

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

Notes of the 28th Meeting Held on 22 October 2010

Present

Prof. Wong Ming-hung	(Chairman)
Mr. Edwin Lau	
Mr. Simon Wong	
Mr. Tsang Kam-lam	
Dr. Man Chi-sum	
Mr. Oscar Chow	
Mr. Samson Lai	(Secretary)

Absent with Apologies

Dr. Yau Wing-kwong

In Attendance

Ms Anissa Wong	Permanent Secretary for the Environment / Director of Environmental Protection
Ms. Margaret Hsia	Assistant Director of Environmental Protection (Waste Management Policy)
Dr. Derek Wong	Environmental Protection Officer (Waste Management Policy Division)1

Item 1 only

Mr. Vincent Tang	Assistant Director of Environmental Protection (Nature Conservation and Infrastructure Planning)
Mr. P H Lui	Principal Environmental Protection Officer (Infrastructure Planning)

Item 2 only

Ms. Chu Lan-ying	Assistant Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Operations Division 3)
Dr. Alain Lam	Principal Environmental Protection Officer (Waste Management Policy)
Ms. Heidi Yung	Senior Environmental Protection Officer (Waste

Management Policy)1

Item 3 and 4 only

Dr. Ellen Chan Assistant Director of Environmental Protection
(Environmental Infrastructure)

Item 3 only

Mr. Wong Wai-yuen Senior Environmental Protection Officer (Waste
Reduction & EcoPark)3

Item 4 only

Mr. Albert Lam Deputy Director of Environmental Protection (2)

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Agenda Item 1: Matters Arising

Minutes of the 27th Meeting

1. The Chairman said that the minutes of the 27th meeting held on 26 May 2010 were confirmed without amendment by circulation on 7 September 2010. He advised that the confirmation be recorded in the minutes.

Food Waste

2. The Chairman welcomed Mr. Vincent Tang and Mr P H Lui to provide members with supplementary information on food waste as follow-up to the last meeting. Mr. Vincent Tang briefed members that some 3300 tonnes of food waste were generated every day in Hong Kong of which one third came from the Commercial and Industrial (C&I) sector, such as restaurants, hotels, food processing premises and small eateries where it was comparatively easier to implement source separation. The Administration was planning to develop modern Organic Waste Treatment Facilities (OWTF) which would target at source-separated food waste generated from the C&I sector. The facilities would be developed in two phases in

Siu Ho Wan and Sha Ling respectively. Upon completion, they would jointly operate a daily treatment capacity of some 500 tonnes in total.

3. Mr. Vincent Tang added that the Administration had implemented a Food Waste Recycling Partnership Scheme to promote good food waste management practices in the C&I sector. A Code of Practice would be published to provide useful guides on food waste avoidance, reduction and source separation for recycling. Wider use of on-site food waste treatment equipment was being promoted and increasingly more of such facilities had been installed in major shopping centres, restaurants and eateries.
4. Mr. P H Lui shared information about relevant experience in selected overseas jurisdictions –
 - In Taipei, food waste generators from the C&I sector were held responsible for treatment and disposal of their own wastes, whereas residents were mandated to separate food waste from recyclables and garbage for collection by the municipal waste collectors. In 2009, about 500 tonnes/day of food waste was generated in Taipei, of which about 46% was recycled into pig feed and compost.
 - In Singapore, about 1660 tonnes/day of food waste was generated and some 210 tonnes/day (mainly from the C&I sector) was recycled to produce compost and biogas for electricity generation. However, there was no specific arrangement for domestic food waste collection and recycling.
 - South Korea first started food waste recycling programmes in the 1990s. Large food waste generators of the C&I sector were held responsible for recycling of their food waste. Households were mandated to perform food waste separation for collection by the local government. In 2008, about 3400 tonnes/day of food waste was generated in Seoul and over 90% of it was recycled.

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In response to an enquiry by the Chairman, Mr. P H Lui explained that “food waste (廚餘)” represented a waste category which would have a general coverage wider than mere waste generated from the kitchens. The relevant waste management strategies were generic, aiming to tackle the “organic waste” problem generally.

