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ACE 26/95
For Advice

Third Review on the 1989 White Paper on the Environment

Introduction

This paper seeks Members' views on a proposal for the Third White Paper Review on the Environment, due to be published by the end of 1995.

Background

2. When the 1989 White Paper - Pollution in Hong Kong - A Time to Act was published, the Governor-in-Council ordered that a review of progress on the many initiatives in the White Paper should be published every two years. The first review appeared in 1991, and the second in 1993.

3. The thrust of the Second Review, which was subtitled "A Green Challenge for the Community", was to educate the community about Hong Kong's environment, and to generate a greater degree of community care and sympathy for it. A three step approach : Understanding, Protecting and Sustaining our Environment - was therefore the basis of the Second Review.

The Third Review

4. The approach to the Third Review, as set out in the 'think-piece' attached, envisages building on the messages in the Second Review, but with particular emphasis on "sustainability". The 'think-piece' therefore proposes that we concentrate on developing sustainable development programmes for priority areas, and invites the Councils' views on what those areas should be.

Conclusion

5. Members are asked to advise
- a. whether they support the proposed structure of the Third White Paper Review, as set out in the 'think-piece';
 - b. what areas they believe should be the priorities for the development of sustainable development strategies; and

- c. how the public could be involved in the formulation of sustainable development strategies.

6. Subject to Members' views, Planning, Environment and Lands Branch will also consult the green groups and the Legislative Council Environmental Affairs Panel on the 'think-piece'. Members are asked to note that they will be briefed on the outcome of these discussions and consulted on a draft of the Third White Paper Review before it is submitted to the Executive Council.

Planning, Environment and Lands Branch
June 1995

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Third White Paper Review on the Environment
Preliminary "think-piece"
(updated on 5 June 1995)

I. **Preface and Introduction** (will emphasise that "sustainable development" is the crux of the Review)

II. **Summary of comments on the Second White Paper Review**

III. **Where are we now?**

A factual section that :

1. concentrates the readers' mind, emphasises the fragility of our environment, then gives a "snap-shot" of the pollution that Hong Kong currently loads onto it - liquid, solid, toxic, agricultural : SOX, NOX, CO₂, CO (others - methane?) : noise;
2. reviews the progress of the current environmental programmes - implementation of the 1989 White Paper and Waste Disposal Plan (emphasising they are 10 year programmes), and TDS Review;
3. emphasises that, though small, Hong Kong has a significant environmental foot-print : it is therefore imperative that we complete the current environmental programmes as soon as possible - the sine qua non of any more comprehensive "sustainable" programme.

IV. **Where should we be going?**

A section that will :

1. revisit the concept of "sustainability" (Cap. 3 of 2nd WPR);
2. summarise the progress made in the CSD in New York;
3. point out the consequences of unsustainable programmes if we don't
 - a. accept the concept of inter-generational equity;
 - b. accept we are, in terms of resource depletion, the greediest of generations (even though we now have a middle class that should be demanding environmental improvements);
 - c. accept that we must develop programmes that balance economic development with environmental protection and cooperation.

- d. emphasise that a "sustainable" Hong Kong could be achieved by :
- i. completing the foundation programmes (1989 White Paper) - must emphasise this especially;
 - ii. achieving key environmental targets :
 - AQOs
 - WQOs
 - NQO objectives
 - community education
 - ii. proposing how more comprehensive sustainable programmes might be built on these foundations;
4. and this leads us to the crux of the exercise because a comprehensive and in-depth review of a community's many aspects is required to enable sustainable development strategies to be formulated. These strategies will also need to be developed within a framework that links what appear to be unconnected issues - from energy efficiency to recycling, taxation to trade, primary industry to water pollution, to name just a few of the issues.

Meeting the objectives of "sustainability" will therefore require change, not only in government policies and programmes, but in the way we all do things [see 2nd WPR]. But before a community decides to change, it needs to agree on where it is going, with what objectives, to be achieved over what time span. It also needs to identify the resources required to achieve the goals, whether such resources are government funds or public commitment.

Some of these issues have already been addressed in the Territory Development Strategy Review consultative document, Development Options, published in 1994. This document seeks to obtain the public's views on the formulation of a long term development strategy for Hong Kong within the overall objective of establishing a "broad, long term land use, transport, environmental planning framework to enable Hong Kong to continue to grow as a regional and an international city and become a better place in which to live and work".

But a **Sustainable Development Strategy** will need to go beyond just a **Development Strategy** that is planning lead. It will, for example, need to examine a broad range of government policies and community programmes to assess how they conform to "sustainability". In addition, we will need to consider how

"sustainability" can be measured. This in turn will require detailed baseline data on a wide range of parameters to help decide what needs to be protected, with what priority, plus a set of detailed indicators so that an accurate measurement of "sustainability" is available to the public - this will enable the community to monitor movement towards the long-term goal of sustainability.

V. HOW SHOULD WE GO THERE?

Clearly, we cannot set about all of these tasks at once; as with any community we need to make choices on priorities. We would therefore welcome your suggestions on those areas for which we should, as a first priority, seek to develop sustainable development strategies.

VI. We believe that the community must be fully involved in the formulation of sustainable development strategies. The administration would therefore also welcome your ideas on how this involvement could best be achieved. In this respect members may wish to take into account the obligation on the administration to produce, every two years, a progress report on the 1989 White Paper; the core of the 4th Review (due in 1997) could be based on the sustainable development strategies that members advise should be compiled.

VI. CONCLUSIONS