

# **COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

## **STRATEGY SUB-COMMITTEE**

Paper 02/03

### **“Susdev 21” and Principles for the Drawing up of a Sustainable Development Strategy**

#### **Purpose**

This paper summarises the background to the Planning Department’s consultancy study on Sustainable Development for the 21st Century (“Susdev21”), its key recommendations and progress with implementation of these recommendations.

#### **Background to the Study**

2. The Planning Department commissioned Susdev 21 in 1997, with the aim of developing a system for taking account of environmental and social concerns, as well as economic implications, when planning for Hong Kong’s future development.

3. The main purpose of the study was to introduce the concept of sustainability into the Government’s decision-making process, based on certain key principles that were to be identified following consultation within the community. Although reference was made in the study to the question of drawing up a strategy for sustainable development, Susdev 21 was not intended to focus on this issue. Rather, the study concentrated on how to put in place a systematic process that would enable decision makers in the Government to understand and account for the long-term implications of their strategic development decisions.

#### **Key Recommendations of the Study**

*Definition of Sustainable Development for Hong Kong*

4. Drawing on the definition of the term ‘sustainable development’ put forward by the UN World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), Susdev 21 suggested the following definition of ‘sustainable development’ for the Hong Kong context –

“Sustainable Development in Hong Kong balances social, economic, environmental and resource needs, both for present and future generations, simultaneously achieving a vibrant economy, social progress and a high quality environment, locally nationally and internationally, through the efforts of the community and the Government.

#### *Guiding Principles and Indicators*

5. Based on the above definition, the study identified eight “guiding principles” for sustainable development that would serve to translate the definition into readily understood values. A list of the guiding principles is at **Annex A**.

6. Indicators corresponding to the guiding principles were then drawn up to help gauge the environmental, social and economic impacts of new government proposals and projects. Altogether, we now have 39 indicators incorporated into a computer-based tool to assist bureaux and departments in testing the sustainability of their new proposals. A list of the indicators is at **Annex B**.

#### *Sustainability Assessment System and the Computer Aided Sustainability Evaluation Tool (CASET)*

7. Susdev 21 recommended the introduction of a sustainability assessment system to ensure that sustainable development implications would be taken full account of in the Government’s decision-making process. The system was intended to facilitate a comprehensive and consistent discipline for assessing the sustainability of new policy, project or strategy proposals, and to foster cross-sectoral coordination within the Government.

8. The study further recommended the development of the CASET as a support tool to help bureaux and departments evaluate the sustainability

implications of their policies and projects. The tool helps users to form their views on the compatibility of possible scenarios against the sustainable development principles. But it was not intended, nor should it be used, to pass judgment on whether a proposal is sustainable, nor does it mandate how conflicts or trade-offs should be resolved. Bureaux and departments ultimately have to exercise their own judgment in assessing and explaining the sustainability of the proposals, and to liaise with other parties to resolve any conflicts identified in the assessment process.

### *Institutional Arrangements*

9. The study also recommended the following institutional arrangements with a view to further promoting sustainable development within the Government and in the wider community –

- (a) the establishment of a Sustainable Development Unit to oversee the Sustainability Assessment System and facilitate the use of CASET in the Government;
- (b) the appointment of a Council for Sustainable Development to provide a link between the Government's work and the aspirations of the community;
- (c) the integration of the use of CASET into the Government's decision-making process, ensuring that the sustainability implications of all policies and projects would be evaluated at an early stage;
- (d) the involvement of LegCo in policy decisions through representation both on advisory policy groups and on the Council for Sustainable Development; and
- (e) consultation with and involvement of the community in the process of sustainable development in Hong Kong, including the development of a Sustainable Development Strategy.

