

COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Paper 09/03

Report of the Strategy Sub-committee

Purpose

This paper briefly reports on the work of the Strategy Sub-committee (SSC), in particular the Sub-committee's recommendations with regard to an engagement process for taking forward the sustainable development (SD) strategy.

Proposal

2. The SSC has agreed that an appropriate process to engage the community should be established at an early stage to ensure effective stakeholder involvement in formulating the SD strategy. The engagement process should be transparent and participatory, and should promote accountability and partnership between the Government and various sectors of the community. With this in mind, following its meeting on 6 September, the SSC has put forward the proposal outlined in paragraph 4 below. The Sub-committee recommends that this proposal be further discussed at a high-level stakeholder workshop with the aim of identifying an agreed engagement process, on the basis of which wider consultation on the SD strategy could start.

The Engagement Process

3. Although it is important to have wide community involvement in developing an SD strategy, the SSC also recognises that it is crucial to the success of the strategy, particularly in terms of implementation, that relevant Government agencies have early and full commitment to the process. In starting off the engagement process, it might be that the Government would initially take what might be seen to be a "leading role". However, it is the intention that the Government should participate in the engagement process

as an “equal partner” with other stakeholders, and that the public should have full access and the opportunity to contribute to and participate in the formulation of the strategy at every step of the process.

4. Bearing this point in mind, the SSC has put forward a proposed engagement process that has the following main stages -

- **Identification of “priority areas”** – The Government would initially identify five or six potential priority areas that it considers important to Hong Kong’s sustainable development. In so doing, it should have regard to issues that have previously been raised at major stakeholder events (such as the “Engaging the Community” workshop at the International Symposium on Sustainable Development in June 2002), as well as concerns expressed during public consultation on the “Susdev21” study. The Council would then advise on which of these areas would be taken forward for stakeholder consultation in the context of developing the SD strategy.
- **Strategy evolution** – For each of the priority areas identified, the SSC, on behalf of the Council, would establish a strategy support group to gather background information on the area concerned, with particular reference to key issues relevant to sustainable development. This information would form the basis of an “Invitation and Response” document, which would be issued as the basis for wider public consultation. The support groups, which would comprise a range of stakeholders, including representatives from the Government, non-government organisations, academic institutions and the business and professional sectors, would remain involved in the consultation process and would regularly review comments and views from the wider community on the “Invitation and Response” documents.
- **Presentation of findings** – At the end of the consultation period, the support groups would consolidate the views of the various stakeholders and present their findings to the Council. Areas of consensus, as well as issues where there

are conflicting views on the way forward would be highlighted. At the same time, relevant government bureaux and departments would put forward their response to the issues raised by stakeholders. The Council would then advise on the way forward with the preparation of the relevant aspects of the SD strategy.

Considerations

5. In putting forward the above proposal, the SSC recognises that there may well be a need to further enhance aspects of the engagement process subject to stakeholder views and in the light of actual experience. Other organisations or groups could also in time suggest other potential priority areas. Regardless of how the process evolves, if the wider community is to feel shared ownership of the strategy, it will be necessary to recognise that additional forums may be needed for conflicting views to be heard.

Way Forward

6. Members of the SSC consider that there is a need to begin the SD strategy building process by first securing stakeholder agreement in principle to a suitable engagement process. The Sub-committee has therefore recommended that a facilitated workshop on this issue be held, with the proposed process described above forming the basis of this discussion. It should be emphasised that, depending on views expressed by stakeholders at the workshop, the above proposal could well be subject to modification. However, the very act of conducting the workshop will send a clear signal that the process of formulating the SD strategy has begun, and that we are committed to this being an open and participatory process.

Timetable

7. At this stage it is premature to set out a firm timetable for progress with the SD strategy – much will depend on the outcome of the proposed workshop on the engagement process. However, to give an indication of a possible timeframe for development of the strategy - should

stakeholders generally agree to the process described above – the Sustainable Development Unit (SDU) has drawn up a notional draft timetable, at the **Annex**, for Members' reference.

Background

8. At the Council meeting on 2 June, Members noted that the SSC had agreed initially to concentrate on designing the process for involving the community in formulating the SD strategy. The Council agreed to the Sub-committee's recommendation that the SDU, in consultation with the SSC, should "road-test" the process by bringing together some key stakeholders for a round-table discussion. This discussion would focus on testing the proposed framework of the strategy.

9. Following further discussion of the arrangements for the round-table, the Sub-committee considers that it would be preferable to focus *first* on seeking stakeholders' consensus on the engagement process itself, before initiating detailed discussion of the strategy framework. Nonetheless, we would explore the possibility of raising the issue of the strategy framework at the proposed stakeholder forum to discuss the engagement process, in order to help define the objectives of the SD strategy.

Council Secretariat
September 2003

Annex**Draft Timetable for the Engagement Process and Drafting of the SD Strategy**

15 September 2003	Meeting of Council for Sustainable Development To consider recommendations on the Engagement Process
October 2003	Stakeholder workshop on proposed Engagement Process and evaluation by SSC
November 2003	Identification of “priority areas”
November 2003	Meeting of SSC To discuss priority areas and identify membership of Strategy Support Groups for the different areas
December 2003	Strategy Support Groups To begin work on gathering information to form the basis of “Invitation and Response” documents
March 2004	SSC to report to Council on progress of Strategy Support Groups and propose detailed plan for wider consultation
June 2004	SSC to consider consultation findings
July 2004	Meeting of Council To examine findings of wider consultation and advise on how to proceed with the drafting of the SD strategy
September 2004	SSC to consider draft SD strategy document and make appropriate recommendations to Council
November 2004	Council endorsement and publication of SD strategy document