

COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGY SUB-COMMITTEE

Paper 06/03

Proposed Process to Engage Stakeholders in the formulation of a Sustainable Development Strategy

Purpose

To meet the challenge of formulating a sustainable development (SD) strategy for Hong Kong, the Council for Sustainable Development (“the Council”) has agreed that there is a need for a strategic approach that allows for a long-term view of planning and policy-making of core components of the proposed strategy, and provides an opportunity for stakeholders to participate in the discussion of key issues and setting of priorities beforehand. This paper outlines a proposal for an engagement process that would facilitate a high degree of stakeholder involvement in defining a SD strategy, while maintaining a disciplined and structured approach to its formulation.

Proposal

2. We propose that, in order to establish a good foundation for the formulation of an SD strategy for Hong Kong, we seek the Council’s endorsement to consult key stakeholders on the proposed engagement process described in paragraphs 5 to 9 below, or as summarised at **Annex A**. Subject to the Council’s endorsement in principle of the process, we propose to organise a stakeholder workshop aimed at securing consensus on the viability of the engagement process as a way forward for preparing and implementing the SD strategy. A suggested timetable for taking this matter forward over the next 15 months is at **Annex B** for reference.

Considerations

3. At the Council meeting on 2 June, Members noted that the Strategy Sub-committee (SSC) had agreed initially to concentrate on designing the process for involving stakeholders in the community in formulating the SD strategy. The Council also agreed that the Sustainable Development Unit (SDU), in consultation with the SSC, should “road-test” the process by bringing together some key stakeholders for a round-table discussion, which could use a sample “priority area” as a basis for testing the proposed framework of the strategy and the engagement process.

The Engagement Process

4. The formulation of an SD strategy is an evolving process that requires regular and relevant input from the community. To this end we should establish an appropriate mechanism *from an early stage* to ensure effective stakeholder involvement throughout the process. Accordingly, we propose that, before “road-testing” the SD strategy framework, we first seek stakeholders’ acceptance of the engagement process through a participatory and specific discussion on the subject.

5. A summary note on the proposed format of the engagement process is at **Annex A** for reference. There are four key steps in the proposed process, namely:

- (a) Identification of “priority areas”;
- (b) Establishment of “expert” task forces to help prepare consultation documents for each priority area;
- (c) Stakeholder consultation based on these documents; and
- (d) Submission of findings to the Council and drafting of the SD strategy content, including appropriate benchmarks and targets for monitoring progress towards agreed sustainability objectives.

Identification of Priority Areas

6. The key element in initiating stakeholder involvement in the strategy formulation process will be the identification of priority areas. We propose that Government bureaux, at the invitation of the Council, should take the initiative in identifying these areas. This would not only promote high-level Government involvement in the process (which has been crucial to the successful formulation of SD strategies in other administrations), but would also help ensure accountability of the bureaux in terms of implementation of the SD strategy. We would propose the following broad “selection criteria” for considering the priority areas:

- (a) **Relevance** – the priority areas and issues should relate to matters of community concern and be of strategic importance to Hong Kong’s sustainable development;
- (b) **Achievability** – the Government and stakeholders must be able to devote resources to developing, discussing and responding to the relevant issues; and
- (c) **Clarity of Objectives** – policy objectives must be clearly understood and the priority areas and issues must be able to deliver results that would build trust and shared ownership among different sectors of the community.

Establishment of “Expert” Task Forces

7. Following the identification of priority areas, the SDU would coordinate the formation of “expert” task forces to explore each of these areas in greater detail. These task forces would gather background information on the priority areas, which would form the basis of a presentation to the Council in the form of a draft “invitation and challenge” document, intended for issue to the community and the Government for comment and discussion. The document would summarise key issues relevant to sustainability in each of the areas in question, and present these in a format conducive to wider public discussion.

Stakeholder Consultation on the “Invitation and Challenge” Document

8. A wide range of stakeholders would be involved in this stage of the process, so as to help raise community awareness of the importance of looking at the priority areas from a sustainable development perspective, as well as to obtain extensive feedback. The following events may take place:

- (a) **Launch Forums**, which would involve interested stakeholders studying the issues raised by the “expert” task forces;
- (b) **Key Stakeholder Workshops**, which would encourage detailed discussion of actual benchmarks, targets and appropriate monitoring mechanisms; and
- (c) **“Town hall” meetings**, which would allow the wider public to express their general views on the strategic priorities, benchmarks and implementation issues.