5. A Member asked how small C&I trades in Taipei and South Korea could discharge their treatment obligations. Mr. P H Lui explained that trades that generate very small amount of food waste were allowed to use the collection service provided by the government.
6. A Member opined that Taipei and Seoul could have achieved high recycling rates because of the implementation of related recycling legislation. If charging were implemented in Hong Kong, there should be corresponding measures to facilitate collection and promote recycling. He also suggested stepping up public education on the impact of food waste on landfills. A Member echoed that disincentive measure such as charging might not necessarily be effective in promoting waste reduction. The Administration should also explore measures that could positively mobilize the public. The Chairman added that the development of treatment technology aside, there should be proper outlets for the post-treatment products such as compost, biogas and animal feed, without which such post-treatment products could end up in the landfills eventually.
7. A Member suggested that the Administration should consider promoting food waste treatment on a district basis so as to minimize long haul delivery of the food waste across the territory and possibly alleviate the odour problem in the landfills. Having regard to his personal experience in in-situ treatment in selected hotels, a Member said that it would be difficult to identify suitable sites for treatment of food waste on a district basis, and treatment within individual premises could be more feasible. Mr. Vincent Tang added that modern food waste treatment equipment was offered in different sizes with more versatile functions. Pilot schemes were being

developed in shopping centres for on-site treatment of food wastes generated by restaurants and food courts.

8. Regarding sponsorship for the equipment, A Member noted that non-NGOs were not eligible for funding support under Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF). He opined that ECF should be opened up for trade to apply. A Member recalled that the same subject was previously discussed in the relevant ECF subcommittee. He agreed that the matter could be revisited at some stage.
9. Ms. Anissa Wong thanked members for their comments. Given that premises-based pilot schemes were being developed, the experience would serve as useful reference for further consideration of the feasibility to extend on-site treatment of food waste beyond individual shopping centres. Two Members concurred. Where necessary, they were ready to solicit the community's support to such pilot schemes through their own network.

Agenda Item 2: Municipal Solid Waste Charging

10. Upon invitation by the Chairman, Dr. Alain Lam gave a briefing on possible options of MSW Charging –
 - *Variable Rate* - based on the quantity of waste produced and charged through prepaid bags or subscribed bins on a household / C&I establishment or building basis;
 - *Flat Rate* - linked to an indirect proxy of waste quantity such as water consumption;
 - *Gate Fee* - paid according to waste quantity weighed at the disposal facilities. Charges would be recouped from waste producers; and
 - *Fixed charge* - charged at a same rate for each household / establishment, regardless of how much waste they produce.

In the presentation, Dr. Alain Lam also recapped the issues to be considered on municipal solid waste (MSW) charging in local context before the Subcommittee

continued its deliberations. They included (a) the unique multi-storey and multi-tenant building setting with mix of domestic and C&I occupants; (b) space constraints for storing waste in buildings; (c) absence of property management in some buildings; (d) mix of private and public waste collection; and (e) refuse collection points and public litter bins.

11. Noting that the objective of MSW charging was to reduce waste, A Member opined that the variable rate approach might appear a better option because it was based on the waste quantity produced and should be more effective in encouraging waste reduction. Ms. Anissa Wong explained that according to overseas experience, the different options on MSW Charging would have impacts on waste reduction of varying degree. For instance, gate fee was also an approach based on waste quantity produced and weighed at the gate. She encouraged Members to engage in elaborate deliberations on the pros and cons of different approaches so that the Administration could take Members' views into account in taking the matter forward.
12. When asked to comment on the feasibility of gate fee approach, Ms. Chu Lan-ying said that it might only be feasible for applying to private waste collectors because waste collection services provided by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) were currently free of charge. In case a charge were to be introduced for such collection services in the future, it would be extremely difficult to administer the charging at the refuse collection points (RCPs) where most of them were not manned. Public perception that FEHD's collection and disposal of municipal waste services were covered in Government rates was also a relevant consideration. FEHD was duty-bound to clear the waste even the statutory charge was not paid because of environmental hygiene problems.
13. A Member noted that in Taipei, fly-tipping was once a serious problem initially when MSW charging was first introduced but the situation was improved over time. Dr

Alain Lam and Ms. Heidi Yung added that waste-off-the-ground policy, closure of RCPs and extensive removal of public litter bins were key elements in Taipei's case. In addition, Dr. Alain Lam pointed out that in Taipei, the pre-paid bag system was not applied to multi-storey buildings on a household basis due to the enforcement difficulty in tracing waste to its source. Ms. Chu Lan-ying cautioned the public acceptability of implementing similar measures in Hong Kong.

