

COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Paper 05/03

Report of the Strategy Sub-committee

Purpose

This paper reports on the issues considered by the Strategy Sub-committee (SSC) since the Council meeting on 1 April and seeks Members' views on a number of issues related to the formulation of the Sustainable Development (SD) Strategy.

Proposal

2. Members' views are sought on the following issues –
 - (a) the draft vision statement for the SD Strategy;
 - (b) the broad conceptual framework for the SD Strategy; and
 - (c) the mechanism for consulting stakeholders on the SD Strategy, in particular the “two-tier” approach proposed by the SSC.

Considerations

Vision Statement

3. The SSC noted the views of international organisations involved in promoting SD strategies, in particular the view that: “strategic frameworks are more likely to be successful when they have a long-term vision with a clear timeframe upon which stakeholders agree”. The purpose of a vision statement in the context of an SD strategy is commonly to describe the long-term aspirations that guide the strategy.

4. The SSC felt that, in order for the “vision statement” to set a clear direction, the statement should initially be the responsibility of a leading, “core” group of stakeholders, such as the Council and its Sub-committees. This would then set the stage for a wider discussion

with interested parties on more “concrete” issues such as the key objectives to be pursued in implementing the overall strategy. The SSC also **agreed** that, subject to the views of the Council, the SDU should prepare a draft vision statement based on proposals put forward by the SSC and Council Members. A draft statement is at **Annex A** for Members’ consideration.

Broad Conceptual Framework

5. In order to provide for a structured and focussed consultation on the SD Strategy, the SSC considered the need for an appropriate broad conceptual framework that could allow for the integration of key themes across policy areas, while avoiding the creation of an unmanageable number of separate subjects for discussion.

6. One approach that the SSC considered might be viable was to organize the key objectives of the Strategy in the broad context of “stocks of capital”. Under this approach, the key objectives would be placed in the context of the broad areas of social, economic, environmental and institutional capital. This would help highlight the links between various policy areas within distinct capital “categories”. It would also place emphasis on the need for integration across the capital “categories” where individual policy areas may appear in more than one category. Further, it would allow for early implementation of concrete measures in areas of priority for Hong Kong’s sustainable development. This approach is further explained at **Annex B**.

Consultation Mechanism

7. The drawing up of the SD Strategy will be of concern to a wide range of stakeholders. In very general terms, these can be broken down into two groups – the “active and informed” stakeholders and the wider community. The former are typically groups and individuals who have engaged in the research or advocacy (or both) of sustainable development principles and practices. A list of organisations that might fit into this “active and informed” category is at Annex B to Paper 07/03: “Feedback from stakeholder consultation on issues related to the SD Strategy”. Those in the latter category, i.e., the wider community may have a degree of awareness of some of the issues related to sustainability, but are likely to see this exercise as something abstract, with little relevance to immediate issues affecting their livelihood or quality of life.

8. In order to make good progress with strategy formulation

and at the same time ensure a broad level of stakeholder and public involvement, the SSC **agreed** to recommend a “two-tier” approach to the participatory process, whereby –

- (a) we engage the “active and informed” stakeholders in discussion on the vision, structure and key objectives of the SD Strategy from an early stage; and
- (b) we build on the work done to date by the SDU and non-government groups in raising wider community awareness of the importance of sustainable development, through demonstration projects and the use of concrete examples of sustainable and non-sustainable practices.

9. In time, we would aim to link the public awareness programme for the wider community to the development of the SD Strategy. Initially, however, there is a need to build greater public understanding of and confidence in the benefits of a sustainable approach. This will help create greater capacity in the community to contribute to the medium- and longer-term strategy formulation process.

Further Action

10. Subject to Members’ advice, the SSC will prepare a detailed “first phase” consultation framework with a view to beginning discussion with identified “active and informed” stakeholder groups.