By the end of this stage, relevant Government bureaux and departments should be prepared to give their response to the issues raised by stakeholders.

Submission of Findings and Drafting of SD Strategy

9. Having gone through the full engagement process, the “expert” task forces would, through the SSC, present their findings to the Council, which would also consider the response of the relevant Government agencies. The Council would be invited to advise on how to bridge the views of the stakeholders and of the Government agencies in drafting the SD strategy. This might involve advising on the benchmarks and targets for achieving sustainability in the relevant “priority areas”, as well as identifying mechanisms to monitor the implementation of the strategy. The SDU will then be responsible for preparing the draft strategy document for further consideration by the Council.

Further Action

10. In moving forward, it is important to keep in mind the role of stakeholders in the engagement process. These stakeholders, *including Government bureaux and departments*, must also contribute to building consensus within the community on priority areas and objectives. An SD strategy will only be effective when all stakeholders share ownership of the objectives and the targets laid down in the strategy. We will therefore need to pay attention to the inclusion of relevant stakeholders in the different stages of the engagement process, particularly in key areas such as the composition of the “expert” task forces.

11. Subject to Members’ views on the proposed engagement process, the next stage in the SD strategy formulation process would be to consult the Council and then seek views from key stakeholders on the process. To this end, if the Council agrees, we propose to invite leading members of the business sector, non-governmental organisations and academic institutions, as well as senior Government officials to take part in a high-level stakeholder workshop to consider engagement process. We would then invite government bureaux to identify priority areas in respect of which we could assemble “expert” task forces for the preparation of detailed consultation papers. A draft timetable for taking forward the SD strategy is at **Annex B**.

Council Secretariat
September 2003

Key Steps in promoting a process of building a sustainable development strategy that is transparent, accountable and participatory

The Council for Sustainable Development (“the Council”) has been established, in part, to advise the Government on the preparation of a sustainable development (SD) strategy for Hong Kong. The Council is committed to fulfilling this role in a transparent, accountable and participatory manner. Accordingly, it must ensure that there is a well thought-out and widely accepted *engagement process* in place to provide a clear road map to proceed.

The engagement process must allow stakeholders to contribute to the discussion of sustainability priorities and issues. With this in mind, it is proposed that the process include the following key steps –

Step One – Identification of “priority areas”: At the invitation of the Council, the Government would identify priority areas for public discussion. This would promote high-level Government involvement and ensure accountability in terms of implementation of the SD strategy.

Step Two – Establishment of task forces: An “expert” task force would be formed for each priority area to gather background information, which would provide the basis of an “invitation and challenge” document that the Council would issue for comment and discussion by the Government and the community. The document would summarise the relevant sustainability issues.

Step Three – Stakeholder consultation: A wide range of stakeholders, including Government bureaux and departments, would be engaged in this stage in order to help secure their understanding of the need for taking a sustainable approach in the relevant priority areas, as well as to obtain their feedback. The Government would separately submit its own response to the “invitation and challenge” document.

Step Four – Submission to the Council: The “expert” task forces would submit their analysis of input and responses to the consultation exercise. The Council examine this together with the Government’s response and would advise on how to bridge the views of the community and the Government in drawing up the SD strategy. It would also advise on the appropriate benchmarks and targets for monitoring progress in implementing the strategy.

The entire engagement process would be repeated at regular intervals with a view to providing an ongoing framework for community participation in the formulation and implementation of the SD strategy.

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

6 September 2003	Meeting of Strategy Sub-committee (SSC) To finalise recommendations on the Engagement Process and strategy timetable
15 September 2003	Meeting of Council for Sustainable Development To consider recommendations on the Engagement Process and SD strategy timetable
mid-October 2003	Stakeholder workshop on proposed engagement process
early November 2003	Identification of “priority areas” by the Government
late November 2003	Meeting of SSC To discuss priority areas and identify membership of “expert” task forces for the different areas
December 2003	Expert task forces To begin work on “invitation and challenge” documents
March 2004	Report back to SSC and Council on “invitation and challenge” documents, and propose plan for wider consultation
June 2004	Report back to SSC on consultation findings
July 2004	Meeting of Council To examine findings of wider consultation, consider Government response 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
October/November 2004	Council endorsement and publication of SD strategy