

COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Paper 04/04

Report of the Education and Publicity Sub-committee

Purpose

This paper reports the progress of issues under the purview of the Education and Publicity Sub-committee (EPSC) since the last Council meeting and seeks Members' agreement to the allocation of additional funding for the second round of Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) applications.

Proposal

2. We propose that –
 - (a) Members note the EPSC's decision not to reconsider the revised submission made by the Hong Kong People's Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD) in respect of their application to the SDF;
 - (b) Members note that the EPSC has agreed to the procedures for processing the second round of applications to the SDF and the mechanism for monitoring approved projects;
 - (c) Members endorse the EPSC recommendation to allocate an additional \$5 million for disbursement from the SDF for the second round of applications later this year; and
 - (d) Members comment on the education and publicity strategy proposed by the EPSC.

Revised Submission from the PCSD

3. The application submitted by the PCSD in the first round of SDF applications was not recommended by the EPSC for the award of grant from the Fund. On 9 March 2004, prior to formal consideration of the EPSC recommendations by the Council, the PCSD submitted a revised project proposal directly to the Council with a letter requesting that Members review the revised submission. Members advised that the EPSC should reconsider the application in the light of new information provided by the PCSD.

4. As a matter of principle, EPSC Members considered that they should not set a precedent of reconsidering an application after having made a decision during the assessment stage and *before* the Council had made its final recommendations. They agreed to inform the applicant of the above principle and the reasons for not recommending approval of the application.

Procedures for processing the second round of applications to the SDF and the mechanism for monitoring approved projects

5. For the second round of applications to the Fund, the EPSC agreed to adopt a similar assessment procedure to that in the first round, i.e., to form sub-groups under the EPSC Vetting Committee (VC) to conduct an initial screening and short-listing of applications. The EPSC also agreed to form larger sub-groups with up to five members each, and to classify the applications according to their project nature for the initial screening, in order to be able to make comparisons of the respective merits of similar types of project. Expert advice on the applications, mainly from Government bureaux and departments, would be sought where required. Noting that a large proportion of the project budget had been allocated for staffing in some of the SDF applications in the first round, the EPSC agreed that, where 50% or more of the total budget for a project was for staff costs, applicants would have to provide justification for this. The Pricing Standards previously endorsed by the Council would also be made available to potential applicants.

6. As for the monitoring of approved projects, grant recipients have been required to sign an agreement with the Government to undertake the project and fulfil their obligations in accordance with the terms of their applications and certain other standard conditions. The EPSC has agreed to

form sub-groups, each comprising a few Sub-committee Members, to monitor one or two projects each. The SDU will provide regular financial monitoring and organise visits and presentations by applicants as appropriate.

Request for additional funds for the second round of applications

7. The Council has previously recommended that an indicative amount of \$10 million should be made available annually for disbursement from the SDF and that there should be two calls for applications to the SDF each year. In the first round of applications, the amount approved for the eight successful applications was \$7.75 million. The cashflow for financial year 04/05 stands \$3.68 million. This leaves an indicative balance of only \$2.25 million for the second round. Based on the experience of the first round, this would be sufficient to fund only two or three projects. In view of the very encouraging response to the SDF from the community in the first round, and in order to ensure that the resource commitment involved in processing applications is worthwhile, the EPSC considers it advisable to set aside an additional \$5 million for the second round of applications. This would mean that a total of \$7.25 million would be available for the second round.

Education and Publicity Strategy

8. The remit of the EPSC is to advise on initiatives aimed at promoting public awareness of sustainable development in Hong Kong through various means. Specifically, the Sub-committee's Terms of Reference include -

- (a) To advise on a continuous education and publicity programme to promote public awareness and understanding of the concept and practice of sustainable development; and
- (b) To foster partnerships with stakeholders in the community on initiatives aimed at promoting public awareness of and community participation in sustainable development.

9. The EPSC has considered aspects of an education and publicity strategy, and Members have agreed to identify a number of stakeholder

groups to act as “change agents”, with a view to building up capacity among certain groups who could then in turn use their own networks to spread awareness of SD. The broad sectors identified as initial target groups include: policy makers (also include Legislative Council Members and District Councillors), social and civic groups, schools and tertiary institutions, the business sector and the media.

10. The EPSC agreed that activities that would have a wider impact on public awareness should be implemented within the current term of Council Members. These activities could include a TV series on approved SDF projects, Announcements for Public Interest (API), development of a web-based resource centre, media tours of SDF projects and a youth summit on SD. Details of some of the activities that Members propose to implement before the end of 2004 are at the **Annex** for reference.

11. Subject to any comments that Members may have on the approach to the education and publicity strategy, SDU will further refine this and submit it with a detailed implementation plan for consideration at the next EPSC meeting.

Council Secretariat
June 2004