*Implementation*

10. The Government has to date implemented the findings of Susdev 21 as follows –

- (a) the Sustainable Development Unit was established under the Chief Secretary for Administration's Office in April 2001 to oversee the implementation of the sustainability assessment system in the Government and to serve as the secretariat to the Council for Sustainable Development;
- (b) following necessary training provided to Government officers, the Sustainability Assessment System was introduced in December 2001 requiring all bureaux and departments to conduct sustainability assessments on all new policy and project proposals prior to submission to the Executive Council or the Government's Policy Committee ; and
- (c) the Council for Sustainable Development was established by the Chief Executive on 1 March 2003.

**Other initiatives**

11. More initiatives are being introduced to advance the promotion of sustainable development, including –

- (a) the setting up of the Strategy Sub-committee under the Council for Sustainable Development to facilitate full public participation and oversee the process for formulating a sustainable development strategy for Hong Kong;
- (b) the establishment of the Education and Publicity Sub-committee under the Council to oversee initiatives aimed at promoting a better understanding of the concept of sustainable development among the public and to help assess applications for funds to this end. A Sustainable Development Fund will be set up to support community

initiatives to promote public awareness in this regard.

### **Susdev 21 and Sustainable Development Strategy**

12. The scope of Susdev 21 did not concern the formulation or drawing up of a sustainable development strategy for Hong Kong. However, there were repeated calls from stakeholders and non-governmental organizations during the public consultation stage of the study that such a strategy should be drawn up as soon as possible, and the study recognised that “sustainable development” could not be achieved by institutional changes only. Rather, a clear, long term commitment to a sustainable development strategy at all levels would be needed to set out the city’s *aspirations, objectives and goals for sustainability*. Such a strategy should be acceptable to all sectors in the community and should provide a benchmark against which the sustainability implications of policies and projects could be measured.

13. The Susdev 21 study has to some extent laid the foundation for carrying forward the formulation of a strategy for Hong Kong. To start with, it has identified the “guiding principles” - a range of social, economic and environmental issues which have bearings on Hong Kong’s long term sustainability. It has also laid down a marker for the wide involvement of the community in the drawing up of such a strategy.

14. One further point noted by the study was that Hong Kong’s approach must take into account the particular conditions and characteristics in the local context (and the wider region). Specifically, Susdev 21 noted the views expressed during the public consultation period that the sustainable development strategy for Hong Kong should also address the city’s wider role within the Pearl River Delta.

### **Way Forward**

15. Drawing on the pointers set out in Susdev 21, we suggest that the following broad principles be adopted as guidelines for formulating a sustainable development strategy for Hong Kong –

- (a) the strategy should set out a clear vision that clarifies the

community's aspirations, objectives and goals for the long-term future of Hong Kong;

- (b) the vision and the strategy itself should result from a consensus-building process, based on open and continued information sharing, consultation and debate; and
- (c) the strategy should also make reference to Hong Kong's role within the broader context of the Pearl River Delta and neighbouring cities.

16. Subject to Members' views, the Secretariat will prepare a submission to the full Council proposing that the above broad principles form the basis for guiding this Sub-committee's work in engaging the community in the formulation of a sustainable development strategy for Hong Kong.

Council Secretariat  
April 2003

### Sustainable Development Guiding Principles

<b><i>Economy</i></b>	Hong Kong should achieve a competitive and prosperous market-based economy that provides the resources to meet the needs and aspirations of the population, both now and in the future.
<b><i>Health and Hygiene</i></b>	Hong Kong should provide a living and working environment and pursue policies that promote and protect the physical and mental health and safety of the people of Hong Kong.
<b><i>Natural Resources</i></b>	Hong Kong should promote the sustainable use of natural resources to minimise its ecological footprint through improving consumption efficiency, minimising the use of non-renewable resources and re-using, recycling waste and recovering energy from waste.
<b><i>Society and Social Infrastructure</i></b>	Hong Kong should foster a stable, equitable, ethical and progressive society and enable present and future individuals to contribute to and fulfill their potential, by providing universal access to adequate and appropriate educational opportunities and social infrastructure.
<b><i>Biodiversity</i></b>	To maintain the biodiversity of Hong Kong and to minimize any threat which consumption in Hong Kong may have on biodiversity elsewhere.
<b><i>Leisure and Cultural Vibrancy</i></b>	Protect and enhance the vibrancy of Hong Kong's recreational opportunities, leisure activities, cultural diversity, archaeological, historical and architectural assets.
<b><i>Environmental Quality</i></b>	Hong Kong should be pro-active in avoiding environmental problems for present and future generations, seek to find opportunities to enhance environmental quality, and minimize the unwanted side effects, locally, nationally and internationally, of development and inefficiencies such as air, noise and water pollution or land contamination.
<b><i>Mobility</i></b>	Hong Kong should provide safe, accessible, efficient and clean transport systems and pedestrian facilities along with an efficient transport network for the movement of goods and facilitation of services for the community.

