

COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Paper 12/05

Way Forward for the Second Engagement Process of Sustainable Development Strategy

Purpose

This paper proposes the way forward for the second engagement process of the Sustainable Development (SD) Strategy, taking into account the outcome of the stakeholder forum on 28 July 2005 and the views of Members of the Strategy Sub-committee (SSC) with regard to the selection of Priority Areas.

Background

2. At the Council meeting on 9 August, Members considered Paper 09/05 on “Priority Areas for the Sustainable Development Strategy”, and asked the SSC to review in full the report of the stakeholder forum, to engage in an early dialogue with relevant Government bureaux, and to consider further the precise scope of potential Priority Areas before making a firm recommendation to the Council on the way forward.

Meeting with the Government Bureaux

3. The SSC met representatives of the Government bureaux on 12 September. During the discussion, SSC Members emphasized the following points –

- the importance of taking account of the views expressed by the public at the July stakeholder forum;
- the fact that the engagement process would help promote public ownership of the Government policies; and
- the Council’s intention to work in partnership with the Government in identifying and planning for realistic and sustainable solutions to the concerned policy areas.

4. It was noted that Air Quality is a widely discussed subject in the community and the Government has also committed itself to a comprehensive action programme to improve the condition of air quality in Hong Kong. In considering to take up the subject in the context of the engagement process, it would be necessary to bear in mind the initiatives that have taken place and those which would be launched shortly to avoid duplicating or, worse still, conflicting proposals.

5. On the topic of Population Policy, the meeting supported the suggestion of including it into the engagement process as it could help to deepen the understanding of the fact that SD was not only concerned with the natural environment, but also issues with broader social implications.

SSC Proposals

6. Having considered the views expressed at the July stakeholder forum and taking into account the discussion with the Government bureaux, SSC Members consider that *two* Priority Areas should be put forward for the Council's consideration of the second public engagement of SD Strategy, namely "A Healthy Living Environment" and "Population and Human Development".

- The proposed Priority Area of "**A Healthy Living Environment**" is an extension of the issue of Air Quality. SSC Members consider that there was consensus at the stakeholder forum, as well as broader community concern, that there is a pressing need to further tackle the problem of Hong Kong's air quality and related issues of energy, transportation, health, etc.
- The proposed Priority Area of "**Population and Human Development**" is an extension of the issue of Population Policy. The "Human Development" angle encompasses related issues such as education, manpower and employment. Relevant Government bureaux are ready to assist the Council in looking into these areas in the context of the engagement process.

7. SSC Members consider that any selected Priority Area should

be made easily understood by the general public, in order that they could arouse community interest in the discussions. A selected Priority Area will need to be appropriately defined in order to maintain focus and to provide scope for achievable targets and objectives to be debated.

Proposed Way Forward

Priority Area of “A Healthy Living Environment”

8. We recognize that the Council should respond to the stakeholders’ immense concern on the Air Quality issue, including the correlation between air quality and the general state of health of the population. Having said that, it is noted that the issue has been discussed and debated in many sectors of the community. Furthermore, the Government is already committed to a comprehensive action programme with numerous and serious initiatives and measures to address the issue. Rather than launching the engagement process afresh to provide yet another forum for the public to debate on the issue again, it is proposed that the Council may address the more imminent need to compile a full picture on actions and efforts taken by the Government, to fill the current information gap between the Government and the community. This should be conducive to a more informed public discussion, particularly on choices that have to be made by the community in order to achieve the ultimate goal of a healthy living environment. A pleasant living environment hinges on cleaner air, less emissions from local power plants and vehicles, etc. However, we will also need to invite the public to consider the financial and other resources implications involved in making these choices for the sustainable future of our city.

9. To take the matter forward, we propose to set up an expert *Study Group* to look at the related issues in a broader perspective of “A Healthy Living Environment”. The Study Group will study and identify the current state of air quality in Hong Kong, the Government’s and various sectors’ committed action programmes, key issues relevant to Hong Kong’s long-term sustainability as well as scope for the community to contribute their views, in the context of the interface between other integrated and contributing factors related to air quality as well as public health. It is proposed that the study will not be limited to the actions of the public sector

alone, but will also put emphasis on what businesses, civil society and individuals can do to address the problem and promote long-term sustainability of Hong Kong. In particular, the study will also identify whether, what and how necessary actions can be better carried forward. Subject to the Council's endorsement, the Study Group will aim at publishing its study report during the second quarter of 2006, which may provide an informed basis for the Council to decide on the engagement process to formulate a strategy report on A Healthy Living Environment.

