drive at and might not look at the issue in the same way as the Subcommittee did. A Member added that irrespective of how HKRMA interpreted, the Subcommittee's views should be conveyed clearly to the public. The Secretary

said that the confirmed minutes of the relevant deliberations were available online for public inspection. EPD would follow up on the reply in the normal manner.

**Agenda Item 3: A Baseline Study on Commercial and Industrial Waste Charging**

8. The Chairman said that EPD and its consultant would brief the Subcommittee on a baseline study on commercial and industrial (C&I) waste charging. He noted that Members asked about the progress of this baseline study at the 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting.
9. After some introductory remarks by Dr. Alain Lam, Ms. Sarah Sanders Hewett gave a presentation on the preliminary key findings of the study. In gist –
  - *Building-based Survey:* Among the C&I buildings surveyed, most of them were multi-storey, multi-unit with multiple occupiers, and occupiers usually set out waste in the communal area. In composite buildings where both commercial and domestic units co-existed, there was no separate storage for commercial and domestic wastes before collection. The collected waste was then sent to landfills, refuse transfer stations or refuse collection points for disposal. Most C&I buildings had some form of property management who took up the coordination role of waste management and collected the associated management fees.
  - *View Seeking from Stakeholders:* Stakeholders including property management, cleansing contractors and waste collectors were invited to the view seeking sessions. They expressed concerns such as additional resources required in waste management, increased responsibilities to make payment for waste charging and to recover the costs from individual premises, increased cash flow demand and risk of deferred payment/bad debts.
10. Members then sought a few clarifications on the key

findings. In response, Ms. Sarah Sanders Hewett explained that –

- *Waste Composition*: The study did not cover waste composition. Reference could however be made to the landfill surveys conducted by EPD annually. As revealed from the building-based survey, it was noted that the nature of C&I waste was likely similar to that of domestic waste with mainly food waste, paper and plastics.
- *Waste Generation*: Wet markets had the highest waste generation per unit floor area due to a high water content in the waste.
- *Charging Option*: As indicated in the study, there could be practical problems for imposing a charge based on waste generation from individual C&I premises because garbage bags were set out at communal areas for collection by cleaners and it would be difficult to trace waste to its source.

11. Ms. Sarah Sanders Hewett and Mr. Frank Wan left the meeting at this juncture. Dr. Alain Lam further briefed the meeting on experiences in other jurisdictions (i.e. New York City, Kaohsiung, Taipei and Singapore) and local constraints of the four key charging options (i.e. establishment-based variable rate, building-based variable rate, gate fee and flat rate). In response to Mr. Simon Wong, Mr. Albert Lam said that it was premature to talk about the charge level at this stage though a ballpark figure was estimated to be in the tens (Hong Kong dollars per household per month). A Member opined that the charge might create a burden on the lower income group even though the ballpark might not be prohibitively high. He urged the Administration to handle the issue with care.
12. Members then sought clarifications about the specific practice adopted in other jurisdictions –

- *Food Waste in Taipei*: Ms. Heidi Yung explained that

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in Taipei, food waste was required to be separated from other household waste and put into designated containers for free collection. In general, each household should take care of their own waste, but households in multi-storey buildings were allowed to engage cleaners to provide collection service using large prepaid bags for the whole building and share the cost incurred.

- *Charging in Multi-storey Settings in Tokyo:* Ms Heidi Yung explained that based on publicly available information, prepaid bag charging scheme was implemented only in the suburban Tama area of Tokyo Metropolis where low-rise buildings were common whereas no charging was implemented in the central metropolitan areas of Tokyo where high-rise buildings was dominant.

13. Noting that experience in other jurisdictions examined by the Administration did not point to a mainstream approach, the Chairman opined that it might not be straightforward for the Administration to come up with a consolidated scheme applicable to our local situation. A Member cautioned that other jurisdictions with a charging scheme might also encounter practical problems though they might not have been spelt out explicitly in publicly available information. A Member said that where feasible, the Administration should arrange field trips to facilitate members to gather first-hand information about the relevant overseas experience.

14. Noting that the Subcommittee had a keen interest in the subject, Mr. Albert Lam suggested and the Chairman agreed that further discussions should be arranged at the next meeting.

### **Agenda Item 4: Any Other Business**

15. No other business was raised.

### **Agenda Item 5: Date of Next Meeting**

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16. The Secretariat would contact individual member shortly to arrange the next meeting.

**ACE Waste Management Subcommittee  
Secretariat  
May 2010**