### Sustainable Development Indicators

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|---|---|
| <i><b>Economy</b></i>                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic return as determined through cost benefit analysis.</li> <li>• Percentage change in income less income tax for the upper quartile household minus the percentage change in income less income tax for the lower quartile.</li> <li>• Gross domestic fixed capital formation as a ratio to GDP.</li> <li>• Expenditure on primary, secondary and tertiary education as a ratio to GDP.</li> <li>• Unemployment rate.</li> </ul>  |
| <i><b>Health and Hygiene</b></i>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notification of communicable diseases.</li> <li>• In-patient discharges and deaths per 100,000 population due to diseases of the respiratory system.</li> </ul>  |
| <i><b>Natural Resources</b></i>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumption of energy per unit of output (\$ GDP).</li> <li>• Quantity of municipal solid waste, public fill and construction and demolition waste requiring final disposal per capita.</li> <li>• The total remaining landfill capacity (by volume).</li> <li>• Volume of freshwater supplied per capita.</li> <li>• Percentage of demand met by locally derived freshwater resources.</li> <li>• Area of countryside.</li> </ul>   |
| <i><b>Society and Social Infrastructure</b></i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average length of waiting list for public rental housing.</li> <li>• Median rent to income ratio for private housing.</li> <li>• Percentage of households residing in inadequate housing.</li> <li>• Living space per person.</li> <li>• Number of registered volunteers.</li> <li>• Waiting lists for subsidized residential care homes for the elderly.</li> <li>• Number of student members of civic education and community services organizations.</li> <li>• Proportion of people of working age who have received post-secondary education or above.</li> </ul> |
| <i><b>Biodiversity</b></i>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Area of Hong Kong of high terrestrial ecological value.</li> <li>• Area of Hong Kong of high marine ecological value.</li> <li>• Area of managed terrestrial habitat for conservation.</li> <li>• Area of managed marine habitat for conservation.</li> </ul>  |
| <i><b>Leisure and Cultural Vibrancy</b></i>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of recorded archaeological sites.</li> <li>• Number of recorded cultural and historical sites.</li> <li>• Percentage of population living within districts with a shortfall of required provision of open space.</li> <li>• Annual ticket sales for major cultural, entertainment and sporting events.</li> </ul>   |

- Environmental Quality***
- Composite index for criteria air pollutants based on percentage of the Air Quality Objectives.
  - Composite index for toxic air pollutants based on percentage of Acceptable Risk.
  - Quantity (tonnes) of carbon dioxide emitted per year.
  - Percentage of population exposed to excessive noise.
  - Percent of EPD's river monitoring stations ranked "Excellent" or "Good" using the EPD's Water Quality Index.
  - Composite index for marine water quality pollutants based on percentage of the Water Quality Objectives.
  - Number of beach-days per year ranked "Good or "Fair".
- Mobility***
- Average travel distances; the distance in kilometres traveled by passengers during morning peak by all major groups of transport modes.
  - Average network speed; calculated as total passenger kilometers divided by total passenger hours.
  - The cost of road-based freight transport; the cost of charges and operating costs as a ratio to GDP.