Council Secretariat
May 2003

Sustainable Development Strategy – Draft Vision Statement

Members of the Strategy Sub-committee have advised in respect of the draft vision statement for the Sustainable Development (SD) Strategy that the vision should -

- Not be too “concrete”, so as to avoid limiting the scope of the strategy
- Not just be a definition of SD in the Hong Kong context, but should provide inspiration and be easily communicated
- Ensure that there is a focus on people and not institutions
- Refer to partnership between the public, private and civil sectors
- Set the scene for building a sustainable city
- Avoid hyperbole and self-promotion

With these views in mind, the following is proposed for consideration of the Council for Sustainable Development -

“Our vision is for Hong Kong to be a healthy, economically vibrant and just society that respects the natural environment and values its cultural heritage. By engaging the community in the process of building a strategy for sustainable development, we aim to ensure that Hong Kong will be a city for all to share and enjoy, for this and for future generations.”

This is only a preliminary suggestion by the Strategy Sub-committee, and Council Members are welcome to revise the draft statement or propose alternatives as the formulation of the SD Strategy progresses. It is likely that the vision statement will itself evolve over time. Therefore, adopting a broader and more “modest” approach at this juncture would allow more flexibility for future discussion.

Elaboration of the “Stock of Capital” Approach to the Structure of the Sustainable Development Strategy

The purpose of the “Stock of Capital” approach to the structure of the Sustainable Development (SD) Strategy is to organize the various key objectives in the relevant policy areas so that the linkages between these issues and their integration into various aspects of the Strategy can be clearly shown.

For example, if the objectives at hand were: “Better Waste Management” (WM), “More Diverse Leisure & Cultural Opportunities” (LCO) and “Improved Health & Hygiene” (HH) these might be placed in the “stocks of capital” structure as follows –

<i>Social</i>	<i>Economic</i>	<i>Environmental</i>	<i>Institutional</i>
-	WM	WM	-
LCO	LCO	-	-
HH	-	HH	-

From this matrix, one could see how issues related to Waste Management have an impact not just on Hong Kong’s stock of Environmental Capital, but also Economic Capital. By the same token, Social Capital includes the objectives related to Leisure & Cultural Opportunities and Health & Hygiene (among others – the table is obviously neither exhaustive nor authoritative).

Within the four “stocks of capital”, benchmarking, objectives and, ultimately targets would apply to each objective. This would then allow for an overall strategic picture of –

- The influence of each of the objectives on the separate “stocks of capital” – for example, how improving the availability of a diverse range of Leisure & Cultural Opportunities might not only contribute to the build up of Social Capital (say, by stimulating collective involvement in neighbourhood or territory-wide cultural and recreational activities, thereby fostering cohesion and sense of self-worth)

but also stimulate the growth of Economic Capital (as related commercial activities such as training courses, catering, retail and specialized services create more employment openings and promote economic diversity);

- How priority issues from various policy areas would integrate in building up each “stock of capital” – for example, how appropriate Waste Management (in terms of improving water quality and reducing landfill and incinerator use) and Health & Hygiene (in promoting a cleaner and more pleasant urban environment) policies would boost our long-term Environmental Capital.

In consulting stakeholders on individual priority issues, we would identify the groups associated with the relevant “stocks of capital”. For example, in the case of Waste Management, we would engage Economic and Environmental groups in initial discussion on how to benchmark the issue, the appropriate long-term objectives, and the relevant targets and indicators that might be set to monitor progress towards a more “sustainable” position. At the initial phase of consultation, we would at the same time seek stakeholder views on the vision statement and the structure for the SD Strategy, in particular the “stock of capital” approach.

Although at first glance this approach might appear structurally complex, it would allow for the early benchmarking and discussion of action plans in respect of key objectives. This would then encourage timely **implementation** of concrete measures in priority areas for Hong Kong’s sustainable development. It would also allow the SD Strategy to become a “living” document, which could accommodate the inclusion of new issues and priorities as society’s needs and aspirations shift. If, on the other hand, we were to concentrate on drawing up long lists of issues and their relative priority and then start on an extensive benchmarking exercise in the full spectrum of policy areas, we would run the risk of delaying implementation of measures to promote sustainability, as well as creating a strategic framework that would be difficult to manage in a manner that would be responsive to change.