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(ACE Paper 8/96)
for advice

CONSULTANTS' RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE WASTE REDUCTION PLAN

INTRODUCTION

This paper informs members of the recommendations of the Waste Reduction Study and seeks advice on the consultation plan. [Discussion of this item will be preceded by a presentation on the Study by the Environmental Protection Department and the consultants.]

BACKGROUND

2. We estimate that the amount of municipal waste will increase by approximately 40%, from about 4 million tonnes in 1995 to 5.6 million in 2005, and that over this period the cost of waste disposal at the three strategic landfills will rise from \$2,200 million per annum to \$3,500 million per annum (1994 prices). Apart from the escalation in waste disposal costs, the sharp growth in waste arisings will pose considerable pressure on the capacity of the three strategic landfills and would require a search for new landfills within the next few years. Given the shortage of land in Hong Kong, the provision of replacement landfills would be difficult and expensive.

3. In February 1994, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) commissioned consultants to conduct a comprehensive review of the existing waste management practice, waste generation, recovery and recycling activities in Hong Kong and to develop a long-term plan for the reduction of municipal solid waste. The study was completed in late 1995 with the submission of the Waste Reduction Plan (WRP) and Final Report by the consultants.

THE CONSULTANTS' WASTE REDUCTION PLAN

4. The main findings of the study and the consultants' proposed WRP are presented in the Summary Document prepared by the consultants at Annex A. The consultants have recommended that the following waste reduction targets be set for 2005:

- to stabilise the amount of municipal waste requiring treatment and disposal at 1996 levels through a waste avoidance programme and waste recovery and recycling programmes; and
- to reduce municipal waste requiring landfilling by 21% through bulk waste reduction technology.

The consultants estimate that the achievement of these targets could extend the life of the strategic landfills from 17 years to 23 years.

5. After a thorough examination of waste reduction practices in Australia, North America, Europe and Asia, and having examined local conditions, the consultants recommend an integrated programme of waste reduction initiatives comprising voluntary participation, carrot measures (government support), stick measures and the application of bulk waste reduction technology. These recommendations, summarised at Annex B, also reflect some general parameters:

- (a) The principal waste avoidance and recovery measures recommended by the consultants have proved workable elsewhere, notably in Taiwan and other developed Asian communities.
- (b) The recommendations reflect extensive consultations by the consultants in the 20-month study period.
- (c) To begin with, the consultants propose a voluntary approach to waste reduction built on existing initiatives. Should this approach fail, mandatory measures (e.g. a compulsory producer responsibility scheme) would be considered.
- (d) Measures with land, planning, trade and economic policy implications will need to be further examined by Government and a longer preparatory period for implementation. These include changes to town plans, land allocation policy and building regulation; green labelling and voluntary preferential purchase schemes; grants support and recycling credits.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION PLAN

6. We intend to carry out public consultation in two stages. In the first stage, we will seek the views of major business and industrial sectors, relevant advisory bodies, the Municipal Councils and green groups on the consultants' recommendations through meetings, briefings and seminars by EPD and the consultants. Based on these consultations, we will prepare the Government's draft WRP and formally consult with the public, including presentation to the Municipal Councils and the Advisory Council on the Environment. The Plan will then be submitted to the Executive Council.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7. We expect that the programme and administrative costs of the WRP will be shared by Government, the private sector and the community. The consultants estimate that the total cost for implementing their recommendations would be \$54 million in year 1, rising to \$306 million in year 8 and further to \$1,216 million in year 10 when the waste fired power generation plants are in operation. The consultants also estimate that an annual saving of \$549 million, i.e. 16% of the total waste management cost could be achieved in year 10 assuming that the waste reduction targets and the resultant reduction in waste disposal costs are achieved. It should be noted that these estimates are based on a wide range of source information adjusted to reflect conditions in Hong Kong, and can only be regarded as indications of probable cost.

ADVICE SOUGHT

8. Members are requested to note and comment on the consultants' findings and recommendations at Annex A and the public consultation plan outlined in paragraph 6.

Planning, Environment and Lands Branch
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