10. It is proposed that the Study Group will be chaired by the Council Vice-Chairman, with members drawn from the Council, relevant Government bureaux or departments, the academia and relevant professions, and supported by a hired consultant. The SDU will, in consultation with the Council Vice-Chairman, coordinate the formation of the Study Group. The proposed composition and terms of reference of the Study Group is at **Annex A**.

Priority Area of "Population and Human Development"

11. As for the Priority Area of "Population and Human Development", it is proposed that the SSC be requested to plan and implement the subsequent stages of the engagement process with priority, including the establishment of a new Support Group on the Priority Area, drafting of the Invitation and Response (IR) document and the rollout of the public involvement stage. Building on the experience of the first engagement process, the Support Group will comprise members from the SSC, relevant Government bureaux or departments, the local community, as well as experts and academics in the field. The SDU will, in consultation with the SSC, coordinate the formation of the Support Group, which is expected to commence work as soon as possible. The proposed composition and terms of reference of the Support Group is at **Annex B**.

12. Subject to further consideration by the SSC and the Support Group, the scope of discussion for this Priority Area may cover the issues of aging, encouraging childbirth, attracting quality population to enhance the human capital of Hong Kong, etc.

Timetable for engagement process

13. A tentative timetable for the second engagement process of SD Strategy is at **Annex C**.

Views Sought

14. Members are invited to consider whether --
- (a) an expert Study Group should be established to address the Priority Area of “A Healthy Living Environment”, with a view to publishing a comprehensive report on the issue for the Council to decide on the public engagement process; and
 - (b) in the interim, the SSC should be tasked to plan and implement the public engagement process on the Priority Area of “Population and Human Development” as soon as possible, including the establishment of a Support Group, drafting of the IR document and the rolling out of the public engagement process.

Council Secretariat
December 2005

Annex A**Study Group on A Healthy Living Environment
Proposed composition and terms of reference**

Proposed composition –

- Chairman : Dr Edgar Cheng (Vice-Chairman, Council for SD)
- Members : Ir Otto Poon (Chairman, Strategy Sub-committee)
 Dr Lily Chiang (Member, Council for SD)
 An academic or professional on air quality issues
 A medical professional or community medicine expert
 Representative(s) from the civil society
 Representative from Hong Kong Observatory
 Representative from Environmental Protection Department
 Representative from Department of Health
 Representative from Economic Development and Labour Bureau
 Representative from Transport Department

Terms of reference –

- (a) To study the current state of air quality in Hong Kong, the committed action programme and constraints encountered, in connection with associated contributing factors and policy areas, with a view to presenting a comprehensive picture on relevant issues.
- (b) To identify key issues relevant to Hong Kong's long-term sustainability, in particular the interface between other integrated and contributing factors related to air quality as well as public health.
- (c) To identify scope for a public engagement process to facilitate the community to contribute their views, including choices that have to be made by the community in order to achieve a healthy living environment.

- (d) To identify possible areas that the Government, businesses, civil sector and every single member of the society may work on further to contribute to a healthy living environment.

Annex B**Support Group on Population and Human Development
Proposed composition and terms of reference**

Proposed composition –

- ◆ Member(s) of the Strategic Sub-committee
- ◆ Academics or professionals on population related issues
- ◆ Representative(s) from the civil society
- ◆ Representative from Central Policy Unit
- ◆ Representative from Health and Welfare Bureau
- ◆ Representative from Security Bureau
- ◆ Representative from Home Affairs Bureau

Terms of reference –

- (a) To identify key issues relevant to Hong Kong's long-term sustainability in the Priority Area of "Population and Human Development", with appropriate reference to international experience and best practice.
- (b) To collect relevant background information (with reference to local and international experience) and compile an "Invitation and Response" document.
- (c) To design and implement the public involvement stage of the engagement process for public discussion of the "Invitation and Response" document and related issues.
- (d) To present the "Invitation and Response" document to the public and encourage and facilitate interactive discussion by stakeholders with a view to building consensus among major groups.
- (e) To receive and collate responses from stakeholders, with a view to making proposals to the Strategy Sub-committee and Council for Sustainable Development.

Annex C***Tentative timetable for the Second Engagement Process of SD Strategy*****(A) A Healthy Living Environment**

Dec 2005	Establishment of Study Group
First quarter of 2006	Research and Report drafting
Second quarter of 2006	Completion of Study Group Report for the Council

(B) Population and Human Development

Dec 2005	Establishment of Support Group
Jan – Mar 2006	Preparation of IR document
Apr – Aug 2006	Public Engagement Process
Sept – Nov 2006	Drafting of Council Report
Dec 2006	Publication of Council Report