14. On a variable rate approach, a Member enquired whether other jurisdictions had encountered any problem of counterfeit pre-paid bags. A Member was aware that some pre-paid bags were equipped with anti-forgery devices which according to Ms. Heidi Yung's advice could be costly in Taipei's experience.
15. A Member said that the Administration could collaborate with property management. For example, they could reward the residents' efforts in waste reduction through concessions in management fees. To facilitate this, they might start counting the garbage bags which were mostly provided to residents in bulk at no additional cost. Dr. Alain Lam said that such measures could be explored as collaborative initiatives but in reality any expectation for the property management to enforce any statutory measures against their fee-paying clients could be far-fetching.
16. After some further deliberations, the Chairman concluded that the Subcommittee shared the importance of a comprehensive and effective waste management strategy in Hong Kong. As far as MSW charging was concerned, its objective should be inducing and incentivizing waste reduction at source by means of economic incentive. The feasibility, practicability and public acceptability of the charging scheme should be major considerations in devising viable options for the scheme. He added that the Subcommittee would expect the Administration to develop possible options taking into account Members' views and engagements with the relevant stakeholders.

Agenda Item 3: Development of EcoPark (Paper WMSC 03/10)

17. Upon invitation by the Chairman, Dr. Ellen Chan updated Members on the latest progress of the EcoPark tenants in Phase 1 and the experience gained hitherto. In light of the feedback from project stakeholders and EcoPark Advisory Committee, the Administration would move forward for the leasing for Phase 2 projects in the approach as outlined in the paper.
18. A Member was pleased to note that the Administration had already taken into account most of the advice from the EcoPark Advisory Committee. He said that amongst the various recommendations, the suggestion of allowing imported waste materials to be processed at EcoPark should be handled with care so as not to add extra burden on our landfills. Dr. Ellen Chan explained that the Administration was fully aware of the sensitivity involved and the recommendation was drawn up after careful trade consultation. The key consideration was that certain automated recycling operation (such as waste electrical and electronic equipment and waste batteries) could not survive on the limited supply of locally generated materials and would not emerge in the first place without the extra supply imported from outside Hong Kong. A Member agreed with the case but considered that vigilant control should be exercised. He considered that community views should be involved in vetting applications and inputs from green groups would also be valuable.
19. On the tendering process, a Member said that the flexible elements should be encouraged but the Administration should be cautious in devising the specific tendering rules so as to uphold fairness. For example, the demand for different lot sizes could vary. In the scenario where there was less demand for larger slots, it could be theoretically feasible for a less meritorious proposal to be accepted at the expense of other better proposals submitted for smaller slots which were subject to more competitive bidding. He was also concerned about the financial capability of

the bidders since many of the recyclers in Hong Kong were emerging players. Dr. Ellen Chan explained that extra flexibility could bring about issues of such nature and thus the tendering rules and marking scheme would be carefully drawn up. She added that successful bidders should demonstrate acceptable capability in each and every aspect in the marking scheme. In any case, there would be escape clause such that the Administration could terminate the lease for recyclers who were subsequently proved to be incapable in their actual operations.

20. A Member suggested adding “Others” to the list of recyclable materials for EcoPark Phase 2 Tendering so as to enhance the flexibility of the exercise. A Member suggested supporting an NGO-operation for second-hand furniture. In response, Dr. Ellen Chan agreed to consider Members’ views. She also offered to organise a visit to the EcoPark so that Members of Advisory Council on the Environment could be apprised of the latest development.
21. The Chairman concluded that the Subcommittee was generally supportive of the recommendations set out in the paper and invited the Administration to consider specific views from Members in taking the matter forward.

Agenda Item 4: Public Education Programme of the “Policy Framework for the Management of Municipal Solid Waste (2005-2014)” (Paper WMSC 04/10)

22. No Members declared interests. In view that the applicant was not available for a presentation, the Secretary summarized the application to facilitate Members’ deliberation. Dr. Ellen Chan added that the proposed project was small but was different from other conventional projects initiated by green groups. Amongst other things, the proposal targeted at students who might be groomed to perform a more proactive function in public education at the community level. Her team could provide some advice which might help beefing up the case.

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23. After some deliberations, the meeting agreed that the application could be endorsed for further consideration by the ECF Committee provided that the proposal could be beefed up after taking into account inputs from EPD.
24. A Member asked whether similar applications could be circulated for Members' comments and endorsement in future. The Secretary confirmed that such streamlining was feasible. With Members' agreement, the Secretariat would consider how to put it in place as soon as possible.

Agenda Item 5: Any Other Business

25. The Chairman remarked that implementation of the paperless mode was deferred to the next meeting.

Agenda Item 6: Date of Next Meeting

26. The Secretariat would contact individual members shortly to arrange the next meeting.

**ACE Waste Management Subcommittee
Secretariat
May 2011**