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*For Information*

## **Report of the Waste Subcommittee**

### **Workshops on Municipal Waste Management**

#### **PURPOSE**

This paper summarises the discussions at the three workshops conducted by the Waste Subcommittee in July 2005 on the strategy for the management of municipal solid waste (MSW) in Hong Kong in relation to a road-map being prepared by the Government.

#### **BACKGROUND**

2. The Government is preparing a document to set out a definitive roadmap of MSW management for Hong Kong for the next decade. Members of Waste Subcommittee considered that workshops should be conducted to discuss in more depth the major issues in the strategy. To draw on more views and experience from outside the subcommittee, relevant stakeholders were invited to join the workshops. Three workshops on the followings were held during July 2005:

- a. Domestic Waste Recovery;
- b. Product Responsibility Scheme (PRS) & the proposed umbrella legislation; and
- c. Municipal Solid Waste Charging.

## **THE WORKSHOPS**

### **Domestic Waste Recovery**

3. The workshop was conducted on 5 July 2005. Representatives from green groups, academics and the Housing Department (HD) joined the discussion. The discussion paper for the workshop is at Appendix I. The workshop expressed the following views: -

- The target to increase the domestic waste recovery rate from 14% in 2004 to 20% by 2007 as set by the Government was reasonable.
- HD as the manager of public housing should put in more effort and a specific target of implementing source separation in public housing estates should be set. (Post-meeting note: HD proposed a target of 30 public housing estates in 2005 and all public housing estates by 2012.)
- Provision of waste separation facilities at Refuse Collection Points (RCPs) and 3-coloured waste separation bins in public places were considered useful and further liaison with Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) was supported. Collection contract by FEHD should be reviewed to enable a more cost effective collection of waste and recyclables.
- As for new buildings, the amendment of building codes for the provision of sufficient space in each floor was considered vital and it would be worthwhile to pursue further with the Building Department (BD).
- Education would be an essential element for the success of the scheme. The concept should be instilled to our future generation early, e.g. at schools. As for the general public, property management companies and domestic helpers played an important role in waste separation.
- The workshop agreed that consideration should be given for the implementation of a mandatory waste separation system.
- Given the success of the territory-wide source separation of waste scheme, members of the workshop urged the Government to devote more resources to implement the scheme in all private housing estates as soon as possible.

### **Product Responsibility Scheme (PRS)**

4. The workshop was conducted on 13 July 2005 with representatives from

green groups, academics, the trade and the Consumer Council. The discussion paper for the workshop is at Appendix II and major views of the workshop are as follows: -

- The enactment of an umbrella legislation to provide a legal framework for the PRS was supported.
- Representatives from the trade supported PRS in principle but expressed that the details had to be studied thoroughly with considerations to public acceptability, economic impact, environmental impact, as well as implementation cost and arrangements.
- Fairness was important and a level playing field should be maintained. Besides, transparency and accountability would be essential to the proper management of the levy collected.
- There was also a suggestion that appropriate alternatives to the product subject to PRS had to be provided so that the PRS would not shift the consumption to other less environmental products which were not subject to controls, e.g. from plastic bags to paper bags and from rechargeable batteries to general batteries.
- The level of hazard, volume of consumption and frequencies of the product use by the public could be used as criteria in prioritization of the products in the implementation of the PRS scheme.
- In order to raise public acceptance towards PRS, efforts should first be put on one or two products of which PRS would be easier to implement.
- E-waste should be given higher priority given its hazardous nature and the less resistance it should have with controls already implemented in EU and other countries. Beverage containers should also be given priority in anticipation that public support would be easier to secure.
- PRS should have an early implementation and members present urged for introduction of the umbrella legislation to the LegCo in the 2005/2006 legislative session.
- Landfill ban should also be imposed to complement the PRS. The ban could be implemented on the waste types which were bulkier as they were easier to be detected, such as electrical appliances or foam boards.

### **Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) Charging**

5. The workshop was conducted on 18 July 2005 with representatives from

green groups, academics, FEHD and HD. The discussion paper for the workshop is at Appendix III and major views of the workshop are as follows:-

- A charging scheme on the disposal of MSW would be necessary to provide economic incentives for the reduction of waste. A purely “flat rate” scheme would not be appropriate.
- A member quoted a survey conducted by the Council of Sustainability Development (CSD) that 2/3 of the interviewees supported a charging scheme and CSD’s proposal of introducing a legislation in 2006 to provide for MSW charging.
- Some members opined that implementation of a charging scheme could be quite complicated and considerations should be given to what and who would be charged and how it should be applied.
- Some suggested that recyclables should be excluded from charging to encourage separation at source and recycling.
- FEHD and some members of the workshop opined that consideration could be given to applying different variable rate schemes to different housing settings, e.g. bags for public housings or single block buildings and bins for estates.
- There were views that enforcement and policing would be very important and various parties such as cleaners, property management companies, waste collectors, HD and FEHD would have to be involved.
- There were also opinions that HD would need to modify the existing domestic waste collection and charging system in public housings to facilitate the proposed MSW charging scheme.

## **CONCLUSION**

6. Members are invited to note the summary of views in paragraphs 3 to 5 above.